

Logistical Challenges for Sharing Economies

Special issue Call for Papers for *International Journal of Physical Distribution & Logistics Management*

Logistical Challenges for Sharing Economies

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Guest Editors:

Valentina Carbone, Professor of Supply Chain Management and Sustainability, ESCP Europe, Paris Campus, vcarbone@escpeurope.eu

Aurélien Rouquet, Professor of Logistics and Supply Chain Management, NEOMA Business School, aurelien.rouquet@neoma-bs.fr

Christine Roussat, Assistant Professor in Business Sciences, Université Clermont-Auvergne & CRET-LOG, christine.roussat@uca.fr

By organizing peer-to-peer exchanges and promoting access over ownership, the sharing economy, hereafter SE, is transforming a great variety of sectors. Enjoying fast growth, SE is an umbrella term encompassing heterogeneous initiatives, that create different types of economic, environmental and/or social value (Acquier et al. 2017). According to PwC, the SE was estimated at \$15 billion in revenue worldwide in 2015, with the potential to reach \$335 billion by 2025 (PWC, 2015), and to disrupt several established industries (Belk 2014). Bank of America Merrill Lynch, using a wide definition of the SE including all technological platforms, predicts SE to jump from \$250 billion to \$1930 billion, globally; with a growth of \$785 billion in the US, \$645 billion in Europe and \$500 billion in China. In 2015, the Chinese SE was reported as being worth \$229 billion and is predicted to grow by 40% annually to reach 10% of domestic GDP by 2020.

Ten years after it was born, the SE field remains difficult to delimitate but its central idea is the optimization of under-used assets (physical assets such as cars, apartments, money or intangible assets such as skills and knowledge) by sharing them through digital platforms (Benkler, 2004). From this initial idea, the SE emerged as a popular term for referring to different initiatives that either connect individuals through platforms to carry out sales, rentals, swaps, or donations (Frenken and Schor 2017), or set up more centralized “product-service systems” to provide access instead of use, thus intensifying the use of idle assets (Botsman & Rogers, 2010). Sharing practices have existed for ages, at the individual or community level and in the domestic sphere. Over the last decade, these formerly domestic and local practices outside the market logic have been “dramatically scaled by the capitalist engine of technology-powered markets” to give rise to ‘stranger-sharing’ in global markets (Sundararajan, 2016, p. 6).

The nascent literature on SEs has developed along three main research streams: 1) Theoretical and definitional issues aiming at establishing borders to the SE field, with stricter vs broader definitions, excluding or including for example BtoC or For-Profit forms of exchanges (see Acquier et al. 2017); 2) Estimations of the economic potential of the SE and its disruptive effect on established industries (Sundararajan 2016); 3) Analysis of the societal and environmental impacts of the SE (Frenken and Schor 2017), resulting in very conflicting positions, that vary from praising the societal innovation enabled to blaming its predatory nature and negative effects for workers (Acquier and Carbone 2018).

Literature combining logistics/SCM perspectives with SE challenges is relatively scarce. The intermediary role of logistics for SE platforms is mainly explored from the point of view of optimization and algorithm modelling. Some preliminary work has been done on logistics initiatives in the SE in particular regarding the development of crowd logistics. A few conceptual papers aim at defining the different types (Mladenow et al., 2016; Carbone et al., 2018), the business-models (Frehe et al., 2017) and the value creation logics (Carbone et al., 2017) of crowd-logistics. More insights are needed on the one hand to understand the role of SCM, transport and logistics within the SE, notably to assess the actual environmental impacts of SE. On the other hand, typologies and models of crowd logistics still need to be refined, contrasted and completed. Further on, there is also a need to comprehend the interweaving of logistics/SCM and SE: how does the SE affect the logistics industry? How does it challenge it? How do traditional and crowd logistics influence each other? Do consumers play an autonomous logistics role? Finally, the financial and operational viability of such new logistics models and firms could be examined.

Scholars are invited to submit thought provoking research at the interface of logistics/SCM and the sharing economy. Submissions can be conceptual, empirical, and can utilize a wide variety of approaches and methods, such as literature reviews, conceptual theory development, large-scale empirical studies, experimental designs, case studies, grounded theory research and action research. However, in line with *IJPDLM* guidelines, quantitatively oriented mathematical modelling and simulation studies are unlikely to meet the requirements of this Special Issue. Regardless of the method employed, preference will be given to theoretically sound research papers that appropriately address the theme of this special issue.

The following list provides a set of topics for the special issue, but is far from being exhaustive. Questions about the suitability of any different topic at the interface of sharing economy and logistics may be addressed to the special issue guest editors.

The contributions may question the role of logistics in the SE:

- Logistics contribution to the intermediation roles of SE platforms,
- Physical and information flow perspective on the SE: logistics organisations, infrastructures, information systems,
- Logistics challenges for a positive impact of the SE on society and the environment;

the development of logistics start-ups within the SE field:

- The rise of crowd logistics initiatives, peer-to-peer logistics processes, and their impact on manufacturing, retail and logistics service providers,
- Big scale vs small scale: revisiting logistics paradigms through crowd logistics,

and the wide array of challenges that need to be addressed when associating the SE with logistics/SCM:

- Consumer, user, logistician? The individual perspective in the rise of the SE.
- The development of consumer to consumer SE supply chains,
- The dark side of the logistics and SE duo: exploitation of individuals, over exploitation of resources, ‘unfair’ competition, etc.

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