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# CSCW and the “Sharing Economy”: The Future of Platforms as Sites of Work, Collaboration and Trust

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**Abstract**

This workshop provides opportunities for community building and in-depth discussion of research directions on the “sharing economy” within CSCW. The workshop is structured around reviewing work done so far on sharing/platform economies, thinking through how that body of research fits together with longstanding CSCW concerns, and working toward a shared research agenda. The workshop’s theme is the future of platforms as sites of work, collaboration and trust. We will explore how this new domain of research could help shift forward broader conceptual and theoretical efforts within CSCW, and how, on the other hand, we might more effectively utilize prior work to inform our research agenda and efforts in this emerging sub-area of CSCW. Our one-day workshop is led by four researchers and supported by an international program committee. It will accommodate up to 25 participants.

**Author Keywords**

Sharing economy; collaborative consumption; collaborative economy; gig economy; platform economy; on-demand economy; local online exchange; network hospitality; timebanking; ridesharing

**ACM Classification Keywords**

H.5.m. Information interfaces and presentation (e.g., HCI): Miscellaneous.

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## Introduction

There has been a lot of hype lauding the idea of new technologies and companies promoting the ability of people to share their possessions [2], ranging from their homes to cars, bikes, clothes, and varied tools. Services tailored for different use cases are rapidly developing in both commercial and nonprofit variants, disrupting established industries [4]. This phenomenon makes more efficient markets possible, improves utilization of available resources, and enables novel localized crowdsourcing modalities, but, simultaneously, it challenges legal regulations intended to protect safety, health, and labor rights [4].

The explosion of the popularity of the term “sharing economy” was quickly followed by criticisms that many services that were considered part of the phenomenon had little to do with the “warm and fuzzy image that the term ‘sharing’ conjures up” [2]. For the purposes of this workshop, we approach sharing and the “sharing economy” phenomenon holistically, adopting a “big tent” approach to invite broad participation.

The so-called sharing platforms and the practices that they foster are attracting increasing attention from CSCW scholars: First, a body of research on different aspects of the “sharing economy” has been published in recent conference proceedings (see [4] for a non-exhaustive review) as well as, for example, in a topical special issue of the *Interaction Design & Architecture(s)* journal [2]. Second, there have been efforts to build community, foster collaboration, and work on shared vocabulary and definitions. Our workshop follows up on these initiatives that include, for example, a CSCW 2015 panel on studying the sharing economy [4] and a CHI 2015 workshop on designing for sharing in local

communities [6]. (There have been further events taking place beyond the ACM community, such as the recently started series of *International Workshops on the Sharing Economy* and researcher meet-ups at the annual *OuiShare* festival.) Following up on these prior efforts, our workshop provides an opportunity for community building and focused, in-depth discussions of research directions. It is structured around reviewing work that has been done so far, thinking through how the emerging body of research fits together with broader CSCW concerns, and working toward a shared research agenda.

## Workshop theme: The future of platforms as sites of work, collaboration and trust

The theme of the workshop is to address questions on how research on “sharing economies” connects with longstanding CSCW concerns, specifically with issues regarding *work*, *collaboration*, and *trust*. We will explore how this new domain of research could help shift forward conceptual and theoretical efforts within CSCW, and how, on the other hand, we might more effectively utilize prior work to inform our research agenda and efforts in this emerging sub-area of CSCW.

### Work

Throughout the history of CSCW, there has been continued interest in examining the ‘nature of work’, as it actually happens in practice, with the goal of applying these insights to better support the design of computer technologies for the workplace [1]. With platform economies, cooperative computer-supported work is taking on new forms, including crowdwork and crowdsourcing [3], the establishment of on-demand mobile work forces [9], and novel infrastructures for volunteering [10]. Sharing/platform economies

challenge us to revisit workplace studies [5] and consider how we might best approach work and collaborative technologies in circumstances that are often characterized as flexible yet precarious, mobile, time-sensitive, algorithmically mediated, and lacking a traditional sense of “workplace” or “coworkers”.

#### *Collaboration*

Collaboration, that is, how people are able to get things done together, has been a central concern throughout the history of CSCW. Work in the community has often taken the form of detailing coordination in action, that is, “how workers align and adjust their activities in relation to the actions of others.” [1] Moreover, the field is, as its name indicates, particularly interested in “cooperative work practices in which coordination technologies serve, or may serve, as technical resources of *coordinative practices*” [8]. There are many questions to consider when it comes to exchange, work, and interaction that is mediated through current and emerging platforms: What does collaboration mean in this context? Who collaborates with whom? How is collaboration currently designed for (if at all) in these platforms? What might alternative approaches look like?

#### *Trust*

Studying trust, and designing for it, has become a core concern for HCI and CSCW over the past decades, in part due to the increasing number of technologies that support a variety of transactions/exchange over distance, with the help of computer-mediated communication [7]: This line of work has included, first, studies on trust in technology-mediated exchanges, such as analyzing what factors warrant trust in another actor and how the presence of these factors can be

signaled reliably to allow the formation of well-placed trust. Second, there have been efforts to support identifying trust requirements in design processes. The now 20-year-old eBay, and the reputation mechanisms it has developed over the years, is an obvious forebear for many of the platforms that are now discussed as part of the purported sharing economy. When it comes to peer-to-peer exchange and platform-mediated forms of work, the roles of trust, reputation, and related metrics are central topics to consider.

### **Goals for the workshop**

The goals for this workshop are to:

- Bring together researchers within the CSCW community who are studying different aspects of the sharing economy phenomenon (broadly understood) with diverse approaches
- Collectively set up an overarching research agenda, working through especially how questions regarding sharing and platform economies connect with broader CSCW concerns
- Encourage interaction and collaboration not just between researchers within academia, but also with practitioners and activists working on related issues
- Support and scaffold collaborative efforts that exceed the short duration of the workshop
- Continue to facilitate the formation of a new sub-community in CSCW and HCI, and discuss possibilities for lightweight collaborative infrastructure to sustain the community (such as a listserv or a wiki page for resources)

### **Workshop Activities**

Our one-day workshop will accommodate up to 25 participants from academia, industry, the public sector,

and civic organizations. The workshop day will consist of diverse activities, with an emphasis on in-depth conversations, community building, and support for establishing new collaborations. Workshop activities will follow roughly the following structure:

- **Introductions (45 minutes)**  
The organizers will, first, kick-off the workshop with a brief presentation of the agenda and goals for the day. They will, then, facilitate a lightning round of talks, giving each participant a moment to introduce themselves, their interest in the topic, and thoughts stemming from their position paper.
- **Large Group Activity: Reviewing the State of the Art (30 minutes)**  
In this session, organizers will introduce the focal concepts of the workshop (work, collaboration, and trust). This will be followed by a brainstorm mapping both 1) theories, studies, and more detailed concepts related to these three, and similarly, 2) relevant prior research and empirical cases of different aspects of sharing economies. The goal of this activity is to generate material to be worked on later in break-out groups.
- **Break**
- **Work in Break-out groups: (60 minutes)**  
Building on the results from the large group activity, each break-out group (consisting of 3-4 participants) will explore how their own research interests and state of the art sharing economy research relates to one of the focal concepts of the workshop. The purpose of this discussion is to generate ideas and questions of how sharing economy research can productively advance broader CSCW concerns, and, vice versa, how longstanding theories and classic studies might

more effectively inform work on the emerging and contemporary issues that the workshop addresses.

- **Lunch**
- **Keynote (60 minutes)**  
Judd Antin, Director of Experience Research at Airbnb, will give a keynote address followed by a Q & A session. Judd is currently building “a world-class team of diverse researchers to bring the voices of Airbnb’s people to its products, communication, and strategy”. As a longstanding member of the CSCW community and a practitioner active in the subject domain of the workshop, he is ideally positioned to give a thought-provoking talk and deepen the discussion in the workshop.
- **Large Group Discussion: Establishing a Research Agenda (45 minutes)**  
Each break-out group will present outcomes from their effort to the whole group and get feedback. The results will be compiled to establish an initial research agenda.
- **Break**
- **Break-out Groups (45 minutes)**  
For this session, participants will reorganize in small groups (2-4 people) based on shared interests. Each team is asked to come up with an actionable idea. Here, the participants are invited to be imaginative and bring to the table the things they most want to work on with others in the workshop. The outcomes from this session could take the form of, for example, a research plan for a user study, a design idea for a new service/feature, or a policy proposal.
- **Larger Break-out Groups (45 minutes)**  
Participants will rearrange into larger break-out groups and present their ideas to each other. This will be an opportunity to give and get feedback and

further improve the ideas together with other participants.

- **Conclusion and Next Steps (45 minutes)**

The workshop will conclude with a group discussion recapping what has been achieved during the day and mapping next steps and opportunities for further collaboration.

- **Workshop Dinner**

The program will be followed by an informal dinner.

### **Organizers**

*Airi Lampinen* is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Mobile Life Centre, Stockholm University in Sweden. She holds a PhD in social psychology from University of Helsinki, Finland. Airi has studied interpersonal dynamics in peer-to-peer exchange extensively, in particular in the realms of local online exchange and network hospitality. Her ongoing research focuses on the experiences of peer-to-peer marketplace founders, exploring opportunities for peer support and collaboration that could help these individuals succeed.

*Victoria Bellotti* is a Research Fellow at PARC. She studies people to understand their practices, problems, and requirements for future technology, and designs and analyzes human-centered systems, focusing on user experience. Her research currently focuses on understanding practices and motivations for participation in peer-to-peer transactions and opportunities for context-aware technology, analytics, and machine learning to streamline marketplaces.

*Coye Cheshire* is an Associate Professor at the UC Berkeley School of Information. He holds a PhD from Stanford University. Coye studies social exchange, trust, and interpersonal relationships in computer-

mediated environments. His ongoing research includes mixed-methods studies of human motivation, social psychological incentives, organizational structure, and paths of participation in online sharing economies.

*Mary L. Gray* is a Senior Researcher at Microsoft Research New England. She maintains an appointment as an Associate Professor in the Media School, with adjunct appointments in American Studies, Anthropology, and Gender Studies, at Indiana University. Mary holds a PhD in communication from UC San Diego. Her research looks at how media access and everyday uses of technologies transform people's lives. Her last book, *Out in the Country: Youth, Media, and Queer Visibility in Rural America*, looked at how young people in the rural United States use media to negotiate their sexual and gender identities, local belonging, and connections to broader, imagined communities. Mary's current book project, co-authored with computer scientist Siddharth Suri, combines ethnography, interviews, survey data and large scale data analysis of four crowdsourcing platforms operating in the United States and India to examine workers' experiences of digital labor and the future of employment in platform economies.

### **Program Committee**

The following individuals serve on the workshop's program committee:

- Barry Brown, Mobile Life Centre, Sweden
- Justin Cranshaw, Microsoft Research FuseLabs, USA
- Juho Hamari, University of Tampere, Finland
- Katharina Hellwig, University of Lausanne, Switzerland

- Andrés Monroy-Hernandez, Microsoft Research FuseLabs, USA
- Moira McGregor, Mobile Life Centre, Sweden
- Sam Witherbee, Fair Care Labs, USA

### **Pre-Workshop Plans**

*Participant Recruitment:* Participants will be recruited from the CSCW and CHI communities, and from the extended research networks of the workshop organizers. Detailed information about the workshop will be made available at our workshop website ([futureofplatforms.wordpress.com](http://futureofplatforms.wordpress.com)). We will reach out to attendees of last year's CHI workshop on designing for sharing in local communities as well as to international, interdisciplinary networks focused on the sharing economy, such as OuiShare and the series of international workshops on the sharing economy. Moreover, we will circulate the call for participation on relevant listservs and through social media. Finally, we will make sure to extend the invitation to practitioners and activists too, leveraging the fact that CSCW 2016 takes place in San Francisco, a hotbed of collaborative economy activity.

*Participant selection:* Our workshop will accommodate up to 25 participants. Those interested in the workshop will be invited to submit a 2-4-page position paper in the CHI extended abstracts format that addresses the workshop themes. We encourage the submitters to discuss their interest in the theme, welcoming reports of (preliminary) empirical results, theoretically oriented pieces, as well as short manifestos regarding next steps of working on the topic. To promote broader participation, in particular from the industry, we offer the option of submitting alternative material of rough equivalence (e.g., a design portfolio, white paper, or

similar). Submissions will be peer-reviewed with the help of the program committee. They will be accepted based on the relevance and development of their chosen topic, as well as their potential to contribute to the workshop discussions and goals.

### **Post-Workshop Plans**

Central goals of the workshop are to build community as well as to facilitate collaborations among workshop participants. During the workshop, we will consider possible next steps together with the entire group. These could include organizing further events, setting up a listserv/page/group for the emerging community, writing a piece for *Interactions* to report on the outcomes of the workshop, or even collaborating on a journal special issue or an edited book.

### **Equipment and supply needs**

The workshop has no equipment and supply needs beyond the usual: a room to host the event, wireless network connectivity, and a projector. Some supplies for group work, such as post-it notes, flipboard-sized paper, and pens, would be helpful.

### **References**

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