

244 Sharing in a social housing area: a case study in Sweden

Annelise de Jong

IVL Swedish Environmental Research Institute, Stockholm, Sweden, Annelise.dejong@ivl.se

Abstract

In this paper we will explore the potential for sharing between residents, facilitated by a housing company as well as present a guide and stepwise approach for housing companies to start up sharing projects. We have performed a two-year project from 2019-2020 in a residential area in Stockholm, Sweden, called Gröna Solberga, which is an established social housing area with new built areas being produced. The results show that there is a certain interest from residents for sharing which should be analysed in close collaboration with all actors, in order to understand the specific interests from both residents and select and support those in dialogue. A seven step approach has been developed, tailored to the needs of the housing company for implementing and anchoring sharing in the organisation, which can be used to set up projects in new areas or by other housing companies. The findings are useful for housing companies in existing areas as well as new construction, and present suggestions on how housing companies can facilitate sharing via existing groups and channels. Sharing has the potential to facilitate new and old areas to merge, and for different community groups to meet and be a way to strengthen social cohesion in a district. The project also contributes to new models of collaboration between actors in a neighbourhood and how sharing initiatives can be designed and developed, as well as getting a better understanding of what role the social drivers play when businesses share with each other and suggestions on how it can be facilitated and done in interaction with the local community.

Keywords: Sharing cities, reuse, co-ownership, community building, social drivers

Introduction

In previous studies and in the testbeds in Sharing Cities Sweden, we have seen that the social driving forces for sharing are strong both for initiators and for users of sharing initiatives (eg. Bradley 2015, McLaren, D. and Agyeman, J. 2015, Bootsman and Rogers, 2011). Sharing is an ongoing relationship rather than a purchase that is an agreement at one specific moment affects both the driving forces for wanting to share and the conditions for creating sharing opportunities. We have seen that the interest in having access to rather than owning is increasing, however potential rebound effects are also apparent (Skjelvik et al, 2017, Börjesson Riviera, 2014).

Our understanding is that this trend is a result of several factors such as convenience and less responsibility, lack of storage space or the desire for participation and community. We have also observed how sharing can lead to dissolving boundaries between public, private and commercial areas (Heinrich, 2013). We wanted to understand more about how, when and the obstacles and opportunities for sharing. This could mean potential for increased resource sharing and for increased participation and community engagement. Sharing has the potential to go from consumption to the use of shared resources. At the same time, there are several obstacles such as agreements, insurance, laws and practices that are not adapted for sharing but for a change of ownership (Belk, 2014).

The Sharing Communities strategic project is focused on developing sustainability solutions within a housing company located in Stockholm in Sweden. Here, we want to gain a deeper understanding of the social communities around sharing in a relatively small, but representative living area in Stockholm and to develop a model for how housing companies can use the potential for sharing in existing communities to strengthen the connection between existing and new areas. The project studied the following questions:

- What opportunities do existing communities (for example neighbourhoods) provide to enhance sharing?
- How can housing companies facilitate sharing among tenants and offer tools and space for sharing?

Methods

The housing area was built in the 1950's with 3-storey flats in neighbourhood blocks. There are two local squares, with several empty premises and a larger centre with service by the commuting train station. The housing company's stock in Solberga are about 1500 households and is close to the average in Stockholm when it comes to demographics. New houses are built as the area is densified and there is an ongoing generational shift. In Solberga in total there are about 12,000 residents which also include villas and complexes from the 1960's million program. The district is a more exposed area, with lower income, worse health and where crime impact the local community. There is a nature recreation area with a public playground, with organized activities, shared equipment and gardening, an active sports club and an active tenant organisation. Since 2018 there has been a research and demonstration facility, where small businesses and organizations have been testing sustainable solutions to various challenges for the entire housing sector together with tenants.

The project was built up around three phases and involved a variety of actors from the housing company as well as local citizens, that were invited based on their interest which we actively sought in locally organized meetings and gatherings.

Phase 1: Research and prepare

An inventory was made of existing sharing initiatives in the neighborhood, and a dialogue was started up with residents and other actors to prioritize the initiatives.

- Identifying and mapping of what is already being shared, tenants and actors' needs and interest, possible geographical places for sharing initiatives, possible collaborations, earlier experience in the housing company, other sharing pilots, possible digital tools.

- Previous studies were analyzed concerning customer satisfaction, demographics, impact assessments, urban planning. Dialogue with tenants through a survey, open houses, mailing list, prototyping, events in the area and meetings with existing community groups.

Phase 2: Do and develop

Four sharing areas were explored and developed: share what you have, workshop facility, cultivation and business/organizational space sharing, see Figure 1.

- Possible collaboration with local tenant groups, cultivation group, civil society, companies and the city were explored.
- Prioritizing and prototyping of what could be shared and how at a first stage.

Phase 3: Analysis and guidance

The sharing options were evaluated and a model for how to drive sharing forward was developed for the housing company.

- Analyses of sharing experiences.
- Evaluation of the process.
- Development of sharing model for housing company.
- Embedding results in the housing company.

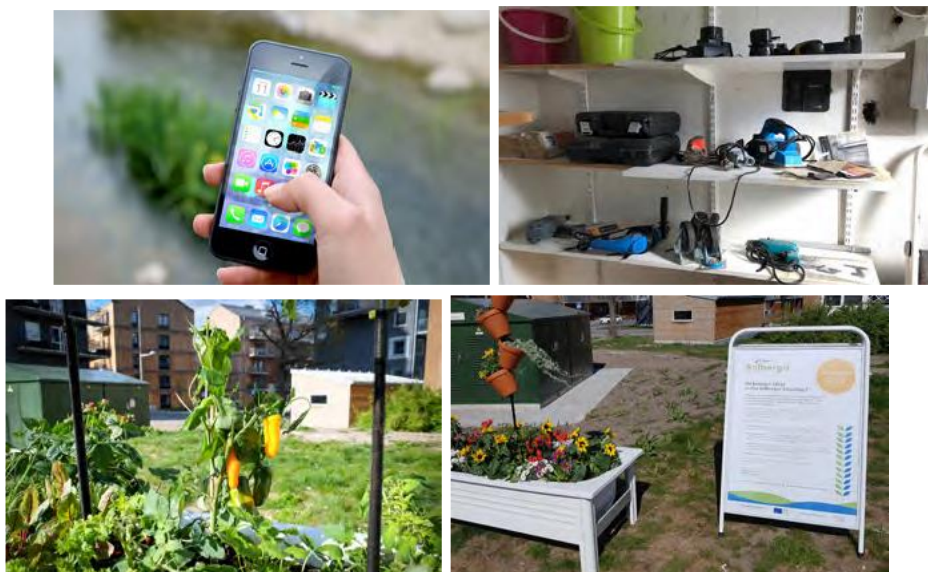


Figure 1. Four areas for sharing were explored: Sharing stuff via an app, sharing a tool workshop, sharing cultivation, sharing spaces.

Results and Discussion

Sharing between residents

In dialogue with the residents and the actors involved, four types of sharing were explored: sharing things you have at home, sharing a workshop facility, sharing cultivation, and sharing spaces.

1. Sharing things you have at home

Facilitate sharing through a platform to share what one has at home.

- For this purpose, a collaboration with an sharing platform provider was started, through an app-based service for sharing locally between private people in a closed group based on area zip codes.
- Dialogue with residents in the Solberga area was sought at various occasions for gaining interest and sharing knowledge into the sharing platform.
- Over 50 users with about 300 items were registered on the platform during the year 2020.

2. Sharing a workshop facility

Facilitate sharing by offering equipment and knowledge.

- The tenants association had a workshop with tools and accompanying space available for wood, textile and metal work which is now more frequently used by members in the association.
- A digital lock system was deemed necessary for smooth exchanges, which was installed by the tenants organization for diminishing the administration around access to the workshop.
- The workshop is now also used for several course moments into crafting, including knowledge sharing and social events.

3. Sharing cultivation

- Both farming in separate small growing boxes, open land farming, and initially indoor cultivation, was sought after by the cultivation group and was established in dialogue with the housing company.
- The interest and commitment have grown during the period, restarted along the way and been supported by the housing company with resources such as pallet collars, soil, seeds, sounding board for organization and support for communication and dissemination.
- An educational series was carried out during the spring and summer within the open land group. It was led by residents and supported by the housing company and the park administration with inspiration, knowledge and skills.

- A seed & cuttings exchange installation is offered through a student project which is aimed for the spring and will start with an announcement board traveling around in entrances of the residential buildings.
- Social events, such as a harvest party, contributed to attracting residents broadly and introducing forms of sharing.

4. *Sharing spaces*

Facilitate sharing by offering possibilities to share space to organisations whose role is central in the Solberga area.

- Mapping premises – an inventory was made both of all the housing company's premises and also of existing businesses in them to identify who could be interested in shared space or functions. Outdoor spaces and actors present in the area through other property owners of high interest was also identified.
- Prioritised areas/premises/actors where identified through analyzes and a workshop with the project partners.
- Dialogue with potential tenants and civil society where initiated.
- Some collaborations where postponed, investigated for other residential areas or were in the end not realized e.g. collaboration with the Stockholm municipality about a local recycling station including a makerspace, co-working area and bicycle pool, collaboration around laundry tailoring shared furniture's and shared children's outdoor leisure equipment. The learnings and insights from the discussions were an important step in the process and where included in the guide for tenants.
- An internal project within the housing company was initiated within the premises department to investigate the possibilities for shared premises, forms of contract and possible development paths and benefits in the long term.
- Within the Tenants' Association, a group has actively conducted a dialogue with the city and the housing company about making a living square. Opportunities have also been investigated here for joint use of premises around the square. The housing company has also had dialogue with two key departments in the municipality around development in the area. During the summer, various pop-up activities were tried out, such as a theatre, studios, indoor gardens and a café on the square. The dialogue about the continued development continues.

Sharing guide for housing companies

Upscaling internally and sharing of insights were sought after at the housing company. In the process of the project and together with the reference group seven steps presented below were identified as well as four levels of collaboration within those: collaboration with people living in the area, with actors (groups, organisations and business in the area), internally in the housing company and with the city district. The guide is open to all housing companies on how to facilitate sharing of things, mobility, space, knowledge and time

among tenants, communities, actors in the area and the city to enhance sustainable lifestyles.

The implementation of the guide is an ongoing process with key functions as area managers, departments of premises and communications and the management looking into how sharing can develop in other residential areas.

Seven steps for sharing in housing companies:

1. Starting an inventory. Residential areas differ in terms of type of residents, type of layout, facilities, collaborations, as well as infrastructures. Investigating what already exists and what is needed in an area is important both for sharing solutions to be used and for residents to feel involved and wanting to pursue these further.
2. Setting up sustainability goals. Identifying which sustainability goals the sharing initiatives should contribute to is a way of driving the project in the right direction and asking the right questions all the way. This can be both about set sustainability goals in the company and the municipality to which sharing can contribute and the areas identified in the inventory.
3. Creating dialogue. Creating conditions for dialogue, for example through attendance on site, questionnaires, open house, meetings, workshops or local events and using both formal and informal communication channels. This can be done by building on existing channels, dialogues and organization.
4. Designing for sharing. Based on the inventory and the dialogue there are good conditions for being able to design initiatives and find forms of sharing that respond to real needs. The housing company can facilitate sharing in a number of ways: a digital arena, to share things you have at home, space and function for things you take care of and use together.
5. Supporting engagement and growth. Pay attention to interest and initiatives from residents and local groups, start from commitment and provide the opportunity to grow and organize dynamically.
6. Developing support systems. Identify which key factors would make sharing work in the specific area and see how systems and organization around sharing can be facilitated for example access to areas, equipment or coordination of gardening.
7. Furthering development and independence. For the sharing initiatives to continue to exist, continued growth and independence are needed so that residents and actors in collaboration manage and feel ownership over them. Initiatives that have initially focused on long-term sustainable organizational and business models have been able to become independent.

Conclusions

In this project, the starting point from the beginning has been to develop methods internally and to build relationships in the area that can be ongoing. In the case of Gröna Solberga delar, there has not been an end date for the activities in the area, but merely for the project's follow-up and conclusions. Earlier initiatives at the housing company, have been project-financed and run by the housing company itself rather than by residents, which is a

reason why it was hard to maintain them over time. In one case, Bagarmossen Startup, it was also run as a project, but from the beginning with the focus on those who wanted to take it further after the project ended and on developing sustainable business models, which proved more successful. Some further important lessons learned were:

Start from community engagement and interests

To base the initiatives on local needs and engagement (in inventory and dialogue, forms of sharing, support systems) helps to build on and scale up existing commitment, create ownership of the initiatives and reduce the risk that initiatives do not meet needs, such as demanding too high IT-maturity in an area with a very high average age, or compete with existing local initiatives with centrally organized ones.

It is important to find the balance between bottom-up and top-down initiatives and to embrace the dynamics between a structured and engagement-driven organization. To pay attention to engagement where it arises and support growth and independence has been a success factor. To build community engagement, a local digital platform could be essential, when compared to a solution at city level. Also, from an environmental perspective a local solution for sharing will limit long transports which has a potential large effect. For the housing company it could be an advantage to gather all communication of the housing company and on local sharing in one solution. For residents it might be seen more as a function between the inhabitants in the area, that they feel co-ownership and responsibility for. An exclusive app for the housing company might also jeopardize collaboration with other housing companies and the gains of strengthening the area.

Offer support for practical challenges and scaling up

Identify which small efforts can provide a large outcome, such as support with code locks, printouts, distribution of information to residents. Agreement- and contract forms as well as insurance solutions are essential for offering and supporting sharing facilities such as spaces, or to gain trust in digital sharing platforms. To have solutions ready can contribute to clearer understandings of responsibility, ownership and financial commitments and make the step to start sharing easier.

Work proactively with gaining trust, to clarify expectations and possible handling of conflicts. If there is a potential conflict of goals among actors, this is important when facilitating the collaboration. Find ways to support groups with different types of organization and access to resources to support a variety of initiatives. Simplify the possibility of stepping in and out of commitment, without requiring long-term responsibility, without taking over responsibility, for example support to complete a cultivation course during a period, or to organize gardens.

Look at different scales

There are several potential benefits to planning and designing sharing capabilities based on different scales of the area:

- Property scale, for example where a smaller project can contribute to the large scale in the form of more efficient use of infrastructure.
- Neighborhood scale, for example by the fact that sharing solutions between more houses / actors can lead to new buildings landing faster on the site.

- District scale, for example by sharing collaboration creates greater opportunities to connect to existing local needs and demand, to involve local actors and create greater conditions for initiatives to be run and taken further locally.
- Urban and regional scale, for example by collaborating on urban development to achieve goals for sustainable development.

Working on several scales is particularly relevant if you want to increase the interaction between areas, for example based on safety. It can also be a way to use spaces more efficiently. It is also relevant to review which scale one works with if the residents' sense of area does not match the administrative divisions. When looking for the right scale for what you want to share to be well used, you may need to change the scale to find sufficient critical mass, for example a bike pool.

Use a system perspective

Have a system perspective when choosing and designing solutions. Can the need be solved in another system? For example, for shared mobility, it is easy to immediately look at the solutions for carpools and bicycle pools you want. Where perhaps increased public transport or joint delivery solutions is an important part of the answer.

Combine multiple forms to create a culture of sharing

Combining forms of sharing, such as sharing things one has at home, sharing common equipment in a makerspace and sharing cultivation, has a greater opportunity to create a habit and culture of sharing, than just one form. Use sharing to create social cohesion Use sharing to create social cohesion between existing and new buildings in a district. Collaboration between property owners, tenant-owner associations and the district on forecasts of what will be needed here in the future and common solutions can strengthen the area. Build on existing collaboration in the district. Address the needs of tenants for the district and include them in the dialogue process.

Be aware of possible social rebound effects

Sharing is a tool for achieving other sustainability goals, such as, resource efficiency, more sustainable lifestyles, reduced carbon footprint, security, community, participation, increased equality, and new business models. However, it is not a given that it is sustainable to share things. Depending on how it is taking place, there is a risk of environmental rebound effects like increased consumption, and increased transports. In the project possible social rebound effects have also been discussed in connection to design of initiatives namely the risk of increased segregation and inequality, that the experience of community is reduced or absent, and reduced responsibility for and maintenance of the common.

References

- Belk, 2013. You are what you can access: Sharing and collaborative consumption online. J. of Business Research, Volume 67, Issue 8, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbusres.2013.10.001>
- Bradley, KTH, 2015. Urban Sharing - The rise of collaborative consumption and co-use of spaces. Bradley. K., Ekelund. L. Dela är det nya äga. LottaFilm 2015. www.delafilmen.info

Bootsman, R. and Rogers, R., 2011. What is mine is yours – how collaborative consumption is changing the way we live, London: Collins.

Börjesson Rivera et. al, 2014. Including second order effects in environmental assessments of ICT, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.envsoft.2014.02.005>

Heinrich, H., 2013. Sharing Economy, A potential new pathway to sustainability, GAIA - Ecological Perspectives for Science and Society, Munich Vol. 22, Issue 4, (2013), 228-231.

McLaren, D. and Agyeman, J. 2015, Sharing cities. MIT Press ISBN 9780262029728

Skjelvik, Erlandsen, Haavardsholm, 2017. Environmental impacts and potential of the sharing economy, Nordiska ministerrådet, Copenhagen.

