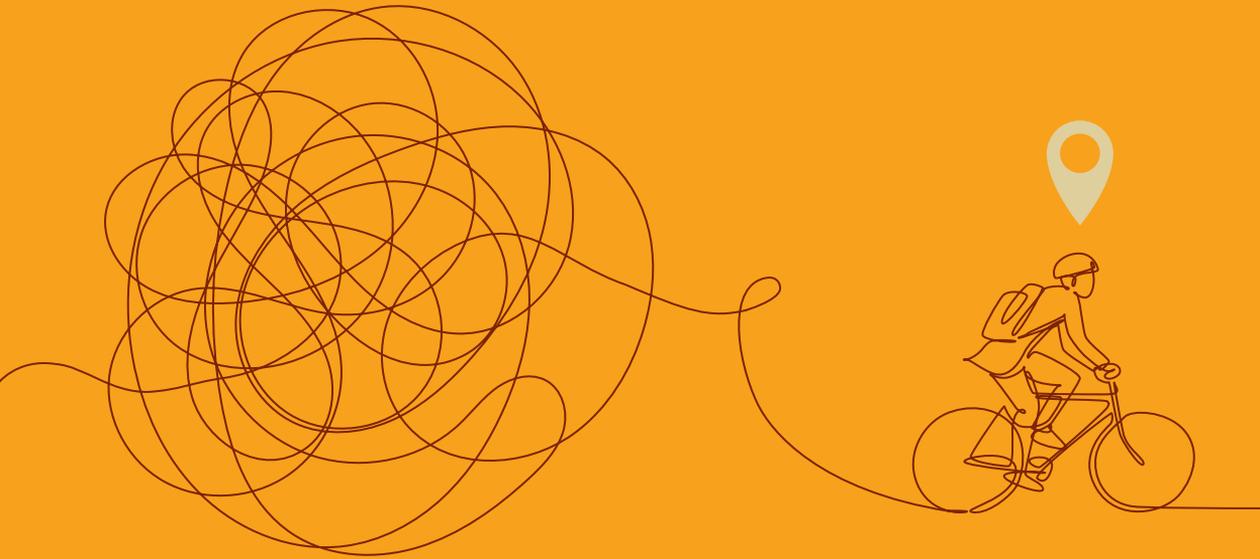


Gianluca Chimenti

# PERFORMING AMBIGUITY?

FOLLOWING MULTIPLICITY IN SHARED MOBILITY MARKETS



## PERFORMING AMBIGUITY?

How do markets change and develop over time? The present PhD project focuses on the dynamic effects of market change in the context of the sharing economy. This phenomenon is of particular interest since it concerns how alternative market forms – such as gifting, collaborating, accessing – are challenging established market conceptions. Empirically, the project addresses emerging shared mobility platforms (ride sharing, car sharing, etc.) and follows their attempts to reconfigure extant market orders within the Swedish transportation sector. By turning the infamous conceptual confusion that surrounds the sharing economy into a topic in its own right, the individual studies address a number of issues related to the formation and change of markets in ambiguous environments. This includes, but is not limited to, the examination of conceptual controversies concerning what “the sharing economy” is, the changing roles of public actors, and issue of overlapping spaces during processes of marketisation.

Using an Actor Network Theory approach across a number of empirical sites in Sweden and Ireland, this dissertation highlights the productive role of ambiguity in processes of market formation and change. The four articles comprising this thesis explore how ambiguity can be seized by a multitude of actors all wishing to shape markets in their own interests, potentially creating multiple economic consequences and material realities as a result. In addition, it illustrates how individual shared mobility markets exhibit clear systemic properties within and beyond the larger mobility realm; they depend significantly on enacted interrelations to other markets (e.g., for digital locks, batteries, telecommunication) and rely on broader, popular socio-economic trends, such as Sharing Cities and Smart Cities. Lastly, although processes of digitalisation are often associated with the removal of spatial barriers and borderless worlds, this dissertation combines insights from marketing and economic geography to illustrate that the many contingencies of local geographies still remain an important facet of contemporary economic organising.



GIANLUCA CHIMENTI is a researcher and teacher at the Department of Marketing and Strategy at the Stockholm School of Economics. As a German native, Gianluca believes in the Humboldtian model of higher education (Humboldtsches Bildungsideal) that follows a credo of combining research, practice and teaching. His research, like his teaching, reflects a passionate interest in marketing, culture and economic geography, particularly in ambiguous and controversial environments. On a good day, he speaks six languages.

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# Performing Ambiguity?

Following Multiplicity  
in Shared Mobility Markets

Gianluca Chimenti

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Dissertation for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, Ph.D.,  
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*To  
My Family*



# Foreword

This volume is the result of a research project carried out at the Department of Marketing and Strategy at the Stockholm School of Economics (SSE).

This volume is submitted as a doctoral thesis at SSE. In keeping with the policies of SSE, the author has been entirely free to conduct and present his research in the manner of his choosing as an expression of his own ideas.

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Director of Research  
Stockholm School of Economics

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Professor and Head of the  
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What a (shared) ride! Since the present work is not my solo creation, my *nom de plume* for this dissertation really should be Chimenti *et al.* The individual studies are outcomes of discussions, collaborations, sharing ideas, and creating things together. Always. In my dissertation, the ‘et al.’ includes a wide variety of fascinating individuals - professors, colleagues, practitioners, activists, family and of course, the lads.

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*Stockholm, November 16, 2020*

*Gianluca Chimenti*

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# PART I

## Introducing the research papers



# Chapter 1

## Introduction

The Market in its ideal-typical form stands in the way of attempts constructively to theorize the diversity of economic life in its own right and in its own terms, as opposed to those “received” from orthodox theory – or, for that matter, by way of neoliberal ideologies. We tend to see markets (or their others, be they firms, communities, households ...) as relatively self-contained, discrete entities, though often as deviations from a supposedly universal model (the Market).

– *Peck, Berndt and Rantisi, 2020*

This recent assertion by Jamie Peck and colleagues addresses the consequences of the representational hegemony of markets, which is often given insufficient attention. Despite the ubiquity and heterogeneity of markets, they are often assumed rather than studied and described rather than critically

questioned. This is particularly true for ambiguous markets. Many controversies that surround them, in particular questions of where markets begin and end, are seldom addressed in the marketing literature.<sup>1</sup>

One set of markets in which such controversies have multiplied in the past decade are those that make up the ‘sharing economy’ (Sundararajan 2016). The notion of shared mobility, for instance, has paved the way for several such ambiguous markets, not only due to its large commercial potential but also owing to its broad and contested application. Shared mobility markets are prototypical examples of “concerned markets” (Geiger et al. 2014), comprising a range of heterogeneous actors with significant social and political stakes, each trying to shape the markets in particular directions that often diverge. Shared mobility defies any commonsensical definition which has major theoretical and empirical ramifications. This nebulosity has produced a “pragmatic ambiguity” (Giroux 2006) that lends itself to various interpretations, making it possible to ‘recognise’ different courses of action as actors engage in various activities to make market reality more like their ideal version of shared mobility. In addition, there is an internal complexity within shared mobility: sharing or on-demand services? Commercial or non-commercial? Hierarchical or participatory? Sustainable or “neoliberalism on steroids”? (Murillo et al. 2017: 66). In a way, shared mobility markets resemble “non-coherent realities that escape a single narrative”, to speak with John Law (2004: 3).

Advances in digital technologies, such as new telecommunication infrastructures and smartphones, have consequences for the construction of shared mobility markets. They allow actors, such as consumers, to become equipped and empowered, thereby affording more effective alternatives to previous modes of economic exchange. Digital devices also have emancipatory effects. For example, digital keys make it possible to tap into the potential of idle cars through short term peer-to-peer rentals. Furthermore, digitalisation has contributed to the multiplication and spread of different labels

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<sup>1</sup> By controversies, I mean disagreement between actors about concepts and ideas that are not yet stabilised or black-boxed. Controversies are shared uncertainties that should be viewed in broad terms, in that they “begin when actors discover that they cannot ignore each other and controversies end when actors manage to work out a solid compromise to live together” (Venturini 2010: 4).

for shared mobility markets. Confronted with a number of new manifestations that mix different principles of organisation – including sharing, accessing, gifting, collaborating or ‘gigging’ – academic debates have been riddled with conceptualisations from different disciplines, each trying to better understand the sharing economy from specific empirical, conceptual and methodological turfs (Frenken and Schor 2017). This is especially evident in the rise of special issues in leading journals addressing such concerns (e.g., *Technological Forecasting and Social Change* 2017, *Academy of Management Discoveries* 2018, *Journal of Business Ethics* 2019, *Journal of Business Research* forthcoming). They argue that the ambiguity has increasingly led to practises of “pseudo-sharing” (Belk 2014: 1596) and “sharewashing” (Belk 2017: 250).

This tension is at the heart of my dissertation. The study of these heterogeneous modalities of marketisation makes it possible to investigate how alternative conceptions of shared mobility markets matter for their development. I explore the dynamic effects of market formation and change in the context of the sharing economy, while specifically focusing on multiple controversies that are linked to conceptual ambiguity within shared mobility markets. I argue that market studies literature has not explicitly engaged with empirical inquiries into the multiplicity that emerges from the kind of ambiguous and complex environments introduced above. What shared mobility markets signify and what shifts in market realities it may engender in different situational and geographical contexts is not yet fully known or indeed foreseeable. As Frankel (2015: 538) highlights, despite the fact that ‘markets’ are equivocal and thus open to multiple interpretations, “few studies in the field deal with this equivocality” while side-lining their simultaneity in practice. This dearth of research comes as a surprise since multiple markets are commonplace. The tomatoes sold on weekly markets, for example, are also part of wholesale markets, agrocommodity markets, supermarkets, etc. Additionally, if we trace the heterogeneous associations required to move them from ‘field to shelf’, as Berndt and Boeckler (2011) illustrate, it becomes clear that the successful selling of a tomato is dependent upon many other markets in order to cross borders and commodity chains. Markets not only work in sequence, but also in parallel, for example if one and the same actor sells specific products in different markets for different purposes, such as a vintner

selling grapes to wine producers to produce a tasteful Chardonnay and to individual customers to enjoy grapes with a slice of cheese.

Moreover, prior work on market change has illustrated how relatively specific economic concepts can intervene in realising particular types of markets, such as the ‘ideal’ competitive market (Garcia-Parpet 2007). However, how ambiguous concepts that are loosely defined and/or not widely understood perform their worlds is still poorly understood. This, by necessity, makes the study of markets an inquiry into multiple possible competing market concerns, their spatial relations, the simultaneity of multiple market boundaries, many conflicting practices, etc., in order to take into account the “legal, ethical, scientific or economic debates triggered by actions of framing and assigning ownership” (Caliskan and Callon 2010: 8).

With these difficulties in mind, this dissertation seeks to broaden the agenda of marketing research on ambiguity in markets. The first paper investigates how controversies concerning how to conceptualise a certain type of market – in this case ‘ridesharing’ – contribute to shaping that market. The second paper addresses the way competing efforts at qualifying space across public and private realms contribute to the demise of building a market for car sharing. The third paper looks at what happens when shared mobility is combined with established modes of transport (e.g., subways, bus, trains) – a phenomenon called Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS) – and how ambiguity plays a role in failing to combine these modes of mobility. Lastly, the fourth paper focuses on the variety of responses of established actors to shared mobility as a whole, including institutional attempts to bring order into its development.

To address the “actually existing socio-spatial diversity” (Peck et al. 2020: 2) in ambiguous contexts, this dissertation departs from the premise that markets should be viewed as explananda rather than explanans. That is, rather than taking the economy or markets as starting points, they are viewed as achievements of socio-technical assemblages that require considerable investment (Caliskan and Callon 2010). As such, this thesis is informed by and contributes to the constructivist stream in Science and Technology Studies (STS), particularly Actor Network Theory (e.g., Callon 1998; Latour 2005; Law 2009), Constructivist Market Studies (e.g., Araujo et al. 2010; Geiger et al. 2014), and the Geographies of Marketisation literature (e.g., Berndt and

Boeckler 2007, 2009). In taking a pragmatist approach, scholars in this tradition set out to study the ‘relational’ in markets, which is “continually produced and constructed socially with the help of actors who are interlinked in dense and extensive webs of social relations” (Berndt and Boeckler 2009: 536). I aim to address the following research questions:

- What is the role of conceptual ambiguity in the formation and functioning of markets, and how does it translate into practical difficulties?
- How is space made to matter in order to establish shared mobility markets and how do competing socio-spatial dynamics influence the functioning thereof?

In pursuit of these questions, I consider efforts to shape markets in different geographical contexts in Sweden and Ireland, including both local programmes in urban inner-cities and nationwide programmes covering several regions. By employing a “method assemblage” (Law 2004: 13), including participant observations, interviews and archival studies, I followed incumbents, start-ups, public actors, regulators and industry associations to study the emergent and relational character of market change processes. By closely following the many actors involved in shaping shared mobility markets, each of the papers illuminates a different aspect of how controversies and ambiguities may be central to the resulting multiplicity in markets.

The structure of this dissertation is as follows. The next chapter introduces the theoretical framing and positions of this work by reviewing constructivist accounts of market studies. The methods section that follows draws on the “mapping controversies” literature (Venturini 2010) and describes my overall research approach, the individual cases, the case material, experiences in the field and the methodical toolbox used to conduct my research. This is followed by a chapter that briefly outlines the four papers that make up this dissertation. Lastly, I discuss the overall findings and contributions across the papers in light of the previous literature on markets and the sharing economy broadly conceived. Part 2 of the dissertation presents the four papers in full.



# Chapter 2

## Theoretical framework

This chapter outlines the theoretical underpinnings of this thesis. In order to inquire into how markets change and take form in the sharing economy, I will draw on a combination of theoretical perspectives. The chapter first synthesises some of the premises of Science and Technology Studies (STS), with a particular focus on Actor Network Theory (ANT), which provides the overarching conceptual foundation. I then introduce two interrelated streams of literature inspired by and contributing to ANT, namely Constructivist Market Studies (CMS) and Geographies of Marketisation (GOM). As interdisciplinary fields of scholarship, both streams share many of the intellectual ideas of ANT. While CMS emerged to re-introduce the role of markets into the marketing literature, GOM problematises the way markets are spatially constituted and evolve on the basis of geographical circumstances. This chapter ends with a brief overview of how multiplicity has been addressed in order to introduce the theoretical framework of this thesis and to address its research contribution. This chapter does not provide a complete genealogy of the above research traditions, but rather highlights specific characteristics that become particularly conducive to addressing the aforementioned research questions.

## ANT – A journey from lab to market: Controversies, performativity and marketisation

I first came to ANT as a tourist. My education has mostly been in Marketing, Arabic cultural studies, and Finance. My interest in ANT arose from its intellectual investment into questioning neoliberal metanarratives around how society and the economy should be conceived and taught. This includes the idea of viewing ‘theory’ as dogmatic truth; viewing markets as abstract, ahistorical entities; and efforts to propagate narratives that strictly divide society, economy and politics into predefined categorical boxes to be consulted in times of crises. It turns out that the ‘social’ and the ‘economic’, as Latour (2005) put it, do not explain but require explanation themselves. This radical ontological shift views science, markets and society as explananda rather than explanans (Latour 1987). This is a courageous approach, and indeed “often ironic, always clever, and sometimes very ‘French’”, involving lots of neologisms and alternative viewpoints to the established social sciences (Baiocchi et al. 2013: 324). But it is precisely this radicality that has resonated with my experiences in the field. As will be seen in the following chapters, the sharing economy does not fit the traditional mould of markets. The complexity of the sharing economy required me to seek a conceptual toolbox that dissolves (or at least questions) dominating divides in social sciences: human vs technology; corporate vs grassroots; globalisation vs nationalisation, etc.

Historically, ANT emerged as a “method assemblage” (Law 2004) to study science and technology in a social setting. A central premise is that scientific knowledge and technology broadly conceived do not emerge from a temporal or spatial vacuum; instead, science participates in a social environment that helps to produce the world it envisions in order to act and make others act in a specific context, and vice versa. Latour’s laboratory study at the Salk Institute in the mid 1970s was one of the first attempts to establish and disseminate this idea. He followed the way technologies and material resources, such as chemicals and instruments, are turned into texts, theories, claims, or artefacts to illustrate how inscriptions are made mobile and immutable for transportation across time and space. The “ethnography of science”, as Latour and Woolgar (1979) have termed this (then) new approach,

shows that knowledge and information never travel by themselves. They require active work to keep things in motion, by “letting the token drop, or modifying it, or deflecting it, or betraying it, or appropriating it or adding to it” (Latour 1984: 267). With this performative view, Latour introduced a shift from a diffusionist towards a distributed perspective of social reality, stressing that knowledge and power have no single impetus and depend upon individual actors in chains of translation. Callon and Law (1982: 619) describe translation as a process by which “different claims, substances or processes are equated with one another”. Translation thus requires an intermediary or an “inscription device” (Law 2004) that can transform and thereby perpetuate a material substance into a figure or an illustration. For Latour, translation is a central element of ANT as it shows how the morphology of specific truth claims and the representations of ‘the original substance’ can take on different forms while becoming embodied in texts, machines and other intermediaries. Translation also provides an explanation of how positions of power come about, as ‘translators’ make decisions to either silence, mobilise or ignore voices from the periphery. But translation is not only a process of de- and re-contextualising knowledge by embedding pieces of information in new contexts; translation involves negotiation and treason as displacements may fail to act, or make others act, and may not transmit knowledge in a ‘faithful’ manner. The ‘sociology of translation’, as it later became known, has thus been crucial to understand how scientific facts and knowledge are constructed and co-opted via socio-material devices to perform specific market visions (Muniesa 2014).

These initial ideas have been substantiated and developed with empirical studies (e.g., Callon 1984; Latour 1987; Law 1987) and eventually helped form the field of ANT as an influential research approach within STS. In fact, since the late 1980s, researchers at Mines ParisTech, an engineering school (!), have expanded the field and popularised ANT across social sciences. While initial work on translation involved ethnographic fieldwork in the laboratory, subsequent work ventured into fields including engineering, innovation, political science, economic sociology, etc., leading to “a diaspora that overlaps with other intellectual traditions” (Law 2009: 142). I will highlight three central developments that emerged in turn and that were particularly helpful in the study of shared mobility markets.

First, ANT highlights the role of controversies and their impact on economic organisation (Akrich et al. 2002; Latour 2005; Czarniawska 2008). Much like the ancient Greeks' agora, Callon et al. (2002) consider markets as hybrid fora. They resemble spaces that bring together commerce, politics and community matters to confront interests and beliefs, and in doing so, negotiate conditions of exchange. Building on this, Venturini (2010) and Blanchet and Depeyre (2015) argue that controversies often provide entry points into the heterogeneity of actors involved in the formation and change of markets. They make it possible to follow inconsistencies that question taken-for-granted routines and processes that may reveal failures in translation. In other words, controversies serve as methodological tools to map actors and their relations: "ANT claims to be able to find order much better after having let the actors deploy the full range of controversies in which they are immersed" (Latour 2005: 23). In parallel, organisation scholars such as Czarniawska (2008) and Hussenot (2014) have introduced and popularised controversies as methodological tools to identify, study and structure organisational processes more generally.

Second, as hinted above, research may be a performative exercise since descriptions of the world not only represent social reality – as passive, abstract representations of phenomena – but also act upon that which is envisioned (MacKenzie et al. 2007). Drawing on Austin's (1962) insights from speech acts, Callon's (1998) *The Laws of the Markets* spawned a body of work examining the performativity of objects (see Mason et al. 2015). But to say that research is performative does not mean that economics, or any other scientific work for that matter, automatically become self-fulfilling prophecies (cf. Ferraro et al. 2005). Instead, performances require (often large) investments in material devices in order to facilitate the conditions necessary for their enactments. When Callon (1998) maintains that the often-contested *homo oeconomicus* does exist, it does so because this economic construct has been embedded in "simultaneous consideration of both the theory and the contextual features which supported its realization" (d'Adderio et al. 2019: 3). Consequently, objects of economic theory, such as *homo oeconomicus* or the Black-Scholes-Merton formula (MacKenzie and Millo 2003), are all part of markets, but they are so due to investments and careful configuration (Holm 2007). It should be noted that non-human actors outside academic

discussions, or economists in the wild, may also produce performative prescriptions and practical knowledge, such as policy documents (Henriksen 2013) and subway signs (Denis and Pontille 2014). As a consequence, this complex combination of “performateurs” (Beunza and Ferraro 2019) implicates that theories may fail to act if the necessary conditions are either unclear or impossible to maintain.<sup>2</sup>

Third, over time ANT has also moved into the realm of economics and the study of markets more specifically. In aiming to transcend the initially narrow focus on the construction of scientific knowledge, Caliskan and Callon (2009, 2010) outlined a two-part economisation research programme inspiring a new wave of market research that has proved enormously fertile. The term “economisation” has been introduced to denote the processes through which “behaviours, organizations, institutions and, more generally, objects are constituted as being ‘economic’” (Caliskan and Callon 2010: 2). As one particular form of economisation, marketisation is concerned with how markets evolve, how they are differentiated and what actors do to assemble networks of heterogeneous actors that constitute them (Pellandini-Simányi 2016). This approach implies a shift from studying ‘the market’ as a singular dogmatic entity given from the outset, towards studying “marketisation” as an ongoing process of strategic arrangements of dynamic actor-networks (Kirkegaard 2015). Methodologically, this implies that researchers explore not only markets that are up and running, so to speak; but also examining efforts at establishing metrological systems, devices, norms and conventions, definitions and discourses that eventually may lead to markets or market-like modes of economic organisation. Lastly, by acknowledging that any human or non-human actor can potentially be a change agent, marketisation re-visits the (not so) new economic sociology (e.g., Granovetter 1985) and its tendency to focus on the role of the social at the expense of side-lining the role of material forces in shaping markets (McFall 2009).

In the late 1990s, Callon (1999: 181) eventually concluded that “ANT has passed one of the most demanding tests: that of the market.” While this has resonated with ANT enthusiasts across several disciplines, two specific research communities are of particular relevance: Constructivist Market

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed discussion on counter-performativity, misfires and their different degrees, please see MacKenzie et al. (2007), chapter three.

Studies (CMS) and the Geographies of Marketisation (GOM). The reasons for combining these two streams are threefold. First, I would like to put forward a sympathetic critique of ANT, arguing that although it addresses the agency of material objects, intentionality often disappears because it does not seem to be a given feature of agency. For some emergent properties, intentionality may not be central. But when we speak about ‘performativity’, intentionality would seem to be a natural part of it. ANT does not necessarily preclude intentionality, but it doesn’t make it a natural feature of constructing markets. There is a tension here that, as I will show, CMS and GOM can help addressing. By viewing markets as constant enactments rather than pre-fabricated entities, previous work highlights the emergent and constructed character of markets. This also means that markets are the result of several more or less explicit efforts to organise, which inherently requires a degree of intentionality. This permits taking into account strategic efforts by incumbents, start-ups, public actors, NGOs, etc., to employ different market(ing) activities, which can introduce us to multiple competing market versions. Second, by stressing how multiple economic theories, and interpretations thereof, possibly affect the organisation of markets, CMS is particularly suited to study the link between marketing knowledge and the market practices that emerge in turn. Since CMS does not define beforehand what a market should look like, it permits studying different market versions as they emerge. This is a productive starting point to trace processes while retaining a degree of flexibility in terms of the study objects (rather than describing marketisation through ex post rationalisations). This is particularly helpful in the context of shared mobility, as it is characterised by fleeting market boundaries and little consensus over how to best define its many different practices. Third, while this thesis set out to address issues around space and spatial patterns of change, they have received little attention in CMS. GOM thus provides entry points to combine insights from marketing and geography to “chart the variegated and diverse market spatialities produced through the translation of market ideals” into strategic efforts of constructed shared mobility markets (Kear 2018: 306).

## Constructivist Market Studies: Markets as practical accomplishments

Taking a pragmatic approach to the study of markets (Muniesa and Callon 2007), CMS is a growing interdisciplinary research field interested in the practical, every-day aspects of market making (Harrison and Kjellberg 2016). Outlining the theoretical influences of CMS is, however, no easy undertaking. While marketing scholars have played a central role in establishing the field, not least by organising the first conferences and workshops (e.g., the Interdisciplinary Market Studies Workshop (IMSW) in 2010), its intellectual influences range across sociology, philosophy, anthropology and organisation studies, to name a few.<sup>3</sup> Largely inspired by STS and specifically ANT, the starting point in this tradition is to conduct detailed empirical studies of the way different actors (incumbents, start-ups, governments, activist groups, etc.) engage in strategic activities to shape, control and change markets. There is no single best way of shaping markets; they are shaped by both deliberate efforts to instigate change as well as by the very “dull, mundane and routine dimensions of market processes” (McFall 2009: 268).

As a derivative of ANT, CMS recognises that marketing research has an important performative function. In order to better understand this function, the CMS community produced a number of books and special issues compiling empirical studies to explore “marketing’s capacity to produce markets” (e.g., Araujo et al. 2010: 1; Geiger et al. 2014; Mason et al. 2015; Neyland et al. 2019). Take for example Harrison and Kjellberg’s (2010: 784) illustration of the “constructive dimension of market segmentation”. A producer of bi-sensors employed market segments based on specific visions about how a market should be divided into divisions of potential customers, which in turn helped construct a market for new product technologies. Similarly, Onyas and Ryan (2015) show how specific brand visions for a new kind of coffee

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<sup>3</sup> Some CMS scholars also have an intellectual background in the Industrial Marketing and Purchasing (IMP) Group, which interestingly has developed its own ‘markets-as-network’ perspective. A key characteristic of IMP is its empirical focus on business relationships, often in mature industries and business-to-business contexts. The so-called ARA-model (Håkansson and Snehota 1995) is just one popular outcome of IMP’s focus on mutually oriented interaction in business relations.

have produced new markets along both upstream and downstream production processes. They also show that the use of marketing knowledge may not only lead to changes in established organisations, but that marketing can also contribute to establishing new types of organisations, such as credit cooperatives. Jacobi et al. (2015: 37) suggest that the capacity of marketing knowledge to act upon markets is not determined by “its truth value, but by its ability to produce compelling stories”. Marketing models differ from, say economic models, in that they seldom try to explain empirical reality, but instead provide prescriptive toolsets to navigate markets; they are meant to be used by managers and other performateurs as a tool to shape markets and organisations in a desired direction. This discussion touches on the recurrent concern relating to the theory-practice gap (Lilien et al. 2002) and suggests that a strict opposition may be confusing and academically unproductive. Echoing Kurt Lewin’s statement that nothing is as practical as a good theory, CMS stresses that theories are developed to be used, but more importantly, that they emerge and morph while translated across and within organisations.

But its wider ambition to reconnect marketing to markets (Araujo et al. 2010) hints at an additional concern that CMS aims to communicate and resolve, namely the gradual detachment of marketing and markets in academic discourses. As pointed out by Mattsson (2010), the increasing trend to view marketing as ‘marketing management’, rather than as a broader societal issue concerned with the exchange of goods and services, has reduced marketing to a discipline that promotes product-centric world views across empirical contexts. In fact, from the 1960s onwards, marketing in Sweden has increasingly shifted from a discipline concerned with the efficient distribution of goods (*distributionsekonomi*), towards a firm-focused disciplined dealing with competition and market growth (cf. Araujo and Pels 2015). Luckily, initial efforts to broaden the view of marketing arose (Alderson 1948). In the 1940s, definitions seemed to shift towards the exchange of goods and services and the role of prices as a regulating mechanism. In the 1950s and 1960s, definitions of markets became more open to capturing different characteristics of consumers and their willingness to buy (e.g., Sissors 1966). Even the American Marketing Association (AMA) has recently revisited its definition of marketing by including the exchange of goods and services beyond an initial focus on production and consumption.

This development opens a tricky question that needs to be addressed: what do marketing scholars mean by the term ‘markets’ in the first place? To emphasise the role of markets in the organisation of exchange while paying attention to the myriad ways to define them, I use a simple definition that follows the agnostic approach of this dissertation: “markets are sites where exchange is organized” (Cohen 2017: 34). In fact, marketing pundits have long noted that “not only has there been a noticeable lack of definition and discussion of the construct of market but also only few previous attempts have been made to put forth a theory of market in the marketing literature.” (Samli and Bahn 1992: 144). Thirty years later, despite their important role in governing everyday life, there is still no common definition available, which is both intriguing and challenging to those interested in markets.

To address this, and to offer a more dynamic and wider approach to marketing while re-introducing markets to the study of marketisation, CMS highlights that markets are the accomplishments of careful organising efforts. This means that markets are constantly in the making; they are malleable, or plastic (Nenonen et al. 2014: 272), since they can be “molded, to varying degrees, in terms of their shapes and functions”. Kjellberg and Helgesson (2007) identify three stylised types of marketing practices that help to shape the forms and elements of markets. Exchange practices comprise efforts that facilitate the exchange of goods and services. This includes more abstract activities such as the formulation of business models, but also concrete situations in which goods are qualified, prices negotiated and services delivered. Normalising practices establish normative ideas for how markets ought to work, including political actions to create and defend established rules and regulations. They determine legal, contractual and moral parameters. Representational practices, finally, generate descriptions of the market by producing quantitative or qualitative images of economic exchanges (e.g., sales statistics or media coverage). Rather than being concerned with how actors make sense of things (e.g., Rosa et al. 1999), CMS primarily stresses how the world is constructed via concrete activities (Andersson et al. 2008). This radical shift from abstract sense-making towards practical enactments further aims to dissolve the often unproductive gap between theory and practice and instead view markets as relational outcomes based on interactions between the two worlds (Muniesa 2014).

## Geographies of Marketisation: Making space for markets

Over the past decade, the study of markets has gained renewed momentum within economic geography. Especially the 2009 financial crisis raised serious doubts about the viability of dominating market theories inherited from orthodox economics and its neoclassical legacy of abstract market models (Jones 2013). Markets have predominantly been portrayed as abstract places of exchange with little attention to their dependency on space (Peck and Tickell 2002). In a way, the spatiality of markets has been assumed, rather than studied; expected, rather than traced. Although often focused on relational ties in embedded geographies (Granovetter 1985), previous research constructed a fictive separation between “an abstract ‘perfect’ Market and concrete imperfect markets” (Berndt and Boeckler 2009: 537).

A nascent but growing stream of research inspired by the social studies of economisation has begun to address this issue. A central aspect of the so-called Geographies of Marketisation approach (GOM), is the analytical priority to understand the role of space and place in markets by studying them “from within” and by putting “particular emphasis on the *geographies* of really existing markets” (Berndt and Boeckler 2020: 69). In foregrounding the spatial constitution of markets, then, GOM suggests shifting gears from viewing markets as being positioned within a given space, towards markets being the result of space itself but also responsible for producing different kinds of spaces (cf. Lefebvre 1991); this means that geographical categories including scale, territory and proximity may be actively contributing to producing markets and thus the way goods and services are exchanged. This also means that Euclidean spatial categories are destabilised in order to highlight that “time-space consists of multiple pleats of relations stitched together” (Latham 2002: 131). Rather than analysing particular geographical aspects of markets, GOM poses the question of how market spatiality may be theorised in the first place. Moreover, GOM invites us to re-think how markets are spatially represented and re-imagined, whether it is through vaguely defined “border regions” (Berndt and Boeckler 2010: 1057) connecting the Global

South with the Global North or through global export markets linking pineapple and mango growers in Ghana (Ouma 2015).

Recent special issues and books reflect a renewed interest in the spatiality of markets, focusing on the “politics of markets making” (Muellerleile and Akers 2015 in *Environment and Planning A*), the “spatial constitution of markets” (Alvarez León et al. 2018 in *Economic Geography*), and most recently investigating “spaces of exchange” (Berndt et al. 2020 in *Agenda Publishing*). Inspired by and contributing to the GOM literature, the studies have a common focus and proceed from the premise that “market spatiality is indispensable to disclosing the dynamics, politics, and consequences of markets” (Alvarez León et al. 2018: 211). As such, GOM tries to unite extant political economy approaches with performativity approaches linked to marketisation. As a result, geographers have increasingly expanded previous discussions on the territorialised economic space into different market contexts, including real estate markets (Akers 2015), agrifood markets (Ouma 2015) and offshore renminbi markets (Hall 2018). A recurring theme within GOM is the spatial mapping of urban environments in order to visualise the role of space. O’Neill (2019), for example, recently argued that fast food franchises, such as McDonald’s and Domino’s, produce delivery maps in order to assess whether a specific customer address is safe for delivery. By following franchises in Guatemala City, the study shows how the mapping of red zones (*zonas rojas*) visualising stigmatised areas linked to gang-related violence, help to safeguard deliveries into remote neighbourhoods that would otherwise not be reached, or kept “disenfranchised”. Spatial zoning thus helps drivers to manoeuvre through dangerous areas by highlighting the important role of space and its representations.

Similarly, Hall’s (2018) exploration of the offshore renminbi (RMB) market in London shows how place-based qualities perpetuate heterogeneity and dominion in financial markets. London’s qualities as a leading financial centre, such as the high number of reputed stock exchanges and a dense concentration of financial institutions, helped to build the first offshore RMB market in Europe. In this context, Christophers (2014) points out that capitalism and market crises more specifically are often addressed through geographical expansion, rather than their spatial constitution. Building on this,

he suggests that while market failures, such as overproduction, were previously ‘spatially fixed’ by expanding the domain of action into other potential markets (see Harvey 1981); but with the rise of neoliberal capitalist systems, space is limited and markets increasingly overlap, requiring more sophisticated “territorial fixes”, which include the “constituting, segmenting, differentiating and extracting [of ]value from actively territorialized markets” (Christophers 2014: 744). Places are thus no longer stable things a firm can expand into, but are rather market making technologies that help produce new market qualities.

The post-financial crises literature within economic geography seems to shift the research agenda away from studying markets through production systems and supply chains (e.g., Coe et al. 2004), towards a broader view that unboxes “the social, sociotechnical, and spatial constitution of markets that is consciously forged” (Cohen 2017: 35). The promise of this work is to study markets across spatial categories to follow how they are “produced on the ground” (Barnes 2008: 1435) including occasional wobbling, if not toppling, to “foreground the concept of market rather than treat markets as a component of wider processes (e.g., capitalism, neoliberalism)” (Jones 2013: 32). It thus perhaps comes as no surprise to say that markets, and the spaces that enable them, may occasionally be situated in the space of the other (De Certeau 1986).

I would argue that GOM has thus far only partially concerned itself with this interference, and that it has not yet explicitly sought to conceptualise how multiple overlapping, contradicting or competing spatial forms of markets play an important role in their formation. While ANT has a long tradition of discussing multiplicity, it has somehow become ‘lost in translation’ when migrating into other disciplines over the last decades. In fact, research on multiplicity in both CMS and GOM is scant, and I have so far suppressed this issue for reasons of clarity. While the four papers that comprise this thesis draw heavily on the previous literature on the study of markets, my ambition with the thesis as a whole is also to contribute to an underexplored aspect identified across the literature, namely that of multiplicity in markets during reorganisation processes. Therefore, for the study of markets to move forward, I will next introduce the notion of multiplicity to briefly outline how

it has been addressed in order to introduce the theoretical framework and positioning of this dissertation.

## Multiplicity in markets and beyond

Most of the researchers in market studies would agree that multiplicity requires moving beyond the mere ‘sayings’ by tracing how activities, practices and more generally the ‘doings’ in a specific site, have effects (Mason et al. 2015). Within CMS, Finch and Geiger (2010: 239) show how multiple customers may be enrolled by using a marketing object that “carries traces from worlds outside the market space”. Established products, such as a weekly newspaper, can be re-qualified using a “bundled other”, such as a DVD; the newspaper/DVD hybrid may attract previously uninterested customers that calculate, compare and relate between options. Callon et al. (2002) similarly describe how a seller of orange juice altered aspects of the product, such as packaging and ingredients, to position the product into multiple potential buyer worlds. In this case, a Pokémon toy was further added as bundled other in order to attach “those consumers who were accompanied by their children”.

I wonder, however, whether the process of re-qualifying goods and services is enough to speak of multiple markets? Should we perhaps speak of multiple customers for similar products? Within business studies, multiplicity has traditionally been conceived in terms of multiple meanings related to specific interpretations (e.g., Eisenberg 1984), which eventually helped form the cognitive turn in organisation studies (e.g., Weick 1995). Kjellberg and Helgesson (2006) entertain the idea of ‘multiple practices’ by suggesting viewing multiplicity as an ontological rather than an epistemological phenomenon. Since actors are likely to have different visions of how markets ought to work (even within a single organisation), they engage in different, perhaps incompatible, practices to shape the market in specific directions. Think, for instance, of how multinational corporations such as Coca-Cola could face difficulties sending a message to all sub-brands or branches across regions. Yet, Kjellberg and Helgesson argue that even “market practices that result from translating inconsistent ideas need not be incompatible.” (ibid., 850).

Economic geographers recently argued that we must acknowledge the “degrees of marketness” (Peck et al. 2020: 10) as a way to overcome the singular-plural view on markets. Polanyi has been a common starting point for recent work in GOM and a helpful source to stress the multiplicity of markets across location: “Markets differ as an African bush market does from the New York Stock Exchange, and the international market for capital, freights, and insurance from the slave market in the American South of a century ago, yet all of them are authentic markets” (Polanyi 1963: 31 cited by Peck et al. 2020: 10). Building on this, Kear (2018: 309) develops the argument that markets may as well come into existence even when subjects are spatially and ideologically scattered, what he refers to as multiple “market sites”.

Extant research on markets provides a provisional way of understanding their multiple character and the plurality of actors involved in integrating various stakes, practices and concerns (e.g., Araujo et al. 2010; Beckert and Aspers 2011; Geiger et al. 2014). I argue, however, that we need to expand these initial insights beyond the mere ‘overlapping of markets’ (e.g., Winroth et al. 2010) into the unstable and formative moments of markets that are characterised by, for example, blurred market boundaries, role ambiguity and multiple incompatible practices. As I will try to demonstrate in the four papers, shared mobility markets, in all their heterogeneity, provide fertile ground to study such multiplicity and the enactments of competing market versions often overlooked within market studies. They are not only a “complex affair” (Geiger et al. 2012: 144), they may be chaotic as well; at times even resembling the madness of medieval market squares where the sanctity of Lent, the cunning of commerce and the profanity of carnival converge through “intermixing of the commercial and the carnivalesque” (Buttimer and Kavanagh 1996: 3). It is through the study of these multiple modalities of markets that it becomes necessary to provide more empirical depth to the notion of multiple market matters. As pointed out by Frankel (2015: 544), market studies literature has fallen short in studying the “multiple market problem” for several reasons. One reason is a strong focus on the question of “whether something is performed (or not) and less on what is being performed”. By reducing performative effects to any kind of material consequence derived from

theory, we run the risk of neglecting what is subject to performance (e.g., markets) and thereby neglect the potential simultaneity thereof.

Similarly, it seems that market studies literature has developed a methodological bias with respect to the identification of markets. While researchers investigate markets of many kinds – bazaars, forums, trade fairs, etc. – the cases typically remain confined to one type of such market, making it “difficult for an analysis to study simultaneous, multiple markets” (Frankel 2015: 540). Lastly, while some initial conceptual work on multiplicity in markets exists (e.g., Kjellberg and Helgesson 2006), there is a lack of empirical work exploring how and whether multiplicity works while taking into account the many values, interests and devices that ‘make space’ for markets. In the same vein, the role of intention remains unexplored: is it possible for markets to become ‘accidentally’ multiple? And what if efforts to shape a market are co-opted by competitors to form a similar yet different market in order to be perceived as if in the same market? In light of these questions, it becomes clear that when markets become multiple, additional analytical perspectives are called for. For multiplicity to be considered in the ongoing organisation of markets, it is necessary to investigate the alignment and calibration of multiple values and concerns as much as it is important to recognise the many material aspects that may interfere with one another (multiple products, regulations, users, producers, etc.). To empirically address this issue while retaining previous insights, it may be useful to borrow some insights from the literature on multiplicity beyond the conceptual preliminaries within market studies.

Perhaps the work that most closely ties into this dissertation’s understanding of multiplicity is Annemarie Mol’s *The Body Multiple* (2002). Building on earlier ANT work and specifically Latour and Woolgar’s *Laboratory Life* (1979), Mol stresses the existence of multiple objects rather than multiple representations thereof. Her ethnography of an ordinary disease – atherosclerosis – illustrates that despite its appearance as a singular object (disease), it comprises a number of other objects (blood vessels, plaque, abnormal cholesterol levels, etc.) which in turn creates multiple enactment sites across time and space. Mol’s notion of multiplicity is thus a radical one. It is commonplace in social sciences to describe how doctors, patients, medical engineers, etc., have different conceptions of a unified object, a phenomenon Mol

(2002: 10) refers to as “perspectivalism”. Objects and their sites should, however, not be viewed as a single static entity discussed in different contexts, but as dynamic performances that are continuously bringing to life different versions of objects through sociomaterial assemblages. The ontology of an object is thus always partial and coherent at the same time. For example, to the patient, atherosclerosis is rendered visible via pain; to the radiologist it may appear as a computer tomography; to a physician who performs surgery it appears as arteries that require cleansing; and a physiotherapist links atherosclerosis to physical workout plans, etc. In the words of Mol (*ibid.*: 55), “there are different atherosclerosis in the hospital but despite the differences between them they are connected”, which means that, “even if it is multiple, it also hangs together.”

As such, Mol extends previous ANT studies by showing that successful translation does not necessarily lead to one single organised reality, but rather enact chronic and simultaneous multiplicities. While they are likely to overlap, they may also be kept deliberately apart to maintain and popularise a specific version of an object’s multiple enactments. Goffman’s (1961) dramaturgical work is sometimes associated with multiplicity, which Mol deliberately uses to contrast and thereby position her own stance. Goffman differentiates between representations of the self, and the self as “hidden reality” (Law 2004: 56) producing representations to entertain particular individuals. Conversely, Mol argues that enactments of objects are not just effects that have already been produced in advance (e.g., specific professional personae), but that they have performative consequences as they turn into practice. There is no single entity coordinating and employing the use of characters or other objects from the backstage.

## Concluding reflections

In drawing the above strands of literature together, this chapter introduced two interlinked theoretical approaches to the study of markets upon which my dissertation builds, namely CMS and GOM. Each of these perspectives contribute to a better understanding of the dynamics between the sharing economy and urban transport actors in Sweden. By considering the work of CMS, I am able to emphasise the importance of marketing knowledge not

only for market shapers, but also for more peripheral actors such as local authorities that often seek to facilitate or enable the formation of new markets. At the same time, GOM helps illuminate how markets exist in space and how their spatiality is created via wider institutional contexts, as well as how the geographies of markets contribute to specific market forms. Lastly, the first attempts at addressing multiplicity help to develop the simultaneity of multiple markets in the analysis while paying particular attention to the “spontaneous, unpredictable and distant connections between heterogeneous elements” (Linstead and Thanem 2007: 1484). Together, these perspectives provide a framework of analysis for the understanding of market formation and change involving both public and private actors in the Swedish context.



# Chapter 3

## Methodology

### Part one - ANT in practice

#### A relational research approach

Markets are messy and so is studying them. Adopting any research approach comes with a whole range of ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions, which lead to deliberately ignoring, including, dismissing and preferring some actors, some actions and some questions (Calas and Smircich 1999). This section aims to lay out my position as a social science researcher to ask what assumptions I made explicitly or implicitly in relation to the subject matter. How did I methodologically equip myself to explore the many idiosyncrasies of shared mobility markets? And most importantly, how did I use specific methods to address my research questions, namely 1) what is the role of conceptual ambiguity in the formation and functioning of markets and 2) how is space made to matter in the creation of (access-based) markets?

Generally speaking, my methodology is informed by a constructivist approach, specifically by the “anthropology of marketisation” (e.g., Caliskan 2007; Caliskan and Callon 2010) and the “mapping controversies” literature (Venturini 2010). In conceiving of social reality as recursive and ongoing process (Law 1994), I have been particularly interested in how market realities are strategically shaped and ‘counter-shaped’ by empirical facts, ideas and controversies without quarrelling too much over their veracity. Considering

the heterogeneity of actors involved in constructing shared mobility markets – including policy makers, entrepreneurs, non-profit organisations and technology – it is likely that multiple market versions will emerge. A constructivist approach is thus embedded in an ontology of becoming, which implies an understanding of the world as a fundamentally dynamic place where ‘existence is action’ (Latour 1984). That is, every action implies plurality and requires taking into account the many (peripheral) sources of change that come to matter, intentionally or not. For example, shared mobility markets turned out to constantly enrol a lot of stakeholders in search of agreement and collaboration in a context of conflicting agendas and objectives. While such new interactions hint at the interorganisational challenges between local organisations, it also opens up opportunities to examine how such networks simultaneously participate in national and international developments, including so-called sharing and smart cities. There is therefore little interest in, and incentive for, studying the essence of one focal source of change. Change has multiple beginnings and endings, sometimes triggered by seemingly tiny actor-networks, such as a virus, or more abstruse set of socioeconomic ideas, such as the sharing economy.

The anti-essentialist stance I assume is a central premise in ANT, where the ‘relativity of truth’ about society and markets is always partial and amendable (cf. Kuhn 1962). Latour (1984) and Czarniawska (2014b) are advocates of the emergent and relational character of reality, inviting us to shift from an ostensive to a performative approach when studying markets and organisations. An ostensive approach suggests that organisations comprise a specific number of parts which can be dissected, labelled and characterised in order to formulate general principles about the object under study; in this view, only one suitable description of organisations and markets exists. Conversely, the performative approach asserts that it is impossible to list all properties of organisations. Here, the purpose of a researcher is to investigate the many different performances and the ways actors construct their own versions of market realities. This implies that informants do not merely serve as data points for collecting objective empirical data on a number of shared mobility markets in Sweden; instead, informants co-perform (Callon 2007) the case narrative based on their individual perceptions and observations within shared mobility markets.

A relativist view on reality thus transcends the mere identification of different interpretations of a single phenomenon by focusing on how truth claims are translated via multiple chains of translations that connect individual ‘islands of realities’ (cf. Law and Urry 2004). One could say that an ocean is water in motion, and we can call parts of that ocean waves. But it gives the wrong impression that the waves are separate entities in the ocean, rather than waves being the ocean itself. The one contains the many and the many contains the one, to paraphrase Buddha. Or perhaps less Buddhistic but nonetheless timeless: social reality is multiple yet interdependent, which means that every phenomenon co-exists as part of wider wholes (e.g., ride sharing as part of shared mobility), and is not to be seen as ‘naked ape’, as Law (1986) would have it. The increasing number of island realities in the sharing economy can partly be ascribed to the performativity of the many conceptual labels used and the resulting ‘rhetorical battles’ (cf. Codagnone et al. 2016). New practices are continuously added with little reflexion over how they align with the wider sharing economy realm. Take, for example, the recent rise of the ‘gig-economy’ that is often associated with a feel-good rhetoric linked to notions of sharing, collaborating and accessing. But what exactly, some have rightfully asked, is being shared in the gig economy? Who is engaged in collaborations with whom? (O’Connor 2016). I would argue that while it used to make sense to use different monikers as new practices first appeared a decade ago, lumping these together to promote a “new concierge economy, where serfs deliver stuff to rich folk” (Naughton 2014), is destined to lead to fuzzy thinking about platforms’ scope and scale.

ANT scholars have spilled much ink over the material extension of semiotics, acknowledging that all entities gain significance in relation to other actors and their practices. A clear division between science and nature, agency and structure, and micro- and macrolevel would thus be contradictory, not least because they are all effects of collective efforts. But how is this relational starting point conducive to my research purpose? For one thing, it encourages making a change of topology; thinking in terms of filaments instead of surfaces (Latour 1990). That is, to follow the fibrous entanglements of markets that can hardly be explained in terms of distinct categories, boxes and layers. This invites us to rethink the classical sociological drive to invent

notions that try to explain what ties us together, such as ‘authority’ or ‘zeitgeist’; but this only works when everything is solidly linked with everything else, something that is rarely the case (Latour 2005). While the sociologists’ ‘nodes of convergence’ often contain insightful information, Latour suggests to start investigating from “unconnected localities, which then, at a great price, sometimes end into provisionally commensurable localities” (ibid.: 3). Unsurprisingly, this requires being responsive to an ever-changing unit of analysis beyond the mere ‘foreground/background’ actors. This means that fieldwork included a number of seemingly peripheral market actors – activists, IT-providers, industry organisations (e.g., [sharedeconomy.se](http://sharedeconomy.se)), and other non-governmental organisations – to make their voices heard and to explore how they became involved in the markets’ organising.

A central methodical dictum that underlies this fluid ontology is the principle of generalised symmetry (Callon 1986). With no intention to return to technological determinism, assuming a generalised symmetry means to acknowledge the often-ignored anthropomorphic features of technical devices, such as a door-closer (Latour 1992), and their agency to provoke action. If we want to understand how markets come about, we must recognise that the status quo, with all its truth claims about success and failure, can be challenged by social forces as much as technological development, including regulatory changes, etc. Change and innovation must thus be seen as effects rather than causes and as interaction between sets of heterogeneous actors.

A second and related methodological implication is the adoption of agnosticism when conducting fieldwork. This means that I as researcher maintained impartiality with respect to ongoing controversies that unfold during the investigation. Disputes among actors, as Law suggests, “must not be ‘censored’ because they fail to accord with the views of the analyst” (Law 1986: 4). This differs from a research method that aims to merely mirror reality, e.g., by compiling data, code and ‘discover’ new facts that already exist. Market shapers may deliberately produce ‘alternative stories’, which should be viewed as political activities, identity work, storytelling, etc., that produce “favorable truths” for individual actors (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007: 1269).

## On the challenges of following the actors in ambiguous contexts

Case studies are often deemed suitable to address specific research questions and to scope time-limited inquiries. Not only are case studies great ways to produce thick descriptions (Geertz 1973), they also allow combining various data-collection tools, including archives, interviews, questionnaires, and observations. For example, Gerring (2004) suggests that case studies are foremost bounded phenomena observed in a spatially confined realm over a specific period of time, such as the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement in the United States during 2020, or the demolition of the Berlin Wall, which paved the way for German reunification. While I generally share this view, shared mobility markets have developed in multiple directions with multiple entry and exit points; they exhibit little consensus to guide collective action and are isolated from guiding principles that help define markets. In fact, in the spirit of full transparency, not knowing how to best ‘zoom in and out’ (Nicolini 2009) of cases was a messy, nonlinear process as 1) uncertainty concerning market participants prevailed and 2) no legal definitions existed concerning individual market categories (cf. Azimont and Araujo 2007). In other words, given the complex entanglement of interests, actors and their practices in shared mobility markets, it was difficult to identify one particular case. It thus came naturally to use ANT as my primary methodological approach. Considering the dynamic and ambiguous character of shared mobility, ANT helped me stay close to “those who argue for the relevance of one grouping and the irrelevance of others” (Latour 2005: 28). Put differently, to lay bare textual descriptions of lived experiences, social norms, behaviour, and attitudes of informants, by making space for the “unanticipated and the unexpected – the things that puzzle the researcher” (Alvesson and Kärreman 2007: 1266). To explore the puzzles in the context of market studies, I began my fieldwork at conferences and workshops themed around the sharing economy.

On November 11, 2016, the Swedish Competition Authority hosted a seminar on “The Pros & Cons of the Sharing Economy”, inviting experts to discuss the sharing economy from a legal perspective (e.g., how to tax platform users, how to distinguish between different sharing initiatives, etc.). I found this interesting quote from an insurance agent in the first pages of my

logbook: “If we have shared and autonomous cars in the future (so, no drivers), how are we as insurance companies supposed to ensure individual passengers are sufficiently insured? And what about co-owning cars [...] What should we base the premium on? On mileage? I’m really confused”. This was the first time I became sensitised to the conceptual confusion as well as the issue of ‘boundary work’ (particularly because I was reading Goffman and Abbott and the time). The heated debates at the conference aroused my interest in exploring why it was so difficult to find a common ground among sharing economy stakeholders.

I want to stress that the start of my fieldwork coincided with the rising popularity of the sharing economy broadly conceived, resulting in numerous conferences and workshops in the following months and years, especially events related to start-ups, such as STHLM tech meetup. This was a perfect time to study how ambiguity travels and produces action ‘in real time’, thus preventing any potential hindsight bias or constructions of linearity in messy worlds (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). I ventured out to learn as much as possible about the way different actors responded to the sharing economy by following start-ups, car manufacturers, local and national authorities, private interest groups (e.g., tax associations) and other non-profit organisations at workshops and conferences across Sweden. By attending to questions such as ‘who was speaking’, ‘on whose behalf’ and ‘how were controversies silenced or seized upon during events’, I was able to spot actors who actively engaged in shaping the market in different directions. Employing this open case selection early on, it gradually became clear that shared mobility has been the most complex case of the sharing economy. For example, the case of shared mobility in Sweden did not fit the traditional mould used by prominent methods scholars to describe cases; “a thing, a single entity, a unit around which there are boundaries” (Merriam 1998: 12). Shared mobility actors set out to revolutionise urban transport via digitally mediated means of mobility, offering many parallel initiatives with strong interdependencies and little consensus over where markets began and where they ended. The proliferation of (often competing) market versions thus offered a unique opportunity to follow “extreme situations, critical incidents and social dramas” (Pettigrew 1990: 275). These situations ranged from fleeting market structures to unclear product categories (e.g., how is ridesharing different from

hitchhiking?) and a lack of consensus over (legal) frameworks to guide action. This allowed for systematic investigations of strategic alliances and oppositions involving an assortment of actors who rejected any useful compromise in questions of definitions, technical standards and regulatory frameworks (cf. Sandberg and Alvesson 2011).

Eventually, on April 20, 2017, I attended a conference in Stockholm entitled “Sharing Economy and Earnings on Demand”, which paved the way for my future fieldwork. I realised that I had become familiarised with the ‘usual suspects’ attending the events, and that certain individuals began to recognise and greet me at the check-in. It was a great starting point to introduce myself in the field. Six months into my research and dozens of conferences later, I felt comfortable and knowledgeable enough to actively reach out to the panellists. I had numerous, insightful, informal conversations at conferences before, but now it was time for more-in-depth conversations, I reckoned.

One particular actor I had followed over several months was the ridesharing platform Heetch. Given my increasing interest in controversies, and after following numerous debates over legal concerns linked to Heetch in the Swedish news, I reached out to the CEO during the conference. Let’s call him Harry. He was particularly interesting because he also co-founded an industry platform called Shared Sweden and thus had an extensive network I could potentially tap into. As I described my research interests to Harry, he expressed his enthusiasm and invited me to his office for an initial interview. Anticipating that conceptual controversies might play a central role in marketing the platform, I wanted to find out how Heetch differed from other ridesharing actors in Sweden. As I started my fieldwork at Heetch, I focused not only on how Harry and his team interpreted the concept of ridesharing, but also how they acted on the basis of it. At some point, Harry invited me to participate in a guerrilla campaign at a local rooftop bar in Stockholm. Since Heetch positioned itself as an entertaining Uber alternative for young party-goers, it regularly promoted the platform in nightclubs and bars. One night, I was responsible for raising awareness of the platform by communicating the ridesharing idea as conceived by the organisation itself. This was great because I received an informal briefing before the event where I learned

how Heetch thought about ridesharing and how this should be communicated to customers, which turned out to be much more insightful and nuanced than doing traditional interviews. It reminded me a little bit of Kurt Lewin's work. As a pioneer of participant observation and action research, Lewin encouraged an approach to (clinical) research that both actively engaged with and intervened in the client's social environment. If I want to understand how markets are shaped in situ, I thought, I perhaps should go beyond face-to-face interviews and join actors in their 'natural state' (cf. Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). With Lewin in mind, I continued participating in meetings and workshops where possible, focusing on the many ways through which shared mobility was theoretically discussed, strategically promoted or deliberately dismissed.

After some months of fieldwork in ridesharing, my impression was that the practices employed by Heetch differed significantly from the two other major actors in the field, namely Skjutsgruppen and Uber. As anticipated early on, Harry was able to facilitate interviews with the former Uber boss of Sweden. He invited me to an afterwork and introduced us, which led to interviews and various chats at other events. Access to Skjutsgruppen was facilitated through a Facebook group that I started (Kollaborativ Ekonomi Stockholm), through which I reached out to the founder. I founded the group, which currently has 132 members, to connect with local sharing economy enthusiasts and, of course, to find interesting cases. At the time, Skjutsgruppen was in the process of raising funding to produce a mobile app (since rides were initially organised only via Facebook), which allowed me to follow their expansion through both interviews and observations. The different approaches to ridesharing, the controversial inconsistencies and the accompanied boundary work among these three actors eventually became a comparative study for Paper 1.

The subsequent three studies developed in parallel. Paper 2 revolves around a single case, namely German car sharing platform DriveNow and its efforts to establish an 'access-based' market in Sweden. I met the CEO at a conference in Stockholm. His presentation was very energetic but also controversial as he stressed the complex interdependency between private and public actors in the formation of car sharing (parking issues, charging sta-

tions, etc.). It was easy to gain access to DriveNow, as the CEO was an alumnus of the Stockholm School of Economics, which helped to find a common ground. Since DriveNow aimed to increase the number of electric vehicles in its fleet, I initially set out to understand how electric vehicle charging stations (EVs) become an infrastructural problem in the formation of car sharing markets. Surprisingly, while I was sorting and mapping my empirical data in the spring of 2018, I realised that spatial interdependencies was increasingly becoming a problem for DriveNow, even leading to its closure in July the same year. Once this became clear, however, I initiated another round of interviews and identified other concerns among stakeholders, which eventually turned my initial narrative into a complex case study of failure. The results were fascinating because I was able to combine the initial narrative with the surprising issue of market spatiality, discovering interesting interdependencies between market and non-market-making efforts at qualifying spaces. This case of a failure to create a market based on spatial interdependencies eventually became the core narrative of Paper 2.

As my fieldwork progressed, I increasingly realised that markets are rarely formed by one focal actor. Individual actors may trigger change or stir market developments, but typically require allies to source knowledge, materials and so forth. This was particularly the case for actors interested in making a market for Mobility-as-a-Service. When I first began to attend industry conferences dedicated to MaaS (in early 2018), two issues quickly became clear. First, MaaS was, and still is, what Blanchet and Depeyre (2015) would call a “hot topic”. It seemed that almost every transport actor in Sweden tried to latch on to the concept, while basing their actions on different forms of knowledge and ambitions. In a way, the growing confusion among conference participants reminded me of Benders and van Veen’s (2001: 38) contention that “any concept must lend itself to various interpretations to stand a chance of broad dissemination”. My second observation was that the role

of public transport actors seemed to play a major role in the operationalisation of shared mobility, often referred to as “ecosystem backbone”.<sup>4</sup> I subsequently reached out to local authorities in Sweden to better understand their role and engagement in MaaS. During an interview with the project manager at Stockholm’s Environment and Health Administration, something unexpected occurred. The interviewee invited me to collaborate on a research paper he was working on at the time. Having himself earned a PhD, he skilfully explained his ambition to study the role of local governance in the diffusion of MaaS in Sweden, an empirical issue that was very much in line with my research agenda. However, in taking a diffusionist approach (à la Rogers), his theoretical positioning did not really resonate with mine at the time. However, I also knew that collaborating would provide more insights beyond those gained from the interview. After some indecision, I agreed to join the study and to focus on the empirical side of the investigation. Interestingly, since this study was connected to a large EU-funded MaaS initiative called *Civitas Eccentric*, involving five cities (Stockholm, Madrid, Munich, Åbo and Ruse), the collaboration resulted in useful discussions about how shared mobility was interpreted and practiced differently across spatial geographies. We further discussed how local authorities become confined by a type of double bind: reacting to specific policy challenges at a local level as well as to political developments in transnational contexts, such as EU-wide efforts to find a common legal definition of ‘the sharing economy’. The many iterations we had both through writing and conversing were particularly helpful to learn about the opportunities and challenges for the City of Stockholm, and what kind of expectations private stakeholders had towards the council. The study has been published in *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management* in early 2020 (see Fenton et al. 2020). Needless to say, this collaborative process has allowed me to use the insights as a pre-study for my own MaaS study, which I began to write during a longer stay in Dublin.

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<sup>4</sup> To explore the role of cities, I have followed the growing interest of local councils to become ‘sharing cities’. At the time, four Swedish Cities – Stockholm, Gothenburg, Malmö and Umeå – had received financial support from a national programme called “Sharing Cities” with a budget of 12 million euro over 4 years jointly funded by VINNOVA, the Swedish Energy Agency and FORMAS. My interviews with city representatives for this programme in Stockholm and Gothenburg revealed that shared mobility was not prioritised, which led me to reach out to the councils directly (as they were still engaged in shared mobility on the basis of other initiatives).

In fact, while most cases are situated in Sweden, I ended up doing several weeks of fieldwork in Dublin. Originally, I planned to spend time at University College Dublin to work with Professor Susi Geiger and learn as much as I could about the market studies discipline. Two weeks into my four-month stay (in late 2018), I came across an event held at Trinity College entitled “Mobility-as-a-Service – Where does it fit in Ireland?” This, of course, piqued my interest and prompted me to reach out to the Transport Planning Society that organised the event. Unfortunately, I did not receive a response, given the short notice. As chance would have it, however, I held a Skype interview with the event’s keynote speaker just a few days before, the CEO of the Finnish MaaS platform Whim (which is often perceived as the MaaS poster child). To live up to my methodological mantra to ‘follow the actor’, I asked whether I could follow him to the event to ensure access. Luckily, he agreed. As the event unfolded, and I networked through the crowds, I learned about the yearly European Transport Conference (ECT) also to be held in Dublin a few weeks later.

The ECT is a multi-stakeholder conference attracting practitioners and researchers to share their latest insights associated with transportation at large. This time, the ECT organised a dedicated MaaS panel to discuss the challenges and opportunities that arise when merging shared mobility with established means of transport; this is where I first met the Dublin City Council and their “unorthodox approach”, as they called it. I learned that over the last decade or so traffic congestion has substantially worsened due to a growing number of vehicles commuting between the city and suburban areas. To address this and related issues, the city council attempted to create a MaaS-like pilot exclusively for council staff. Noticeably, the way MaaS was here approached differed from the Swedish approach, given its unique attempt to create an internal MaaS-like system inaccessible to the public. The main intention was to tap into idle capacity of both private and council-owned vehicles, to make vehicles available for site visits and other short business trips, while employees would make extra money during working hours. At the conference, I also noted that the concept of MaaS was ambiguous and vaguely defined. On an abstract level, MaaS was conceived of as a way to consolidate shared mobility platforms with established modes of public transport onto one single platform. In merging a number of established and

emerging mobility providers, i.e., car sharing, bike sharing, public transport and taxis, the grand idea is to (somehow) plan, book and purchase journey tickets through one unified digital platform. In a way, MaaS seemed to be such a complex idea, considering the number of (public and private) concerns that need to be addressed, that it was often unimaginable for stakeholders to even envision a potential market for it. Central questions thus emerging included: How are such overlapping (often competing) concepts put into practice in different contexts? How may a concept in its multiple manifestations shape relationships between and among public-private actors, and (how) does it act to reconcile various agendas in new ‘hybrid collectives’ (cf. Callon et al. 2009)? Finally, given this multiplicity and ambiguity, how can we as scholars trace these networked manifestations, including the required felicity conditions for the concept to ‘perform’? In order to address these questions, numerous interviews with different local authorities followed in turn, eventually turning my stay in Dublin into an intense juggle between exploratory fieldwork on the one hand, and a deep-dive into the world of market studies at UCD on the other. Once I was back in Sweden, I continued my fieldwork with Swedish MaaS stakeholders, many of which were government agencies or government-funded start-ups. This time, business-and-employment-oriented online service LinkedIn turned out to be a good platform to ask for interviews. I brushed up my personal profile to make it more professional and reached out to ‘MaaS-actors’ I identified in Sweden (since MaaS was such a hot topic, actors were shamelessly eager to post new milestones and collaborations, which made it easy for me to identify potential interviewees). One actor was particularly present in the public press, social media and MaaS conferences, namely the very first MaaS start-up, named UbiGo. Again, as chance would have it, Harry (from Paper 1) became the new CEO at UbiGo, which allowed me to follow his footsteps again and conduct additional interviews and participant observations. The result of this study can be found in Paper 3.

Lastly, Paper 4 was initially inspired by the fieldwork from the first three studies, during which I realised the extent to which established actors try to contribute to shaping the market for shared mobility in Sweden (including car manufacturers, tax agencies, interest groups, etc.). To explore the role of established actors in more detail, I further engaged in participant observation

at Sweden's largest Shared Mobility Think Tank organised by one of the big four accounting firms. The think tank drew together top representatives from a broad array of established actors and industries, representing airports, electricity distribution companies, local transport authorities, telephone companies, etc. Thanks to one of my colleagues at SSE, Per Anderson, I was invited to participate in a series of sessions during the fall of 2019, in which participants tried to define the phenomenon and discuss the changes necessary to existing transport infrastructures. The meetings were organised around themed sessions that dealt with specific questions such as, how does shared mobility affect related fields such as autonomous driving or electro mobility? Additionally, how may it affect the practices of non-transport actors, especially those that provide the market infrastructure (e.g., internet providers, digital lock companies). Conversations with these different actors provided great entry points into the multiplicity of parallel developments and understandings of 'shared mobility'. For example, during a water cooler chat with the local airport representative, he proudly stated that "we have had shared mobility for years at the airport, I mean look at all the car rentals we have". Here he was equating shared mobility with car sharing, a common phenomenon. Combining these insights with extensive desk research, Paper 4 illustrates three vignettes of ongoing shaping efforts among established actors in Sweden, namely Volvo, The Taxi Association and Swedish local authorities. For more detailed descriptions as to number of interviews, etc., please see Tables 1, 2 and 3 in Part 2 of the methods section.

### Parallel conceptual considerations

***Identifying cases.*** Despite, or perhaps because of my fluid and opportunistic approach to case selection, I delved into the market studies literature to find potential guiding devices. One of the things that became clear from the beginning was that issues of case selection are inseparable from questions of market selection, or more precisely, questions of how to single out a market. Wouldn't this require some sort of common understanding or implicit agreement of what we mean by 'the market for shared mobility in Sweden'? Frankel's (2015) commentary on multiple markets provided me with an initial compass on how to best identify markets. He describes four different ways. First, "this is named 'market'": markets can be identified via descriptions that

have the term ‘market’ in their names, such as ‘supermarket’. Second, “this is a market”: identifying a market by being present in it to get an idea of how exchange is organised (of course, this would imply that I as researcher would have some sort of preconceived notion of how markets can be defined, how they function, etc.). Third, “this is how we define ‘market’”: knowing that something is a market from the outset via others’ descriptions, such as journalists or authorities. NASDAQ is often referred to as a stock market, for example. Fourth, and the most emic take on this, “this is what members understand by ‘market’”: here, market participants are the key informants in identifying whether, and how, something can be considered a market. Of course, one should take these approaches with caution. In the latter option, for example, it is difficult to know how individual members came to the conclusion that this is a market in the first place. However, there is an additional methodological approach for identifying a market that I used occasionally, namely, “this looks like a potential market”: here, participants may not refer to their efforts as ‘market-making’ but instead employ terms such as ‘network building’ or ‘multi-stakeholder collaborations’ in order to organise initial economic exchange that possibly leads to new markets. Some cases were neither for the actors themselves nor in a more qualified or conceptual sense actual markets. Thus, sometimes actors were not even aware that they actively contributed to the formation of a possible market. Other actors deliberately decided to be perceived as part of an ‘economy’ that was not yet marketised. Hence, there is a high degree of ambiguity in shared mobility as to when, how and to what degree particular efforts to organise exchange become a market. This was particularly interesting as it permitted following marketisation efforts. That is, how economised exchange turned in to market-like forms; or in the words of Araujo and Pels (2015: 451), when market exchange seemed to become the “principal mode of the coordination of socio-economic life based on the belief that markets are an inherently superior way of organising the conception, production and exchange of goods”. Nevertheless, in most cases I have adopted a mixture of the above approaches. Situations where the participants themselves framed their efforts as ‘market making’ were particularly interesting, since emic definitions of markets are often treated with little semantic sensibility and thus vary across platforms even

within the same market. This in turn provided fertile ground to examine how disagreements were voiced and solved (or not).

*Following controversies.* The search for controversies has been a useful guide in my research from the very beginning. As my research progressed, I became increasingly keen on identifying situations of conflicts, sudden changes in organisational strategies and definitional inconsistencies. As ANT scholars have long argued, we may only fully comprehend the many idiosyncrasies of markets by attending to the ruptures in translations across actors and their complex associations (Bijker and Law 1992; Akrich et al. 2002).

Fuelled with this initial inspiration, I subsequently began to follow Latour's work at Sciences PO and learned about the interdisciplinary research laboratory he founded in 2009, MediaLab. Here, I stumbled on more recent controversy studies dealing with methodological issues (e.g., Blanchet and Depeyre 2015), which provided me with a *fil rouge* (guiding thread) when narrowing down my research, most pointedly: 1. prioritise contemporary controversies, that is, study markets in the making where practical and conceptual controversies are most heated; 2. discover new sites of controversies by also paying attention to suppressed voices and ignored actors. They often have their own mode of expressing concerns. Mainstream media often creates *doxa* at the expense of marginal voices. This produces blind spots and partial information. Finally, 3. avoid 'underground controversies', that is, seek events that are accessible via political debates, journalistic inquiries, scientific publications, or personal participant observation. Identifying such situations was relatively easy, since efforts to form a market for shared mobility had just gained momentum in Sweden when I started my research in early 2017. This momentum was accompanied by discussions around conceptual controversies related to market boundaries and the lack of regulatory frameworks, whose effects on sharing platforms were frequently voiced through public op-eds. A case in point was the termination of Uber's low-cost service UberPop in 2016 after dozens of drivers were convicted of operating taxi services without appropriate licenses or permits.

I also realised that controversies are not public by nature and may be constructed to enrol allies or to find support for entitlements. They are sometimes even deliberately kept in a 'magmatic' state to change character across geographies (Venturini 2010). Controversies are never either/or. They are

relational and liminal, which implies that they can be found in any type of situation (conceptual disputes, regulatory changes, product launches, etc.). This always reminded me to look out for new powerful alliances and spaces of possible conflicts across public and private actors as new sharing platforms were launched.

### Some reflections on doing research in Swedish shared-mobility markets

As actors and cases have been identified and followed more closely over the years, I became more reflective of my own role as social science researcher. It was also in this phase where I began to question whether I know enough about the wider transport industry beyond emerging shared mobility offers. With that in mind, and knowing that new (shared mobility) markets always emerge on the basis of existing infrastructures, resources, etc., I began to ask questions about the Swedish transportation industry more generally both in my interviews and at conferences.

However, although Venturini (2010) suggests that technical issues are a perfect entry point for mapping controversies, the technical nature of transport systems turned out to be rather overwhelming. Let's take the example of MaaS again, since its successful implementation involved a number of challenges. These included: 1) uncertainties about the role of local governments (e.g., enabler, facilitator, provider); 2) fragmented regulatory frameworks both geographically and industry-wise; 3) interoperability issues challenging scalability and integration of MaaS services (booking, payment and ticketing systems are based on different technical standards and therefore difficult to integrate); 4) trust and collaboration are problematic due to diverging interests; 5) lack of a clear and common understanding of what MaaS stands for. I remember attending a MaaS conference specifically dedicated to the technical integration issue. In order to consolidate third-party systems into one app – such as Google Maps, payments systems, Taxi apps, Tram apps etc – I learned that it is crucial to develop infrastructures for data sharing between previously unconnected actors to 'harmonise' data files. I also realised that my programming skills were too limited to follow the conversations around APIs, data security, algorithms, and different data types. Yet, over time, I read a lot of scientific MaaS papers in engineering journals and

actually met up with the ‘tech-guys’ from some of the MaaS stakeholders (e.g., Trafiklab). This helped me to develop my vocabulary and to have more pointed discussions during my interviews with key stakeholders.

Despite these technical difficulties, I faced a second challenge, namely that of becoming an informant myself. While conferences attracted a number of different stakeholders, there was typically little intimate exchange between the actors when ‘off stage’, or between presentations and during breaks. Yet, from the outset, participants seemed to be well-connected and informed about each other’s engagements and concerns. It was therefore strange that during my interviews, they increasingly asked questions about other stakeholders. As my expertise grew over time, and as I occasionally gave presentations at conferences, I realised that they increasingly considered me as an academic expert responsible for ‘the birds-eye’ view. I did not feel comfortable in this position. On the one hand, I was dependent on insights from my interviewees; on the other, they sometimes tried to get some insight from my investigations in turn. It was this balancing act that I needed to manage with great sensitivity, to be always on guard not to reveal confidential information.

Lastly, and closely linked, I want to stress that following the actors may come at the risk of building (too) close relationships. As I followed Harry and other stakeholders in their daily work (some of whom were only few years older than me), actors sometimes tended to slip into their ‘private me’, thus making it difficult to assess whether this was on the record or not. Asking them made it even more awkward, since conspicuously putting on my researcher-hat while sitting in public transport, for example, would have perhaps soiled our rapport. I thus tried to be very clear about when we were ‘on the field’ (i.e., data collection periods) and ‘off the field’ (also data collection periods, but not to be directly used in the papers). This helped to create an atmosphere of confidence in which interviewees felt free to express possibly controversial views against other stakeholders or even my own.

## Part two - Outline of collected data

In following market shapers, and their traces, I have encountered a large assortment of stakeholders concerned with the development of mobility markets. Below I briefly outline the actors that I followed intensively over the

last three years; they emerged as actors that “at once occupy the margins and the core, are the most outspoken critics and the most ardent stalwarts, are simultaneously insiders and outsiders” (Singleton and Michael 1993: 232 in Law 2004: 91).

## Actors in Sweden

### **Heetch**

Heetch is a ride-hailing platform founded in Paris 2013 that entered the Swedish market in 2016. One of the interesting aspects of Heetch was its opportunistic attempt to shift positioning from a ride-hailing to a car sharing platform in order to seize upon the conceptual ambiguity at the time. Specifically, Heetch tried to find a middle ground between professional and non-profit platforms within shared mobility, circumventing the increasing hostility voiced by competitors via public op-eds. Heetch terminated its Swedish operations in 2019 after three years of uphill battles with competitors and local transport authorities.

### **Skjutsgruppen**

Skjutsgruppen is a Swedish non-profit, peer-to-peer ridesharing platform from Gothenburg. While originally started as an informal Facebook platform in 2007, it has grown into a self-proclaimed ridesharing ‘movement’ with circa 70 000 active members. Skjutsgruppen can be considered one of the few ‘true’ social enterprises within shared mobility, receiving recognition for their contribution to sustainable transport. Members frequently write public op-eds to voice concerns against competing profit-driven platforms.

### **Uber**

Uber is a US ride-hailing platform which started operating in Sweden in 2013. As opposed to Skjutsgruppen, Uber invested much effort into positioning itself as a professional service, providing several different versions to cater to different customer needs (e.g., UberPop). The platform was regularly contested by both public and private actors for its controversial working conditions while pursuing market dominance at the cost of disregarding established norms and regulations.

## **DriveNow**

DriveNow is a full subsidiary of German car manufacturer BMW. The car sharing service came to Sweden in 2015 and ceased operation after only three years, allowing me to conduct longitudinal research over the life of the enterprise. DriveNow was particularly interesting as it aimed to create an access-based market via free-floating car sharing schemes. That is, users could pick up and drop off vehicles at their convenience at any spot within several dedicated business zones in the wider Stockholm area. Its many devices used to qualify these zones, however, turned out to be overlapping with other efforts at qualifying space, especially those from the City of Stockholm.

## **Volvo**

Volvo is a Swedish car manufacturer based in Gothenburg and owned by the Chinese Zhejiang Geely Holding. Volvo has – over more than a decade – taken a front seat among incumbents in experimenting with shared mobility, launching several separate initiatives, including Sunfleet, Lynk&Co and Mobility M. Moreover, Volvo invests in market infrastructures to establish new networks of relations to adjacent markets, e.g., markets for self-driving cars, and stakeholders, e.g., suppliers of digital locks and smart charging stations.

## **Swedish Taxi Association**

The Swedish Taxi Association (Taxiförbundet) is a private-interest group representing the majority of taxi firms across Sweden. It understands itself as a lobbying and governance body to develop and monitor codes of conduct within the taxi market. The association has invested many resources in exposing Uber's alleged misconduct in Stockholm, hiring private investigators to film specific practices. Their efforts to safeguard taxis as a brand and to avoid the anarchistic conduct of new entrants stayed at the front of local media for several months, which allowed me to follow ongoing debates via public press and other available materials, including video recordings.

### **Swedish Tax Authority**

The Swedish Tax Authority (Skatteverket) was among the first authorities to weigh in with a deeper analysis of how to best define individual shared mobility initiatives, not least to avoid further tax evasion. Already in 2016, Skatteverket published a comprehensive report pointing at regulatory issues, definitional concerns and other practical inconveniences for taxpayers. This was followed by several years of ‘smart policy developments’, through which the agency teamed up with Vinnova in creating a “Policylab” – a venue for public and private actors to quarrel over terms and conditions of shared mobility in Sweden (at least in theory).

### **Voi**

Voi was founded in 2018 and is the leading scooter-sharing platform in Sweden. Dockless scooters have raised serious concerns among local authorities; not only is their sustainable aspect disputed, but sidewalk hazards are on the rise, leading to injuries on and off the street. Moreover, scooters are currently classified as bicycles in Sweden, which confines authorities to enforce stricter measurements, such as the compulsory use of helmets. It was particularly interesting to follow how Voi employed several devices to curb this ‘mess’, as the Transport Agency described it, by employing parking stations and a virtual traffic school.

### **UbiGo**

The Swedish UbiGo start-up is often recognised as the very first MaaS pilot globally. UbiGo tried to launch a multi-modal urban travel platform combining public transport and various types of shared mobility options, in order to address so-called first and last miles problems. The first trial spanned a period of six months (2013–2014) in Gothenburg before re-launching in Stockholm in 2018. UbiGo served as a fascinating example of how an ambiguous concept can enrol multiple actors across public and private realms, and how difficult it is to take into account various concerns that are associated with the formation of markets.

## **Samtrafiken**

Samtrafiken is Sweden's largest public-private transport organisation. It is owned by about forty stakeholders, including local authorities and transport providers. Founded in 1993, Samtrafiken is perceived as the heavyweight incumbent among transport networks. Its central task is to enhance cooperation concerning the National Ticket Standard and the collection of traffic data. Interestingly, Samtrafiken launched a Swedish Mobility Programme in 2017 to explore how it could potentially position itself within the shared mobility ecosystem. The programme led to several possible roles to adopt and many interesting discussions around how – in practice – such a well-established firm may change direction.

## **Local and national governments in Sweden**

On a local level, the City of Stockholm engaged in several shared mobility projects. Among its key involvements was its role as facilitator between shared mobility platforms and established transport actors, such as local train providers. However, local authorities, such as the Traffic Bureau in Stockholm (Trafikkontoret) became a great source to understand how the increasing parking fees can challenge the creation of a market for car sharing. On a national level, the government launched several agencies to oversee and develop shared mobility platforms, such as KOMPIS, in order to help lawmakers decide upon regulatory frameworks and to provide a roadmap for stakeholders.

## **Actors in Ireland**

### **Local government in Dublin**

Despite, or precisely due to the many different MaaS versions across the globe, the Dublin City Council took an unorthodox approach by developing an internal MaaS platform as part of a larger project, Smart Dublin. As opposed to the open, unorganised approach in Sweden, Dublin experimented with a confined, internal prototype by cutting the network from the outside world. This came along with a well-structured tender process, strict guidelines concerning the use of space and detailed requirements for how to scale

this *in vivo*. I followed this tender process and interviewed some of the stakeholders, which revealed just how diverse MaaS solutions could be, but it also hinted at the precariousness of moving between *in vivo* and *in vivo* experiments.

If necessary, additional confirmatory cases were added to polarise differences and commonalities, or to highlight specific conceptual points (Hammersley and Atkinson 2007). Each field trip thus built upon previous rounds of data collection and became more specific as I developed my understanding of shared mobility markets, but also as I recognised limits in the literature. To sum up, it turned out that the progressive promises and the unified diversity associated with shared mobility enrolled or at least attracted various kinds of actors and their efforts to shape markets. To shed light on such multiple approaches of shaping markets required a flexible and creative approach to fieldwork – a method assemblage (Law 2004).

### The method assemblage

While each individual paper is temporally bound, my fieldwork as a whole was constantly ongoing. This means that while writing up the first study, I did not dismiss important empirical work for study 2 in parallel. Given the topicality of shared mobility, it was necessary to enter the sites “where they have not yet become cold” (Latour 2005: 118). All field trips were conducted between 2017 and 2020.

### Interviews

Twenty-nine semi-structured interviews have been conducted in English and Swedish depending on the interviewees’ preferences. The selection of interviewees was initially exploratory while attending different conferences and workshops. Subsequent interviewees were mostly identified and contacted via acquaintances made in the field, LinkedIn and e-mail, wherein I sought to include individuals with long and short tenure in firms while maintaining a degree of functional and hierarchical variety. In keeping an interest in the relational and controversial aspect of market shaping, my work as interviewer often took on the qualities of a Sherlock Holmes mystery, questioning each statement and probing into possible underlying issues of victims and culprits, metaphorically speaking. This detective work made me alert to clues that did

not quite “add up” or “ring true” (Legard et al. 2003: 153). In doing so, I sought to better understand the networked character of markets wherein some organisations may function as powerful gatekeepers worth paying more attention to. But I also tried to understand how individuals interpreted and defined shared mobility as a basis for their own organisational activities. It was not uncommon that we ended up in theoretical conversations discussing historical and etymological origins of cooperatives. In such moments, I had a lot of use for my readings of anthropological texts on sharing, gifting and other related terms, allowing me to toss in catchwords and key facts to build credibility but also to drive conversations into topics interesting for my thesis.

### **Document analysis**

While my rudimentary Swedish bore the risk of losing information in translation, it was an opportunity to facilitate interviews with individuals who otherwise would have declined or only provided partial insights. I took the same approach to document analysis, studying texts in English, Swedish and German. This included archival data, press releases, industry reports, legal documents, and consultancy whitepapers, wherein each type of text had its own informational character. Industry reports provided market representations, often illustrating the conceptual confusion that prevailed among consultancies. Take, for example, global revenue forecasts for the sharing economy. In 2015, Fast Company declared that “the sharing economy is dead”, whereas PwC forecasted a turnover of USD 335 billion for 2025 in the same year (Kessler 2015; PWC 2015). Legal documents, government motions and regulatory proposals served to identify political actions aimed at establishing contractual and moral parameters.

Lastly, inspired by the recent surge of netnographic methodologies (Kozinets 2010), video material and social media content has been central to capture how virtual groups influence the shaping of shared mobility markets via online communities. Specifically, Twitter and Facebook helped to follow discourses linked to certain measures – such as changes to price plans in car sharing subscriptions – as a way of asserting social power. Streaming platforms such as YouTube provided additional insights into how organisations explain and present their services via step-by-step video tutorials as a way to

guide and stimulate user behaviour. These technical platforms served to study shaping strategies “beyond the skin of the individual person” (Hutchins 1995: xiv), and thereby illustrated the potency of non-human actors to make individuals and groups co-opt themselves into market change processes.

Combing the collection of both primary and secondary data across cases within the shared mobility case over three years has led to a chronological account of shared mobility, revealing many unexpected market failures and controversies, but also interesting success stories and surprising relationships among stakeholders. Table 1, Table 2 and Table 3 summarise key sources across shared mobility initiatives. For more granular information of the individual methodological approaches, please consult the respective article.

### **Observations**

I pursued informal access to identify efforts of marketisation through observations in addition to interviews and archival data mentioned above, especially to explore how different stakeholders view each other’s actions and perceptions of shared mobility. I attended most shared mobility events between 2017 and 2020 in Sweden. These events involved stakeholders from the Swedish transport industry, the start-up world and the public realm. By turning into a ‘fly on the wall’, and by taking lengthy field notes at each event, I was able to recognise the variety of concerns among stakeholders and their efforts to advance vested interests. Several tools including tables, charts and maps helped me flesh out how “actors make sense of a situation by confronting their interests, beliefs, values, and opinions with those of others” (Blanchet and Depeyre 2015: 10). I observed meetings with a particular focus on how attendees voiced their concerns, who introduced whom, and who did not speak at all.

Four observations were central over the last years. First, the shared mobility think tank. As mentioned before, I attended a series of mobility workshops organised by one of the big four accounting firms. My roles were to provide my personal insights from the field and to participate in roundtables and discussions. We were given tasks and questions to solve and discuss, allowing each participant to voice their point of view. This was a great op-

portunity to explore the variety of shared mobility understandings across attendees, since it involved a number of non-mobility actors as well. Second, the reoccurring Kompis meetup. As a government-funded hybrid organisation – involving researchers, policymakers, engineers, etc. – Kompis organised regular meetups aimed at establishing a common MaaS guideline for public and private actors via concrete milestones. These meetups provided fruitful grounds for identifying new interviewees, as they involved a larger number of firm presentations. Third, workshop participations in Dublin. I actively partook in roundtables and discussions to understand how the variety of stakeholders made sense of and employed the notion of MaaS across administrative units in the public sectors, such as workshop on “The Future of Mobility and MaaS Governance and Orchestration”. The workshop included a broad range of key stakeholders, such as Smart Dublin, MyTaxi, Dublin Bus, MaaS Global, Transport Infrastructure Ireland and other important mobility stakeholders, allowing me to map out conceptual inconsistencies and implicit or explicit controversies. Lastly, I followed start-up Heetch in their daily work but also spent an entire evening shadowing employees and talking to potential customers at a rooftop bar in Stockholm.

Table 1 - Outline of interviews

<b>Interviews</b>			
<i>Use in analysis: To familiarise myself with particular issues and new actors. To map controversies and links to individual actor-networks and observe changes of relations over time. To arrange additional interviews with colleagues and/or collaborators.</i>			
<b>Actor</b>	<b>Function</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Duration</b>
Heetch	- CEO (Swedish country manager)	Stockholm	1x45 min, 1x20 min
	- Customer relations/ project manager	Stockholm	40 min
Skjutsgruppen	- Founder	Gothenburg	90 min
		Telephone	33 mins
Uber	- Former Swedish country manager	Stockholm	40 min
DriveNow	- CEO (Swedish country manager)	Stockholm	1x48 min, 1x58 min
	- Communications Manager	Stockholm	36 min
UbiGo	- Operations manager A	Stockholm	47 min
	- Operations manager B	Stockholm	n/a
City of Stockholm	- Project Manager at Environment and Health Administration A	Stockholm	65 min
	- Project Manager at Environment and Health Administration B	Stockholm	20 min
	- Project Manager at Traffic Department	Stockholm	35 min
TrafikLab	- Innovation and Business Developer	Stockholm	22 min
Samtrafiken	- Communication Manager	Stockholm	55 min
Chalmers Univ.	- MaaS researcher	Online	30 min
KTH	- Sharing City Engineer	Stockholm	50 min
Kompis	- Senior mobility researcher	Online	32 min
Kompis	- Project manager MaaS	Stockholm	90 min
Whim	- Founder and CEO	Online, Dublin	1x15 min, 1x20 min
Volvo M	CEO	Stockholm	55 min
Tax Agency	- Head of Sharing Economy matters	Stockholm	50 min
Dublin City Council	- Senior Transport Officer	Dublin	44 min
National Transport Authority (NTA)	- Senior Officer	Dublin	51 min
Arup	- Two mobility project engineers	Dublin	30 min
AECOM	- Regional director	Dublin	53 min
Dublin City Council	- Smart Dublin manager	Dublin	35 min

Table 2 - Outline of participant observations

<b>Participant observation</b>		
<i>Use in analysis: Generate field notes to understand how actors interpret shared mobility and related concepts. Follow how particular voices are silenced or amplified.</i>		
<b>Event</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Date</b>
Shared mobility think tank	Stockholm	22.10.2019; 26.08.2019; 23.08.2019
Kompis workshop participation	Stockholm	05.02.2019; 15.11.2019
Arup workshop participation	Dublin	24.01.2019
Guerrilla promotion with Heetch	Stockholm	18.08.2018

Table 3 - Outline of archival data

<b>Archival data</b>	
<i>Use in analysis: To build a solid background knowledge of actors and how they communicate their ideas to stakeholders, e.g., potential customers, government, etc.</i>	
<b>Type of document</b>	<b>Indicative/important examples</b>
Policy documents	Motion to the parliament by the Moderate Party (2017/18:3670) "Sverige ska bli världens bästa land för delningsekonomin"
Position Papers	Position Paper "DriveSweden Verklighetslabb Support Regelverksinnovation för P2P bildelning i Sverige" (Rise, 2018)
Government inquiries	"Delningsekonomi På användarnas villkor" (SOU 2017:26) "Taxi och samåkning – i dag, i morgon och i övermorgon" (SOU 2016:86) "Delningsekonomi, Kartläggning och analys av delningsekonominns påverkan på skattesystemet" (Skatteverket, 2016) "Sharing Cities Städernas roll i delningsekonomin" Gothenburg City, 2017 "Statusrapport Mobility as a Service 2018" The Traffic Administration Stockholm
EU investigations	"Scoping the Sharing Economy: Origins, Definitions, Impact and Regulatory Issues" EU Commission (Codagnone and Marten 2016) "The Passions and the Interests: Unpacking the 'Sharing Economy'" EU Commission (Codagnone et al. 2016)
Invitations to tender	"Small Business Innovation Research (SBIR) Ireland Invitation to Tender Smart Workplace Mobility Hub", 2018
Firm documents (press releases annual reports, presentations)	Volvo annual reports 2010–2019 Heetch internal firm presentations (e.g., internal research projects on driver safety, firm introduction, etc.) All Swedish press releases from DriveNow
Whitepapers/consultancy reports	PWC, "Assessing the size and presence of the collaborative economy in Europe", 2016 Timbro, "En taxi på varje garageuppfart" 2017
Public press/print media	300+ digital and paper clippings from (mostly) Swedish newspapers
Social media	DriveNow: Facebook posts, YouTube videos, Twitter tweets Heetch: Facebook and Instagram posts

### From data to stories – The writing up

Czarniawska (2014a) argues that ethnography means writing. This thesis obviously does not claim to have the ethnographic depth of a trilogy on the Trobrianders (Malinowski 2014 [1922]), nor does it capture the richness of classic anthropologic accounts of affluent societies (Sahlins 1972). Yet, like the mapping controversies literature, my work is inspired by an “anthropology of markets” (Caliskan 2007; Caliskan and Callon 2010) that studies the multi-sited character of market shaping, in order to “describe these ‘hangings-together’ of various elements that configure a market” (Kear 2018: 302). Humphreys and Watson (2009) seem to agree with Czarniawska and strictly distinguish between ethnographic fieldwork and the written ethnographic account, the ‘writing up’, so to speak. The writing up of this dissertation unfolded cyclically by combining empirical observations, theory and writing in an integrated manner. This means that the writing process always consisted of interrelated activities running in parallel, rather than having planned sequential isolated steps in the research processes. In other words, I have followed an abductive approach to case study research (Dubois and Gadde 2002: 555), allowing me to continuously “confront theory with the empirical world” through detailed descriptions and mappings of emerging controversies. Individual plots in the articles have thus taken different shapes over time, involving a number of fractional accounts that collectively resemble a storyline, albeit rhizomatic.

Two caveats ahead, though: First, it must be said that this dynamic process had no single best way of shifting between analysis and narration; instead, in going back and forth, the writing process was a non-linear, messy process, continuously interrupted by new theoretical insights and unexpected empirical discoveries. Indeed, the individual papers have taken many productive detours and drafts in my quest to present the most interesting and significant insights of the plots in each storyline (cf. Sandberg and Alvesson 2011). Given the long stretch and the intermittency of data collection, continuous entries in my research diary helped craft the stories with more detailed filaments. Especially during intense periods of fieldwork, I debriefed the notes taken throughout the day in order to reflect upon confidential conversations and meetings that helped frame my case narratives without revealing unpublished material (Davies 2008). Second, the writing up of my papers

should not be confused with the writing up of classic ethnographic accounts. The audience and the institutionalised formats used in business journals often dismiss the role of the researcher as active member of events and observations. Even though the openness to competing narratives was obviously discussed during the review processes, the current publishing traditions have not really allowed me to always fully “make sure that the number of voices that participate in the articulation of propositions is not arbitrarily short-circuited” (Venturini 2010: 268).

To analyse the data for each paper, I combined insights from primary and secondary material by composing initial draft narratives in the form of bullet points, using the respective conceptual framework as an organising device. Graphs, flash cards, maps and office walls covered by endless chains of Post-it notes further assisted in breaking down relations of actors, their current roles in the market, and their efforts to advance vested interests via specific market shaping strategies. In the first analytical round, I typically arranged the data along a (meta)timeline of particular shared mobility markets, which allowed me to draw comparisons with other ongoing initiatives running in parallel. For example, for Paper 1, which deals with the ridesharing market in Sweden, I first mapped out all ridesharing platforms including their key characteristics irrespective of whether I or they considered the platforms to be ‘ridesharing’. Here, it was particularly useful to flesh out the various interpretations of how ridesharing changed over time and how actors positioned themselves in turn vis-à-vis one another. This early phase of mapping and coding specifically focused on matching initiatives, people, particular projects, as well as on observing recurring controversies and taken-for-granted ideas that started to be questioned (Venturini 2010).

Obviously, in taking a constructivist perspective, decisions about how to portray reality had to be made while trying to avoid a ‘crisis of representations’. One fruitful way to decide between possible competing interpretations is to exercise disciplined reflexivity (Weick 1999), by recognising that narratives are carefully crafted versions of reality wherein my writing becomes part of the phenomenon under study. This does not necessarily mean to become a partisan spokesperson for communities, organisations or their practices. Instead, it required me to be aware that my role as narrator is an act of ven-

triloquism (Czarniawska 2014b). I thus tried to abstain from reducing or muting controversies and their material manifestations, not least because they are “reduction resistant” (Venturini 2010: 262); in other words, not to speak on behalf of the other means to “engage in the political activity of creating speaking platforms” for the unheard as faithfully as possible (Czarniawska 2004: 122).

The relational lens sensitised me to the crucial role of relations not only in processes of market shaping, but also in the writing process itself. The idea that scientific work is not cumulative, but rather depends on the agreed-upon relationship of ideas in thought communities, is not new (cf. Kuhn 1962). When papers were co-authored, the data was jointly analysed, while conceptual disagreements and empirical puzzles discussed and resolved through sprawling conversations. I alone have collected empirical material and written first drafts. My co-authors, Susi Geiger and Hans Kjellberg, assisted throughout the writing process, acting as sounding boards and devil’s advocates while contributing with helpful edits to frame the research for a targeted journal submission. Needless to say, the resulting contributions of the papers stem from collaborative efforts. However, the element of co-production in the papers goes beyond co-authorship. In aiming to publish my conceptual arguments in scientific peer-reviewed outlets, editors and reviewers as well contributed to the content of my articles, both by criticising my manuscript and by making explicit suggestions. While I defended and preserved the key conceptual arguments in each text, I have learned to frame my central postulates towards specific editorial styles and journal interests. This also involved taking serious constructive critique by senior reviewers while acknowledging the co-constitutive character of ‘writing up’.

### Quality of the data

The credibility of a qualitative research process can be assessed through different criteria (Guba and Lincoln 1994). I have employed several methodological mechanisms to ensure that I well-managed to map what I sought to map. First, I have used debriefing by peers as a way to cross-check my interpretation of empirical material. Where materials were not confidential, I have considered interpretations from other sharing economy researchers that

I periodically met (in Stockholm and via Zoom). Since the researchers studied the sharing economy from different conceptual angles (innovation and economic history), using them as a sounding board helped to retain a degree of viability with respect to my interpretation of both case material and the literature. Second, I employed ‘member checks’. That is, I occasionally sent sections of my manuscripts to informants for commentaries. Yet, while their feedback served as a ‘reality check’, it did not mean that interpretations were revised entirely. This is because informants often did not have the dimension of information that I had, and I did not claim to provide purely emic accounts in my essays. Third, as I became increasingly familiar with shared mobility platforms, the appreciation for new insights was at times challenging to maintain. To counter this, I have cultivated a detached and reflective naivete by taking deliberate breaks from case writing to view my narratives with fresh eyes. In addition, by allowing negative support for my arguments or sudden surprises to arise, I allowed myself to keep a high degree of flexibility in modifying the case narratives and to avoid the fallacy of testing preconceived notions (Wallendorf and Belk 1989). More generally, a research diary during data collection and analysis ensured personal reflexivity, creating an “interplay between producing interpretations and challenging them” (Alvesson 2003: 14).

# Chapter 4

## Introducing the papers

This chapter summarises the four individual research papers that form the basis of this thesis. Each paper addresses the research questions using different yet interlinked empirical cases and theoretical insights from CMS and GOM (see Table 4). Paper 1 addresses the role of ambiguity at the boundaries between markets. Paper 2 speaks to the importance of taking into account the spatial aspect of marketisation. The third paper describes how conceptual ambiguity provokes situations in which public and private actors seize upon the resulting task uncertainties across stakeholders. Finally, Paper 4 addresses how established actors employ strategic shaping strategies on the basis of individual concerns.

Table 4 – Overview of research papers

Research Paper	Title	Research Question	Cases	Empirical focus
Paper 1	Conceptual controversies at the boundaries between markets: the case of ridesharing	How do alternative conceptions of ridesharing contribute to the shaping of the Swedish ridesharing market?	Uber, Heetch and Skjutsgruppen	ridesharing
Paper 2	Mutable mobiles? Making space for an access-based car sharing market	How is space qualified as part of an offering? How is qualification itself situated?	BMW's DriveNow	carsharing
Paper 3	Performing ambiguity qua experimentation: constructing multiple versions of Mobility-as-a-Service	How does the ambiguity of a concept matter to the formation of multiple market enactments?	Public and private transport stakeholders	Mobility-as-a-Service
Paper 4	On the role of established actors in shaping markets: Exploring shaping strategies within shared mobility	How do established actors shape markets on the basis of different concerns?	City of Stockholm, Taxi association, and Volvo	Scooter sharing, ridesharing, car-sharing

## Research paper 1

### **Conceptual controversies at the boundaries between markets: The case of ridesharing**

Gianluca Chimenti

*Published in Consumption Markets & Culture*

The sharing economy has been referred to as an “essentially contested concept” (Acquier et al. 2017: 2) for good reason. I would argue, however, that it is its anti-essentialist character that makes it so contested. The variety of phenomena subsumed under the umbrella of sharing, collaborating, etc., has produced a conceptual elasticity that allows actors to associate a range of definitions with the wider sharing economy literature (Table 5).

This seemingly serendipitous labelling inevitably produces difficulties to draw *market boundaries* and to define whether/where markets overlap (cf. Christophers 2015). At the same time, the ambiguity of this boundary-drawing opens up the possibility of using it strategically. While earlier research acknowledged that ambiguity could indeed have beneficial outcomes for decision making (e.g., Rizzo et al. 1970), it was considered as an inadvertent by-product of sorts. Today, it has become increasingly popular to understand how boundaries can be kept intentionally ambiguous to strategically stir market developments or bypass legal constraints. A recent example from shared mobility is the case of Uber. In 2019, Time.com reported that Uber's success would hinge on whether it could convince authorities that drivers are actually not part of the 'core business'. Uber is now using a diverse portfolio – such as food delivery, freight services and self-driving cars – to argue that its drivers are only independent contractors and thus work at the fringes of Uber's higher mission. "Drivers' work is outside the usual course of Uber's business, which is serving as a *technology platform* [emphasis added] for several different types of digital marketplaces", said the chief legal officer in an interview (Rosenblatt 2019). This is an emblematic case of how the ambiguity of concepts causes difficulties to draw boundaries from a legal point of view (e.g., for competition authorities), even as it shows how this ambiguity can be seized upon by opportunistic behaviour.

This article explores the consequences of unclear market boundaries and specifically examines how alternative conceptions of the sharing economy contribute to the development of new forms of boundary work. Drawing on constructivist market studies, the study focuses on a market that has been controversial since its inception, not least due to the lack of regulatory frameworks: the ridesharing market in Sweden. By comparing three dominant ridesharing platforms – Uber, Skjutsgruppen and Heetch – the study highlights that ambiguity not only opens up the number of actors involved in the shaping of markets, but it also allows more idealised forms of economic re-organising. One important question of this process is how "things of boundaries" (Abbott 1995), such as digital devices, help to frame a market in light of conceptual confusion. In fact, entrepreneurs use various digital devices (apps, platforms, etc.) to develop different yet similar versions of markets based on their preferred version. By highlighting the fluidity of boundaries

and the tension that may emerge due to their liminal character, this article makes the ongoing conceptual confusion and ‘rhetorical battles’ in academia and elsewhere an object of inquiry in its own right. By closely following the three cases, it reveals that efforts to establish market boundaries can be traced to the many (mis)interpretations of the sharing economy, which in turn leads to practical incompatibilities and “performance struggles” (Callon 2007: 330). I show that this affects which actors become enrolled in the process of shaping the market (e.g., regulators, incumbents, entrants), what kind of concerns are discussed (e.g., legitimacy, taxation, protection) and in what ways these are addressed (e.g., through public op-eds, legal measures, public inquiries, market rivalry).

Table 5 – A glimpse of different definitions in the sharing economy, and alternative terms (bottom)

Source	Definition
Arcidiacono et al. (2018: 276)	"New socio-economic model based on collaboration, access to, and the socialization of, value production, facilitated by digital technologies".
Eckhardt et al. (2019: 7)	"A scalable socioeconomic system that employs technology- enabled platforms to provide users with temporary access to tangible and intangible resources that may be crowdsourced".
Stephany (2015: 9)	"The value in taking underutilized assets and making them accessible online to a community, leading to a reduced need for ownership of those assets".
Frenken and Schor (2017: 2)	"Consumers granting each other temporary access to under-utilized physical assets ("idle capacity"), possibly for money".
Botsman (2013)	"An economic model based on sharing underutilized asserts from spaces to skills to stuff for monetary or non-monetary benefits".
Hamari et al. (2015: 2047)	"The peer-to-peer-based activity of obtaining, giving, or sharing the access to goods and services, coordinated through community-based online services".
Muñoz and Cohen (2017: 1)	"A socio- economic system enabling an intermediated set of exchanges of goods and services between individuals and organizations which aim to increase efficiency and optimization of under-utilized resources in society".
Mair and Reischauer (2017: 12)	"A web of markets in which individuals use various forms of compensation to transact the redistribution of and access to resources, mediated by a digital platform operated by an organization".
Kumar et al. (2018: 148)	"The monetization of underutilized assets that are owned by service providers (firms or individuals) through short-term rental".
Ter Huurne et al. (2015: 486)	"An economic model based on sharing underutilised assets between peers without the transfer of ownership, ranging from spaces, to skills, to stuff, for monetary or non-monetary benefits via an online mediated platform".
Alternative terms often linked to the sharing economy	The mesh Gansky 2010
	Commercial sharing systems Lamberton and Rose 2012
	Access-based consumption Bardhi and Eckhardt 2012
	Circular economy Kircherr et al. 2017
	Hybrid economies Lessing 2008
	1099 economy Kenney et al. 2016
	Online platform economy Kenney et al. 2016
	Cradle-to-cradle McDonough and Braungart 2010
	Sustainable product-service systems Roy 2000
	Commons-based peer-production Benkler 2006
Crowd – based capitalism Sundararajan 2016	
Collective consumption network Närvären et al. 2014	
Connected consumption Schor 2014	
We commerce Howard 2015	

## Research paper 2

### **Mutable mobiles? Making space for an access-based car sharing market**

Gianluca Chimenti (corresponding author), Prof. Hans Kjellberg  
*Under review at Environment and Planning A*

How are market offerings qualified spatially, and how is the qualification process itself spatially situated? This paper inquires into the issue of making space matter in markets by framing them as an important quality to take into account. Callon et al. (2002) claimed that the qualification process is central to market formation and change, as it allows comparison of products and services and thereby contributes to frame the boundaries of (product) markets. How, and in which markets a product is sold thus significantly hinges on the way it is qualified.

To produce a richer understanding of marketisation and market emergence, geographers have recently set out to unpack the specific spatial dynamics of these qualification processes. In revisiting heterodox approaches to market studies (Peck 2012), the so-called “geographies of marketisation program” (Berndt and Boeckler 2012) has proposed new vantage points to explore the spatial arrangement of markets, pointing to the multiple interdependencies of legal, political and commercial realms. Yet, while research in this tradition has paid much attention to the macro-structures of market geographies, such as transnational markets for digital information (Alvarez León 2018), it has largely side-lined the convergence of spatial qualities at the micro-level, e.g., in urban agglomeration centres.

To address this issue, this study follows a failed attempt to create an access-based car market in Stockholm, where spatiality was a more pressing problem than in many other ‘sharing economy’ markets. The case involved parallel site-specific effects of marketisation across public and private realms which were poorly synchronised and pervaded by overflows. Access-based markets are broadly defined here as sociomaterial arrangements mediating short-term provision and use via digital platforms in urban contexts. Such

markets offer an opportunity to tap into the capacity of idle cars by employing free-floating car sharing schemes within a dedicated urban ‘business zone’.

While research is still scant, economic geographers are increasingly acknowledging the spatial aspects of the sharing economy (Grabher and van Tuijl 2020), particularly focusing on interdependencies between space and processes of digitisation. In fact, geographers have recently concluded that the field of geography is “in the midst of a digital turn” both in scholarship and practice (Ash et al. 2018: 25). More specifically, recent research suggests that the success of shared mobility platforms heavily hinges upon established transport infrastructures, not only because new markets only rarely emerge from a “tabula rasa” (blank slate) but also because they are “spatially embedded” in socio-spatial politics (Stehlin et al. 2020: 14).

Combining this contemporary case with previous marketisation literature, we develop three main points. First, we show space-making to be a critical component of contemporary platform-based marketisation, especially for access-based markets. Second, we introduce the notion of spatial vaccination to characterise how DriveNow handled space as part of their envisaged access-based market by homogenising terms of service, regulations and technical conditions across market sites. Third, we argue that qualifying space in access-based markets is inextricably linked to (often unknown) entanglements and interdependencies with parallel space-making efforts. The resulting ‘place-based tensions’ illustrates the territorialized character of marketisation and the competing geographical imaginations between public and private spheres.

## Research paper 3

### **Performing ambiguity qua experimentation: Constructing multiple versions of Mobility-as-a-Service**

Gianluca Chimenti (corresponding author), Prof. Susi Geiger

*Under review at Organization Studies*

In the summer of 2014, the City of Helsinki hosted the European Congress for Intelligent Transportation System (ITS), a multi-stakeholder network dedicated to coordinating industry standards and interdisciplinary transport research. As part of the opening ceremony, the Finnish Minister of Transport screened an animated film raising the question, “Could mobility be viewed as a service?” What was at the time a speculative question has made massive waves across transport communities. Attempts to conceptually and practically frame ‘Mobility-as-a-Service’ or MaaS, as it soon became known, proliferated during the following years. MaaS is a typical manifestation of the larger sharing economy, aiming to combine shared mobility platforms with established means of transport. It is typical in two ways. First, even after five years of widespread and often heated debates on the definition (Kamargianni and Matyas 2017), the concept itself remains ill-defined and ambiguous. Second, notwithstanding these conceptual uncertainties, the concept has given rise to a multitude of small- and larger-scale implementation experiments in cities across the globe, which have often drawn in previously unconnected actors (Smith et al. 2018).

A central question emerging from this development is: how could such an ambiguous concept spawn so many changes in our physical and social environments? And what if a concept such as ‘mobility-as-a-service’, quite simply, fails to act – or what if even in its failure, it changes the networks it is nested in?

The case of MaaS is in fact highly suitable to address an issue that has been raised in relation to market studies literature in recent years: critics have pointed out that most empirical performativity studies focus on success stories, thereby often trivialising the fact that concepts may not only fail to produce the reality they envision, but that their ‘misfiring’ (Callon 2010) may generate ambiguities of a cognitive and a political nature (Huault and Rainelli-Le Montagner 2009). It has been pointed out that current performativity research has fallen victim to a ‘success bias’ (Marti and Gond 2018) by predominantly tracing well-defined concepts and their ‘strong’ form of performativity (MacKenzie 2006).

Within organization studies, scholars have argued that ambiguity often serves as a rhetorical and political device for the powerful to instigate specific actions in organizations, which they have commonly referred to as “strategic

ambiguity” (Eisenberg 1984; Sillince et al. 2012). This literature has pointed to the potential dark sides of such strategic behaviour, highlighting that ambiguity may cause transparency issues (Huault and Rainelli-Le Montagner 2009) or identity struggles (Alvesson and Sveningsson 2003), revealing that ambiguity can be both an ‘enabler’ and the ‘nemesis’ of organizational change (Abdallah and Langley 2014).

However, much of this research has considered stakeholders and situations that had a clear ‘centre’ from which the ambiguity was controlled. Moreover, the vast bulk of ambiguity research has focused on communicative or rhetorical action rather than the practical and material consequences of ambiguity (but see Davenport and Leitch 2005). Yet, in emergent contexts such as MaaS or other sharing economy phenomena, where multiple organizational actors are potentially interested and/or affected, it is often not clear whether anyone is in charge – nor who may be in the future.

By combining the literature on performativity and ambiguity, this study explores the performativity of MaaS through two in-depth case studies in Sweden and Ireland. The findings reveal how the implementation of MaaS prompts diverging experiments and how these experiments in turn have different effects on ambiguity. We follow the generative and often unintended consequences of MaaS experiments in both geographies via different experimental configurations (Callon 2010), and we note how such efforts shape collective action and positions of power, resulting in interconnected processes of *epistemic work* and *co-performance*. Epistemic work denotes the ongoing and multiple efforts at framing and reframing the concept based on definitional negotiation; co-performance is defined as the multiple socio-material choreographing required to provoke conceptual translations in practice. Both together have the potential to reshape institutional arrangements including networks and markets, but this framing does not also lead to a full taming of the concept, which remains full of potential.

## Research paper 4

### **On the role of established actors in shaping markets: Exploring shaping strategies within shared mobility**

Gianluca Chimenti

*Unpublished manuscript*

While markets are increasingly viewed as plastic phenomena, extant market orders are often still treated as static entities; that is, they are often assumed rather than inspected, and described rather than critically interrogated. By using a familiar trope from CMS, specifically performativity (Mason et al. 2015) and market concerns (Geiger et al. 2014), this study offers a typology of market-shaping strategies among *established actors* across public and private realms in Sweden. Since the term ‘shared mobility’ takes different forms (see Table 6), this study follows different performances of the concept in car sharing, on-demand hailing and scooter sharing. By focusing on the intended and unintended consequences of market shaping, this study highlights the heterogeneity of shaping strategies – associating, demonstrating, and compromising – among established actors and the precariousness of balancing stasis and change during such processes.

*Shaping through associating.* The first illustration follows the car manufacturer Volvo, which is particularly concerned about the ongoing shift from traditional ownership schemes to usage of goods on a pay-per-use basis. Historically, Volvo has been primarily concerned with issues of safety, leading to a series of innovations, including the world’s first three-point seat belt, introduced in 1959. With shared mobility on the rise, Volvo increasingly re-qualifies its offerings to change elements, processes and forms of established (car) markets. To address this shift, Volvo employs different brands that associate its offerings with notions of flexibility, accessibility and shareability.

*Shaping through demonstrating.* The second illustration deals with the fierce struggle between the Swedish Taxi Association (STA) as a representative of taxi firms and Uber as market entrant. The STA is specifically concerned about the issue of unfair competition resulting from Uber’s attempts to influence the structure of the market in a direction that allows for a competitive

advantage over established actors. To shape the market by demonstrating, and demonstrating against, emerging unfair practices by Uber, the STA conducted three major investigations between 2016 and 2019: Operations 1) Uberdrive, 2) Tax Compliance and 3) Film Recordings. This ‘counter-shaping’ of the market eventually resulted in shutdowns and conflicts over legitimacy between established actors and entrants.

*Shaping through compromising.* Lastly, the third illustration deals with the increasing market overflows associated with scooter sharing in high-traffic areas. As scooter accidents were spiking, particularly on sidewalks, local governments tried to shape the market in close dialog with scooter platforms through agreements and optional measures, rather than strict bans or harsh regulations (as seen in many other European cities). In fact, local governments formed ‘civilised agreements’ together with scooter providers. For example, in Stockholm, the City governed scooter sharing by introducing so-called ‘hotspots’ and ‘foiled parking zones’ in densely populated areas to mitigate sidewalk hazards and to bring order into the parking situation. Interestingly, meeting the stakeholders halfway bore initial fruit. Most scooter platforms further developed these ideas and integrated financial incentives (additional ride credits) for customers to park in these zones. In fact, the largest scooter provider, Voi, developed a virtual “Traffic School” (ridelike-voila.com) in which users could playfully learn what the zones mean, why they exist, and other information related to safety and sustainability.

Table 6 - Different types of shared mobility markets in Sweden, Source: own design

	Description	Examples from Sweden
<b>Car sharing (for profit)</b>	Car manufacturer or digital intermediaries providing platforms to...	
Station-based	Pick up and return cars at dedicated stations across the city.	Sunfleet (ceased), Mobility M
Round-trip	Rent and return car to starting point (classic car rental).	Circle K, Avis
Free-floating	Access on demand and return ad-hoc within a defined geographical zone (highly dependent on the qualification of space).	Car2Go (ceased), DriveNow (ceased), Aimo
<b>Car sharing (non-profit)</b>	Private individuals that...	
Peer-to-peer	Share private vehicles for a small fee. This type of car sharing is considered more environmentally sustainable than for-profit models as no additional vehicles are produced, by tapping into idle capacity.	Snapcar, Go-more, CiaoCiao
Fractional ownership	Jointly purchase and co-own vehicles.	lhopa
<b>Public bike sharing</b>	Provider often selected by the city via public tendering. Bicycles are made available for shared use to individuals on an as-needed basis for a (membership) fee.	Eu-bike, Citybikes (ceased)
<b>Scooter sharing</b>	Electric motorised scooters, also referred to as e-scooters. They are often dockless and made available to use within a dedicated zone.	Voi, Lime, Tier, Aimo
<b>Mobility as a Service (MaaS)</b>	MaaS is the integration of various forms of established transport services – such as trams, buses, trains, boats, taxi – with shared mobility platforms into a single mobility platform accessible on demand. Members pay a monthly fee in order to have access to various modes of transport, depending on their membership.	UbiGo

# Chapter 5

## Discussion and Contribution

Drawing on previous insights from ANT, CMS and GOM this dissertation explores 1) how alternative conceptions come to influence the production of specific versions of markets; 2) how conceptual ambiguity translates into practical difficulties in market shaping processes; and 3) the role of socio-spatial dynamics as a market shaping device. In addressing these issues, I have followed the complex interdependency between controversy and multiplicity, in that controversies seem to ceaselessly feed the creation and imbrication of new market forms while prompting multiple challenges of practical and theoretical sorts. While previous research highlights the methodological benefits of following controversies broadly conceived (Venturini 2010; Blanchet and Depeyre 2015), this thesis shows how conceptual controversies over how to interpret, depict and eventually perform markets has multiple implications for their functioning. In what follows, I discuss some of these implications in light of both successful and failed attempts to construct shared mobility markets.

### The role of ambiguity in markets – towards a world of multiple market realities

Interestingly, even in the sixth edition of the International Workshop on the Sharing Economy (IWSE), in 2019, I still observed new efforts at framing and defining the sharing economy from different conceptual angles. It raised

the question of why so many different conceptualisations of the sharing economy emerged in the first place. There may be many different reasons for such frenzied efforts, and it seems that the less we understand a phenomenon, the more illustrations and representations of it we produce. Previous research points out that market representations – generated through images, theories, concepts, etc. – can have a direct bearing on the functioning of markets (Anand and Peterson 2000; Bjerrisgaard and Kjeldgaard 2012). They provoke changes in the way goods and services are exchanged and render visible how such exchanges should be governed. My analysis confirms this performative view. Yet, a closer look at the ‘epistemic work’ behind depicting the sharing economy reveals that representations that aim at describing controversial and ambiguous markets open up the prospect of making market reality more like the preferred interpretations of it. The sharing economy literature provides a multitude of conceptual influences, ranging from anthropological accounts of ritualistic exchange to marketing accounts on access-based business models, which actors deliberately and conspicuously use as guiding devices to shape markets. In addition, there is a multiplicity of stakeholders with different agendas engaging in shared mobility, which further contributes to its ambiguity.

Paper 1 describes one central consequence of ambiguity concerning the establishment of market boundaries. In this case, actors try to establish and defend specific versions of ‘ridesharing’, each using different sets of (digital) market devices. The study shows that controversies surrounding representations may affect who gets involved in such boundary work (e.g., incumbents, start-ups, regulators), what issues are debatable (e.g., legitimacy, taxation), and how these issues are solved (e.g., via public discourse, competition, legal measures, and expert studies). While this case supports earlier findings on the networked character of market representations (Diaz Ruiz 2013), it also shows that it is key for both entrepreneurs and local authorities to grasp how such representations are understood and performed in practice. Only then can market actors distinguish between those actors who deliberately seize upon the conceptual ambiguity by actively blurring market boundaries, and those who engage in “true sharing” (Belk 2014: 1596).

In addition, the possibility of multiple market realities opens up the question of how existing infrastructures may ‘rub against’ different versions of

markets. Are there any versions that are better performed than others in light of established market orders? And if so, is there any way to perform a ‘market test’ before investing in market devices? The practical difficulties emerging in the context of MaaS, for example, have shown that a large variety of market versions does not necessarily increase the success of market formation. Concepts may be not followed to the letter, especially when they are ambiguous. And since the actors involved in creating market infrastructures often have diverging interests (Bowker et al. 2019), it is important to take into account existing “localized configurations of political-economic power, territorial authority, infrastructural history, and socio-spatial inequality” (Stehlin et al. 2020: 14).

Furthermore, as I sought to illustrate across all four papers, there is a risk that the conceptual ambiguity may be alienated and translated into everyday language leading to buzzwords that easily change meaning as they travel. In ambiguous environments such as the sharing economy, practitioners seem prone to use academic definitions and mix them with lexical definitions for laypersons. Interestingly, previous research shows that a degree of conceptual morphology may even be desirable. Some pluralistic settings seem to have a requirement for ambiguity, such as hospitals (Denis et al. 1996), universities (Jarzabkowski 2005) and cultural organisations (Abdallah and Langley 2014). However, the continued blurring of different definitions makes it increasingly difficult to make a solid academic analysis, since actors may create an ‘illusion of consensus’ with different underlying conceptions. This is especially the case in debates at conferences, since we rarely use the description of a concept (*definiendum*) but rather a commonsensical word that resembles the concept (*definiens*) (See also Swedberg 2019). Thus, constructing a contextualised ‘working definition’ that serves particular groups and particular purposes in a particular moment in time is perhaps more useful than finding the ultimate definition of a concept. Of course, how specific markets are conceptualised is not equally important for everyone. A working definition might be less relevant for users who simply want to share their private cars. Similarly, sociology, as opposed to, say, law, is not specifically concerned with producing one single market definition to be used as a basis in important court decisions. Within the social sciences, as Swedberg (2019: 2) recently argued, producing “the perfect definition” is illusory and does not

necessarily lead to productive discussions. At least since Wittgenstein's "language game", we know that it is nearly impossible to subsume all social phenomena that are (somewhat) related under the same umbrella. There may always be some sort of "family resemblance" where no one feature of a phenomenon is common to all of the things. This means that working definitions and ambiguity do indeed have their value and importance for some actors, in some contexts, for particular practices.

Lastly, I have argued that ambiguity in markets leads to "empty signifiers" and "contested concepts". There may be a risk to viewing them as synonyms. But I think a distinction may be worthwhile. By arguing that conceptual ambiguity leads to contested concepts, I specifically refer to the process of actors becoming concerned about a concept's use. By 'concerned', I mean Geiger et al.'s (2014) threefold meaning of the word: to relate to; to become affected by; and to worry about. As Paper 1 illustrates, the co-opting of a concept (here, ridesharing) is never neutral and possibly leads to performance struggles at the boundaries between markets. Contested concepts may act as social lubricants that bring to the fore stakeholders' lack of clarity or precision over a markets' boundary; it triggers open conflict and is not simply transmitting or translating; contested concepts are betrayed, inflected and protected on the basis of vested interests. Empty signifiers, on the other hand, such as "digital labour" (Gandini 2020), provoke little conceptual contestation. Instead, they aim at enrolling new actors into ongoing discussions (governments, funding agencies, etc.) which in turn often 'hollows out' the essence of conversations due to the sheer number of opinions. As shown in Table 5 in the previous chapter, empty signifiers also emerge on the fringes of a contested concept as a way to introduce alternative terms (e.g., "collaborative consumption" as a substitute for "sharing economy"). It turns out that both have their function during processes of market change. Contested concepts contribute to sensitising individuals to the conceptual nuances between different concepts by encouraging conceptual tactfulness and semantic precision; empty signifiers aim to broaden ongoing discussions by stretching particular terms, which may then turn into contested concepts if their performativity begins to rub against other concepts. Needless to say, not all efforts to influence markets through the strategic use of concepts are successful. Indeed, in several instances, the efforts I studied resulted in failures.

Yet, not all failures are the same and some may in fact be surprisingly insightful. This is the issue to which I now turn.

## Types and usefulness of failures in markets

Marres and McGoey (2012: 1) concluded that performative studies on markets are “biased towards success and limited in their ability to acknowledge failure”. I have sought to address this shortcoming by following multiple market failures resulting from the controversies encountered during fieldwork.

I have found that there is nothing ‘universal’ about failures. They are multi-faceted and arise at different moments during the formation and change of markets. For example, the case of MaaS in Paper 3 illustrates how a failure to reach consensus on role distribution leads to “collaborative inertia” (Huxham and Vangen 2000) at a very early stage in the process. In contrast, the DriveNow case in Paper 2 shows that failure can also occur abruptly and unexpectedly even at the peak of a firm’s success. DriveNow planned to expand its office space to a larger facility in the city centre the summer after my first round of interviews. In addition, DriveNow’s social media feed was covered with messages of surprised users who had planned to use the service for various trips.

I would also argue that there is an unproductive degree of abstraction when market scholars talk about ‘failure’, not least because its different interpretations often converge. Are controversies automatically a failure? Are the above examples cases of ‘market failures’? I don’t think so. Rather, they are firms and networks failing to construct a new market. But questions of failure cannot be separated from the question of how failures are defined. In everyday business language, a failure is laxly equated with failed transactions. In orthodox economics, for example, scholars have a clear idea of what a failure is, namely when the conditions for the perfect market are not present. To briefly recap: 1) There is a condition of atomicity. The number of entrants into the market are of such a quantity that no one can influence the price; 2) The market is fluid. Actors are free to enter or exit a market; 3) The market is transparent. Actors have perfect knowledge of the quality and price of offerings; 4) Products are homogenous, i.e., they have the same meaning for all

concerned. To what extent are these conditions fulfilled in the shared mobility markets examined in this thesis? I suggest that in many cases they are not. The offerings, for example, are anything but homogenous. As illustrated in Paper 1, actors even within the same market inscribe services with different meanings (e.g., Uber positioning as ‘ridesharing’), thus creating a number of products whose meaning is only identifiable in combination with the seller. Reflecting on the four papers as a whole, the conditions for a perfect market within shared mobility are, at this messy stage, not achievable. Callon’s (1998) argument that overflows are the norm, rather than an exception, again trickles through in this context. Overflows, at least in Callon’s sense, are not to be conceived of as failures, but the normal state of economic organising. No frame can contain all overflows.

Since failures in markets are not detrimental per se, I have found that it is important to distinguish between consequences of failures and actual failures. As an initial attempt to broaden our understanding of it, I identified three overlapping types of failures in a market context, namely *impotent*, *productive* and *discouraging* (Table 7).

First, failure may be impotent in that a market-shaping initiative turns out to be too difficult to operationalise within a specific industry (e.g., no critical mass, no available infrastructure). Such a failure may generate public discussions over the ‘hows’ and ‘whys’, but they are often degenerative and unproductive as the use of empty signifiers produce an illusion of progress. Interestingly, even if impotent failures are unofficially deemed ‘hopeless’ or ‘dead’ by stakeholders (for various reasons), they are often still latched onto just to join trendy bandwagons (and the financial means they attract in turn). A case in point was my experience at the European Transport Conference in Dublin in 2019. Despite the enthusiasm to find a common MaaS understanding, the statement of a local government official echoed the overall sentiment at the conference: “I think the concept of MaaS sounds too utopian to succeed. There are simply too many diverse stakeholders involved to come to terms with diverging interests. But we still try to work with it and see what happens”. Despite this serious doubt, efforts to experiment with MaaS in Sweden have not ceased.

Second, a market failure may be productive in that it can serve as an opportunity to articulate insufficiencies and develop more careful initiatives.

Here, the market failure functions as an organising device to produce new attempts at forging alliances, re-structuring an organisation, re-formulating regulations, etc. As Paper 4 illustrates, the many failed MaaS experiments across Sweden and Europe led to various kinds of hybrid forums, such as KOMPIS Meetup, to find common ground as to how to proceed with MaaS in Sweden. Furthermore, as evidenced through government initiatives, numerous inquiries across local and national realms have been published as part of wider ambitions to legally define and control various shared mobility initiatives. A recent example is the positioning paper by RISE, a government research institute, suggesting a new distinct legal category for peer-to-peer car sharing in order to help users with taxation issues (Olsson and Schnurr 2018). The paper also includes explanations of how established regulations currently impede the successful formation of car sharing in Sweden – a major problem being that contemporary car sharing is still based on rules and regulations from 1998.

Lastly, the analysis shows that failure may be discouraging, in the sense that it is afflicted with negative connotations and its signalling value results in increasing discontent among stakeholders. For example, when UberPop was shut down in Sweden in 2016, local governments became much more careful in sponsoring or tolerating similar platforms, given the conceptual confusion at the time (hardly any practitioner could distinguish between ridesharing and ride-hailing some years ago). This was particularly problematic for non-profit, or ‘true’ sharing platforms, which often rely on the legitimisation and support of local authorities (e.g., Skjutsgruppen).

Table 7 – Multiple-market failures

<b>Type of market failure</b>	<b>Description</b>
<i>Impotent</i>	Unsuccessful in identifying potential lessons from failures. Failure does not spawn renewed interest or efforts to produce alternative markets due to lack of coordination.
<i>Productive</i>	Actors seize moments of uncertainty. Involves deliberate efforts to produce market representations and normative ideas about how a market should function in order to create guidelines for future work.
<i>Discouraging</i>	Deters effects on stakeholders. Low degree of enthusiasm to participate due to potential negative spill-overs.

## On the importance of making space for markets and non-markets

This thesis sought to understand how space plays a role in the organisation of markets. Previous research on the spatiality of markets has called for attention to “tensions between areal/scalar/hierarchical spatial representations of markets” and the possible difficulties that emerge when they collide (Alvarez León et al. 2018: 214). This thesis sheds light on precisely this issue. Paper 2 discusses how local geographies pose particular challenges for market shapers as value creation in the construction of access-based markets becomes dependent on congestion tax zones, parking zones and public transportation systems. These challenges show that spatiality should not be viewed as a passive residual of market making, or as an ‘immutable mobile’ resistant to local adaptations; but rather as plastic devices that command attention, exclude, provoke and which may help to construct markets if compatible with other parallel efforts at space-making. Indeed, the formation of a spatial infrastructure proved highly complex, requiring actors to take into account the many interferences between different uses of space. As the DriveNow case illustrates, the success of an access-based market for car sharing hinges on how it is aligned with (or can dominate) parallel efforts of qualifying space from local governments. In addition, spatial infrastructures are

scale-dependent in the sense that they require enough supply, demand and transactions in the market for the resulting spatial flows to even out. Unless this is the case, the market will remain spatially dependent rather than spatially “vaccinated”.

The literature has begun to acknowledge these interdependencies as outcomes of socio-political struggles, or “contested spaces” (Peck et al. 2020: 14). For example, drawing on Polanyi, Zhang (2020) argues that markets are always ‘instituted outcomes’, in that marketisation is not a polar process that oscillates between state and market but is rather an outcome of reciprocal trial-and-error relationships between public and private realms. Paper 2 directly connects to such contemporary understanding of market spatiality in economic geography. Yet, in taking a marketing perspective, the study zooms in on these interdependencies and investigates what exactly such incompatibilities are made of (e.g., parking plan, congestion system). This has raised the question of whether the high failure rate of digitalised markets may be linked to the success or failure in configuring market space to work in favour of a firm’s business model. Making space part and parcel of a firm’s offering requires market shapers to overcome the idealised conception of space as an autonomous and self-acting system. I argue that space is not an apolitical, disconnected island for firms to tap into. Instead, it is constitutive of markets. Breaking free from the popularised free market idea means that marketisation may comprise a range of composite localities, requiring careful coordination between economic and non-economic principles and initiatives. For example, I found that the absence of a well-established network of sharing economy platforms decelerated or deprioritised MaaS developments in Dublin. In contrast, in Sweden, multiple layers of spatial qualities proliferated in the last year due to mature infrastructures (e.g., a high density of start-ups, advancements in digitalisation, high demand of sharing solutions) that both attracted new digital platforms but also forced authorities to use space as a way to curb overflows. This was especially evident in the case of scooter sharing, where dedicated parking zones and reduced-speed areas were created within the overall business zones. As such, this study is an initial attempt to empirically investigate the multiple overlapping efforts at qualifying space in geographically confined realms while taking into account already existing configurations of space.

## Reflections on the use of ‘markets’ and its usefulness in this dissertation

What does it mean – methodologically – to study shared mobility through the lens of ‘markets’? One thing is clear: there can be markets without shared mobility. But can there be shared mobility without markets? To address this question more specifically, it may help to distinguish between markets and some of its frequent substitutes, such as ‘transactions’ or ‘industries’. I would argue that while both markets and transactions are related to economic exchange, all exchanges in markets are transactions, but not all transactions need to occur in a market. Hence, if individual transactions fail, it does not mean that the entire market fails. For a transaction to occur, it is typically enough to have two actors. Thus, a key characteristic distinguishing the two is that markets are made of more than dyadic buyer-seller interactions. As Aspers (2011) suggests, even if we take the smallest constellation of a market, we have three actors involved, typically, one buyer and two sellers (or two buyers and one seller). This number also implies that, as opposed to transactions, markets are characterised by competition. While roles in markets can be substituted (think of, e.g., ‘prosumers’), this competition is often for the benefit of the third actor – a classic “*tertius gaudens*”, so to speak (Simmel 1955). One methodological consequence is that a market perspective opens up for meso-level investigations that involve other actors which are not directly involved in a transaction. This could involve potential substitutes, or actors that set normative standards and rules to facilitate fair exchange. A case in point is the competition authority. As mentioned earlier, the first sharing economy conference that I attended was organised by the Swedish Competition Authority (Konkurrensverket) in 2017. This should come as no surprise. In competition law, before deciding whether actors have significant dominance, two questions are raised: 1) are there any substitutes, and 2) how is the ‘relevant market’ defined geographically. As illustrated in my papers, this is no easy task. The relevant market typically includes the (close) substitutes of a product or service and extends geographically to include actors that pose a significant competitive constraint. Here, an interesting and common starting point for authorities to define such market is to assess whether it is

“something worth monopolising” (OECD 2012). But to understand this type of boundary-drawing obviously requires going beyond transactions and including a myriad of heterogeneous, socio-material actors partaking in shaping markets. As such, compared to a transaction lens, the market view allows broadening the unit of analysis and the notion of marketing to view the ‘exchange’ of goods and service in terms of linkages, embedded relationships and strategic behaviour.

Another obvious potential substitute for markets would be the notion of ‘economy’. Should we not be studying sharing markets instead? Economic sociology, broadly speaking, argues that markets reside in the economy. This implies that the economy is a wider (though not necessarily more complex) construct aggregating a number of different markets. While originally denoting household and farm administration, scholars today predominantly use the term ‘economy’ to discuss wider social orders in light of resource scarcity (cf. Swedberg 1999). Take for instance, Aspers’ (2011: 15) definition: “people’s coordination of production, consumption, and distribution of wealth”. Marshall (1961: 1) similarly stresses that the economy is about social actions “connected with the attainment and with the use of the material requisites of wellbeing”. Lastly, the dogmatic focus on a stage model to explain particular moments of exchange (Levitt 1965) means that formation and change is viewed as a succession of demand/supply curves. This rather static and abstract birds-eye view underlying the notion of economy may be useful for macro-issues, such as questions of health or labour policies (Granovetter 1985). But in order to fully understand the entirety of processes, conventions, instruments of valuation of goods and the dynamics of material arrangements that lead to new forms of exchange, I deem the notion of markets (and the associated literature mentioned in previous chapters) as most conducive in this endeavour. There are two strong arguments for that. First, markets are useful to coordinate the use of resources, which is a central aspect of the sharing economy, i.e. to improve the use of certain types of underutilised resources. Second, markets are good for renewal and dynamics, which is more linked to the freedom of entrepreneurial activity. Using a market lens thus allows to investigate both, the static as well as the dynamic aspects of how goods are qualified, calculated encounters between agents arranged, etc.

How useful is it to address my research questions in the context of shared mobility? Admittedly, being on the quest for a ‘potential market’ from the outset may not be entirely aligned with an agnostic approach to fieldwork and may even lead to a ‘market myopia’ (Lusch and Watts 2018). Unsurprisingly, others within the discipline of market studies have argued for more detailed conceptualisations of the term market in order to be more selective and precise in its use (e.g., Penalosa and Venkatesh 2006). Truly, the use of the term ‘market’ is often based on different elements of markets, such as products, services, places, segments and users, but also wider social relations (Mele et al. 2015).

I have used the term ‘market’ in slightly differently ways across the four articles. Paper 1 deals with the ridesharing market as outcome of particular framing efforts; Paper 2 discusses the car sharing market and more explicitly refers to the type of market (i.e. access-based); Paper 3 points at a *potential* market for MaaS and is thus used more metaphorically; and Paper 4 is associated with shared mobility markets more generally, discussing different markets from a more systemic perspective. While this multifarious and seemingly lax use of the term market may become a “disciplinary deficit” (Lusch and Watts 2018: 236) that can obstruct an integrated perspective of markets, in the case of shared mobility, this helped to follow situations in which “collective life gets most complex: [...] where nothing is as simple as it seems; where everyone is shouting and quarrelling; where conflicts grow harshest” (Venturini 2010: 236). In other words, sometimes the most heated and insightful controversies take place outside a market, and sometimes they even occur before a market comes into existence. In chapter 3, I referred to this approach as ‘this looks like a potential market’. This approach sensitises us to exploring how markets come into being in the first place, both from ‘the inside’ and ‘below’ with particular emphasis on the contested spaces of really existing markets (and those to-be!). On the one hand, this may require studying the formation of auxiliary phenomena – networks, associations, new types of exchange, etc. – that eventually turn into markets or market-like phenomena down the line. On the other hand, it also helps countervail a possible market myopia that overlooks interesting surprises and sudden turns in markets.

Despite the noted challenges of using a ‘market lens’, its practicality in the context of shared mobility should be clear by now. First, there is no blueprint or stable set of practices for the organisation of economic exchange in such ambiguous contexts; studying shared mobility markets as practical accomplishments allows you to study local contingencies and changes over time. Second, the way shared mobility markets are produced is complex and includes a number of heterogeneous actors and their marketing devices. It is thus unlikely that there is a single outcome of shaping efforts, which calls for detailed empirical inquiries into the many tensions that arise from multiple market performances. It is also in and through such tensions that the economisation of shared mobility – through price setting, framing, qualification of goods and services, equipping users with market devices etc. – attains market-like form.

## Some reflections on practitioners ‘in the wild’

The ancient Greeks built their cities around a central public space called *Agóra*, the community’s epicentre for commerce, politics and other social exchanges. Literally meaning ‘gathering place’, it also served as physical arena to exchange ideas, engage in debates, and foster communal identities. In a similar vein, the Roman Empire created the Forum, a centre for day-to-day life where traders and producers could negotiate prices, gladiators fight, people protest, and criminals be staged. I argue that the gradual transformation of markets into placeless, abstract ideas by mainstream economics over the last two centuries has sucked out this ancient spirit of confrontation in marketplaces. The mystification of markets has led individuals to suppress the natural propensity to seek truth; to be vulnerable and to shamelessly expose one’s inability to be in control of ongoing changes in markets. That is not to say that shared mobility stakeholders do not meet and discuss market issues. As I have shown in article 3, public and private actors frequently convene through industry workshops and academic conferences. However, I realized that, despite the efforts to attend such events, there is a lack of willingness among participants to 1) assign concrete roles and responsibilities, and 2) to find consensus over conceptual definitions as a basis to formulate specific action steps. Too often have I experienced that stakeholders from all sorts

of industries come together to agree that shared mobility is ‘a mess’. But as Berndt and Boeckler (2009) stated, markets do not fall from thin air. It needs courage to admit shortcomings. And shared mobility markets, as I have tried to show, are impossible to build in isolation. As long as private actors are not willing to truly collaborate by shifting mentality from an “egosystem to an ecosystem” perspective, as one interviewee explained, we may have more cases of failure ahead.

The less this passiveness is influenced by political guardianship and fear of self-exposure, the more efficient and harmonious will collaborations become, and the more they will be filled with the intellectual culture necessary to establish valuable and enduring markets. Obviously, this would also require an alignment of the public sector across administrative units. In Sweden, there is still a great misalignment between local, regional and national authorities in questions of shared mobility, as the following quote from the Traffic Administration Office illustrates:

We have this separation of power and that means, for the City, when we think about how we want traffic flows in the city to be, we always have to think about these other actors. So, we have both, the regional and the national level and we also have the private companies that are in the city of Stockholm and in the region. [...] If you look at the general, overarching strategic goal for Sweden, then you see things like ‘innovation’ or the ‘reduction of climate impacts’. You can see an alignment of goals across all the different levels, but when it comes to how to do things, to achieve the goals, then it goes wildly apart. (Traffic Administration Office, interview April 2018)

Practitioners, particularly established actors, need to understand that ambiguous environments require functioning interrelations between both ‘familiar stakeholders’ and other markets. This implies that actors must constantly interact with multiple others in search for agreement and collaboration in a possibly clashing arena of interests and principles. Controversies and failures are often generated at the intersection of private and public realms, and thus shall not be left unexamined or ignored, as each controversy may create a space of encounter and negotiation among concerned actors.

## Contributions

### Contributions to Constructivist Market Studies

By focusing on ambiguity's inter-organizational relationality, this dissertation highlights a different facet of ambiguity, one to which market studies have surprisingly paid scant attention, namely the productive role of ambiguity in processes of market formation and change. Inspired by previous work on communicative effectiveness in organizations (Eisenberg 1984), a burgeoning number of scholars have suggested that ambiguity may be desirable and used as a strategic tool to stir organizational goals in both public and private realms (Davenport and Leitch 2005; Best 2012). Yet, despite the complexity and emergent character of markets, CMS has largely disregarded how ambiguity redevise established market orders and how it contributes in maintaining specific market versions. As Paper 3 shows, experimenting with ambiguous concepts redevise networks by enrolling incumbents, regulators, and government initiatives across spatial and symbolical realms. Even though actors do not always effectively synchronize their interests, the presence of ambiguity can help to open and widen the network for more actors to participate in discussing and experimenting with different kinds of ambiguity (cf. Cohen et al. 1972). I further demonstrate that the marketisation process decides how these ambiguities are eventually resolved, and whose version and vision wins the day. In the *in vitro* case (see Paper 3), though ambiguity is temporarily constrained, the prototype eventually has to re-insert itself into a larger network, thus postponing rather than fully taming the associated ambiguities. While it comes as little surprise that in each situation the multiple translations that are necessary to enroll actors into the experiments bear significant risks of perpetuating ambiguity, the different approaches of *in vivo* versus *in vitro* identified allow us to think through how experimental designs can be conducive in taming and/or leveraging ambiguous concepts. These insights provide a starting point to further explore the two processes that emerge in ambiguous contexts, namely 'epistemic work' and 'co-performance'.

In addition, this dissertation broadens the view of markets by stressing their systemic character. That markets are interrelated systems is recognized in a number of academic disciplines (Layton 2007; Vargo et al. 2017), yet

research in the CMS tradition predominantly focuses on single (product) markets. Recent research has begun to address this issue by providing an analytical shift towards exploring the inter-relationships, processes and pattern of change that emerge during market formation (Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli 2015; Giesler and Fischer 2017; Kjellberg and Olson 2017). For example, Ertimur and Coskuner-Balli (2015) show how the coexistence of, and dependencies between spiritual, medical, fitness, and commercial institutions contributed to the formation of yoga markets in the US. Similarly, Kjellberg and Olson (2017) address how adjacent markets are contributing to the formation of new markets. Building on these insights, I show that individual shared mobility markets (e.g., car sharing, ridesharing, bike sharing) exhibit clear systemic properties within and beyond the larger mobility realm. They depend significantly on enacted interrelations to other markets (e.g., for digital locks, batteries, telecommunication) and depend on broader, popular socio-economic trends, such as Sharing Cities and Smart Cities. While this systemic aspect becomes more obvious once individual markets are formalised, I demonstrate that new interdependencies are added as services gain legitimacy. A case in point is the ridesharing platform Skjutsgruppen. Its transition from Facebook to mobile app required new trust mechanisms, financial services and mobile devices. Taken together, these systemic relations significantly influence market formation by forging new alliances and by employing iterative negotiations with actors from adjacent markets.

### Contributions to Geographies of Marketisation

Despite that digitalisation is often associated with the removal of spatial barriers and borderless worlds, this dissertation reinforces recent assertions that the geographies of markets still remain an important facet of economic organising (Ash et al. 2018). All four Papers show that many of the previous insights from economic geography on spatiality still hold up also as markets digitalise. Products and services are not just traded or exchanged; they also need to be shipped, circulated and accessed geographically. The product here of course is mobility and Paper 2 specifically points to the fact that access to mobility may be provided to everyone, but that does not necessarily mean that the product or service accessed is equally ubiquitous. Thus, irrespective of how digitally sophisticated or primitive the markets, there has always been

(and will likely always be) some type of spatial infrastructure that supports the consummation and organising of exchange (Stehlin et al. 2020). While it can prove very costly, it seems that establishing an illusion that the product or service is available everywhere and always, is key. The role of space may take on other forms and might present itself in different ways, but at least in access-based markets, space becomes a key facet even though it is platform based. Notably, to a geographer, ‘access’ has always been a core element of any market, although not in the sense of providing an alternative to car ownership. Access-based markets in the sharing economy thus point to a dual meaning of the word, i.e. access denoting ubiquity (or an illusion thereof) *and* opportunity to consume or use a product or service.

Furthermore, despite its origins in ANT, the GOM literature has often foregrounded the meso or macro level, thereby taking for granted the micro-geographical dynamics in alternative economic spaces. As a result, as Alvarez León et al. (2018) recently noted, discussions on market formation are often very abstract, not least due to GOM’s preoccupation with questions of how “local neoliberalisms” become “embedded within *wider* [emphasis added] networks and structures” (Peck and Tickell 2002: 380). I have sought to address this in two ways.

First, I provide novel insights into the territorial segmentation of markets by shedding light on the importance of qualifying space and its boundaries. Specifically, I show how ‘zones’ or ‘business areas’ serve as a disciplining device. Microgeographical space is agenced in order to control the whereabouts of exchange objects and to render visible the domain of action. Second, and closely linked, I demonstrate how such qualification processes are affected by – and to some extent, affects – other, ‘competing’ spatial qualifications that do not necessarily aim at market-making. Previous empirical research has highlighted the role of various discursive and material devices in realizing specific (product) markets (e.g., Hawkins 2012; Muniesa 2014). In this dissertation, I probe one attempt to form an access-based market for cars and argue that the multiplicity of devices geared towards economizing space is likely to overlap during processes of digitalisation. This is particularly true in urban agglomeration centres, where multiple (public and private) actors attempt to construct, maintain and reproduce overlapping economized spaces.

Second, I introduce the notion of *spatial vaccination* as a way of situating and standardizing the processes of spatial qualification. Given that qualification is always site-specific (Callon et al. 2002), the geographical extension of a market hinges on the same (or similar enough) qualification taking place across market sites. The three strategies identified illustrate how market shapers may handle space as part of their envisaged market by homogenizing terms of service, regulations and technical conditions across sites. For example, DriveNow actively constituted its access-based market by linking up different market sites through a digitalised infrastructure – including social media, the firm website, the customer app etc. – that covered both supply and demand.

### Contributions to the sharing economy literature

This dissertation contributes to the sharing economy literature by addressing the practical consequences of its preoccupation with in-principle conceptualisations. While conceptualising markets is an important part of understanding their workings, I argue that this should not be regarded as an effort separate from those who are trying to organise and shape those markets.

Truly, a few feathers will be ruffled by saying that practitioners would benefit from a more commonsensical and simplified conceptual discussion. Today, the sharing economy literature is riddled with critical voices from different disciplines, each trying to better understand the sharing economy on the basis of specific empirical, conceptual and methodological contexts. Ongoing discussions straddle across marketing (Eckhardt et al. 2019), sociology (Frenken and Schor 2017; Gandini 2019), law (Davidson et al. 2018), geography (Stehlin et al. 2020), anthropology (Belk 2010), innovation (Schneider 2017), management (Munoz and Cohen 2017), and policy making (Koopman et al. 2014). In addition, conceptual debates and new terms have increasingly moved into the mainstream vernacular, thereby contributing to the ongoing ambiguity. The resulting lax conceptualisation of the sharing economy – which Botsman and Rogers (2011) describe along three dimensions, namely product service, redistribution markets and collaborative lifestyles – spawned the first controversial debates. Most prominently, Belk (2014: 1597) criticized their approach as being too broad and mixing “marketplace exchange, gift-giving, and sharing”. Belk (2014: 1597) instead suggested an even broader

definition: “people coordinating the acquisition and distribution of a resource for a fee or other compensation”. Other critics followed shortly. For example, Slee (2015) countered with a book sarcastically entitled *What’s yours is mine* (following Botsman and Rogers’ *What’s mine is yours*), in order to respond to the portrayal of collaborative consumption as an anti-capitalist knight in shining armour. Similarly, Carr (2016, chapter 32) argued that Botsman and Rogers are “more interested in co-opting anticonsumerist energies than unleashing them”. As these definitional debates illustrate, the last decade has largely been characterized by conceptual confusion and controversies over how to best frame ongoing and newly emerging practices, rather than acknowledging their performative effects on really existing markets.

Furthermore, the sharing economy literature is not very sensitive to the systemic effects of the sharing economy. Studies often seek to divide markets into singular, clearly defined ones, such as e.g., urban property markets (Brauckmann 2017) or labour markets (Dølvik and Jesnes 2018). As a result, sharing economy markets are also often defined through a narrow product-centric perspective while overlooking the importance of interdependencies and “enduring relationships” (Viswanathan et al. 2012: 160). Or in the words of Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015: 10): “complex, contested and asymmetry-ridden relationships among actors (i.e. producers, consumers, intermediaries, governments and civil society) are not problematised, and there is no acknowledgement of fundamentally different rationales underpinning collaborative phenomena”. In employing a systemic perspective, I sought to open up this limiting view on the sharing economy by following interdependencies and hidden realities through a micro-relational and processual lens.

Lastly, previous research has largely neglected cases of failure in the sharing economy (though see Täuscher and Kietzmann 2017), which leaves us with the unsatisfactory situation in which we still don’t fully understand what exactly doesn’t work, particularly in the marketisation of shared mobility. Admittedly, theoretical gains could result from studying the achievements of platform giants, such as Airbnb, Uber, and Etsy. Yet, as I have tried to show, imitating shared mobility platforms that work elsewhere (such as in the US) did not guarantee success in the Swedish context. Thus, studying failed attempts of constructing shared mobility markets requires empirical studies

that endogenize controversies and the multiplicity in markets in order to reveal the frictions between different types of market interfaces. This led me to follow Finch and Geiger's (2010: 136) call to "investigate instances of contested market interactions empirically, at a more granular level" across all of the four papers.

## Future research

The relational and abductive approach employed in this dissertation has opened a number of interesting research avenues that unfortunately remain unexplored due to time constraints as well as rigorous reviewing processes. However, these ideas do merit further investigation in order to address and broaden the representational hegemony of markets.

First, while multiplicity used to be a popular trope within ANT (e.g., Latour 1996), it has increasingly been moved to the periphery, particularly in the studies of markets. In this respect, one potential research trajectory is to further explore multiplicity in marketisation processes from different empirical, methodological and theoretical perspectives, e.g., through the work of Bergson (1910) and Deleuze and Guattari (1988). Bergson distinguishes between two stylized types of multiplicity: quantitative and qualitative multiplicity. Quantitative multiplicity is numerical and objective. It is associated with homogeneity, discontinuity and differences *in degrees* between discrete objects. Quantitative multiplicity is homogenous, spatial and exists in parallel because, just as with a herd of cows, we can enumerate its instantiations and determine their spatial coordinates vis a vis one another. Qualitative multiplicity, on the other hand, is characterized by subjectivity and heterogeneity. Objects change nature when they divide; qualitative multiplicity is based on continuous succession and differences *in types*. It rejects the importance of the one as well as the same, and stresses the continuity of multiples as they are irreducible to numbers. Transposing this line of thought into market studies may allow to systematically explore the interplay between different types of market multiplicity, and how they may contribute differently to the formation and change of markets over time. This dual perspective also allow us to look at markets from both the abstract *and* the concrete. In fact, a common starting point of market studies is to counter abstract models of markets

by focusing on one single market ‘on the ground’. This individuation of markets may rectify abstract market models and representations. But what if the phenomenon under study occurs simultaneously in multiple markets? Is the act of individuating not yet another abstraction or methodological tool to guide the researcher? Providing further evidence of the rhizomatic, non-linear, weed-like aspect of multiplicity, focusing on both the abstract and the concrete, would allow us to shift from the dominating one-many dyad that implies multiple enactments of a single source (concept, idea, material artefact etc.), towards an understanding of market multiplicity as substantive form (*a* multiplicity, rather than a multiplicity of a thing).

Second, this thesis suggests that clear conceptual definitions may not necessarily contribute to more efficient markets. Legal definitions, such as regulatory frameworks, may be capable of structuring, integrating and delimiting the way goods and services are exchanged in shared mobility markets (Christophers 2015). At the same time, conceptual ambiguity affords entrepreneurship. It is not clear whether markets will actually change if regulatory frameworks are in place and who will benefit from eventual changes. Will researchers depart from such a market definition in their empirical work? Will incumbents lean on such definitions when experimenting with mobility platforms? Still, there is one important stakeholder group that may benefit from legal definitions that has not been addressed in this thesis, namely the users. In fact, the Swedish tax authority has recently concluded:

The majority of the participants in the sharing economy do not report at all or report errors in the declarations despite detailed information on our website, articles in the media, control seminars, links in the platforms to the Tax Agency, etc. The question is whether enough information (and control) is sufficient in the long term to increase compliance with the rules or if a more adapted legislation is required. (Swedish Tax Agency, 2017)

To address this taxation issue head-on, in 2018 the tax authority received about half a million SEK from a Swedish government agency (Vinnova) to create a hybrid forum, or ‘Policy Lab’, to start a dialog between regulators and platform owners. This lab was a first step towards consolidating different sharing economy actors and their concerns, to co-create more tax-friendly

guidelines for users. As these efforts are still ongoing, this provides opportunities for future research to follow how such ‘normalising practices’ (Kjellberg and Helgesson 2007) unfold in ambiguous and nascent environments, and how the resulting rules and regulations will be situated ‘in the wild’. Following this shift may also contribute to our understanding of the liveliness and thus uncertainty offered by such experimental Policy Labs.

Third, in this dissertation I have not only challenged the often taken-for-granted assumption of markets found in popular textbooks, I also sought to broaden our understanding of their situatedness. Beyond the specific insights from Paper 2 into the contested spaces of marketisation, there are important implications from this work that can contribute to a ‘location sensitive’ research agenda on patterns of market change. This agenda may include 1) attentiveness to how market devices are meshed with marketisation efforts across micro, meso and macro structures, in order to study how “the contingency and spatiality of markets feeds back into the macro-structures of capitalism” (Cohen 2018: 906); 2) studying the interplay between national borders and market borders. For example, how the ambiguity of changing borders and frontier regions, such as between Israel and Palestine, may cause unexpected consequences for established (cross-border) markets; 3) studying how the current lack of regulatory frameworks in the sharing economy may be contingent on existing geographical infrastructures, thereby reiterating recent efforts to study “legal regimes as structuring elements of market constitution” (Alvarez León 2018: 220).

In sum, shared mobility markets are not merely changing the way we move in inner cities, but have started to reshuffle and created new relationships with previously unconnected actors across public and private realms. The political, social and economic implications of this re-configuration is crucial for scholars in marketing and economic geography if they wish to further understand the dynamics of how markets operate during change processes.

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