



# SHARING OUR WORLD

Simply Sharing Can Solve Big Challenges

by Neal Gorenflo and Jeremy Adam Smith

Sharing is the answer to some of today's biggest questions: How will we meet the needs of the world's enormous population? How do we reduce our impact on the planet and cope with the destruction already inflicted? How can we each be healthy, enjoy life, and create thriving communities?

**H**istorically, we are all connected by climate, roads, fisheries, language, forests, cultures and social networks as part of life on this planet. In recent decades, the rules of access and ownership have shifted in new directions, making sharing more convenient, necessary, fulfilling and even profitable.

## Sharing as a Lifestyle

Ways to share in everyday life seem to be multiplying like rabbits, but perhaps the Great Recession is forcing all of us to pay more attention to its importance these days. There's car sharing, ride sharing, bike sharing, yard sharing, co-working, co-housing, tool libraries and all kinds of cooperatives. Ways to

share power, dialogue and knowledge, such as workplace democracy, citizens' deliberative councils, unconferences, open spaces and world cafés are getting more attention, aided by innovative Web 2.0 tools and other means.

Scores of new websites are designed to help us share real stuff, and it's possible to create a complete lifestyle based on sharing. We can live in a co-housing community, work in a co-op, grow food in a neighbor's yard and travel to the open space town council meeting via a local car-share. Want to know about the nuts and bolts of how to build a shareable life? Read *The Sharing Solution*, by Janelle Orsi and Emily Doskow.

## Shareable Cities

A revolution is underway in our understanding of cities; they are becoming the focal point for our collective hopes and dreams, as well as for all kinds of innovation needed to avert a worsening climate crisis. In the past, we tended to see cities

as dirty, unnatural, isolating places; today, citizens and urban planners alike are starting to see their potential for generating widespread well-being at low financial and environmental cost. There's an increasing appreciation for the benefits of public transit, urban agriculture, making room on the streets for pedestrians and bicyclists and for civic engagement. The very thing that defines a city—its population density—makes sharing things easier, from cars to bikes to homes.

## Social Enterprise and Cooperatives

Social enterprises, both nonprofit or for profit, offer products or services that aim to advance social or environmental missions with benefits for all. This industry is small, relative to the overall economy, but growing extremely fast in some sectors.

The Social Enterprise Alliance reports that nonprofit earned income grew

by more than 200 percent, to \$251 billion, between 1982 and 2002, reflecting a continuing trend in their expanding engagement with their publics. Meanwhile, Cleantech Group research shows that investment in clean-tech ventures nearly trebled, to \$5.2 billion, between 2004 and 2008. At the same time, fair trade goods sales doubled between 2004 and 2007, to around \$4 billion, according to the Fair Trade Federation.

Gar Alperovitz, author of *America Beyond Capitalism*, says that more than 11,000 worker cooperatives have emerged in the last 30 years. Many embrace pro-social missions and are managed, governed and owned by the people who work at them.

## The Nonprofit Sector

Nonprofits are an increasingly important way for people to share their wealth and labor. Independent Sector reports that, in the U.S. alone, charitable donations to nonprofits more than doubled between 1987 and 2007, to \$303 billion; about 75 percent came from private individuals. The National Center for Charitable Statistics further reports that the number of nonprofits increased 31.5 percent between 1999 and 2009, to 1.58 million. Data from Volunteering in America shows that in 2010, 63.4 million volunteers dedicated more than 8.1 billion hours of service.

## Microfinance

This form of capitalization is a powerful innovation that extends small loans and financial services to help the world's poorest people rise out of poverty, serving customers that traditional banks largely ignore. Kiva, a U.S. nonprofit peer-to-peer microfinance sensation, facilitates around \$5 million in no-interest loans per month to entrepreneurs in developing nations through its website. Microfinancing is yet another way the world is learning to share its wealth.

## The Internet

It's easy to take it for granted, but the Internet's potential as a sharing platform has just begun to unfold. The Internet itself would not be possible if people did not share labor, software and infrastructure. No one owns it or runs it. It's built

and it operates on free and open source software and open standards. Data travels over networks and is routed through servers owned by private individuals and corporations that share transport and routing duties.

This global commons enables the creation of tremendous value. Harvard Business School Professor John Quelch estimates that the economic impact of the Internet is \$1.4 trillion annually in the United States alone. Last year, the Computer & Communications Industry Association calculated that companies and nonprofits relying on "fair use" (such as search engines, web hosting and social media) employ 17 million people and generate \$4.7 trillion a year, one-sixth of the country's gross domestic product.

## Free and Open Source Software (FOSS)

FOSS and the Internet have a symbiotic relationship. The Internet would not have been possible without FOSS, and the growth of FOSS relies on the Internet to power its peer production and distribution model. For example, more than 270 million people use the Firefox browser, a shared, freely available tool. Half the world's websites, about 112 million, are hosted on Apache's open source server software. A quarter million websites run on Drupal, a leading open source content management system.

That's just scratching the surface. Today, the more than 200,000 open source projects operate on nearly 5 billion lines of code that would cost hundreds of billions of dollars to reproduce. Visit the Infoworld Open Source Hall of Fame website for more on desktop favorites.

Today, millions of individuals and organizations rely on FOSS in performing their daily work, as do a growing number of governments. It's a pervasive part of life in the developed world; because of its low cost, open source software may become even more important to developing countries.

## The Open Way

Inspired by the success of free and open source software, the values and

## SHARING HELPFUL WEBSITES

The Internet is a vast repository of information, and even with the help of search engines, navigation can be daunting. These links address topics of interest noted in "Sharing Our World."

**Bike Sharing:** [tinyurl.com/4zsfjtb](http://tinyurl.com/4zsfjtb)  
**Car Sharing:** [tinyurl.com/49hytdj](http://tinyurl.com/49hytdj)  
**Co-working:** [tinyurl.com/ygbvntq](http://tinyurl.com/ygbvntq)  
**Ride Sharing:** [tinyurl.com/499lh9n](http://tinyurl.com/499lh9n)  
**Sharing Directory:** [Shareable.net/how-to-share](http://Shareable.net/how-to-share)

Source: [Shareable.net](http://Shareable.net)

**Civic Engagement:** [tinyurl.com/242yaja](http://tinyurl.com/242yaja)  
**Cohousing:** [tinyurl.com/3amn2ch](http://tinyurl.com/3amn2ch)  
**Cooperatives:** [tinyurl.com/4m7vqx2](http://tinyurl.com/4m7vqx2)  
**Urban Agriculture:** [tinyurl.com/la558s](http://tinyurl.com/la558s)  
**Yard Sharing:** [tinyurl.com/4chmtua](http://tinyurl.com/4chmtua)

Source: [Yes.Magazine.org](http://Yes.Magazine.org)

**Business/Government/Education:** [OpenSource.com](http://OpenSource.com)  
**Car Sharing:** [RelayRides.com](http://RelayRides.com)  
**Home & Family Life:** [NeighborGoods.net](http://NeighborGoods.net)  
**Home & Garden:** [ShareSomeSugar.com](http://ShareSomeSugar.com)  
**InfoWorld Open Source Hall of Fame:** [tinyurl.com/4ujuzpu](http://tinyurl.com/4ujuzpu)  
**Microfinance:** [Kiva.org](http://Kiva.org)  
**Neighborhood Rentals:** [Rentalic.com](http://Rentalic.com)  
**Open Government Directive:** [tinyurl.com/495ks6k](http://tinyurl.com/495ks6k)  
**Open Source Tractor:** [OpenFarmTech.org/wiki/LifeTrac](http://OpenFarmTech.org/wiki/LifeTrac)  
**OpenStreetMaps:** [OpenStreetMap.org](http://OpenStreetMap.org)  
**Peer-to-Peer Knowledge:** [blog.p2pFoundation.net](http://blog.p2pFoundation.net)  
**Social Media:** [TrendWatching.com](http://TrendWatching.com)  
**Yard & Garden:** [Hyperlocavore.ning.com](http://Hyperlocavore.ning.com)

practices of open sourcing—making information and innovations publicly available—are being applied in a dizzying number of ways. In the past few years, open, or peer-to-peer, sharing strategies have gained significant traction in science, business, culture, education and government.

Applications range from the obscure, like the Open Source Tractor, to the everyday, like the OpenStreetMaps project. It's a tough trend to quantify, because it is so viral and self-organized.

The Obama administration's Open Government Directive is currently one of the most visible of these efforts, at least in the United States. The directive orders each executive department and agency to identify and publish online, in an open format, at least three high-value data sets; create an open government web page and respond to public input received via that page; and develop and publish an Open Government Plan that describes how they are improving transparency and integrating public participation and collaboration into its activities.

### Social Media

Sharing is the currency of social media. *Socialnomics* author Erik Qualman alerts us that, "Social media is bigger than you think."

The public uploaded more user-generated video to YouTube in a recent six-month period than the three major TV networks produced and distributed in the past 60 years. Now with more than 500 million users, Facebook would represent the third largest country in the world by population. Wikipedia contains more than 9 million articles in 250 languages, all written by volunteers—and with an accuracy that studies like that at Harford Community College, in Bel Air, Maryland, indicate approaches that of leading commercial sources (80 versus 95 percent). Creative Commons has made it easier for creators to share their work; they've licensed more than 130 million creative works in 50 countries since 2002.

By 2008, one in eight couples who married that year met through social

media, and 96 percent of Generation Y has joined a social network, where sharing is a way of life. In these powerful ways, social media has taken sharing mainstream.

### Generation Y = Gen G

Now that a shareable world has a serious foothold, all that's needed is a willing population to scale it up. There's a strong argument that Gen Y is the generation that can bring it to fruition.

Roughly 100 million strong in the United States, Gen Y grew up on the Internet and brings its values and practices, including sharing, into the real world. Last year, *TrendWatching.com* called them Gen G (for "generous") and said they are accelerating a cultural shift where giving is already the new taking.

They may not reach their full sharing potential until later in life, but there are promising indicators that they are already having a telling impact.

An online study by Cone Inc. and AMP Insights concluded that 61 percent of 13-to-25-year-olds feel personally responsible for making a difference in the world. Eighty-three percent will trust a company more if it's socially and environmentally responsible. Volunteering by college students increased by 20 percent between 2002 and 2005, with nearly one in three contributing their time.

Business strategist Gary Hamel believes that this massive generational force, which outnumbers baby boomers, promises to transform our world in the image of the Internet—a world where sharing and contributing to the common good are integral to the good life. William Strauss and Neil Howe, authors of *Millennials Rising*, believe that Gen Y is a hero generation, coming of age in a time of crises they're already helping to resolve, largely by applying the tools and mindset of sharing.

*Neal Gorenflo is the publisher of Shareable.net, a leading online magazine about sharing that includes the Web's largest collection of how-to-share articles. Jeremy Adam Smith is the editor of Shareable.net.*

We are rethinking ourselves through sharing, linking and collaborating in new ways.



# FOUR DEGREES OF SHARING

by Janelle Orsi



## Sharing to the First Degree: Requires Cooperation + Minimal Planning

At the most basic level, sharing arrangements require little planning, time or money. They can start or stop almost any time: sometimes, quite spontaneously. Many of us already share at these levels.

- Carpooling
- Potlucks or meal exchanges with neighbors or coworkers
- Borrowing and lending goods
- Babysitting exchanges
- Dog-walking exchanges
- Harvesting and sharing fruit from neighborhood trees
- Sharing free computer software or content

## Sharing to the Second Degree: Requires Cooperation + More Extensive Planning

These arrangements generally involve a larger number of people and/or sharing things with more value. They entail a higher degree of cooperation and planning, and a greater investment of time or money, as well as some administrative detail work, and likely a written agreement among sharers.

- Car ownership
- In-home care provider for children, elders or people with disabilities

- Rental housing or ownership of a single-family home
- Yard space for food cultivation
- Babysitting co-op with multiple families
- Neighborhood tool lending “library” (perhaps shared shed storage or a list of tools each neighbor owns and is willing to lend)
- Food-buying club
- Neighborhood home repair group

## Sharing to the Third Degree: Requires Cooperation + Extensive Planning + Infrastructure

At the third degree of sharing, participants will probably adopt systems for communicating, making decisions, managing money and keeping records. They will probably adopt some technologies, like an online calendar for shared scheduling. They may even create a small nonprofit or limited liability company (LLC).

As a result of creating such infrastructure, third-degree sharing arrangements often have an identity independent of their individual members. In other words, even as members come and go and there is complete turnover, the sharing arrangement remains and becomes a lasting community institution.

- Car-sharing club
- Cohousing communities and

- housing cooperatives
- Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs
- Cooperative groceries
- Parent-run cooperative preschools
- Offices, studios, commercial kitchens and other workspaces shared among multiple entrepreneurs
- Communitywide tool lending libraries
- Cooperatives that facilitate sharing of resources and collective bargaining by businesses

## Sharing to the Fourth Degree: Requires Cooperation + Extensive Planning + Infrastructure + Communitywide Restructuring and Mobilization

More formalized community participation, whether publicly or privately managed, involves significant investment of time and resources and a more complex system of administration. Taking sharing to the fourth degree might require getting government buy-in, mobilizing multiple players (legislators, investors, banks, developers, planners) or even restructuring how a community collaborates.

- Communitywide car-sharing program
- Official designation of casual carpooling parking lots and pickup spots
- Citywide bike-sharing programs
- Dedication of public land to community gardening plots
- Expansion of public library systems to include lending of tools, equipment and other goods
- Planning of neighborhoods and housing designs to facilitate extensive common areas and community interaction
- Citywide WiFi programs

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