

**Westfälische Wilhelms Universität Münster /**  
**University of Twente**

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Institut für Politikwissenschaft / Faculty of Management and Governance

Prof. Dr. Karsten Mause / Dr. Maarten J. Arentsen

**Governing the Sharing**

*Sharing Economy on the Verge of Becoming a Public Policy Issue*

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Student:                   Fabian Gorke  
Studies:                   Public Administration / European Studies

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# 1. Introduction

The idea to share is longstanding. It is practiced by all individuals and involves to utilize or to enjoy something with others. It is a form of exchange between humans that creates social bonds. Since the aftermath of the economic crisis in 2008, new forms of sharing are emerging. In the media they are referred to as Sharing Economy.

What is innovative about this sharing concept is that it represents a market idea, which creates new modalities of provisioning goods and services (Benkler, 2004). The crucial dimension are digital technologies or to be more precise the internet. Through incorporation of the internet sharing concepts are able to reduce transaction and search costs to a minimum. Thus, it makes it easy for individuals to share via online platforms or apps. The underlying principle is the utilization of unused assets ranging from spaces to services to objects. “The sharing concept has created markets out of things that wouldn’t have been considered monetizable assets before” (Forbes, 2013) due to its simple idea of sharing nearly everything. Today, Sharing Economy operates on all levels, from local organized neighborhood communities to global businesses. To give an example: Consider that for instance in the room sharing branch the platform AirBnB is able to offer more rooms than all Hilton Hotels worldwide without owning any real-estate (Praschl, 2014).

The Sharing Economy has been examined and discussed with regards to the advantages, challenges (Agyeman & McLaren & Schaefer-Borrego, 2013; Schor, 2014; Hamari & Sjöklint & Ukkonen, 2015; and others) as well as theoretical reflections on the principle of sharing (Belk, 2007, 2010, 2014). Moreover, media has adopted the topic concerned with the positive impacts for individuals like earning opportunities and potentials for the society like mobility and ecological effects (Tagesschau, 2015; Praschl, 2014). But in the media criticism is being raised due to concerns in consumer protection and the bypassing of legal market regulation (Die Zeit, 2014; The Guardian 2015a/b; Ziegler & Czycholl, 2014; Schultz, 2014). The negligence to cope with this growing issue would impose external costs particularly for governments. On the one hand governments would miss the potential of positive advances in society and economy like new developments in mobility concepts for urban areas. On the other hand they risk possible negative impacts for consumers as a result of an absence of regulation or a legal framework.

Yet, the connection between Sharing Economy and policy-making is a not quite yet elaborated field. Thus, this paper investigates the relation between governmental policy-making and the extent to which Sharing Economy is recognized and incorporated into

political agendas. Policy research shows that for a political issue to be put on a political agenda it has to be recognized as a problem by the respective government, otherwise possible policy issues are neither discussed nor are policies implemented. Drawing from partisan theory, parties are the central actors in governments and define the issues addressed and implemented within the policy-making process (Hibbs, 1977, Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2008, 2013). Furthermore, conservative parties tend to preserve the status quo in contrast to green or social parties that tend to more interventionist behavior and support concepts for efficient and ecological use of resources. The aim of this paper is to examine if Sharing Economy is dealt with in the political context and policy-making process or if it is being ignored. This paper is conducted in a qualitative rather than quantitative fashion. Therefore, in order to conduct such an analysis the national governments of Germany and the United Kingdom are selected as examples. For this reason, government/party programs as well as coalition agreements of the current and last legislative period are researched using the method of qualitative content analysis. Hence, the research question is:

*To what extent is the emerging phenomenon of Sharing Economy perceived and introduced to the political agenda by the national governments of the United Kingdom and Germany?*

Through the analysis of the political agendas of national governments the relation between Sharing Economy and policy-making will be elaborated and simultaneously the party political constitution as well as the share of votes will be considered. In addition, potential options and strategies for advocates or critics of Sharing Economy become apparent to transform sharing issues into themes important enough for parties/governments to incorporate them within the political agendas. Such strategies are derived through the identification and adoption of mechanisms in partisan theory and policy research and their connection to the outcomes of the analysis.

The paper is structured as follows: First, the theoretical framework is outlined. It starts with a theoretical depiction of Sharing Economy thereby defining central characteristics. Subsequently, the analytical tool of the policy cycle is explained as well as the mechanisms and ideas of partisan theory. Second, the research design and method are introduced discussing the choice of cases, units of analysis and categories. It is further outlined how the empirical analysis is conducted. Third, the results of the content analysis are described and the status quo of the share of votes among the governmental parties is presented. Then, the results of Germany and the United Kingdom and the respective partisan situation are compared, discussed and put in relation to the theoretical framework. Last, the paper is completed with a concluding remark.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

### 1. The Paradigm of Sharing Economy

While sharing between individuals usually takes place among families and close kin (Belk, 2007, 2010), contemporary concepts of sharing have begun to operate globally, especially through the internet and digital technology or locally through organized groups in the neighborhood.

“Just as YouTube did with TV and the blogosphere did to mainstream media, the Share Economy blows up the industrial model of companies owning and people consuming, and allows everyone to be both consumer and producer [...]” (Forbes, 2013)

In his article Belk (2010) distinguishes sharing from other modes of consumption namely gift-giving and commodity exchange. An example for classic commodity exchange is buying a good for money such as a bottle of water or piece of bread. In commodity exchanges we transfer ownership between the seller and buyer (Haase & Pick, 2015; Belk, 2010). Thus, commodity exchange involves transfer of ownership. Ideally the exchange is done simultaneously, therefore, the two parties (usually strangers) do not have to see each other again (Belk, 2007, 2010). In contrast to commodity exchange, gift-giving is normally done at special occasions, governed by social norms but also involves transfer of ownership (Belk, 2010). For example consider the habit of birthday presents: Receiving a gift at your birthday and in exchange repeating the gesture to others – this procedure is never completed or balanced and one person remains in debt of a gift (Belk, 2007, 2010).

Even though, sharing fosters social bonds it can be referred to in positive or negative ways such as altruistic or selfish and fair or unfair (Belk, 2007). Belk defines sharing as:

“the act and process of distributing what is ours to others for their use as well as the act and process of receiving or taking something from others for our use” (Belk, 2007: 127).

Contrary to commodity exchange and gift-giving, sharing is not based on reciprocity and complete transfer of ownership. In fact, sharing connects people with each other and emphasizes access rather than to own goods (Haase & Pick, 2015, Hamari et al., 2015). The access over ownership means “that users may offer and share their goods and services to other users for a limited time through [...] sharing activities” (Hamari et al., 2015: 5). Access over ownership becomes relevant in this process due to systematic overcapacity of certain goods – in Western societies at least – with the goal to harness unused capacities and provide access for more people (Benkler, 2004; Haase & Pick, 2015; Schor, 2014; Agyeman

et al., 2013). In this case overcapacity means that a resource or good is not used to its full capacity it originally possesses (Benkler, 2004). For instance using an owned car for only four days a week leads to three days on which the car is not used. This capacity could be utilized to create value for another person. However, since it is not used by others overcapacity is created. Sharing concepts are viewed to entail an efficient system in distributing and allocating unused capacities which then can be utilized to produce an economical valuable output (Benkler, 2004; Agyeman et al., 2013).

“The evolution of the social web [...] first enabled programmers to share code (Linux), then allowed people to share their lives (Facebook), and most recently encouraged creators to share their content (YouTube). ‘Now we’re going into the fourth phase,’ says Botsman, ‘where people are saying,’ I can apply the same technology to share all kinds of assets offline, from the real world.” (Sacks, 2011)

The internet and new technologies play a central role within the Sharing Economy as they provide mechanisms and networks. These reduce transaction and coordination costs to a minimum and enhance trust among the participants through feedback and rating mechanisms (Agyeman et al. 2013; Lamberton & Rose, 2013; Schor, 2015).

“[The] real innovation is not online rentals. It’s ‘trust.’ It [AirBnB] created a framework of trust that has made tens of thousands of people comfortable renting rooms in their homes to strangers” (Friedman, 2013).

Relying on the internet and its mechanisms, sharing online enables individuals to share up to almost everything material or immaterial. In return, access becomes more important to individuals involved in sharing (Agyeman et al., 2013). Thus, sharing is individual orientated and provides “a bunch of new ways to connect things that are not being used with people who could use them” (Schifferes, 2013).

Consequently, the Sharing Economy incorporates not only a social dimension, fostering bonds and trust between formerly unknown individuals, referred to as “Stranger Sharing” (Schor, 2015: 14). But it furthermore adds an economic dimension. The new emerging forms of sharing are referred to as more efficient, ecological and provide profitable earning opportunities for individuals besides their actual work (Agyeman et al., 2013, Benkler, 2004). In addition, it involves technological and digital developments as a third dimension that are the foundation of the emergence and vast growth of this phenomenon (Hamari et al., 2015, Haase & Pick, 2015).

To sum it up, Sharing Economy is an emerging innovative idea that has impacts in the fields of economy, society and politics thanks to its different dimensions. It can be defined as a concept in which individuals (who can be matched and organized by firms) offer each other access to under-utilized resources. Wherby, monetary exchange is possible.

In consequence, such definition is distinguished from economic models like Second-Hand concepts (e.g. Ebay), which involve the complete transfer of ownership rather than temporal access. Second-Hand concepts even represent commodity exchange based on the recirculation of goods. It also follows that when another person rents a room, when the original tenants are on holiday, it can be regarded as a part of Sharing Economy because unused assets are being utilized. However, continuously living somewhere else, but renting your actual apartment, is not only often illegal but in fact similar to running a traditional hotel and therefore not part of the Sharing Economy. This is further applicable to modes like Business-to-consumer models involving leasing and renting, especially widespread in the automobile industry (e.g. Car2Go by Daimler or DriveNow by BMW<sup>1</sup>). As they do not represent the utilization of unused goods but rather a provision of cars over a contractually stipulated period of time they do equally not represent a sharing concept.

## 2. Public Policy Cycle and Agenda Setting

Policy research is all “about what governments actually do” (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003: 3; Knill & Schulze & Tosun, 2010). When, how, why and by what means do governments make universal decisions and which reasons can be identified that guide government’s actions (Schmidt, 2006; Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2015). Thus, the premise of policy research is to explain governmental activity and in consequence to study policies and policy-making (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2015). One key question is not only if but also to what extent changes and challenges of the Sharing Economy are adopted by governments and the policy-making process. But what is a policy?

### a. Public Policy

One of the most known definitions of a policy in political science is anything “governments choose to do or not to do” (Dye, 1972:2). A policy, therefore, is every action taken by a government. Nevertheless, Dye’s definition is not adequate enough since it includes all governmental activity as a policy. It even could be argued that bureaucratic expenses such as purchasing new print-paper are public policies (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003).

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<sup>1</sup> DriveNow powered by BMW/Mini accessible: <https://de.drive-now.com/>  
Daimler’s Car2Go: <http://www.daimler-financialservices.com/dfs/de/car2go>

Anderson (1984; as cited by Howlett & Ramseh, 2003: 7) views a policy as “a purposive course of action followed by an actor or a set of actors in dealing with a problem or matter of concern”. The difference to Dye’s concept is that Anderson puts emphasis on the problem-orientated process of policy-making based on social problems perceived by governmental actors. Another scholar defines policy as:

“a set of interrelated decisions taken by a political actor or group of actors concerning the selection of goals and the means of achieving them within a specified situation where those decisions should, in principle be within the power of those to achieve” (Jenkins, 1978; as cited by Howlett & Ramesh, 2003: 6).

This definition adds another dimension to a policy. In particular that it is necessary for a government to have the capacity to implement its decisions. Despite, the different definitions of policies, common characteristics can be identified.

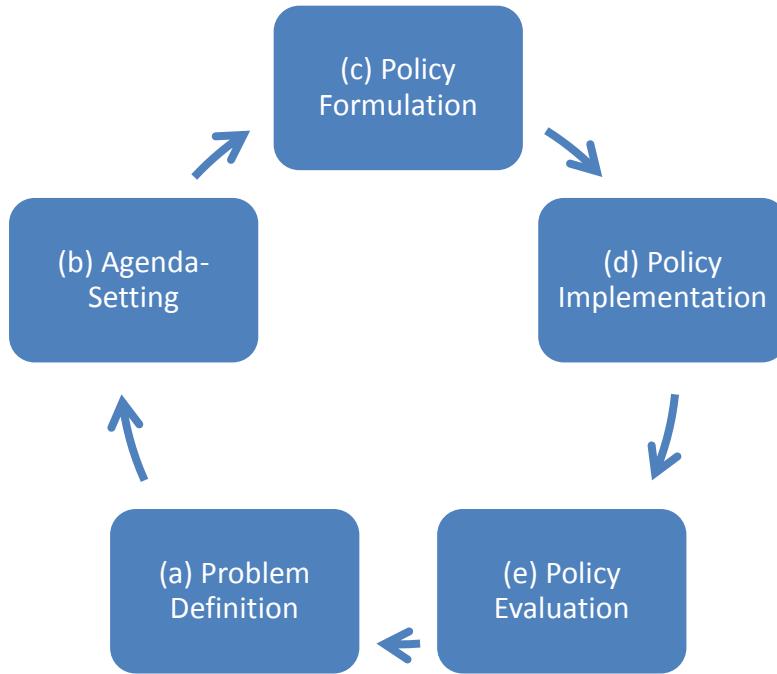
To summarize: Governments are the central actors in the policy-making process. Governmental decisions constitute policies, which can either sustain the status quo or alter it. Therefore, governments have to possess the capacity of decision-making to implement policies. In addition, even inaction by the government can be referred to as policy because it influences the policy-making process, as well as society. The process of policy making is highly influenced by the selection procedure of the policies introduced to it. Thereby, the preferred issues of the government are favored (Schubert & Blum, 2009; Cobb & Ross & Ross, 1976). In consequence, other potentially equally urgent problems are not introduced to the political agenda due to the preferences of governments (Cobb et al., 1976; Schneider & Janning, 2006).

### b. Policy-Cycle and Agenda Setting

Since policies are developed through a processual procedure it is possible to divide this process into a series of phases building a simplified model, which allows for an analysis of certain stages of the policy-making process (Schubert & Blum, 2009; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; see Figure I: 7).

The different phases can be illustrated as a cycle because a policy is not recognized to have a destined life. In fact, policies do reappear in new guises succeeding one another or are introduced with minor modifications (Howlett & Ramesh, 2003:13). The policy cycle theoretically involves five different phases. These are modeled to be distinct from each other but in reality however can be either intertwined, skipped or in another order than illustrated by the model. The five phases include: (a) Problem recognition and Problem

definition, (b) Agenda-setting (c) Policy formulation (d) Policy Implementation (e) Policy Evaluation (see Figure I; Schubert & Blum, 2009; Howlett & Ramesh, 2003; Wenzelburger & Zohlnhöfer, 2015).



**Figure I: Policy Cycle. Source: Own Illustration.**

Two phases in the policy-cycle are crucial determinants of public policy, however less visible when compared to the attention of actual implemented policies. The two phases are (a) Problem definition and recognition as well as (b) Agenda-setting (Cobb et al., 1976). Problem definition and recognition refers to the fact that an issue has to be defined and acknowledged as a problem, before political decisions are possible. Agenda-setting refers to the question: “why do some issues appear on the governmental agenda for action and not others?” (Howlett & Ramseh, 2003: 120)

The process of how problems attain the political agenda is called “agenda building” (Cobb et al., 1976: 126). There are two types of agendas: (a) the public agenda, which consist of themes and problems that are of public concern and interest. Second, (b) the formal agenda (political agenda) consisting of issues that have been recognized by political actors (Cobb et al., 1976). These issues can either initiate from the public agenda and enter the formal agenda or vice versa. The Sharing Economy, however, is discussed frequently in the media and by several scholars (Die Zeit, 2014; Schor, 2014, 2015; Praschl, 2014; and others). Therefore, it can be seen as an issue positioned on the public agenda. Thus, it has not been either recognized as a problem or even put on the agenda by governmental officials. Hence, the question at hand is: How do issues enter the formal agenda?

Cobb, Ross and Ross (1976) identified three different models of agenda building. The inside initiative model is characterized by issues being acknowledged within the political system and is placed on the formal agenda. This process takes place without knowledge of the public. In the second model agenda building is initiated by political actors but further depends on the support of the broader public for its implementation. The process is inverted, compared to the one we are interested in. The third, the outside initiative model is defined by the initiation of problems by non-governmental actors or groups. Once the problem has entered the public agenda, it is necessary to create enough pressure on political actors in order to force them to recognize and consider the issue at hand. This is exactly the model applicable to the case of Sharing Economy. Hence, controversial opinions, surveys and scientific discussions deal with the topic of Sharing Economy in the media and public (Haase & Pick, 2015; Die Zeit, 2014; Praschl, 2014; Schor, 2014; Schultz, 2014; The Guardian, 2015a/b and others).

Although, as Cobb et al. (1976: 132) recognize, it has to be considered that a formal agenda status of a problem “does not necessarily mean that the final decisions of the authorities or the actual policy implementation will be what the grievance group originally sought.”

A prominent problem, identified by Cobb and Elder (1971) is the tendency of policy-makers to prioritize older issues and reassure the prevalence of status quo. Furthermore political parties play a major role in the introduction and acknowledgement of new issues on the formal agenda. As the reception in party programs places issues not only on the formal agenda but also in the context of political party controversy (Cobb & Elder, 1971). This indicates the importance of political parties in the articulation of policies as well as a part in the policy-making process. Not only because they constitute the government but also due to their power to introduce issues to the political agenda through party programs.

### 3. Hypothesis of Party Difference

We have seen that governments play a central role in the policy-making process. The central actors in governments are parties (Zohlnhöfer, 2013) and the party political composition of the government is related to differences in the policy-making process and policy output. Consequently, the party political orientation of the government determines government activity and differs according to the parties represented in the government (Hibbs, 1977; Hicks & Swank, 1992; Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007, Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2008, 2013; Schubert & Blum, 2009).

One important approach regarding partisan influence was first introduced by Douglas Hibbs (1977). He argued that the subjective interests of distinct social classes constitute parties, which in return try to assert the interests of their electorate through the implementation of their preferred policies. This theoretical idea is called the hypothesis of party difference. Hibbs (1977) further assumed that governments do have a vast maneuvering room to implement their policies. By representing and implementing policies according to the interests of their electorate, parties are also able to foster their reelection (Zohlnhöfer, 2003; Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007).

Besides trying to implement policies according to electorate interests, parties also want to maximize their votes and to be re-elected (Downs, 1957, Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007). Critics might argue that the competition for votes among parties will lead to a convergence of party interests because parties try to cover all societal interests in order to be reelected and maximize their votes. Despite the fact that parties try to include all possible interests of the electorate and an assimilation of party programs is observable, research results show that differences between parties remain prevalent (Zohlnhöfer, 2003; Beyme, 2000). Parties might even concentrate on the same social issues in their programs. They, however, differ in their favored policy instrument, as well as their ideological views on how certain social processes function (Zohlnhöfer, 2003; Beyme 2000). Following Zohlnhöfer (2003, 2008) parties do not only pursue the interests of their electorate but also embody the views, values and beliefs of their party members on how society works. As a result, parties do not only differ among each other but also within themselves, which can be seen in the distinction between left-right camps within contemporary political parties (Zohlnhöfer, 2003).

In summary, a political party has two goals: First, the establishment of policies reflecting the interests of their voters and members. Second, the aim to maximize votes and to be reelected (Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2008, 2013; Schubert & Blum, 2009).

Thus, it can be argued that governments constituted by different parties lead to different policy outcomes (Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2013; Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007). So how can party differences in governments be analyzed? A common approach of hypothesis building is to divide the main party political factions into two parts: Right-wing parties (including conservative and liberal parties) and left-wing parties (including Green parties and Social Democratic Parties) (Mause & Krumm, 2011). It can be argued that right-wing parties favor the preservation of the status quo and reduce state interference into the economy following the implications of a supply-side economic strategy. Whereas, left-wing parties are

associated with a higher level of state intervention into economic affairs and also emphasize the role of the public sector (Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007; Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2008, 2013; Hibbs, 1977; Mause & Krumm, 2011).

But why should governments at all respond in some way to the Sharing Economy. The Sharing Economy confronts the economy and governments with a new economic approach and new economic workings. The estimated rapid growth of sharing concepts (European Commission, 2014; Wosskow, 2014) does influence the economic performance of traditional businesses such as hotels or automobile-production. The advancing digitalization and the related growth of Share Economy do in fact push boundaries and question existing regulation of traditional market concepts (Haucap, 2015). It is not without any reason that traditional automobile manufacture established own online 'car-sharing' or rather leasing and renting services (e.g. Car2Go by Daimler or DriveNow by BMW) in order to "position themselves under the big-tent of the sharing economy" (Schor, 2014: 1). Furthermore, political officials should deal with the effects of sharing concepts entering existing markets and its possible impacts on market competition, monopolization or bypassing of market regulation (Haucap, 2015). Therefore, the negligence to deal with Sharing Economy would impose negative external costs on governments. Moreover, positive aspects already discussed in the media and literature would be cast aside. In specific, on the one hand governments would miss the potential of advances in society and economy such as new developments in mobility concepts for urban and rural areas. On the other hand risk possible negative impacts for consumers as a result of an absence of regulation or a legal framework. These are by far not the only reasons why governments should respond to the Sharing Economy in one way or another.

Assuming that responses regarding the Sharing Economy can be identified in the respective party programs, the resulting response are expected to differ according to the partisan alignment of the government. On the one hand this is because right-wing parties tend to focus on the preservation of the status quo as well as the protection of traditional business models. Furthermore, conservative or liberal parties put emphasis on less government interventions and regulation in market affairs. The idea of the Sharing Economy to utilize unused capacities challenges the status quo or more precise the economic mantra of consumption and purchasing to own. Hence, two possible responses can be expected: First, right-wing governments do not respond to the Sharing Economy as their focus is on free market competition and less state intervention. Second, if right-wing governments respond it is with focus on the negative aspects due to the challenge Sharing Economy poses to traditional businesses (Benkler, 2004; Agyeman et al., 2013). This is different for left-wing

parties, which emphasize the role of the public sector and consequently a higher level of state interference in the economy (Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007; Zohlnhöfer, 2003; Mause & Krumm, 2011). Sharing Economy provides access to a variety of goods that is made available for example by online platforms and provides an opportunity of financial restricted social groups to access such resources in such a way. In addition, Sharing Economy is seen as a more ecological and social economic behavior (Praschl, 2014; Tagesschau, 2015; Haase & Pick, 2015; Schor, 2014). It is therefore expected that left-wing parties do respond to Sharing Economy with a general positive attitude.

Thus, three hypotheses can be derived from partisan theory in relation to Sharing Economy:

- (a) *National governments with strong participation of right-wing parties are expected to not incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda*
- (b) *National governments with strong participation of left-wing parties are expected to incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda*
- (c) *If the Sharing Economy is recognized by governments led by a majority of a right-wing party the attitude is expected to be negative*

### 3. Research Design and Research Question

It has been identified that governments and the respective governmental parties play a central role in the policy-making process and the impacts and relevance of the Sharing Economy have been underlined. Moreover, opportunities as well as challenges of the Sharing Economy call for political attention, if not action. Therefore, the research question posed in this paper is: *To what extent is the emerging phenomenon of Sharing Economy perceived and introduced to the political agenda by the national governments of the United Kingdom and Germany?* The combination of partisan theory and the policy-making process, especially agenda building is viewed to be able to explain the variation regarding whether Sharing Economy is addressed by governments or not. The expected result is that the recognition of Sharing Economy by national governments differs according to their party political constitution:

- (a) *National governments with strong participation of right-wing parties are expected to not incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda*
- (b) *National governments with strong participation of left-wing parties are expected to incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda*

(c) *If the Sharing Economy is recognized by governments led by a majority of a right-wing party the attitude is expected to be negative*

## 1. Research Design

The aim of this paper is to examine if Sharing Economy is recognized within the political context and policy-making process or ignored. Therefore, the influences of the variables of partisan theory are recognized. In order to be able to conduct such a snapshot of the current status of Share Economy within the political sphere, the method applied in this paper will be a (qualitative) content analysis. Content analysis is a method of analyzing written, verbal or visual communication messages to interpret and evaluate meaning and content from the context of this data (Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Kassarjian, 1977; Salheiser, 2014). This method goes beyond merely counting words and allows extrapolating from textual data to social contexts (Salheiser, 2014; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). It is an useful tool because it “provide[s] knowledge and understanding of the phenomenon under study” (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005: 1278). In the interest of conducting a content analysis it is necessary to define specific a period of time (Kassarjian, 1977; Klein, 2014).

Due to the different definitions and concepts of Sharing Economy it is difficult to identify a specific moment in time when Sharing Economy arose. However, there are certain indicators. Some prominent and well known examples of sharing concepts in Europe are AirBnB, BlablaCar or Uber. AirBnB was founded 2008 and Uber 2009 in the United States of America. Other online platforms and sharing concepts emerged approximately since 2005. BlablaCar for instance was established in 2006 in France.<sup>2</sup> The emergence and scientific interest has highly increased in the aftermath of the financial crisis in 2008 (Sacks, 2011; Schor, 2014; Hamari et al., 2015). As these examples of Sharing Economy businesses and scientific literature indicate is the Sharing Economy a rather new phenomenon and a definite point of origin difficult to define. Therefore, the time period of this research includes not only the current period of legislation of the government but also the respective previous legislation period in the United Kingdom and Germany. This is viewed to incorporate a timeframe most applicable for the examination of the research question. Selecting a legislation period prior 2005/08 is not expected to provide convincing and informative results. Furthermore, considering that the Sharing Economy did not receive

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<sup>2</sup> AirBnB (2015): About Us. Online: <https://www.airbnb.co.uk/about/about-us> (Accessed: 18.09.2015)  
BlablaCar (2014): Über uns. Online: <https://www.blablacar.de/news/ueber-uns> (Accessed: 18.09.2015)  
Uber (2015): Über uns. Online: <https://www.uber.com/de/about> (Accessed: 18.09.2015)

such vast media and public attention prior 2005 (Guardian, 2015a/b; Tagesschau, 2015; Die Zeit, 2014; Ziegler & Czycholl, 2014; Schultz, 2014). Hence, focusing on the last two periods of legislation of government provides the optimal time frame for this paper. Thus, in the case of Germany the legislative periods between 2009-2013 and 2013-2017 are studied. On the other hand in the case of the United Kingdom the legislative periods between 2010-2015 and 2015-2020 are examined.

A second step is to decide what set of data is analyzed in order to identify governments' reaction and possible differences depending on the party political constitution of governments. The most useful textual data to analyze are coalition agreements (if more than one party is needed to form the government) or government/party programs (if one party forms the government). Coalition agreements are published at the beginning of each period of legislation by the respective parties charged with the formation of the government, as are governmental programs. Party programs outline the policy roadmap of the party should it rise to power through the next election and are chosen if the former two units do not exist. All possible unit sets represent a guideline of the planned political action in the following legislative period. Thus, coalition agreements or government/party programs can be referred to as the political agenda of the government in question. Selecting either a coalition agreement or government/party program of the respective period of legislation of the German and British national government provides a suitable data set for the analysis. It also represents a manageable sample size and allows for the examination of the role of party political orientation.

#### a. Case Selection

Furthermore, the case selection has to be explained. Since this paper is conducted in a qualitative rather than quantitative fashion, selecting one or more cases at random is problematic. Because for a comparative small-N case study randomized selection procedures often create a sample that is unrepresentative (Gerring & Seawright, 2008). However, it is evident that selecting only a small number or only one case is inherently difficult regarding the possible level of generalizability. To decrease the unreliability of the study, a suitable selection method has to be applied providing a reliable small sample size. Drawing from Gerring and Seawright's (2008) article, a case study should be representative and entail a variation of characteristics of theoretical or categorical interest. Germany and the United Kingdom are chosen as empirical examples. Both cases can be regarded as typical cases of European democracies (Gerring & Seawright, 2008). Besides, the United Kingdom and Germany represent on the one hand two of the largest economies in Europe and on the other different varieties of capitalism (Schmidt, 2003; Höpner, 2015). The United

Kingdom is traditionally defined as a liberal-market economy has become more financially market driven and liberal in state relations and Germany can be defined as a coordinated market economy that has moved towards a more competitive managed capitalism (Schmidt, 2003). This is insofar relevant as the Sharing Economy has originated in the economical foundation of Western democracies and economies. In addition, these two cases have been selected because the content and space of this paper are limited. Incorporating more cases for example France regarding its economic performance and interesting standing within the literature of varieties of capitalism (see Schmidt, 2003) was not possible. This is due to barriers embodied by the researcher's language expertise as well as time and formal requirement of this paper (Gerring & Seawright, 2008). Thus, the small number of cases and their limiting effect on the generalizability has to be considered.

### b. Categories of Analysis

The next step is to clarify the units of measurement, which can either be a word or a theme (Kassarjian, 1977) and to determine the categories of analysis (Kassarjian, 1977; Elo & Kyngäs, 2007; Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). The unit of measurement will be a theme, which is "most useful, because issues, values, beliefs and attitudes" can be identified and discussed in this form (Kassarjian, 1977: 12). This means that text passages that deal with Sharing Economy will be distinguished into the components (referring to Sharing Economy or not) so that categorizing is possible. According to the literature (Kassarjian, 1977; Mayring & Fenzel, 2014) categories are the central building block of a content analysis. Text passages are assigned to their fitting categories in order to analyze the coalition agreements in a reliable fashion. Through this procedure it is possible to compare and evaluate the results of the analysis process.

Thus, the two main categories are *existence* or *nonexistence* of the theme Sharing Economy in the coalition agreements. The first category is distinguished in dichotomous sub-categories: *positive attitudes* or *negative attitudes*. Whereas, the second main category *non-existence* is referred to when the theme Sharing Economy cannot be identified. The existence of the theme Sharing Economy in coalition agreements can be identified by references to Sharing Economy participants like Uber or AirBnb as well as through the identification of groups of keywords: Share(-ing) (Teilen), Access (Zugang), Ownership (Besitz), Collaboration (Gemeinschaftsarbeit), Crowdfunding, Online/Internet Platforms, digital technologies (digitale Technologien). In the case that Sharing Economy as a theme is present in the studied coalition agreement: *Positive attitudes* are defined as viewing the concept of Sharing Economy as worthy to support, for example by emphasizing better access to transportation within cities or ecological/environmental considerations. This can

also be evident in combination with the simultaneous demand of regulatory measures. In contrast, *negative attitudes* are defined as text passages focusing solely on the adverse socio-economic impacts of sharing concepts. For instance aspects like wage dumping, bypassing regulation or considerations of consumer protection. It has to be mentioned at this point, that this kind of research is conducted in an interpretative fashion.

In addition, the governmental parties are identified and the share of the votes is considered to examine the influence of the party political constitution. Especially the share of votes within the respective national parliament is a suitable indicator for partisan influence within the political system and government. Moreover, the limitations of the theory are considered to avoid overemphasize on the theory, which would bias the study. Another threat to the objective conduction of the research is the researcher's bias, which may influence the overall reliability (in particular inter- and intra-coder reliability). The explanation of the method and procedure however allows for the reproduction of the analysis in a reliable manner. Besides, perfect accuracy can only be striven for due the defining element of interpretation that involves a certain room for maneuver (Mayring & Fenzl, 2014). Or to put it in another way the confines of content analysis "are perhaps the limits of the ingenuity and creativity of the researcher" (Kassarjian, 1977: 16-17).

## 4. Analysis

In the following section the government/party programs or coalition agreements of the different national legislative periods in Germany and the United Kingdom will be analyzed. The outcome of the application of the defined categories is described. Based on the empirical results, similarities and differences between the cases are identified, compared and discussed. Thereby, the theoretical framework (section 3) is considered. It is examined if the hypotheses can be validated or falsified.

### 1. Germany

The content analysis of Germany includes the legislative periods between 2009-2013 and the current period 2013-2017. Both coalition agreements outline a roadmap of the respective policy goals of the coalition partners, which they trying to achieve during their period of government.

In the time 2009-2013 the German government was constituted by a coalition between the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) and the Free Democratic Party (FDP) (Koalitionsvertrag, 2009). The unit of analysis is the coalition agreement

between CDU/CSU and FDP. The categories defined in *Part 3: Categories of Analysis (existence, non-existence, positive attitudes, and negative attitudes)* will be applied to the coalition agreement. One major issue within the coalition agreement is the use of the internet and its impact on social as well as economic development (Koalitionsvertrag, 2009: 100). It is additionally emphasized that statute and law do remain valid online (Koalitionsvertrag, 2009: 101). Despite, the latent focus on the internet in general, an adoption of Sharing Economy in the coalition agreement between CDU/CSU and FDP cannot be identified. Thus, the coalition agreement is categorized as *non-existence*.

After the election in 2013 the former national government consisting of the conservative parties CDU/CSU and liberal FDP was succeeded by the current national government. The current German government is formed by a grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD). Within the coalition agreement the general subject of digital and internet-based technology is referred to as the fourth industrial revolution. This development is regarded to as being connected to a variety of chances for economic growth (Koalitionsvertrag, 2013: 8). It is referred to crowdfunding as a framework for business formation with the aim of further incorporating and supporting such concepts in this area.

In addition, the term sharing used in the coalition agreement exclusively refers to Car-sharing concepts. Car-sharing and alternative modes of mobility are seen as innovative and more ecological mobility strategies worthy of support in the area of urban and rural development (Koalitionsvertrag, 2013: 44-45). Emphasis is put on the elaboration of a legal framework for a better utilization at this point. In the coalition agreement the theme Sharing Economy is present. Moreover, all the identified parts can be organized within the category of *positive attitudes* (Koalitionsvertrag, 2013: 8, 22, 44-45). In the coalition agreements the sub-category *negative attitude* is not present. The parts not classified as *existence and positive attitudes* are subsumed in the main category *non-existence* in both coalition agreements. The defined key words such as digital technology, internet, access and ownership mentioned in both units of analysis are however unrelated to Sharing Economy or do not occur at all.

## 2. United Kingdom

With the elections in 2010 thirteen years of Labour Party government were succeeded by a coalition between the Conservatives and Liberal Democrats (BBC, 2010). The decided and pronounced coalition agreement between both parties is for this time period (2010-2015) the unit of analysis. The content analysis of the coalition agreement has not provided any

positive findings. Hence, the category of *existence* and its sub-categories are not evident. The whole coalition agreement is categorized as *non-existence* of statements referring to Sharing Economy.

Since March 2015, the new British national government is constituted by the Conservative Party receiving the absolute majority (36.9% share of votes) (Auswärtiges Amt, 2015). A government policy statement has not been published by the British government. As a consequence, the unit of analysis in the case is not a coalition agreement as in the former legislative period but rather the Conservative party program 2015. Analyzing the party program of the Conservatives the defined categories of *existence* and *non-existence* are applied according to the outlined procedure and defined keywords (see section 3). The analysis showed that neither explicit sharing concepts nor specific group's key-terms are present in the program. Therefore, the whole program corresponds with the category *non-existence* as well (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2015).

Themes like digital technology, internet, access and ownership are mentioned in both units of analysis, however unrelated to Sharing Economy. Thus, Sharing Economy is not acknowledged as a political issue on the political agendas in both legislative periods.

In summary, the content analysis has shown that in the case of the United Kingdom within the current and former government Sharing Economy is not regarded as a relevant political issue. In Germany, the same pertains for the coalition between the CDU/CSU and FDP. Solely the current German government (SPD and CDU/CSU) does incorporate sharing in their official agenda. However, the adoption is restricted to specific areas like mobility and urban development.

### 3. Differences and Similarities

In Germany as well as in the United Kingdom the background conditions are similar. Since the economic crisis in 2008, Sharing Economy has been on a rise (Sacks, 2011; see Section 3.1 Research Design). In the last years sharing has been a vividly discussed issue in mainstream media and has come to public attention in both nations (Die Zeit, 2014, Guardian, 2015a/b; Ziegler & Czycholl, 2014; BILD, 2013; Mühl, 2013; and others). Moreover, the issue has been analyzed and discussed in various disciplines such as sociology, economic sciences or consumer research (Schor, 2014, 2015; Threul, 2015; Lamberton and Rose, 2012).

The public interest and economic relevance is also indicated by the potential among citizens/consumers as show in Table I and II (p.18) in the case of Germany. The relevance is

indicated by the potential among the German consumers (see Table I and II) to utilize the offers by providers of sharing concepts.

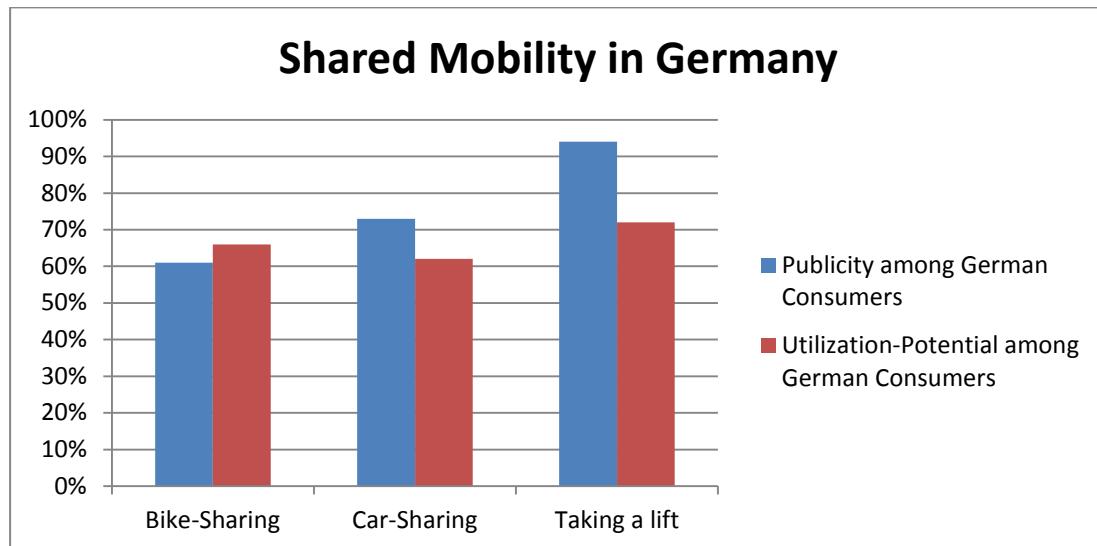


Table I: Publicity and Utilization-Potential of Shared Mobility. Source: Verbraucherzentrale, 2015

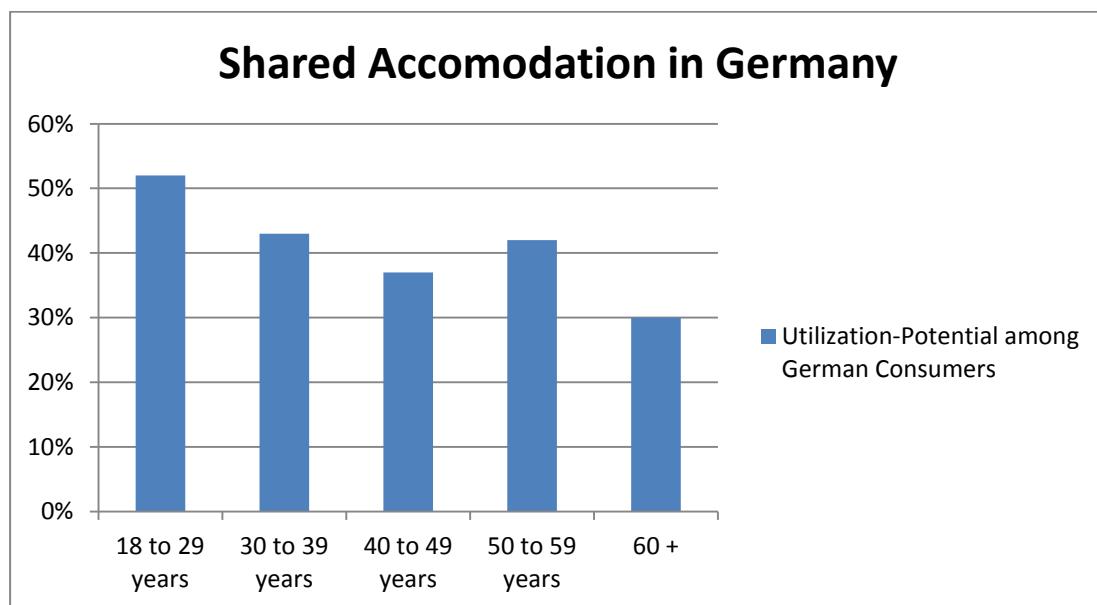


Table II: Utilization-Potential of Shared Accommodation. Source: Verbraucherzentrale, 2015.

The high percentages depict that the broader public is adopting the principles, values and ideas of sharing as an alternative option in their every-day lives. This is one but not the only reason why the Sharing Economy should be an issue relevant to government officials in Germany. In the United Kingdom the conditions are similar. For instance, “one in three (36%) UK adults frequently share a ride for transportation. That is an equivalent of 17.9 million Britons, with a further 17.7 million considering using this transport option” (The State of the Sharing Economy, 2013). Besides, the Sharing Economy in the United Kingdom

is currently valued as encompassing nine billion Pound Sterling and estimated to rise to 230 billion Pound Sterling until 2025 (Wosskow, 2014). For example a citizen living in London, who rents out his apartment only on 33 nights (equal to one month) a year, earns around 3.000 Pounds (Wosskow, 2014). This indicates that the differences and similarities do not depend on different starting positions. Nevertheless, a similar stage of the Sharing Economy in the policy-making process within the German and British national government or a common relevance in their political agendas is not evident as the content analysis illustrates.

As depicted in the previous section, both units of analysis for the United Kingdom are categorized as *non-existence*. There is not any recognition or political roadmap referring to Sharing Economy when looking at the data set. Similarities as well as differences can be identified in the comparison to the case of Germany. For the legislative period of 2009-2013 the category is *non-existence* as it is in both units in the United Kingdom. In addition, another similarity between all units categorized as *non-existence* is the complete dominance of right-wing parties in the government. Solely the contemporary German government is separated due to the participation of the left-wing SPD. In contrast government officials in the current German government (2013-2017) tend to be positively minded towards sharing concepts. Even though sharing is contained in the coalition agreement (2013) and categorized as *existence* and with *positive attitudes* the focus is limited to the field of mobility.

Thus, concluding it can be said, that the political agendas in the past legislative period in Germany as well as both legislative periods (2010-2015; 2015-2020) in the United Kingdom are categorized as *non-existence*. A central difference becomes apparent when comparing the current governments. First, in Germany the government involves a left-wing party (SPD) and Sharing Economy has been incorporated to the political agenda (coalition agreement) however limited to certain policy areas. Second, it has been identified that the background conditions between Germany and the United Kingdom are similar regarding the media and expert attention Sharing Economy receives. Third, the British government is dominated by right-wing parties in both legislative periods and is categorized as *non-existence*.

## 5. Discussion

Light can be shed on the explanation of the differences and similarities between Germany and the United Kingdom when considering the party political constitution of the national governments. In the United Kingdom, both legislative periods are definite example for right-wing led governments. In both party program the government parties favors the preservation of status quo and reduced state interference (Conservative Party Manifesto, 2015: 47-49; Coalition Agreement, 2010). In addition, the legislative period 2009-2013 of the German government was formed by a coalition of parties that can be referred to as right-wing as well. Due to the emphasis to protect the status quo illustrated for instance by the exclusion of increasing taxes for citizens (Koalitionsvertrag, 2009: 5-6). Such a categorization as right-wing is in line with the literature in comparative political science that addresses partisan theory (Schmidt & Ostheim, 2007; Zohlnhöfer, 2003, 2008, 2013; Mause & Krumm, 2011). Therefore, the common denominator in all this three cases is the dominance or complete occupation of the government by right-wing parties and no influence of left-wing parties. The result is that Sharing Economy is not recognized as political relevant or incorporated into the official political agenda in form of the coalition agreement or party program.

In contrast to the three *non-existence* cases stands the partial recognition of Sharing Economy by the current German government by SPD and CDU/CSU. Their coalition agreement is categorized as *existence* and *positive attitudes* towards sharing concepts. Despite the fact that the party with the greatest share of votes 49% is the conservative (right-wing) CDU/CSU (Bundeswahlleiter, 2013). Due to the strong representation of a right-wing party in the current government its political ideas should be influential within the policy-making process. It might be expected that the outcome is *non-existence* as well. However, thanks to the electoral system in Germany the CDU/CSU had to build the government by forming a coalition with the left-wing SPD. This is has been identified as a critical difference in comparison to the other three units of analysis. Even though, the SPD only won a 31% share of votes both parties determined the content of the obliging coalition agreement in 2013. The coalition agreement thus comprises values and ideas of both party political camps (left and right-wing).

In their coalition agreement the CDU/CSU and SPD adopted sharing concepts in the areas of urban development and mobility. The adoption of sharing concepts can be seen as a political issue relevant for both ideological sides, despite the CDU/CSU being a right-wing party. According to partisan theory it can be beneficial for the CDU/CSU to incorporate

sharing concepts in order to integrate it within the existing legal framework. Thereby, only adjusting the status quo rather than introducing a major change and not acting against the preferences of their electorate to preserve the status quo. Whereas, for the SPD it is arguably beneficial since sharing concepts can be led to foster socially favorably outcomes. Such outcomes might include the enhanced access to particular goods, which may otherwise not be accessible for parts of the population due to financial, social or individual restrictions. Furthermore, it is obligatory for both parties to incorporate sharing in their political agenda (coalition agreement). This is a consequence of the second aim of parties to maximize votes (Downs, 1957). By the integration of sharing concepts both parties position themselves in the context of a rising and novel concept. In addition, this partial incorporation of sharing concepts is related to the overall potential of sharing in Germany where more than 50% have positive attitudes towards sharing (Verbraucherzentrale, 2015). As a result Sharing Economy involves a great number of potential (new) voters. Through the adoption of sharing parties try to address and win these new potential voters. Especially for the SPD it is important in order to retain votes in the next election from the CDU/CSU (49%). However, this is different when compared to the United Kingdom.

Not only the second goal of parties – maximization of votes – has an influence on the incorporation of Sharing Economy in the political agenda of governments, but also the first goal to implement policies according to the electorate of the respective party. In the United Kingdom during both legislative periods and in the coalition between FDP and CDU/CSU in Germany the parties try to implement policies associated with their political orientation. The goals mentioned in the coalition agreements or party program are aligned around the paradigms of preservation of status quo, for example no increase of taxation or the reduction of state interference in the life of citizens (Koalitionsvertrag, 2009: 5-6; Conservative Party Manifesto, 2015: 47-49; Coalition Agreement, 2010).

Therefore, the two central objectives of parties implementing policies according to the interests of the electorate and maximizing votes heavily influence the governmental tendency to incorporate Sharing Economy. This is depicted by the present or absent theme of Sharing Economy in governmental programs and coalition agreements. Furthermore, this relationship is also shaped by the orientation of the party on a right-left-wing paradigm. The CDU and British Conservative party have been identified as a right-wing parties and the SPD as a left-wing party.

Both British governments and the legislative period 2009-2013 in Germany exemplify the expected outcome that *national governments with strong participation of right-wing parties*

*are expected to not incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda (Hypothesis a).* Since the three units of analysis were categorized as *non-existence* and the respective governments are defined as right-wing. Thus, the first hypothesis can be validated.

However, the current German legislative period 2013-2017 contradicts the first hypothesis to a certain degree as the strongest party is right-wing but Sharing Economy has been integrated in the political agenda. Yet, this difference can be explained due to the involvement of the SPD in the coalition. The mechanism at hand is that the SPD tries to win (maximize) their potential votes for the next election and on the other hand tries to implement policies according to their electorate interests. Thus, the strategy to integrate sharing in order to reach out to a new potential group of voters is a reasonable one for the SPD. As left-wing parties seem to be more open the principle of sharing and its possibilities than right-wing parties and the Sharing Economy involves a great share of potential new votes. Consequently, the CDU/CSU also tries to incorporate sharing in order to retain their share of votes.

Besides, as illustrated in the other cases in which right-wing parties were not accompanied by a left-wing party those parties do not incorporate the Sharing Economy due to its status quo challenging nature. For the CDU/CSU this has been observable in the coalition 2009-2013 with the FDP. It can be argued that in the current coalition the influence of the SPD is strong enough to put Sharing Economy on the political agenda. Thus, despite the smaller share of votes the SPD is able to put Sharing Economy on the political agenda. Therewith, the coalition agreement between SPD and CDU/CSU depicts an expected outcome according to hypothesis (b) *National governments with strong participation of left-wing parties are expected to incorporate the Sharing Economy in their political agenda.* And however does not falsify the first hypothesis.

The third hypothesis (c) *if the Sharing Economy is recognized by governments led by a majority of a right-wing party the attitude is expected to be negative* has to be falsified. Even though the German coalition between CDU/CSU and SPD is led by a majority of a right-wing party the existing category is *positive attitudes* rather than *negative attitudes*. Moreover, all other cases do not provide any information due to the complete absence of Sharing Economy on the government's political agenda. However, the coalition agreement between the CDU/CSU and SPD illustrates a conflicting case as it is led by a right-wing party but the consistent attitude is categorized as *positive attitudes*. This contradicts the expected result. Consequently, the third hypothesis has to be falsified. However, this might be explained through the involvement of the SPD in the coalition. The CDU might not want to

neglect the issue or refer to it negatively to not lose votes to the other parties. Moreover, the presence on the political agenda is not consequently accompanied with its consideration (Cobb et al., 1976).

To sum it up, the first two hypothesis derived from partisan theory have been validated though the analysis of the government's political agendas in the current and former legislative periods in Germany and the United Kingdom. The third hypothesis had to be falsified. But this might be thanks to the influence of the left-wing SPD.

The policy cycle (Figure I: 7) can be considered as a suitable framework to explain how policy-making functions. Thereby, the stage/phase of Sharing Economy as a potential political issue is of interest. While in the United Kingdom the Sharing Economy has not been introduced to the political agenda or policy-making process, there has been a shift between in the German legislative period 2009-2013 and 2013-2017. Drawing from Cobb et al. (1976) the outside initiative agenda building model explains how an issue broadly discussed in the media and public can initiated from outside the political sphere on the political agenda.

In both nations, Germany and the United Kingdom, the Sharing Economy is discussed and has received broad media attention. However, as in both legislative periods in the United Kingdom the unit of analysis was categorized as *non-existence* it can be argued that Sharing Economy is still located in the first phase of the policy cycle Problem definition (see Figure I). Hence, the outside initiative model by Cobb et al. (1976) is not yet applicable in the case of the United Kingdom.

In the legislative period 2009-2013 sharing concepts were not evident on the political agenda in Germany. However, in the contemporary coalition (2013-2017) positive aspects have been recognized by German political officials. Admittedly limited to the sector mobility but nevertheless indicating a shift in the recognition of Sharing Economy by government officials. Other central aspects of the Sharing Economy like housing (Ziegler & Czycholl, 2014) or consumer protection issues (Die Zeit, 2014; The Guardian, 2015a/b) broadly discussed in the media are still not been recognized.

In Germany the initiation of the outside has started during the transition between the former legislative period (2009-2013) and the current legislative period (2013-2017) which is exhibit by the partial incorporation of sharing concepts on the government political agenda. Due to the restricted incorporation it can be argued that the first phases of the policy-making process are intertwined, especially the phases of Problem definition and

Agenda-setting. Some dimensions of the Sharing Economy are already put on the political agenda (mobility) although others are cast aside and exclusively discussed by the media and the public such as housing or consumer protection (among others see Praschl, 2014; Schultz, 2014; Tagesschau, 2015).

Hitherto, a policy considering sharing issues and concepts has been announced or implemented neither in Germany nor in the United Kingdom. However, it furthermore has to be considered that governments may not only show programmatic responses (in their agendas) to the Sharing Economy. This point is to some degree relevant in the case of the United Kingdom as the government mentions in their Budget for 2015 that one aim is to “[...] to help unlock the potential of the sharing economy [...]” (Her Majesty’s Treasury, 2015). It should be mentioned that being on the political agenda does not necessarily relate to the decision to implement a public policy (Cobb et al., 1976).

To make a long story short, in the United Kingdom the outside initiative model regarding Sharing Economy has just begun. But there are some indications that Sharing Economy does not go completely unrecognized by government officials. In Germany on the other hand there has been a shift of attention towards Sharing Economy with the elections in 2013. Moreover, the policy-making process of Problem definition and Agenda setting is intertwined, which is exemplified by the partial recognition of sharing concepts. Although, the agenda building process of integrating Sharing Economy is yet still limited to specific aspects as mobility and urban development.

## 6. Conclusion

In this paper the political agendas of national governments in Germany and the United Kingdom in different legislative periods have been studied by conducting a qualitative content analysis. The focus has been placed on identifying if and to what extent the Sharing Economy is present on the political agendas and thus in the policy-making process. To explain the differences and similarities between the selected cases, the mechanisms of partisan theory provided a suitable and convincing approach.

The results show that right-wing parties tend to not incorporate the principles of Sharing Economy in their political agendas as long as they are not in a coalition with a left-wing party. The right-wing party British national governments do not refer to Sharing Economy in their political agendas (coalition agreement/party program). The same is valid for the coalition between FDP and CDU/CSU during 2009-2013 in Germany. However, in comparison,

the current coalition between the right-wing CDU/CSU and left-wing SPD has partially recognized the potential of sharing. Moreover, the attitude prevalent in the coalition agreement (CDU/CSU and SPD) is thoroughly positive. But its sharing references are limited to the field of mobility and urban development. Despite, winning 49% of the votes in the last election and therefore being the strongest party in the German government, the CDU/CSU signed the coalition agreement, thereby putting sharing on the political agenda. The explaining mechanism is based on the concept of partisan theory. Thanks to the characteristic goal of parties to maximize votes, even right-wing parties tend to adopt and recognize sharing but only if they are in a coalition with a left-wing party. Otherwise the chance exists that the other parties might be better off in maximizing their votes during the next election. This is reinforced, through the ongoing growth and rising awareness of sharing concepts in the media as well as general public. Consequently, Sharing Economy involves a growing number of potential votes.

The hypothesis that governments led by right-wing parties do not refer to Sharing Economy has been validated. Three of the four cases do exemplify right-wing governments which all are categorized as *non-existence* regarding the issue Sharing Economy. The case of current German government is not contradictory. It can be argued that the SPD rather than the CDU is interested to respond to the Sharing Economy due to the goal to maximize votes. Furthermore, the coalition agreement between the SPD and CDU/CSU confirms the second hypothesis of the paper that left-wing parties do incorporate Sharing Economy in their agendas. However, interestingly the assumption that right-wing parties refer to Sharing Economy negatively had to be falsified. For the reason that in the SPD/CDU/CSU coalition agreement if sharing was mentioned, the references were positive towards Sharing Economy despite a right-wing majority.

The limits of this paper are likewise the basis for possible continuing research. In relation to the selection of partisan theory as an explanatory variable within the policy-process, additional third variables could influence and be relevant in explaining the results. Variables such as other political actors or existing structures do not falsify the explanatory potential of partisan theory, although being potentially influential. To eliminate such influences further research has to be conducted incorporating a greater variation of explanatory variables. In addition, the small number of cases does also pose a limit to the external validity of the study, as it is problematic to conclude to the greater population on the basis of such a small sample. Hence, the generalizability of this study is narrow. Therefore, it seems that further analyses need to be conducted to improve the generalizability of the findings. In this regard, the size and variety of the cases has to be increased in order to identify possible third

variable influence. It has to be mentioned that the study of Germany and the United Kingdom did not reject the hypotheses derived from partisan theory except the third hypothesis.

This analysis has elaborated and highlighted the central role of partisan constitution in the field of policy-making. In particular, attention was paid to the introduction and recognition of the new and innovative development called Sharing Economy by national governments. This paper lines up with various other studies (Agyeman et al., 2013; Schor, 2014; Hamari et al., 2015; Belk, 2007, 2010, 2014). Although, approaching the issue Sharing Economy from a comparative political science perspective. Following the different dimensions of Sharing Economy and to provide a holistic approach further research should adopt an interdisciplinary angle integrating political and social science as well as economic and consumer research when analyzing the Sharing Economy.

Concluding it can be said that the recognition and introduction of Sharing Economy to the political agenda is limited through the respective governments. Furthermore, the party political alignment of the government and the number of parties involved are highly influential variables in this context. As the outcome of the content analysis illustrates is Sharing Economy still situated in the first phase of the policy cycle: Problem definition or more precise in the initial phase of the outside initiative model of agenda building. However, specific aspects (for instance mobility) start to be attained by the political agenda. Nevertheless, it is important to consider as (Cobb et al., 1976) already identified that only because an issue is located on the political agenda it does not have to be addressed.

The outside initiative model identified by Cobb et al. (1976) in combination with partisan theory provides mechanisms to enhance the agenda building process. According to their model, enough pressure has to be created to receive political attention. The mechanisms of partisan theory namely the maximization of votes and the aim to implement policies in the interest of the electorate can be utilized in order to produce such adjustment pressures. Due to its economic, social and ecological impacts as well as rapid growth rates Sharing Economy is receiving a wide media attention. This potential has to be increased and fostered to raise the awareness among consumers in order to point out the impacts of sharing. Thereby, the Sharing Economy is transformed in an issue, relevant for an increasing number of voters and consequently for parties. And it has been illustrated that parties are essential in the policy-making process in order to define the issues of the political agenda.

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