SHARE IT: Challenges and opportunities in co-designing a sustainability assessment framework for urban food sharing initiatives

Dr. Stephen Mackenzie, Vivien Franck and Prof. Anna Davies

Trinity College Dublin, Ireland

7th EUGEO congress on the geography of Europe – Galway, Ireland

Mackenst@tcd.ie
www.sharecity.ie
@sharecityire

Grant Agreement No: 646883
SHARECITY

SHARECITY is a 5-year research project funded by the European Research Council which is exploring the practice and sustainability potential of city-based food sharing economies.

Aims & Objectives

To establish the *significance* and *potential* of food sharing economies to transform cities onto more sustainable pathways

1) Develop deeper theoretical understanding of contemporary food sharing

2) Generate comparative international empirical data about food sharing activities within cities

3) **Assess the impact of food sharing activities on urban food sustainability**

4) Explore how food sharing in cities might evolve in the future

Food sharing definition used - having a portion [of food] with another or others; giving a portion [of food] to others; using, occupying or enjoying [food and food related spaces to include the growing, cooking and/or eating of food] jointly; possessing an interest [in food] in common; or telling someone about [food]” (Davies and Legg, 2018: 237)
**Food sharing - very diverse**

- 70% of initiatives share multiple food-related stuff, spaces, or skills.
- 53% of initiatives share via multiple methods.
- 21% of initiatives use multiple organizational structures.

**WHAT IS SHARED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Knowledge/Skills</td>
<td>2500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meals</td>
<td>1500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruits/Vegetables</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eating Together</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land</td>
<td>1000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food Products</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tools</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plants/Seeds</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Devices</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitchen Space</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Compost</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meat/Fish</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**HOW IT IS SHARED**

- Gifting
- Selling
- Collecting
- Bartering

**SHARING ORGANISATION**

- Nonprofits
- Associations
- Forprofit
- Informal
- Cooperatives
- Social Enterprises
Why focus on food sharing & urban food sustainability?

~ 70% of global population living in cities by 2050

Issues for Urban Food Systems

Social
• Increased Isolation (dining alone), Food Poverty, Detachment from Food and Nature

Environmental
• Land Use Change, Food Waste, Carbon Footprint of Food system

Economic
• Fair Returns to Farmers, Affordability and Accessibility of Nutritious Food, New & Diverse Food Economies

In analysis of 37 case studies from 9 cities we found less than half of impact statements were quantitative and in >30% of cases stated goals relating to food sustainability were not accompanied by any impact reporting

Many initiatives would like to improve the analysis and/or communication of their impacts
Developing SHARE IT

- The objective of SHARE IT - to create an open access online tool which will allow food sharing initiatives around the world to understand and communicate their impact on the sustainability of urban food systems.
- We also hope it will be a space where food sharing initiatives can learn from each other.
- Developed using a co-design process over 4 phases 2018-2019:

  **Phase 1** – Establish the fundamental concepts and structure of the toolkit by co-designing with 6 initiatives from 3 cities (London, Dublin and Singapore) to develop a framework.

  **Phase 2** – Work with developers to create a open access online version of this toolkit.

  Phase 3 – Open the toolkit out to much wider number of initiatives in the SHARECITY100 database for beta-testing – June/July 2019

  Phase 4 – Public launch of the open access toolkit online.
Co-design partner example: Be Enriched

**Name:** Be Enriched  **Focus:** Eating; Redistribution

**Summary:** Be Enriched is a charity sharing food, knowledge and skills through gifting.

**Stated Goals:** “Be Enriched is a youth and community charity set up in 2013 focused on supporting and developing the community... We develop programs which balance inequalities whilst building community cohesion and developing skills in young people. “We believe in enriching local life through connecting people through community activities and cultivating respect over a bite.”

**Impacts:** There are some limited quantitative figures included on the website and references to community building.

**Summary of Be-Enriched activities:**

- Provide important shared eating experiences to those who may otherwise not have them
- Provide weekly access to balanced cooked meals using fresh ingredients for those who otherwise may get them
- Provide education on food safety, nutrition, cooking skills and food budgeting for youth groups and broader audiences in the form of cooking classes and take home educational materials
- Use platform (particularly online) to engage in activism to promote changes in food policy and increase access to healthy, affordable food for everyone through grassroots campaigns
The Co-design process

**Review**
- Review of Sustainability Impact Assessment (SIA) methodologies for urban food systems
- Match relevant indicators to stated goals of initiatives
- Establish preliminary Indicator categories

**Respond**
- Analysis of needs and capabilities
- Review of relevant literature beyond existing SIA methodologies for urban food systems
- Development of preliminary indicator suite

**Refine**
- Refinement of indicator suite
- Identification of additional indicators
- Development of SHARE IT process & concepts

**Workshop 1**
- Establish the initiatives:
  - Current impact reporting practices
  - Reporting goals and needs for the future
  - Realistic reporting capabilities

**Workshop 2**
- Consideration of indicator suite
- Challenges of data collection
- Gap analysis

**Workshop 3**
- Reflection on indicator suite
- Consideration of SIA indicator framework (Toolshed)
- Additional concepts added to SHARE IT
  - (Talent Garden + Greenhouse)

**SHARE IT Toolkit**
- Talent Garden
- Toolshed
- Greenhouse

Direct co-design with initiatives
Desk based research
Feedback from co-design interviews

- **No more paperwork** Partners are very interested in increased impact reporting but DO NOT want to increase it...

- **Developing knowledge and skills** Urban growing initiatives feel there can be too much focus on the reporting the physical aspect of their activities (food produced etc.) and not enough on their educational value

- **A fleeting impact?** Initiatives are interested in the temporal aspect of reporting and consider it important that they demonstrate long term impact, but this is difficult!

- **Is anybody out there?** Initiatives would be interested in a resource where they can also connect and see best practice from others around the world
SHARE IT - FUNCTIONS

The Toolshed
A resource where initiatives can create a full Sustainability Impact Assessment report of their activities.

Also produces a 2 page summary report of impacts as a communication tool for potential funders etc.

The Talent Garden
The Talent Garden is a space for food sharing initiatives around the world to share stories about their activities and impacts.

These can be written stories, images, videos or even reports that are generated in the Toolshed.

The Greenhouse
A space where food sharing initiatives can connect with others around the world to share experiences and learn from each other.
Driving the Toolshed is a sustainability impact assessment (SIA) framework developed specifically for food sharing initiatives.

The framework contains 34 indicators across 4 pillars of sustainability: Economic, Environmental, Governance and Social.

This framework was developed based on existing SIA frameworks for urban food systems as well as novel indicators specific to the activities of food sharing initiatives.

The tool links reported impact areas directly to the relevant UN sustainable development goals.

The framework is designed to consider impact at the organisational level which is rare for SIA of urban food systems.
The Toolshed integrated a number of impact areas beyond those traditionally considered in SIA of food systems to account for the activities of food sharing initiatives and some of the known benefits including:

- Increasing levels of meal sharing
- Increasing the friendship/support network of participants
- Increasing levels of self-efficacy amongst participants
- Increasing appreciation of different cultures across and within communities
- Increasing well-being through volunteering
- The potential of involvement with food sharing initiatives to influence the choices and values of participants with respect to food
The Toolshed – challenges

- Ensuring the Toolshed is both accessible and informative for initiatives who may have little time and resources to dedicate to impact reporting.

- But the Toolshed also needs to be considered rigorous enough for its outputs to be valued by funders and policy makers.

- Developing a full picture of the societal benefits of sharing itself is a challenge for all researchers trying to understand the impact of any area of the sharing economy.

- Understanding the temporal considerations around the impact of sharing is a wicked problem!

- Ethical considerations around the application of quantitative sustainability assessment to food sharing initiatives.
Conclusions

• SHARE IT is a combined research and engagement tool which will further our understanding of the impact food sharing is having in cities around the world.

• The Toolshed integrates concepts of value and impact not traditionally considered in the area of food sustainability but very relevant for food sharing initiatives. It responds to the lack of appropriate supports for food sharing initiatives to consider, capture and reflect on their goals and impacts.

• Communicating the value of shared experiences relating to food through the Talent Garden and social media will be important to the success and perceived value provided by SHARE IT to food sharing initiatives.

• Through the Greenhouse we hope to make an impact through facilitating shared knowledge and experience between food sharing initiatives around the world. To help them overcome the significant cultural, financial and regulatory challenges many of these initiative face.

• We know that many challenges relating to governance exist for food sharing initiatives and this is now a major focus for the final stages of SHARECITY.
Thank you!

Website:  www.sharecity.ie
SHARECITY100: www.sharecity.ie/research/sharecity100-database/
Blog:  http://sharecity.ie/blog/
Facebook:  https://www.facebook.com/sharecityresearch/
Twitter:  https://twitter.com/sharecityire  @ShareCityIre

Stephen Mackenzie
mackenst@tcd.ie