

## CHAPTER 11

# Ethnography of True Sharing Initiatives in Brno

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### Abstract

The sharing economy is a topic of the current discussion. Platforms like Airbnb or Uber are often criticized for exploiting the positive connotations of the word ‘sharing’ to achieve financial gain. On the other hand, sharing has always been present in society, especially in families or closely related communities, where it was a fundamental form of asset redistribution. There is a third form of sharing that is often neglected. In this chapter, I focus on true sharing in the form of initiatives that are motivated by social, environmental, or other goals. I will present several sharing initiatives that operate in Brno, the second largest city in the Czech Republic. I will mainly focus on relational geography to show how communities are able to access resources and further control their flow through networks. Based on semi-structured interviews and ethnographic fieldwork, I will clarify how initiatives of true sharing manage and redistribute resources such as food, clothes, books, and houseplants. Resource management can highlight the materiality of true sharing as social practice, and also the transformational potential of this type of sharing. I place the whole theme in the broader context of a diversified and community-based economy as presented by Gibson-Graham (2006).

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## The Transformational Potential of True Sharing

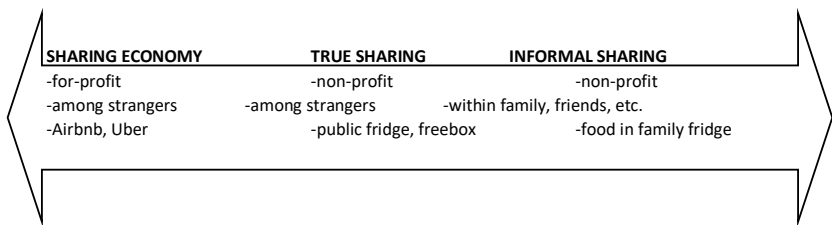
Sharing is common in different cultures and historical stages of humankind (Sahlins, 1972; Belk, 2007; Hyde, 2012; Gurven and Jaeggi, 2015). People share with family and friends. They share for free, with the purpose to strengthen interpersonal ties and to help loved ones. Sharing is associated with positive connotations, relationships, and care. In recent years, sharing has been closely linked to the concept of a sharing economy. Some authors (Botsman and Rogers, 2011; Plewnia and Guenther, 2018) see the sharing economy in a positive light as efficient use of resources, new opportunities for extra income, and leaving the consumer lifestyle, where people do not need to own things but need only temporary access. However, many others (Belk, 2014a; Richardson, 2015; Martin, 2016; Murillo et al., 2017) point out that a sharing economy has nothing to do with sharing: its main goal is financial gain. The activities of a sharing economy are often problematic from a legal or social point of view and can lead to hyperconsumerism when people consume in the name of sharing (with the feeling that they are acting ecologically and economically favourably) more things and services than they normally use (Richardson, 2015).

The fundamental problem is in the ambiguous definition of the concept of sharing. In particular, the relationship between sharing and profit is problematic in defining and distinguishing between 'sharing' and the 'sharing economy'. Belk (2010) defines gifts, sharing, and market exchange based on ideal prototypes of these activities, like sharing body and milk between a mother and her child. He emphasizes the proximity of gifts and sharing and, on the other hand, shows a relatively clear line between these two types of resource distribution and market exchange. According to Belk, sharing does not include reciprocity and financial compensation. However, other authors (see Table 11.1) also include in the sharing or sharing economy activities that may contain this compensation, or it may even be crucial for the given activity.

A broad or, on the contrary, very narrow concept of sharing then creates misunderstandings in the academic discussion. Some scholars use 'sharing economy' as an umbrella term for different forms of behaviour and business models (Heinrichs, 2013; Curtis and Lehner, 2019). Following various definitions of sharing, I will use 'sharing economy' to describe profit-oriented activities (e.g. Airbnb, Uber). On the other side of the sharing axis is non-profit sharing within the family, which is of particular interest to anthropologists and sociologists. However, there is a third type of sharing: so-called true sharing (Geiger et al., 2018) combines elements from a profitable sharing economy and non-profit sharing within the family and stands between them (see Fig. 11.1). It is a sharing that takes place between people who are not connected by family

**Table 11.1:** Different approaches of authors to defining sharing according to profitability and non-profitability.

For-profit sharing	Non-profit sharing	Author
Pseudosharing	Sharing	Belk, 2014a, 2014b
Sharing economy		Richardson, 2015; Davies et al., 2017; Micheleni et al., 2018
Economic sharing	Social sharing	Plewnia and Guenther, 2018
Sharing economy	True sharing	Geiger et al., 2018



**Figure 11.1:** Brief characteristics of three types of sharing.

or friendly ties, but at the same time they share not for profit but for different motivations (social, environmental, etc.).

Ede (2014) and Davies et al. (2017) point out that more important than the profitability of activities is their transformational nature. Transactional activities seek to make efficient use of resources in the current system and are often profit-oriented (but financial transactions may not always be present). On the contrary, transformational activities change the power scheme and social ties in the sharing network. Joint control and decision-making on resources within the community are strengthened. From this point of view, it is important to explore more about true sharing activities, because they have strong transformational potential. They extend the capacity of mutual care and relationships from family and friends to strangers. They use and mediate resources that would not otherwise be available to users of sharing. In terms of the Gibson-Graham (2006, 2008) concept, non-profit, and therefore true sharing, is below the level of attention of economic science, although it completes the diversity of economic activities.

I will present several true sharing initiatives that operate in Brno, the second largest city in Czechia. I will use the relational geography approach to show how communities are able to access resources and further control their flow

through networks (Radil and Walther, 2019). As I showed in my previous work (Rýparová, 2020), true sharing initiatives create several types of networks, thanks to which initiatives are connected by hierarchical links to authorities, organizations or companies that support them and provide them with some resources. Furthermore, the initiatives are interconnected by friendly and collegial relations. The last type of networking is in the form of links to the local community and users of sharing. The resources that are managed in these networks show how diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 2008) manifest themselves in practice, how they are ‘made material’ (Holmes, 2018), and to what extent this is a transformational activity (Ede, 2014).

### Methods

During 2018, I conducted semi-structured interviews with representatives of nine initiatives, listed in Table 11.2. I selected these initiatives and their representatives based on a survey of the internet, the news media, or personal knowledge of some of the activities.

The interviews lasted an average of about an hour; I then rewrote the recordings with the consent of the communication partners and continued working with the text. A thematic and open analysis of the text was performed through the Atlas.ti program. The interviews were supplemented by knowledge gained

**Table 11.2:** Initiatives in this study.

Name	Name translation	Abbreviation used below
Food not Bombs Brno	Food not Bombs Brno	FNB Brno
Freebox na Fakultě Sociálních studií Masarykovy univerzity	Freebox at the Faculty of Social Studies of Masaryk University	Freebox at FSS MU
Freebox u Tří ocásků	Freebox at Tři ocásci	Freebox at Tři ocásci
Freeshop Nadačního fondu studentů Filosofické fakulty Masarykovy univerzity	Freeshop of the Endowment Fund of Students of the Faculty of Arts of Masaryk University	Freeshop EFS FA MU
Květena	Flora	Flora
Literární lavičky	Literary benches	Literary benches
Paběrkování po Brněnsku	Gleaning in the Brno region	Gleaning in the Brno region
Potravinová banka pro Brno a Jihomoravský kraj	Foodbank for Brno and South Moravian Region	Foodbank for Brno and SMR
Veřejné lednice Brno	Brno Public Fridges	Brno Public Fridges

during ethnographic research—participatory observation, which took place from January to June 2019. I joined as a volunteer the cooking and food distribution activities organized by Food not Bombs Brno. Ethnographic research was chosen because it allows a deeper understanding of how the initiative works, what people are involved in sharing and what their motivations are. The FNB group seemed to be the most suitable, as it is one of the few initiatives that allow a larger number of people to be involved in their activities on the part of the organizers. As part of handing out food, I had the opportunity to talk to several users of the initiative, i.e. recipients of food distributed. At the same time, the FNB Brno initiative is partly connected with the Freefood Brno initiative, whose activities I was able to learn more about, although I did not interview its representative. I recorded the experience and information from the research in a field diary and also as notes on a dictaphone. Due to the anonymization that some communication partners wanted, I will use pseudonyms below.

Brno was chosen for the research because it involves several activities of true sharing. It is the second largest city in Czechia. There are several universities and colleges, international companies, etc. A certain cosmopolitan and at the same time student character of the city is favourable for the establishment and development of true sharing initiatives. There is the possibility of inspiration from abroad, but also the potential for the development of local activities.

### Resource Management in True Sharing Networks

I identified 17 initiatives of true sharing in Brno. However, this is a dynamic phenomenon and some of the initiatives disappeared during the research (e.g. Brno Public Wardrobe, Sharepoint). Some are open all year round, others only occasionally. Some of the initiatives have a local character (Freeshop EFS FA MU), while others follow national or even international activities (FNB Brno). Some initiatives operate as volunteer informal groups, or are sponsored by an organization (e.g. Literary Benches are organized by the Jiří Mahen Library). Some activities have well-defined rules on how people can share, while others leave the responsibility largely to the users themselves. From these few characteristics, a great variety of true sharing activities emerges. This also leads to different approaches of individual initiatives to obtaining, controlling and redistributing resources.

The resources in the case of true sharing initiatives are food, clothing, books, household equipment, flowers, seeds, etc., which their original owner would no longer use and would probably end up as waste. Thanks to sharing, these resources become reused and again valuable. Initiatives thus purposefully or unintentionally follow the current debate on the need for sustainable use of resources and the ideas of waste minimization, such as zero waste, reusing and recycling. In the following pages, we focus on the process of obtaining the

resources by the initiatives, their management, logistics, and the actual sharing. We will also state to whom community resources travel and what will happen to them at the end of this process.

### *Obtaining resources by initiative*

True sharing initiatives purposefully look for unused resources in society and give them new meaning. At the same time, true sharing creates space for other people to pass on their unnecessary things. Initiatives access resources in different ways. Most of the things subsequently shared are donated to the initiative. People, businesses, and organizations donate things because they support the idea of reducing waste, reusing things, they want to help other people, etc., or they are also motivated to do so by legislation. For example, large retail chains are required by law to pass unsold food that is safe to assisting organizations. Thanks to this, the work of the Foodbank is a bit easier, as the retail chains themselves respond to it with the offer of food. In some cases, it is necessary to involve the initiatives themselves, which they look for, where there are unused resources in their vicinity and they try to negotiate their transfer. For example, Gleaning in the Brno region negotiates with farmers so that they can harvest their crop, which does not meet the quality and aesthetic requirements of shops and would remain unused in the field. A special case is so-called dumpster diving, which is sometimes run by FNB Brno. It is about obtaining resources from garbage cans, for example at supermarkets. Their original owner did not want to share the resources obtained by dumpster diving, and this is an activity on the edge of the law. The Literary Benches, initiated by the Jiří Mahen Library, are also specific. In addition to cooperating with another organization and the users themselves, it also uses its books, which were discarded from the library and would end up in an incinerator.

Gleaning began to negotiate with the farmers around Brno so that the vegetables could be picked up and used. And then, in cooperation with the Brno Foodbank, it was further distributed to shelters and other helping organizations, for which it is a source of food for the people they care about and which does not cost them anything, which is quite important for them. At the same time, it uses vegetables that would otherwise rot in the field. (Radek, member of FNB Brno and founding member of Gleaning in the Brno region)

Not all the food we share, the original owner probably wanted to share, but I am a supporter of the fact that if someone throws something away, they have lost any right to it, but the law does not look at it that way. (Radek, FNB Brno)

Initiatives such as FNB Brno and Foodbank for Brno and SMR take care of the logistics themselves, collect resources from donors and transport them on. Gleaning in the Brno region also ensures the harvest of surpluses in the field or orchards. Others (e.g. freeboxes, Flora, Brno Public Fridges, Literary Benches) only create a space where people can bring their surpluses and share them with others.

Of course, there are always some logistics associated with this, such as on Friday it is necessary to pick up the food and vegetables from various places, from which we then cook on Saturday. So basically it's like on Friday night and Saturday all day, there is always one group dedicated to it. (Radek, FNB Brno)

We had a lot of plants and we like to pass them on to each other, as between our friends. And then we said to the girls that we would like to mediate it for other people as well ... (Bětka and Monika, Flora)

### *The process of sharing*

Some sharing activities are open to everyone (Literary Benches, Sharepoint) because they take place in a public and constantly accessible space. The accessibility of others (freeboxes, public fridges) is limited by the opening hours of, for example, cafes or universities where sharing takes place. Placement in a building can also be a barrier, and not everyone who might be interested in sharing can get to share. Café Tři ocásci works purposefully to break down this obstacle that can be caused by the commercial environment. The 'hanging coffee' offer opens up to people in financial need, who can then use the freebox more easily.

We still promote it as books that we bring closer to people who, for example, have a barrier, don't want to come to the library, can't, or it's just better for them to take those books on the street for some reason. At the same time, it is an opportunity for people who can put their books away there. (Eliška, Literary benches)

So it had the social dimension in the sense that they don't just give those people something they don't have and they don't pay for anything, and at the same time you see them, you meet them in the cafe where they wouldn't otherwise come because the cafe is a commercial environment, where for that type of people come ... it was supported by the fact that we are in a coffeeshare system or we have this hanging coffee. (Klára, Freebox at Tři ocásci)

Some forms of sharing work all year round (Foodbank for Brno and SMR, Brno Public Fridges); some take place as weekly (FNB Brno) or occasional events (Flora, Freeshop EFS FA MU). In some cases, the time of year or the day of the month also plays a role in the interest of sharing.

It's quite different, but it's a few dozen people every Saturday. And it depends a lot on the time of year and which weekend of the month it is. Depending on whether it is warm or cold, depending on whether those who are needed from lodging houses still receive some social support, so at the end of the month or the beginning of the month they may be waiting for the money and do not have, so they will come for food, while the support will come, so they have something to live on so far, so maybe they will not come at all because they still have something to buy the food from. (Radek, FNB Brno)

The exclusivity or, on the contrary, the inclusiveness of certain forms of sharing is also given by the form of promotion and dissemination of information. For example, FNB Brno hands out food at the same time and in the same place every weekend. They disseminate information about their activities to helping organizations that can inform their clients. They also create information leaflets. On the other hand, Freefood Brno informs about the place and time of distribution through a closed group on Facebook. Becoming a member of this Facebook group is easy, but the precondition of access to the internet already means a certain barrier, which means that the food distributed is not intended for everyone (a specific case is the joint distribution of food with FNB Brno).

... they [Freefood Brno] do it, I think, primarily through a Facebook group, where they announce when and where they will be. And they actually distribute food just like us, but by doing it primarily through Facebook, there is a slightly different goal, that it is not primarily about the socially needy or partly can, but it is about students and various alternative-minded people. (Radek, FNB Brno)

Initiatives allow sharing in the form of one-way and two-way resource flows. One-way flows (i.e. the user has the opportunity to play only one role – donor or recipient) predominate in food sharing, except the public fridges. Most other initiatives operate on the principle that people can be both donors and recipients of shared resources. The user is encouraged to do so, for example, by the inscriptions: *'Take what you want here. Leave here what you don't need.'* (Freebox at Tři oásci). In practice, however, even in initiatives that allow two-way flows of resources, people are usually involved in only one role.

... We tried to spread the idea of sharing from the beginning, yeah people come, put something in there, take something, but I think that the



group here is more in the minority, that it's more the people who put it there and then there is another group of people who take it, but it's just my theory, we didn't do any research. (Táňa, Brno Public Fridges)

Most of all there were people who brought a lot of it and then took one or two things. But there were no such people that they would come to hoard up things. (Vendula, Freeshop EFS FA MU)

### *The volume of shared resources*

In terms of the volume of things shared through the initiatives, research has not covered this topic with precise quantitative statistics. However, the statements of the communication partners show that the number varies significantly across initiatives. The largest volumes are probably reached by the Foodbank for Brno and SMR, which at the time of the research ensured the sharing of tens of tonnes of food per year. Some initiatives want to increase the volume of shared resources (e.g. Foodbank), other initiatives (e.g. Freebox at FSS MU) are afraid about whether they will manage their activities with a greater flow of things. The communication partners also mentioned that at the beginning they had doubts as to whether the interest of the people, and therefore the number of things to share, would be sufficient. In practice, however, they have found that the resources that people want to share are often more numerous than the interest of others in those things.

In a single year, it was possible to harvest several tonnes of vegetables, and that certainly not everything has been collected yet. (Radek, member of FNB Brno and founding member of Gleaning in Brno region)

So we keep statistics, and when we see each year or quarter, we look at how much food we've distributed, and as long as the chart goes up, it's good. And so far it's headed up, because every time a warehouse or a driver is added, it has to show, now is a new law. So every year we hand over more food than in previous years – last year it was 94 tonnes and this year we hope to reach 250–300 tonnes. (David, Foodbank for Brno and SMR)

There was a lot left, but it was probably because we had a terrible onslaught of those things. That there were a lot of things, a lot of things were spinning there, a lot of things were there, and if I say half, three-quarters were taken away, and even so, eight Ikea bags were still given to the Veronica Foundation. So it was really big. We didn't expect that, we thought it would be so small that we would be happy if at least someone brought something. (Vendula, Freeshop EFS FA MU)

...we were afraid that no one would come there too much, and then we were afraid that they had brought too much, and that we didn't know what we were going to do with it ... we had a lot left, and then we had to give it away. So I think that these people quite understood the concept and it was good and they brought a lot of it. (Bětka and Monika, Flora)

*To whom do resources go – charity or lifestyle?*

Thanks to sharing, people who are in socially and financially difficult situation also have access to resources. In a market economy, they would have a problem obtaining these resources. The focus on the people in need is most noticeable at the Foodbank for Brno and SMR, whose activities consist mainly in handing over food to helping organizations such as Caritas and asylum houses. The FNB Brno initiative is open to all people, but the food is distributed mainly to homeless people etc. Brno Public Fridges has a similar experience.

The Foodbank is an organization whose main mission is to take food where it is surplus of it and give it where it is missing. We try to save the food that we threw away and gave it where people used it, so to helping organizations and they give it to clients. (David, Foodbank for Brno and SMR)

It's a thing that has clearly visible results, a clear meaning, simply in conditions where [a] third [of] food that is produced all over the planet is thrown away, ends up in the trash, and at the same time there are people on the streets and lodging houses who can't afford food at all, otherwise they can't afford quality food and here we have the opportunity to get it at least occasionally, whether they have to pay for the food. (Radek, FNB Brno)

And then a few people who take it there are homeless people, that's the way it is. (Táňa, Brno Public Fridges)

At the same time, sharing networks involve people who think differently about things and ownership. They often more or less oppose the consumerist way of life, and the use of second-hand things instead of buying new ones is common for them as a lifestyle. It is in this case crucial that resources are shared for free. Their value lies not in the financial price but in the fact that they are environmentally friendly, help other people, etc. At the same time, the initiatives send a message to their surroundings, enabling people to think about their resource management.

Well, for me, it's definitely not necessary to keep buying things. And spending money unnecessarily when this is a thing that grows on its

own, so I don't see a reason to buy it somewhere, and I find it nice when people share it with each other that it's not necessary to give everything some monetary value ... we wanted it to be free and for everyone ... (Bětka and Monika, Flora)

It is based on the concept of how we work, that we strive for some environmental attitudes and sustainability, that we do not want to buy new things, that we want to use rather old things or recycle them or use them again. And one of the ways to make it possible for people is to have the freebox. (Klára, Freebox at Tři ocásci)

But that gesture, I don't just think about the people walking around it in that hallway, but the gesture towards the people who use the freebox, which means they can think about what they want, what they don't want, and when ... just don't stick to them that much. (Marek, Freebox at FSS MU)

### *Subsequent life of shared resources*

The resources that people gain from initiatives are immediately consumed (in the case of food), used for a longer period (clothing, dishes, books, etc.) or shared again. Whether it is a one-way or a two-way sharing activity also plays a role here. Literary benches motivate people to return the book to the bench or share it in another way after reading it. In some cases, the freeboxes work similarly. Flora teaches people to propagate flowers so that they can donate them further. The subsequent life of shared resources has not been explored in more detail, but it is worth noting that sharing within an initiative does not end the resource cycle.

I'm terribly messy and I take a lot of things out of that freebox and then I have them at home and I don't need them at all, so after a while, I'll return it with the fact that I don't need it, so I'm getting rid of the property again. (Klára, Freebox at Tři ocásci)

I would like them to work ... if, for example, the bookshelves didn't empty so quickly, so that people would learn to look at it in such a way that when something is free somewhere, it is not necessary to take it home right away, but that they could share more with others ... that's how I wish, and so I secretly hope that over time people will find out that if the books are still available there, there won't be so many people taking them away ... but I don't know. (Eliška, Literary Benches)

## Discussion

True sharing initiatives are an example of the diversity of economic activities (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008). They show the variety of ways to obtain resources and how to manage them further. At the same time, the initiatives themselves work in different forms and modes, and the people involved in them have different motivations (Rýparová, 2020). The economic side of sharing is manifested primarily in relation to the acquisition and distribution of resources to fill the material needs of people. Through sharing networks, communities can enforce power to control resources, access resources and manage them in network flows (Radil and Walther, 2019). This shows the transformational potential of true sharing. Thanks to initiatives, a community seizes otherwise unused resources and participates in their management and redistribution. In particular, initiatives that allow two-way flows, so users can be both donors and recipients of resources, have stronger transformation potential. People have the opportunity to participate in multiple roles. They can learn that things do not just have to be bought in a store or received as a birthday present, but there are a lot of unused resources around us that can be used legally and ethically. Sharing can be a common way for them to obtain, give or manage resources.

The material side of sharing shows how diverse economies are practised while revealing the benefits and pitfalls of sharing (Holmes, 2018; Sovová, 2020). Community resource management through the true sharing initiative means that more resources are used and do not end up as waste. At the same time, these resources are mediated to people who would not otherwise have access to them. In some cases, it is the targeted low threshold of these resources. The initiative is either significantly involved in shared resources logistics or creates capacity and space for resource sharing and redistribution. In the second case, there is the potential for greater activation of people who have to be more involved in the process if they are interested in sharing.

Resources shared through initiatives are usually in the form of a donation, as they are provided free of charge and there is a permanent or at least temporary transfer of ownership. After all, gifts and sharing are very close to each other and arguably it is not possible to determine the boundaries between them as precisely as the boundary to the market exchange (Belk, 2007; Jehlička and Daněk, 2017). The amount of resources shared in this way ranges from units to thousands of shared pieces. In relation to weight, grams to tens of tonnes of things are shared. Some communication partners themselves emphasized that it was of key importance for them that sharing could exist and work at all. Thus, the volume of sharing is often not paramount for them, but the creation of space for 'others'. Here again we can find a connection with the concept of diverse economies (Gibson-Graham, 2006, 2008), where the authors show the importance of diversity in the landscape of economic practices without highlighting the activities that are most significant in terms of frequency, the volume of resources or finances, etc.

In the sharing process, it is necessary to realize that the initiatives do not stand alone but work in a network of relationships with other initiatives, organizations, authorities, etc. (Rýparová, 2020). Each link in the chain in which shared resources flow is important, but their role is different. Some provide resources for sharing, others distribute them, some provide financial support, participate in the promotion of activities, etc. True sharing thus draws on the gift economy, because the material, finances and time devoted to initiatives are a gift (Holmes, 2018). The most prominent supporters of the Brno initiatives are the Brno-Centre Municipal Authority, Masaryk University, some non-profit organizations with an environmental focus or local businesses (cafés, restaurants, etc.). Their influence is reflected in the material support for the functioning of initiatives, but also, for example, by promoting certain activities, it increases the trust of users in sharing but also the trust of people who do not participate in sharing but live or work near the place of sharing.

Bridging social exclusion and poverty can be a positive aspect of sharing as well as the sustainable use of resources (Holmes, 2018). People who join the sharing networks created by the initiatives have access to food, clothing, books, flowers and more. Holmes (2018) points out that in contact sharing when people meet face to face, intangible aspects such as emotions, advice and support are also shared. However, in some cases, initiatives can create barriers to sharing – purposefully or unintentionally. This most often is the location in the building, where not all potential users have easy access. The rules of movement in the building allow everyone to enter, but shyness or fear can play a role. The opening hours of these places can be a barrier. Also, framing sharing activities in everyday practice and academic discussion can have a major impact on how people view true sharing initiatives and how willing they are to engage in the work. A significant limitation may be the explicit focus of some initiatives on people in socially disadvantaged situations. Again, shyness, pride and other psychological factors can discourage people from using even initiatives that are open to all people. Jehlička and Daněk (2017) and Holmes (2018) suggest that non-profit sharing be interpreted as a practice that has a positive role in society, strengthens community cohesion, is environmentally sustainable and is anchored in everyday relationships and ethics. Positive and empowering framing of sharing will support its transformational potential and at the same time, people can be encouraged to use these activities.

Barriers to sharing should be the focus of attention in further research (in relation to the sharing economy, e.g., Spindeldreher et al. (2018), for non-profit sharing Holmes (2018)). It would also be useful to focus in more detail on the importance of sharing, involving and motivating users themselves. As Sovová (2020) points out, if diverse economies are made up of practices, then it is necessary to know the people who are involved in these practices and how the practices work from their point of view. Ethnographic research, which is based on participatory observation or direct autoethnography, where the researcher can be at the centre of events and have direct experience with the people involved in the activity, is an invaluable tool for a thorough understanding of true sharing.

## Conclusion

This chapter focuses on true sharing initiatives that operate in Brno, Czech Republic. Given that resources are shared through these initiatives on a non-profit basis and at the same time between people without family or friendly ties, true sharing has a strong transformational potential. Based on the process of acquiring, managing, and redistributing resources, I have shown how communities apply their power over resources, as well as how these activities are practised in terms of their materiality. People can be more involved in managing the resources available in the community, but true sharing initiatives also reduce waste and promote solidarity between people and in relation to the environment.

Through the quoted statements of my communication partners from among the organizers of initiatives, we were able to look into the practice of initiatives, but also into the different types of thinking and opinions that these organizers have on sharing. Thanks to participatory observation within the FNB Brno, I also had the opportunity to talk informally with more people who are involved in sharing: organizers, other volunteers and people who receive shared food. This helped me get a broad picture of the materiality of sharing, but also of the motivations and other psychosocial aspects of sharing. As the discussion showed, it would be useful to focus the following research more on users themselves to better understand their role in sharing networks. Barriers that people have to overcome when they share, or that discourage them from sharing, are also crucial.

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