

CHAPTER 3

Easy Sharing: A Sharing-Economy Pilot Service in Areas of Multiple Deprivation in West Edinburgh

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Abstract

This chapter describes Easy Sharing, a pilot service from the Edinburgh Tool Library (ETL). ETL lends from a library of 1000 tools and has made more than 13,000 loans in four years. Over a 20-week period, Easy Sharing provided pick-up and drop-off of reserved ETL items at four community organizations in areas of multiple deprivation in West Edinburgh, combining a digital platform with social engagement and transport logistics. The goal of Easy Sharing was to introduce an alternative economic infrastructure, a Library of Things, that can engender sharing over time. Through ethnography, surveys, and focus groups, we investigate the drivers and barriers to participation in the sharing economy, interrogating the receptiveness and capacity of people facing barriers to using a library of things over retail consumption and other forms of

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reuse. We report stories of reception by members of these communities. We conclude with the argument that a platform-mediated sharing economy would be not so much an innovation as in fact a restoration of historic social bonding, mitigating the pressures of current deprivation by introducing infrastructure to strengthen community.

Introducing Easy Sharing

This chapter reports on a pilot Library of Things (LoT) service, Easy Sharing, from the Edinburgh Tool Library (ETL). Easy Sharing extended the geographic reach of ETL beyond its two current lending locations in Edinburgh during a 20-week period, from 24 May till 4 October 2019. Using participant observation and surveys, the authors spoke to community members who were being introduced to the platform to gauge receptiveness in the four areas of multiple deprivation where Easy Sharing was implemented. At follow-up focus groups at two of the lending locations, the authors asked participants more general questions about sharing and reuse and what shape they would like a LoT in their community to take. This research adds to a small body of literature that has sought to understand societal willingness to engage with sharing initiatives, the role of community and place in fostering sharing, and what barriers might prevent these shifts (Cherry and Pidgeon 2018; Amelie 2017; Albinsson and Perera 2012).

Making sharing a social norm poses challenges, compounded by the difficulty that among the people spoken to for this chapter, most had never heard of LoTs. In the face of these hurdles, we ask:

- How receptive are community members to the sharing economy and Easy Sharing, and what barriers might prevent membership?
- What role might community bonds play in developing sharing initiatives?

We hypothesize that a complex interplay between new infrastructures and existing community relationships will influence cultural reception of LoTs. By drawing on the strength of existing local ties, Easy Sharing might incrementally create cultural receptiveness to sharing. Below we position Easy Sharing within literature on the 'sharing economy' before providing greater detail on Easy Sharing and the Edinburgh context. We then detail our methods, findings, and conclusions.

Libraries of Things in the Sharing Economy

Around the world, sharing economies present alternative consumption models that suppress the market for new consumer goods and reduce the cost of post-consumer processing. Examples of the sharing economy include sharing events, such as bartering and auction sites and swap meets (Albinsson and Perera 2012), and peer-to-peer (p2p) sharing communities. The appetite for

these alternative forms of exchange appears to be growing; surveys conducted by Nielsen (2014) in 60 countries revealed that two-thirds of participants claimed they would share products through a p2p system.

LoTs are proving to be one of the more tractable models for establishing a sharing economy. LoTs lend items such as tools or toys, often in exchange for a membership fee; they are often run by volunteers, typically build inventory from donated items, and have curtailed hours. Ameli (2017) notes that LoTs offer stable locations and hours and an online platform to manage loans, all of which reduce the burden of exchange logistics present in p2p sharing, while centralising liability and maintenance. The hub-and-spoke architecture of the LoT is much more scalable than a p2p service, which would require repeatedly collecting single items from multiple locations. Further, many LoTs host workshops and social playtime with toys, fostering a sense of community that commercial retail does not offer (Albinsson and Perera 2012). LoTs therefore have the potential to destigmatize second-hand goods and promote common borrowing behaviour as a form of social inclusion.

We view LoTs and other sharing cultures as distinct from commercial platforms that have taken hold in the mainstream through companies such as Airbnb, Uber, and Taskrabbit. International commercial platforms manage the idle capacity of a resource or person — whether unused apartments, cars, or someone with both skill and time on their hands — and they help clients exploit these resources across distance (Light and Miskelly 2015). Light and Miskelly (2019) distinguish these online for-profit platforms, which commodify otherwise private resources, from ‘caring-based sharing’ initiatives that are embedded in a locality. Caring-based sharing is non-rent seeking, not-for-profit, and focused on giving and reciprocating items in a manner that builds relations over time. Rather than growing to international scale, to levels where exchange is highly or entirely impersonal, these initiatives are ideally local. If these projects grow, they are best done through what Light and Miskelly (2019: 598) call ‘meshing’, through an ‘ecology of mutually-supportive systems’ that grow across a locality. A healthy sharing ecosystem will yield many local collectives along with several technical and social scaffolds between them.

In this chapter, we distinguish not only between sharing and renting, but also between sharing — as in both shared *use* and shared *ownership* — and p2p lending, which entails shared use but private ownership. When items are donated to a community-run LoT, ownership transfers to the community; the donor has rights to the item that are equal to but not greater than the rights of others in the community.

In the next section we describe in greater detail the mechanics of Easy Sharing and its implementation in four locales. We then use this case study to show how Easy Sharing aligns with a caring-based sharing vision that will succeed, we believe, by drawing on existing community bonds to normalize the virtues of buying less, whether for economic or environmental reasons or both.

The Easy Sharing Pilot

If we are to re-frame consumption, borrowing has to be easy and social. Easy means logistics are simple and reliable. Social means that your local libraries of things are a household name in your community; borrowing means less effort for you and your friends. (Lyons, 2019)

ETL's Easy Sharing pilot ran from May to October 2019. ETL lends from a library of 1000 tools covering woodwork, gardening and bicycle repair, and has made more than 12,000 loans in four years. The workshops at ETL's locations encourage skill-sharing and provide classes, open sessions and social-inclusion projects. Regular members pay an annual subscription fee for unlimited loans (like an all-you-can-eat buffet).¹ The service this buys is scalable for the member in that additional tool use does not incur additional cost. Subscriptions fund storage space for tools and the licence for the library-management software, myTurn. The tools come from donations, and library processes are run by volunteers. ETL's model stands in contrast to LoTs that charge pay-per-use fees to their members.² Access to ETL's platform is revenue-generating, but its material resources in themselves are non-revenue-generating.

Easy Sharing received funding from Nesta's Sharelab in Scotland on behalf of the Scottish Government. The project arose partly in reaction to a report commissioned by the Ministry for Economy, Jobs and Fair Work, which warns Scotland's government against reactively regulating 'new collaborative platforms that land in this country' (Goulden 2018). The report urges Scotland to pioneer home-grown collaborative platforms that deliver social value and inclusive economic growth; Sharelab Scotland funded five such projects, of which Easy Sharing is one (NESTA, 2018).

Easy Sharing offered a technical platform and a physical borrowing service along with opportunities for community engagement. The pilot supported pick-up and drop-off of reserved items once a week at four West Edinburgh community organisations: Wester Hailes Arts for Leisure and Education (WHALE Arts), Broomhouse Hub, North Edinburgh Arts (NEA) and granton:hub. All are outside the social orbit of the Edinburgh Tool Library and too far away for transport to be quick and easy. All are among the 20 per cent most deprived areas of Scotland, according to the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD); Wester Hailes and Muirhouse are in the top 5 per cent (SIMD 2016³) (Figures 3.1 and 3.2).

¹ £30 in the first year; £20 subsequently. A pay-it-forward fee of £40 subsidizes a £10 concessionary fee for students and people who are receiving benefits, unemployed or over 60. Tool donors get free membership.

² ETL has other revenue streams, including third-sector partnerships, specialist workshop courses and consultancy, which are separate from LoT operation. Pay-per-use sharing libraries include Share Oxford (shareoxford.org) and the Library of Things in London (www.libraryofthings.co.uk).

³ The Scottish Index of Deprivation was since revised in 2020.

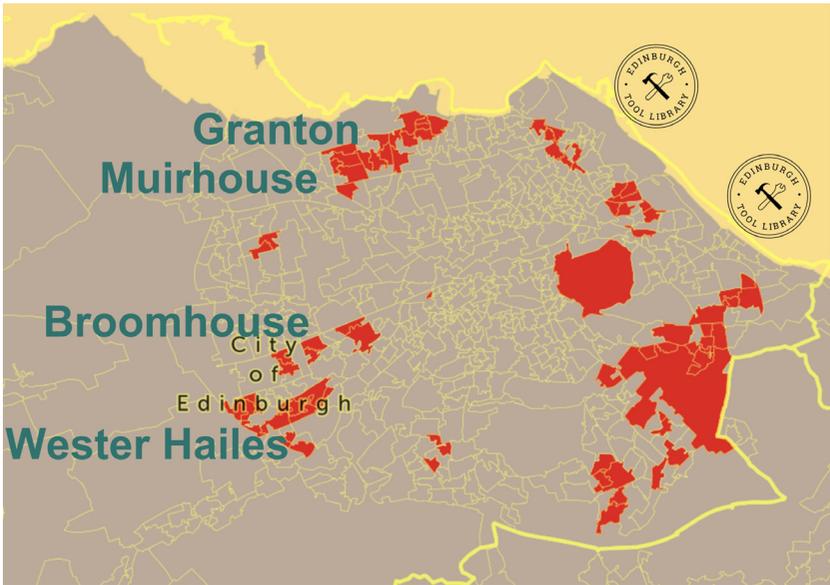


Figure 3.1: City of Edinburgh: areas falling within the top 20 per cent of multiple deprivation are shown in red (SIMD, 2016). Easy Sharing communities are indicated; ETL locations (Leith and Portobello) are marked by a logo.

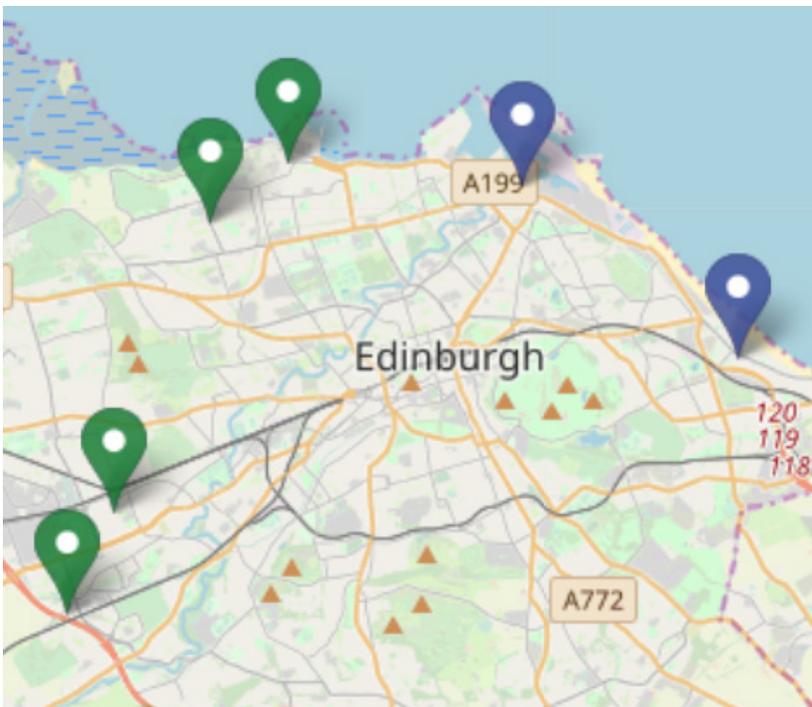


Figure 3.2: The map at easyssharing.org. ETL locations are blue; Easy Sharing locations are green.



Figure 3.3: Easy Sharing postcard.

Under Sharelab funding, Easy Sharing created a free membership category and therefore presented no financial barrier to potential members. Because ETL's business model already offered members unlimited loans rather than pay-per-use, Easy Sharing membership likewise did not deter repeated use of the service.

To use Easy Sharing, participants would visit easysharing.org and select an Easy-Sharing pick-up location on a map, which linked them to ETL's myTurn catalogue with that location set. myTurn is the leading LoT software, used in over 400 LoTs on five continents. The project funded myTurn to support multi-location delivery logistics, which makes ETL the first LoT to build this option into its online platform.

Easy Sharing employed a part-time coordinator who delivered and collected loans at each of the community organisation's Easy Sharing stations every Friday over the course of the 20 weeks; he was met at each location by a local coordinator, an Easy Sharing Liaison Officer, appointed by the centre for the partnership. To pick up and return tools, Easy Sharing members visited during the Easy Sharing hour assigned to each centre. In effect, the project tested a hub-and-spoke model via community organisations.

The project promoted the service by distributing 1500 postcards throughout the centres (Figure 3.3). As hubs of community activity, the centres allowed Easy Sharing staff to reach many locals who offered to promote the service through schools and churches and by word of mouth. At WHALE Arts and Broomhouse Hub, Liaison Officers distributed the cards locally through a housing association; at the local library, where 20 postcards were taken away in a week; and door to door.

Methodology

Researchers adopted a mixed-method approach that combined participant observation and surveys at six events at the four community hubs between May and July 2019, and follow-up focus groups at two of the hubs, Broomhouse Centre in October and NEA in December 2019.⁴ We detail the findings from the community events first, before describing the focus groups. In our findings we also draw from loan statistics collected by myTurn (Appendix II).

Community events and surveys

ETL hosted four Community Making days, one at each hub, to introduce Easy Sharing in each location, between 31 May and 17 July 2019; researchers also conducted surveys at two community days at NEA and WHALE

The five-minute surveys allowed researchers to engage in conversation and gather stories about people's willingness to borrow. The surveys (see Figure 3.4) asked people questions about digital exclusion by enquiring if they use online services and social media, about whether they use the public library and shop second-hand, about whether they have heard of LoTs before and what items they might use a LoT to borrow, and any barriers they could foresee to Easy Sharing adoption, such as stigma about second-hand borrowing, lack of confidence with tools, or lack of internet access. Survey findings are in Appendix I. The two researchers who conducted fieldwork are employees of the project, one as project researcher and one as project manager.

Focus groups

Researchers also held focus groups with local residents at two of the community centres that hosted Easy Sharing, to gather more ideas about the reception and use of a local LoT. One took place at Broomhouse Hub on 8 August 2019, as part of a community garden party and during the Easy Sharing pilot; the other was at NEA on 16 December 2019, following the conclusion of the pilot in October. Both focus groups had five participants – two women and three men.

The focus groups began with the researchers explaining the Easy Sharing project and the purpose of the research. Researchers then asked participants to tell 'sharing stories' — to talk about their feelings and experiences with sharing and reuse, from buying and receiving second-hand items to donating or giving away their own second-hand goods. In the second part of the focus group, researchers introduced the concept of LoTs and managed sharing. Participants discussed

⁴ Plans for a March focus group at granton: hub were cancelled due to the Covid-19 lockdown.



EASY SHARING
easyssharing.org

Thank you for answering this survey for an Edinburgh Tool Library pilot service

1. Which of these do you use online?

- Social Media
- Email
- Online shopping
- Banking/Bills/Government services
- Games and Entertainment
- Other, write here: _____

2. Do you use the public library?

- Often
- Rarely
- Not registered

If you do, what for?

- Books
- DVDs/Music/Audiobooks
- Computer/Internet
- Events/Classes/Workshops
- Other, write here: _____

3. Everything in the tool library is secondhand and maintained. It helps to know if you buy from Gumtree, charity shops, etc.?

- Often
- Rarely
- Never

4. Before this project, had you heard of a library of things other than books?

- No
- Yes

5. What kind of equipment would you be interested in borrowing, as needed?

- Tools/Gardening
- Bikes
- Sewing/Knitting
- Wedding/Formal clothes
- Baby things
- Cookware/Partyware
- Toys
- Camping/Picnic
- Other, write here: _____
- Not interested in borrowing

6. Is there anything that would prevent you from using this pilot service?

- No
- Yes

If yes:

- Access to the internet is difficult
- Not interested in tools
- Not interested in borrowing
- Other, write here: _____

Figure 3.4: Easy Sharing survey.



Figure 3.5: Examples of the sharing shapes.

types of items they could imagine borrowing, including items they wouldn't ordinarily buy, and what a sustained library of things in their community might look like. Participants talked about the nuts and bolts of a hypothetical LoT, from opening hours to location, and also considered barriers to its adoption.

Physical prompts in the form of cardboard cut-outs using printed icons from the Noun Project,⁵ dubbed 'sharing shapes', were used to support dialogue. Sharing shapes (see Figure 3.5) exemplified the kinds of things that might be

⁵ <http://thenounproject.com>

shared and helped the researchers to model processes by which sharing could be managed and imagined.

Outcomes: Early Reports on Easy Sharing

In the West of Edinburgh, Terence drives to WHALE Arts to leave DIY and woodworking tools with Fabien. Fabien will drop off a couple of them with a neighbour. He makes a phone call and another man comes to collect some of the tools. Terence will come back next week to pick them up. Meanwhile, he is also arranging to deliver an angle grinder to Broomhouse Hub for a lady who is trying to remove the stubborn remains of a broken fence. In Muirhouse, there's a man who is interested in borrowing a lawnmower after his was stolen. In Granton, there's a woman who says, 'I wouldn't have bought a lawnmower if I had known I could borrow one.' (Lyons, Easy Sharing blog 2019)

In this section we describe the four community making days, summarise the results of our surveys and focus groups with community members, and offer some preliminary data on platform use.

Making days

The WHALE making day took place on 24 May; we timed it to coincide with a free community lunch that an estimated 25 people attended. Outside the lunch hall, ETL staff were building a little free library that members of a WHALE place-making group would later decorate. A small number of people walked over to talk to us, but not as many as we would have liked, though we did speak to all the lunch attendants and invited them to sign up. A woman from the Mums into Business programme told us she plans to make and sell herbal teas, and she was interested in borrowing a strimmer to renovate her garden and grow herbs. At the second WHALE event, a participant told us she would like to use Easy Sharing because 'My husband spends a fortune on tools ... it would keep him out of B&Q.'

Easy Sharing at WHALE also inspired existing community making activities, particularly a men's making group started by a local resident and WHALE's community link worker. WHALE gave the men a storage room holding items that were to be relocated, and the group has persisted, curtailed only by Covid lockdown. Anticipating access to 'a pool of resources' has motivated the group to clear the room, borrow tools and launch projects. One in the group commented that Easy Sharing has made a 'huge impact' on this initiative. Another outcome of Easy Sharing at WHALE was that the local

resident employed to work on Easy Sharing has remained an employee since, working front of house.

At the Broomhouse making event, ETL staff constructed an outdoor bench for the Broomhouse Hub's new building. The event attracted around 15 people, including a local councillor and a community policeman. Several people spoke to us with ideas about how they might support the service. A mum who had just collected her children from primary school and was on the parent council told us that the school would be interested in promoting Easy Sharing. Two retired ladies, both church elders, thought the minister would be willing to promote Easy Sharing to the parish. One of them signed up and reserved an angle grinder to remove a broken chainlink fence since she had no suitable tools.

Granton:hub's making event attracted the fewest participants, with around five. The event centred on building a bench for the large community garden, and, perhaps unsurprisingly, all participants were interested in gardening equipment. One told us 'If I had known about Easy Sharing I would not have bought a lawnmower – you need to have lived in my neighbourhood for 10 years before I'd have been comfortable asking my neighbour.'

At NEA's making event, 12 participants built a coat stand. We spoke to parents, mostly mothers, who frequently visited public libraries with their children to look at books and play with toys, and they readily saw the possibilities of LoTs for baby accessories, toys and bikes. Children accompanying a parent-respondent joined in to express their views; one nine-year old suggested that roller skates could be added to the library, and another, a four-year old, asked to go to a toy library that day. We met a man whose lawnmower had been stolen and who wanted to use Easy Sharing since he could not afford a replacement.

Surveys

According to the surveys, very few of our participants had heard of LoTs; among the few who indicated prior knowledge were those who had already heard of ETL or toy libraries, and a small number knew of the musical instrument library in Muirhouse public library in partnership with NEA. This finding indicates that Easy Sharing has been a means to introduce the sharing economy concept to participants. With only a few exceptions, participants were interested in borrowing rather than buying at least some items, especially gardening tools and camping gear, which ranked highest among items people wanted to borrow.

Originally, we had hypothesized that difficulty using online platforms and stigma about using second-hand goods might hinder participation. According to the surveys, however, neither of these assumptions proved to be true. Participants did not feel opposed to second-hand use, nor did they report trouble with online shopping or using social media. The survey results did find

that a few people saw other barriers to participation or found no motivation to participate. At Broomhouse a participant was concerned about the short collection time, which reflects other studies that show LoTs' limited hours preventing accessibility for some (Ameli 2017). At WHALE and NEA, some felt either that their family members could lend them tools or that many items, such as baby things, could be easily sourced from neighbours and friends.

Focus groups

With the focus groups, three main themes emerged around sharing and LoTs: (1) *material* value and maintenance, (2) *social networks* and social values in sharing and reuse, and (3) concerns around *processes*, such as management, transport and storage.

The *material* items that candidates suggested for managed sharing included tools for woodwork, decorating, and gardening. Both groups agreed that ladders, while seldom needed, were particularly expensive and very difficult to store at home, making them a good item to borrow, though they would need particular transport and safety information if lent. Participants suggested leisure items would work well at a local LoT, including camping, fishing, and golfing equipment, and they suggested items that would support trying out hobbies such as painting equipment and musical instruments, before committing to spending money on them. Participants also proposed toys and children's equipment, including buggies, waterproof clothing, and hiking equipment for young people, and school uniforms. The Broomhouse group suggested barbecues as an occasional-use item, especially to replace non-recyclable disposable barbecues.

Participants at both places talked about the material value of electrical items, especially power tools, and the reliability of second-hand electricals, and they thought that a guarantee of reliability – such as working batteries – was more important than newness, since new budget tools might not be reliable. Said one participant, 'I don't think of it as second hand if it's from the tool library. You need an instrument to do a job, and as long as it works properly there's no need to complicate matters further.' There was some scepticism, however, that reliable tools would be donated to a LoT. Both groups pointed out the need for clear user instructions and Portable Appliance Testing for electrical safety. The Broomhouse group talked about the prohibitive cost of getting things fixed, which raised the prospect of a repair service to complement the library.

Both groups also talked about social networks and the social value of reusing goods, which led to discussions around the differences between sharing something, selling it, and giving it away. Participants felt that direct sharing between people plays an important role in their communities, which indicates degrees of trust. For instance, charity-shop donation, participants thought, could be less rewarding for a donor than giving to someone they know — a point that mirrors scholarship on the emotional rewards of giving to friends

and acquaintances (Aknin et al. 2013). Children's clothes and toys especially are subject to close-knit social networks of handing down. Some participants pointed out they would always try borrowing from a neighbour before a LoT. On the other hand, participants also talked about how recipients might actually prefer the anonymity of receiving items through a mediating agent, such as a charity shop or LoT, rather than receiving what is perceived as charity by someone they do not know well; one gave food banks as an analogy.

There was also discussion around how a local LoT would benefit and grow from people finding value in the prognostic use of the donated item — that is, the knowledge that its functional value will be retained by a new owner. When contemplating a LoT that would be embedded in the community, value in this prognostic use of a donated item could offset the monetary loss of selling that item, if it was sufficiently small, so that donating would be motivated by enlightened self-interest. An exchange at Broomhouse illustrates this point:

P4: Aye, you might be thinking, I want rid of this. You might think, see if I can get something for it; stick it on eBay or that. But if it's — so nobody else in the area gets to benefit from that you know — but if there's a library and people are able to borrow it and give it back and things, like, if you know that stuff's getting tested and things regularly as well, you know that it's gonna be decent equipment, it's gonna be —

P5: Yeah, so that's what I'm saying, you know, the equipment's gonna be tested and things so that's —

P1: Yeah that's a major thing aye

P5: That's your membership yeah, like I say if you've given something to the centre then you've got a bigger toolbox —

P1: And you feel like it's yours as well, which gives you more sense of keeping that safe as well, and making sure that other tools come back and stuff like that and so on and so forth — it kinda gives you more of an attachment to it.

The above exchange also indicates how donating could be an act of trust. Other statements reinforced this point that social cohesion is necessary to trusted sharing and is a function of settled communities and neighbourly bonding; on the other hand, where neighbours are new to each other, there is less trusted sharing. One participant at NEA reflected on how things used to be in the 1960s and 70s, when organic social networks obviated the need for formal organisation:

Sharing's not a new thing in this community. That goes back ... the front garden was always flowers for your mum. Back garden was vegetables. Everybody grew vegetables. You had a fork and spade, but Johnny down

the road had a wheelbarrow. There was an exchange system, shall we say, and the planting season, you always had too much, too many seeds, so you shared the plants with your neighbour. Or you borrowed a wheelbarrow, a horse's stable down the road. That system was going. Neighbours swapped furniture. Didn't have money to buy new furniture, so swapped furniture. People did these things at that time. I'm talking late 60s early 70s because there was community; it wasn't organised.

By contrast, younger participants who were less settled felt less able to ask neighbours to lend them items. Participants pointed out, with reference to a new housing development near the community centre, that new housing also lacks these organic sharing networks. Participants also observed that the distinction between settled community networks in the past and greater residential mobility now correlated with ownership versus tenancy, and the difference in responsibility and autonomy in home maintenance. Said one, 'it used to be, like, if you owned your house and stuff and you do your DIY and whatever, but now there's so many people who can't afford to buy a place, so just renting.'

Strengthening cohesion in order to support trusted sharing was a theme of both focus groups. To Broomhouse participants, the mediated sharing that a well-organised LoT would provide was analogous to the dignity afforded by charity shops. And at NEA, the outreach needed to make a LoT succeed provided the opportunity to build cohesion in areas that have lost it over time.

Finally, both focus groups envisaged themselves as stakeholders in the *processes* of running a community asset, not as service users. A participant at Broomhouse Hub speculated:

Just say it was a coping saw that you needed to dae a job, so you got the coping saw, and then you gave that to the library, that kind of makes the rest of the tools in the library yours as well. So you're givin your saw away, but at the same time you're gaining a whole toolbox.

At NEA, a participant proposed that there was obvious readiness for a local LoT and how to build momentum and outreach:

[It would] need a panel of people, group of people who are the drivers, who will think of the organisational aspects, saying what has worked before, why isn't this thing already happening? There's the desire for it to happen ... There's a sense in this community, so why has this not happened?

Both groups speculated that the LoT would be run by a combination of paid staff and volunteers, and that the LoT would need to consider storage and delivery needs. For instance, some of the items that people would want to borrow, such as ladders and lawnmowers, would be bulky to move or store, and that was

precisely why they made good candidates for sharing. Transport of bulky items, especially for use by people with mobility issues, led to a detailed discussion of a possible delivery service from Broomhouse Hub and the immediate vicinity and its natural boundary, a discussion that would determine which areas should be part of the catchment for a local LoT.

Platform analytics

In all, the project helped grow ETL membership, with the first loan occurring two weeks after the first making event. Eventually, over the course of the project, 80 people registered with Easy Sharing and 186 loans were made by 39 people, which means almost half of the new members joined because they wanted access to Easy Sharing without having an immediate need. The data indicates strong take-up in WHALE, reflecting the activity of the men's maker group. NEA had a smaller number of loans, an unintended consequence of partnering directly with the Shed, a wood workshop there that is detached from the main building. We had hypothesized that Shed users would be interested in Easy Sharing, but this was not borne out.

Conclusion

In the first phase of the project, researchers interrogated local residents' exposure to LoTs and their receptiveness to them. In the second phase, focus groups made an extended investigation into experiences, feelings, and attitudes about sharing, and elicited ideas from local people about creating a possible sharing-economy community initiative that could have sustained presence in the community.

Easy Sharing was a delivery service from elsewhere in the city, brought into areas of multiple deprivation; it was not an organic grassroots initiative. As a delivery service, Easy Sharing did not engender the social amenities of ETL's permanent locations, with open-access workshops, classes, and volunteering opportunities. Rather, Easy Sharing was a service sent into communities, a hub-and-spoke logistics model that was adequate for operating a pilot. In contrast, a sustainable embedded local amenity would of necessity be co-created and owned by local people. The focus groups evidence a way forward for participatory design, should funding become available, towards building community-owned and -run LoTs.

Further, as mentioned, Easy Sharing was funded under NESTA's Sharelab, 'to grow evidence and understanding of how collaborative digital platforms can deliver social impact', rather than commercial gain. That framing of the pilot service emphasised user experience, service design, and process. This technical

focus, however, was too narrow, and did not interrogate what social impact might mean in a community of multiple deprivation.

The focus groups afforded us a much deeper examination of the social significance of sharing, without getting bogged down with the workings of technological platforms. There, participants painted a vivid picture of what a thriving local sharing economy looks like: locals knowing which neighbours to approach for a loan of a tool; people swapping, bartering, and receiving children's clothes and toys and handing things on in turn. People with practical skills helping others to learn, knowledge of who had mobility problems and would need support if they were to be included, informally arranged local events, and intimate knowledge of local geography for a feasible delivery service. In short, both focus groups described a dynamic network of relationships of trust grounded in a stable community.

Participants assumed that the people running a LoT, whether paid or as volunteers, would be familiar and well connected locals. Donating items to the LoT would not feel the same as giving them away anonymously to a charity shop, but rather like putting them in an extra-large toolbox that belongs as much to the donor as to anybody else. This sense of being part of a network of trusted relationships carried over from depictions of local community to visions of what a community-owned LoT would feel like.

The SIMD data is an instructive indicator for a locally created sharing economy; it points to both the need and the potential of a community-owned LoT. SIMD divides Scotland into 6976 data zones, each with an average population of 760, which are ranked across seven domains: income, employment, education, health, access to services, crime and housing. Each community centre where Easy Sharing operated serves more than one datazone. Figures 3.6 and 3.7 indicate the ranking of the datazones of the community centres' locations. NEA, in Muirhouse, is in the top 10% of multiple deprivation; Broomhouse is in the top 20%.

The focus groups shed light on vibrant community cohesion, despite high levels of deprivation, and the contrasts between the past and the present: residential stability and high levels of trust are being replaced with greater residential transience, poverty, and subsequent dependence on landlords for household maintenance, along with less time to build trusted bonds for sharing with neighbours. In this context, a LoT could amplify existing social capital, in addition to reducing the urban carbon footprint.

We can contrast the findings of the focus groups with those of the surveys carried out in phase 1. The surveys interrogated awareness and receptiveness of local people for LoTs, with emphasis on their openness to second-hand use, borrowing from a LoT, and using an online platform. The phase 2 focus groups prompted people to imagine habitual sharing through potential LoTs and provided a more systemic scoping of sharing-economy capacity and the social significance of community-mediated reuse.

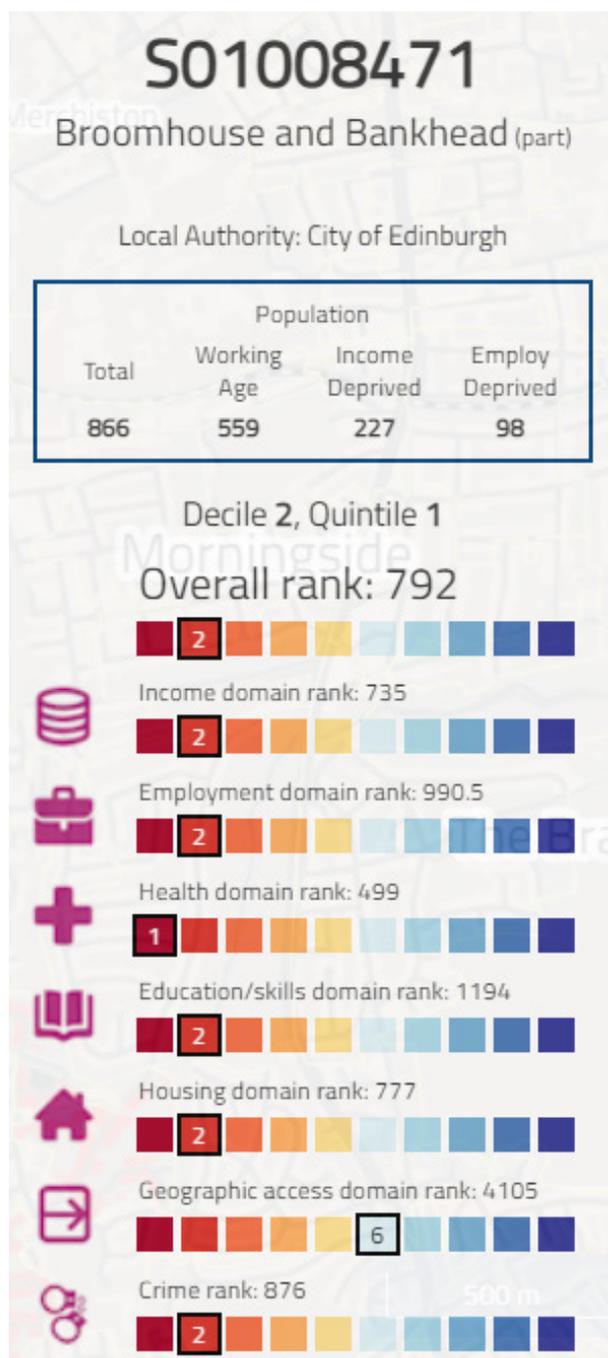


Figure 3.6: Broomhouse SIMD ranking.

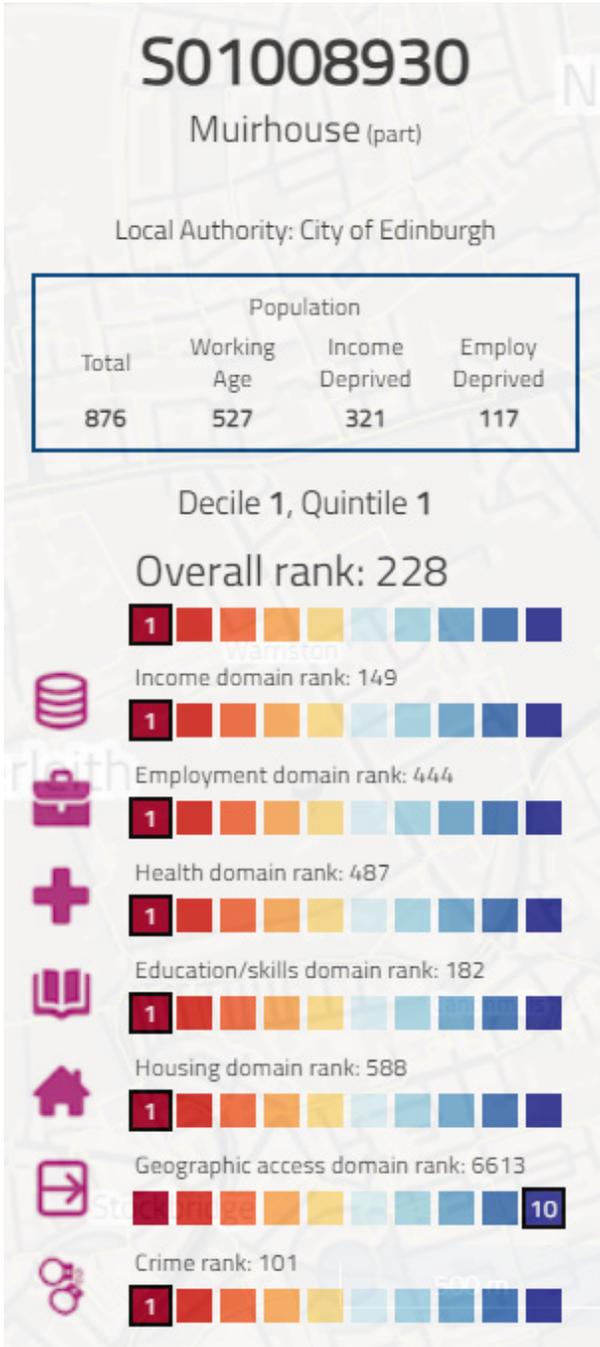


Figure 3.7: Muirhouse.

The contrast points to the following insights. A sharing economy is already embedded in the communities of multiple deprivation we researched, even though online sharing platforms are a little-known innovation. The social significance of sharing an item, whether as a loan or a gift, is informed by the degree of trust between the parties. Donors value the prognostic use of an item, sometimes more highly than its resale value, when prognostic use will remain within the donor's social network. It follows that a community-owned LoT can be conceived of as an extended social network, and, as such, it offers greater potential for valuing prognostic use than a charity shop does.

The phase 2 research allows us to reframe the proposition of a platform-mediated sharing economy not as *innovation* but in fact as *restoration*. It offers the possibility of mitigating the pressures of deprivation by introducing infrastructure to strengthen social bonding. A strategic goal of Easy Sharing was to test scalability and replicability of LoTs organically without mimicking highly centralised commercial platforms, which value economy of scale above other benefits. The concept of restorative infrastructure for the sharing economy points the way to further research and community development.

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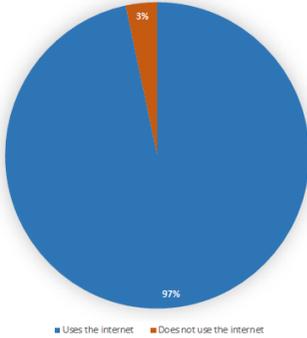
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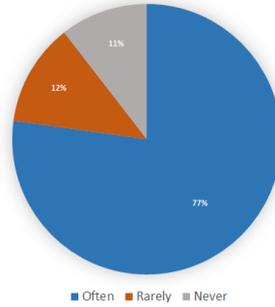
Appendix I: Survey Data

N:60 unless indicated otherwise

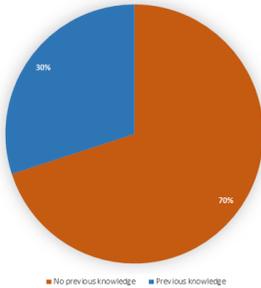
Proportion of respondents using the internet



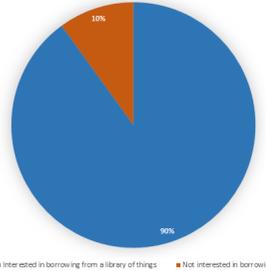
Proportion of respondents' purchasing secondhand goods



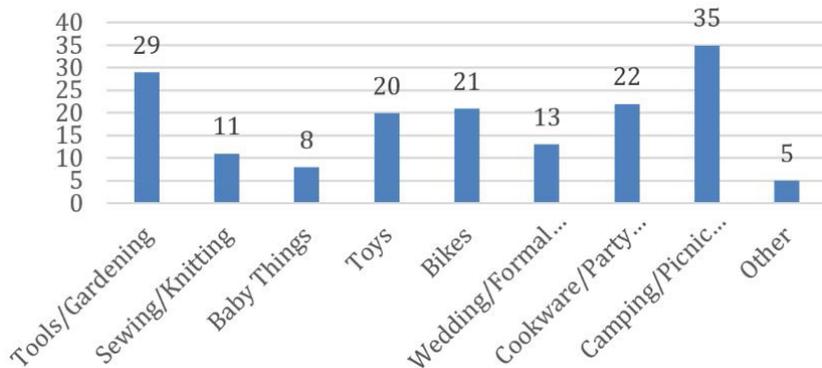
Proportion of respondents with previous knowledge of 'libraries of things'



Proportion of respondents interested in borrowing things

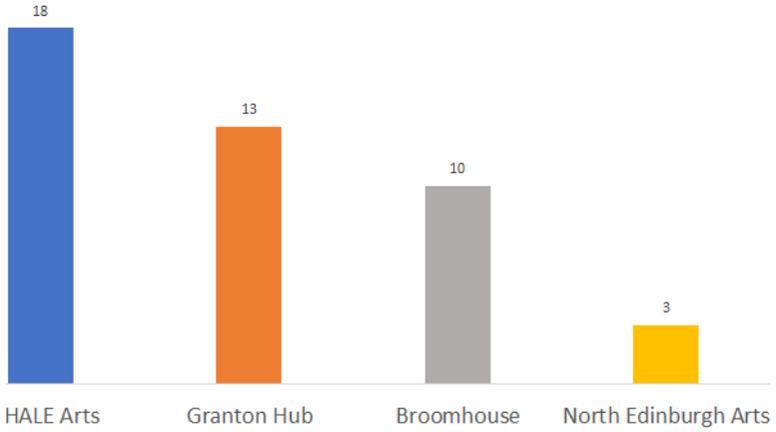


Frequency of respondents' interest in different equipment (n: 54)



Appendix II: Easy Sharing Borrowing Statistics 7 June–30 July 2019

Items checked out per location



Borrowing interactions per user

