



CAR - SHARING

EXAMPLE OF PRACTICE LAYER - ECONOMIC DIMENSION

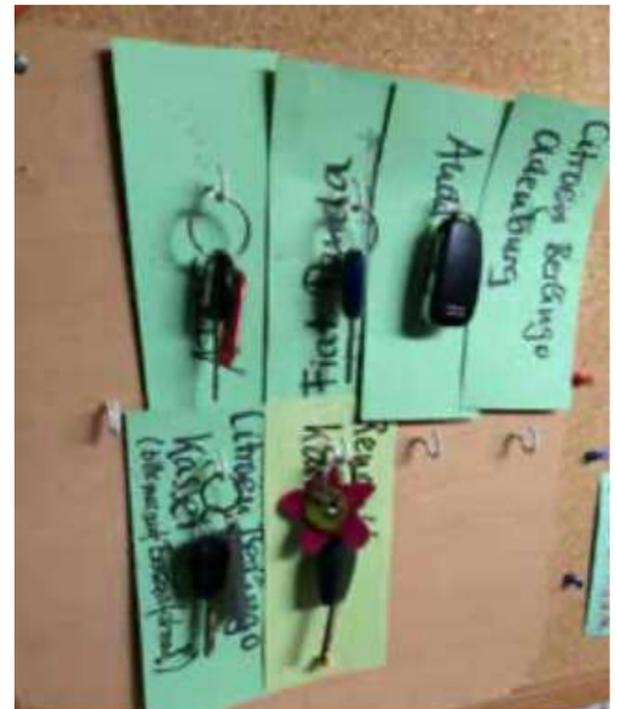
Nowadays most people use cars very frequently, so it is no wonder that even in groups strongly dedicated to sustainability cars are unavoidable, particularly in ecovillages which tend to be remotely located. Cars symbolize an increasingly individualistic lifestyle that depends on re-sources that strain the environment severely, either through congestions or emissions.

Transport and cars represent a dilemma and ambivalence. It is no wonder that many sustainable groups, wishing to minimize their ecological impact, are attempting to rely on ecologically and economically viable alternatives, such as various forms of public transport or, even better, bicycles! However, the availability of public transport infrastructure varies widely from place to place. Many sustainable projects chose to be based in remote places, away from cities, shops, and offices, and also far away from other groups with similar values. For such groups, cars remain a necessity. The question remains: how to use cars in a less environmentally harmful manner – while still using them to maintain everyday life with work obligations, friends/family relations, etc.

Some groups establish car-sharing schemes, thus using common cars more effectively: having on average more passengers per ride, distributing ownership and maintenance costs, reducing the number of cars on the road. One possibility is to join an official car-sharing agency that offers car-sharing in different cities. There are usually no car sharing opportunities in rural areas, but if there are enough people in the community who want to use it, car sharing agencies can be approached to install it even in villages. Another possibility is to self-organize a car-sharing system for the community. This usually works quite well even with privately owned cars.

IMPACT ON THE INDIVIDUAL LAYER

Common causes of tensions around car sharing are: cleaning the car “properly” after use, returning the car on time, making sure there is fuel in the tank, accepting that there may be times when you need the car but it is already in use. Both trust and planning are necessary. Owning one’s own car may seem easier, more efficient, and autonomous for doing everyday trips (commuting to work, shopping, etc.) without having to coordinate this with others. Still, the benefits of car sharing are numerous whether you are joining an existing formal scheme or implementing your own system of sharing privately owned cars. Common ownership gives a chance of closer connection with others in the community. Mundane errands have the potential of becoming moments of fun and adventure. Furthermore, car maintenance costs are substantial; car-sharing means cost-sharing, so individuals who otherwise couldn’t afford a car can use it when they need it.



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IMPACT ON THE COMMUNITY LAYER

THE AVERAGE AMERICAN OWNS ALMOST 1 VEHICLE PER PERSON



**DANCING RABBIT ECOVILLAGE'S CARSHARING CO-OP OWNS
1 VEHICLE FOR EVERY 10-15 PEOPLE!**



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Car sharing can bring communities together, not just at events of celebration or business, but for everyday functions. In a community with a few fully utilized cars it is a lot less common to see someone driving a car alone, with all other seats empty. This reduces the carbon footprint of the community as a whole. Car sharing is one of the possible elements of a shared economy and it is easily aligned with other elements. Some car-sharing schemes allow users to see the trips of other users so they can contact each other and share costs. Car sharing is about making individual practices more collective, utilizing the effects of such practices, and benefiting from community building.

INTENTIONS THAT INFLUENCE PRACTICE

Key questions are: What is the community's intention? How much does the community focus on reducing its carbon footprint? Does it wish to use resources more effectively? Would it like to cultivate day-to-day communal activities? Answers to these questions need to be positive if the car-sharing scheme is to run well. Communities that present themselves as sustainable but don't have a car-sharing scheme can use these questions to reevaluate their vision and see how would car-sharing help them function more sustainably. Curious visitors of ecovillages commonly ask the question: So, you live in an ecovillage but each one of you drives your own car? How does this correspond with your core values and intentions?

THE IMPORTANCE OF STRUCTURE

Many car-sharing schemes are possible but the basics of all schemes usually include the following:

- Ownership: all the cars are commonly owned and/or personally owned cars are a part of the scheme
- Organisation: membership contracts, payments, and liability for possible damage, rules for reservations, etc.
- A place (physical or virtual) where reservations can be made, sharing of rides arranged, usage monitored, etc.
- A place where all car keys (and other equipment) is stored and, of course, parking places for shared cars
- Driver's log in for all cars that are a part of car share

Support team, responsible for cars (maintenance), payments (administration), etc.



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These structures usually work better if cars are commonly owned (for instance by the central organization of the group). A car-sharing scheme with privately owned cars is easier to establish on the one hand but tends to be more complicated to run on the other since owners wish to enforce special rules and rights for using their own cars. Negotiation is a skill learned best in the community!

A PRACTICAL EXAMPLE

The 24-hour rule of Sieben Linden car sharing.

In Sieben Linden there are 10 cars in the car-share, 8 of which are privately owned.

Whoever wants to reserve a car for more than 24 hours, needs to get consent from the owner. Within the frame of 24 hours, all free cars can be reserved and used by anyone. If the owner finds out hers/his car is already occupied, she/he must look for another car from the carpool. With enough cars in the carpool, this usually works well.

