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Mobile Lab on Sharing in Gothenburg

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LUND UNIVERSITY

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URBAN SHARING IN GOTHENBURG

Country: Sweden
Population (city): 581,821
Population (metro): 1,015,974

City area: 447.76 km²
Government: Gothenburg
municipality



SHARING & THE CITY

Cities – Sharing – Sustainability



**Sharing
Cities
Sweden**

A NATIONAL PROGRAM
FOR THE SHARING
ECONOMY IN CITIES

Urban Sharing at a Glance

Gothenburg is known for its experimental culture, strong civil society and long tradition of left wing governments, all of which has influenced the sharing landscape in the city. There are many sharing organisations representing various sectors, most of which are community-based or municipally led ones. They include the sharing of consumer goods (e.g. bikes, clothes, toys, tools, and sports equipment), urban farming allotments, car rides and experiences. Very few of these include money transactions. They appear on the Smart Map with over 100 sharing initiatives in Gothenburg and its surroundings. The for-profit sharing organisations are less common in the city. Gothenburg municipality has actively engaged with the sharing concept since 2011. It is positive about the potential of sharing to help address urban sustainability challenges, and is supportive of community-based sharing initiatives.

City Strategies, Agenda and Position on Sharing

The “sharing economy” was included in the City budget in 2015, according to which the City should encourage its growth, if it is possible “to reduce environmental impacts, increase process efficiency and reduce costs.” The Consumer and Citizen Service Administration at the Gothenburg municipality works strategically to advance sharing in Gothenburg. In 2017, it put forward a vision for Gothenburg to become a Sharing City, which was based on the proposal voted by its citizens. The City of Gothenburg is part of the Sharing Cities Sweden, which is funded by Swedish Innovation Agency VINNOVA, Swedish Energy Agency and FORMAS. As part of this programme, the area of Södra Älvstranden is planned to be transformed from an industrial area into a living and sharing hub with sharing services in the bottom floors of the houses. The City of Gothenburg also supports the spread of bike kitchens and arenas for sharing consumer items. Together with an NGO “Collaborative Economy Gothenburg”, the City has created the Smart Map (<http://smartakartan.se/>) of 100+ sharing initiatives, and the partners are working to make it open source. The City is also a member of the Sharing Cities Alliance since 2017.

Drivers for Sharing

Drivers for sharing in Gothenburg include:

- Purposeful work by the municipality to make Gothenburg a Sharing City
- Historically favourable political climate and high levels of political acceptance
- Strong socialistic and grassroots movements, and experimental culture
- Tradition of successful collaborations between the City and the civil society
- National funding through Sharing Cities Sweden programme
- Visionary and passionate leaders from various sectors, who promote sharing
- Potential of sharing to contribute to resource-efficiency, reduce environmental impacts, build social capital and save money for users



Barriers to Sharing

Barriers to sharing in Gothenburg include:

- Bureaucracy of governmental institutions that may impede collaborations with community-based sharing organisations
- A need for reciprocity in collaborations between the City and the sharing organisations
- A need for a delicate balance between the City involvement and the degree of freedom for sharing initiatives
- The principle of equal municipal treatment of societal actors
- Low levels of citizen knowledge about the Smart Map and sharing initiatives in the city
- Scepticism or negative attitude to loaning by citizens

Collective Action for Sharing

Collaboration to advance sharing in Gothenburg occurs at different levels and between various actors. Through projects, the City collaborates with businesses, public companies, universities, other municipalities and civil society. An important idea-based public partnership is between the City and an NGO “Collaborative Economy Gothenburg”. The City supports sharing organisations by providing funding and premises, organising matchmaking events or communicating about these organisations through official channels.

Sustainability and Sharing

Environmental sustainability

The City has Environmental and Climate Programmes, and 12 environmental quality objectives. Initially the municipal interest in urban sharing was due to its potential to contribute to sustainable consumption and environmental sustainability. Sharing organisations often do not explicitly talk about their environmental sustainability arguably because they take it for granted. In politics, climate change, environmental and resource-efficiency issues are important.

Social sustainability

The social agenda has grown in Gothenburg since the refugee crisis of 2016. There is also a City strategy “Equal Gothenburg”. Promoting social integration, equity, justice and social capital are key drivers for the municipality to support sharing. Providing access to assets for children through, for example, Fritidsbanken or the Toy Library, and thus avoiding purchasing stuff is also prioritised by the City. Sharing organisations also discuss their contribution to social sustainability, e.g. by building social cohesion or offering opportunities for people to meet.

Economic sustainability

Sharing is seldom framed as an opportunity to provide extra income. However, economic motivations are the main ones for Gothenburg citizens to share according to the consumer survey of 2017. Economic viability of sharing organisations remains important.

