

# FOOD SHARING ECONOMIES

## Transformative forms of eating in the Anthropocene?

*Consuming the Anthropocene II*  
*AAG Annual Meeting, 25<sup>th</sup> April 2015, Chicago*

Anna Davies

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

Email: [daviesa@tcd.ie](mailto:daviesa@tcd.ie)

Web: [www.consensus.ie](http://www.consensus.ie)



# CITIES & FOOD



Unsustainable  
cities

## **DOMINANT NARRATIVE: TRANSITIONS**

Large-scale: Technology, infrastructure, administration

**ONE IN EIGHT PEOPLE  
GOES TO SLEEP  
HUNGRY EVERY DAY**

## **DOMINANT NARRATIVE: AGRI-FOOD**

Predict and provide: Increasing food supply to meet demand



## **SOCIETAL META-CHALLENGE**

To transform urban food systems in a just and sustainable manner



## **NEED FOR NEW RESEARCH HORIZONS**

Reframing debates to include social practices of food sharing?



# WHAT IS SHARING?



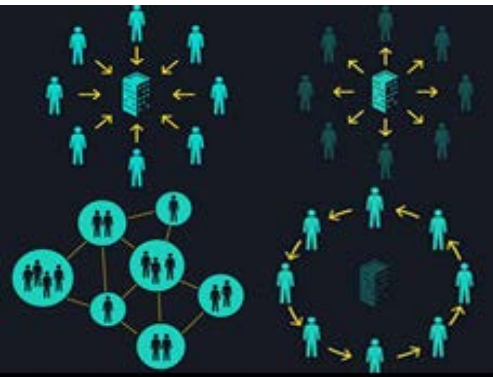
## DICTIONARY DEFINITION

*“Have a portion of (something) with another or others; Give a portion of (something) to others; Use, occupy, or enjoy (something) jointly with others; Possess (a view or quality) in common with others; Tell someone about (something, especially something personal)” (OED, 2014)*

## DEFINING SHARING ECONOMIES

*“Act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use and/or the act and process of receiving or taking from others for our use.” Belk (2010) – but what about contractual renting, leasing, or illicit-unauthorized use?*

*“An economic model based on sharing underutilized assets from spaces to skills and stuff for monetary or non-monetary benefits. Largely focused on P2P markets.” Botsman & Rogers (2010) – but what about social and environmental benefits?*



# FOOD SHARING



## FOOD SHARING AS AN EVERYDAY SOCIAL PRACTICE

Sharing a meal with friends and family; sharing a kitchen with colleagues



## “NEO” SHARING ECONOMIES

ICT - Stretching contemporary food sharing into new spaces and scales

## SUSTAINABILITY CLAIMS BUT LIMITED EVIDENCE BASE

“a means to build community, to distribute (and re-distribute) resources more efficiently, to tread more lightly on our environment” (Gaskins, 2010)



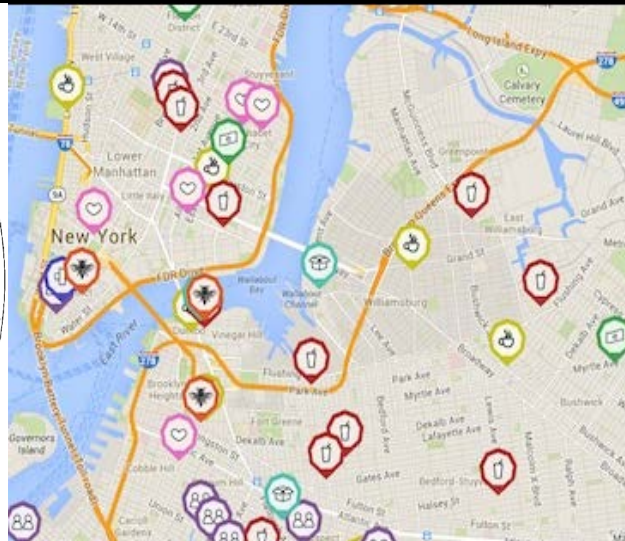
**Are food sharing economies transformative or simply ICT-enhanced neoliberal (disaster) capitalism?**



# SHARECITY

*Examining the practice and potential of food sharing to transform eating in cities onto more sustainable pathways*

## IDENTIFYING FOOD SHARING



# PRELIMINARY DATABASE

## ON-LINE SAMPLING

- Sharing Cities Network – 51 cities (Nov. 2014) 54 (Apr. 2015)
- 72 Sharing City Community Maps
- Mesh Directory, P2P Directory, Open Food Foundation, Farm Hack, Open Source Ecology, Shareable, Collaborative Consumption

## PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

91 countries - 468 cities - >5500+ sharing enterprises - millions of sharers

54 Networks/Multi-city Enterprises:

- Incredible Edible UK - 200 groups worldwide inc. Europe, USA, Japan, Australia, India, NZ
- Foodsharing.de 40,000 members in 218 German cities & Austria, Switzerland, Mexico, Israel , UK

## LIMITATIONS

- 1 month scoping study
- English language websites only
- Descriptive on-line data
- Dynamic space
- Diversity of 'sharing'



# FOOD SHARING ACTIVITIES

## SHARING STUFF

- Surplus public or privately grown crops: ***Cropmobster*** (USA)
- Surplus food from individuals or households: ***Foodsharing.de*** (Ger.)
- Surplus food from retailers or institutions: ***FoodCloud.ie*** (Ire.)
- Home-cooked food and cottage industries: ***Cookisto*** (Greece)
- Space and appliances: ***People's Kitchen Detroit*** (USA)
- Food cultures: ***The Cultured Club*** (Ire.)

## SHARING KNOWLEDGE

- Sharing information about wild or publicly available foods: ***Falling Fruit*** (USA)
- Sharing skills for food production and preparation: ***Urban Edibles*** (Netherlands)

## SHARING EXPERIENCES

- Home-cooked food in homes: ***Eat With*** (Global); ***Opendoor Supper Club*** (Ire.)

**FOOD SHARING ECONOMIES AS DIFFUSE AND DYNAMIC ASSEMBLAGES; A SPECTRUM OF PRACTICES AND TERRITORIES**



# BIOPOLITICS OF FOOD SHARING?

## ENACTING BIOPOWER

- **Statecraft** aims to simplify and harmonise practices so to be easily governed
- **Agri-business** and **corporate** power dominate global agri-food systems
- State and corporate **alignment** perpetuating the status quo

**Are food sharing economies enacting processes of counter-conduct against rules and ordinances and prescriptive, programmatic moralisms around food?**

- Food sharing economies are evolving: potentially **messy** and **unruly**
- Current governing framework lacks clarity – **regulatory soup (Orsi, 2010)**
  - When does gifting become bartering?
  - When does the private and personal become the public and commercial?
  - What is a business and what is an employee?





# BIOPOLITICS OF FOOD SHARING



**Important issues of safety, labour rights and legal protection but incidences of reactive regulatory responses to food sharing:**



**Public food gifting** - Criminalisation of public food sharing; some cities limit the number of people you can feed for free



**Seed sharing** - small seed library in Mechanicsburg, Pennsylvania ordered to shut down or follow exorbitant testing and labelling rules intended for commercial seed enterprises – labelling, contamination, noxious or invasive species – agri-terrorism



**Need to examine how biopower plays out at different scales in different food sharing activities – from the body, to the kitchen, garden, neighbourhood, city, nation and supra-national**



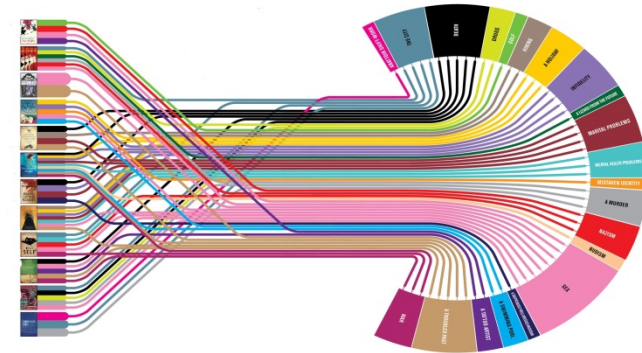
# SHARECITY



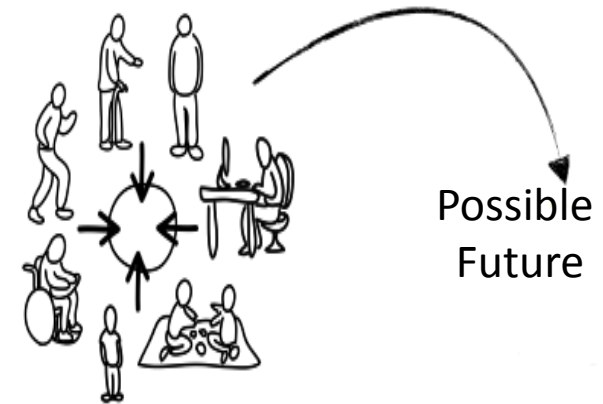
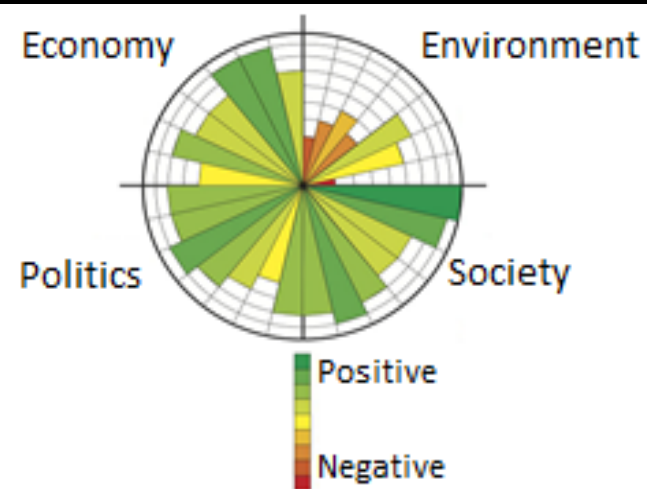
Sharers



Researchers



## MULTI-SITED ETHNOGRAPHIES, ASSESSMENT & BACKCASTING



# THANK YOU

## CALL FOR PAPERS:

### Sharing Economies? Theories, practices and impacts

Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society:

<http://cjres.oxfordjournals.org/>

**Editors:** Anna R. Davies, Betsy Donald, Mia Gray and Janelle Knox-Hayes



# SPECTRUM OF FOOD SHARING

Following, Julian Agyeman, Duncan McLaren and Adrienne Schaefer-Borrego (2013) Sharing Cities, Friends of the Earth's 'Big Ideas' project:

	<b>Concept</b>	<b>Examples</b>	<b>Participants (typical)</b>
<b><i>Material</i></b>	Recovery and recycling	Biogas	Many suppliers, fewer users
<b><i>Product</i></b>	Food redistribution	Food banks	Single provider to single user
<b><i>Service</i></b>	Product service system	Kitchen library	Single provider to many users
<b><i>Wellbeing</i></b>	Collaborative lifestyles	Cookisto	Many single providers to many single users (P2P)
<b><i>Capability</i></b>	Collective commons	Landshare	Collective providers to collective users



# REGULATORY SOUP

## Clear cut cases: Soup for money - Soup for me

Things get **soupy** in the sharing economy:

- **Soup parties** – I throw a fabulous monthly soup party for my friends. It's all for fun and for free, although my friends sometimes show their appreciation by inviting me over for dinner, or by bringing dessert to my part – gift category
- **Gift economy soup** - I start having weekly soup parties and my friends start doing things for free too. As the spirit of giving and generosity grow, friends might offer free massage, gardening, computer help, handy work, or other favours. Other friends hold weekly salad nights, curry nights, or cook-out nights, and I get free dinners every day of the week – is this gift or barter?
- **Barter soup** - what if my accountant offers to prepare my taxes in exchange for coming to five of my famous soup nights? Deal! But what does it mean legally? This example differs from the above Gift Economy example, because now we have a direct exchange that we've bargained for, and we have a binding verbal contract for barter. – accidental business? Valuable services as payment for my soup?
- **Time bank soup** – helping the elderly and disabled with soup making. Being part of a time bank each hour that I spend helping out, I am credited a “time dollar” through an online accounting system. Later on, I could redeem each “time dollar” for an hour of someone else's time. Informal and non-commercial?
- **Soup hire** - my landlord, who lives downstairs from me, learns of my superb soup and asks me to become a [personal chef](#) for her family, in exchange for allowing me to live rent free - The value of my free rent should be reported as income on my tax returns, and the value of my cooking services should be reported on her tax returns as rental income.
- **Soup enterprise** - my soup has become so popular that I make multiple pots of soup every day, invite people over to share it for free and in return I get other services. Even with no money changing hands, chances are that I've suddenly found myself in the soup business - will need a business license and various food-related permits
- **Soup bucks** - soup operation one step further and start creating soup gift certificates – currency, maybe legal in all but a few states; may come under gift certificate regulation

Janelle Orsi (2010) How to barter, gift and get stuff: available from <http://www.shareable.net/>

