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Research project in a nutshell
Sharing of goods, services and skills is seen as one solution to urban sustainability challenges. However, its sustainability potential and institutional processes have not been systematically scrutinised. To develop evidence base and support sustainable sharing, a systematic and comparative analysis of the role of cities in sharing is needed. The project aims to examine, test and advance knowledge on the role of city governments in the initiation, implementation and institutionalisation of sharing organisations across cities in Europe.

Preliminary findings from a pilot study in Berlin and London
- Larger for-profit urban sharing organisations (USOs) receive various support from the city more often while non-profit USOs are often left out.
- If seen as potential solutions to urban sustainability challenges (e.g. waste prevention, air pollution) or as contributing to urban agendas (e.g. innovation, smart city), USOs tend to attract more interest from the city governments.
- Regulator role of the city is the most frequent in London and Berlin. USOs are regulated to ensure quality of life, economic prosperity, social cohesion, and health and safety among the citizens. Both cities have succeeded in regulating unwanted, disruptive activities on a case-by-case basis.
- The role of city as provider - particularly as investor - is limited. Both cities act as hosts by providing spaces to some USOs.
- For enabler role only a handful of strategic projects that promote urban sharing in London has been identified, while in Berlin most of enabling activities take place at the local district level.
- Only one example was found of city as consumer in relation to sharing.
- If managed properly, USOs have a potential to improve environmental and social conditions in cities. However, the support for such USOs remains fragmented.
- We suggest cities should continue regulating larger USOs on a case-by-case basis, AND introduce supportive mechanisms for smaller, bottom-up USOs. This should aim to maximise the contribution of USOs to urban sustainability.

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