Responsibility and Care in the Collaborative Economy

Dianne Dredge

Abstract This paper explores moral responsibility in the collaborative economy using examples from the collaborative economy accommodation sector as the context to excavate key issues and challenges. The paper traverses difficult philosophical terrain in order to better understand the relationship between concepts such as ethics, responsibility and moral action in the collaborative economy. The traditional approach is for governments to adopt universal rules to determine who is responsible for what consequences and to prescribe remedies so that actors can 'earn' the claim of being responsible. However, the global and liquid nature of the collaborative economy operating across jurisdictions and the difficulty and lack of interest in implementing strict regulatory frameworks that contradict neoliberal free market ideology suggest that utilitarian and rule bound approaches to defining and apportioning responsibilities are unlikely. A care ethics approach to responsibility, that relies on articulating values, establishing emotional connections to place and people/communities, and that encourages public-private collaborative action towards a caring end is argued to be a potential way forward.

Keywords Responsibility • Care ethics • Collaborative economy • Tourism • Accommodation sharing • Planning • Policy

1   Introduction

If you believe some reports, in May 2016 Berlin's government banned Airbnb (Berlin has banned Airbnb, 2016; Oltermann, 2016; Payton, 2016). The legislation, which evoked considerable controversy in the media and ignited concern across the world, was introduced in response to brewing tensions some of which were explained by Hollersen and Mingels (2012) some four years earlier:

> In this odd environment, two types of people are coming into conflict: On the one hand, there are the foreigners, or new Berliners, who are looking for something to buy. On the

D. Dredge (✉)
Department of Culture and Global Studies, Aalborg University, A.C. Meyers Vænge 15, Copenhagen 2450, Denmark
e-mail: dredge@cgs.aau.dk

other, there are the locals, the old Berliners, who wonder how much longer they'll be able to stay. Those in the first group tend to look up as they walk the streets, checking out buildings and looking for good investments. Those in the second are just trying to get home.

Despite these differences, they are all anxious. The foreigners are anxious about their modest assets, which they hope to convert into valuable real estate before the euro goes bust. Meanwhile, native Berliners are worried about the city they call home. And this anxiety, which affects all of Germany and many other European countries, is being transformed into a euphoria of sorts in the Berlin real estate market.

Hollersen and Mingels identified just two perspectives: local residents and mobile investors/new residents. Local residents within apartment complexes were living with the daily impacts of visitors coming and going and the City was growing at a rapid rate with the tenants association claiming that 45,000 new Berliners were searching for accommodation each year (Berliner Mieter Gemeinschaft, 2016). The Senate was interested in protecting the interests of Berliners, both present and future, so housing availability and affordability were key concerns. The legislation required that approval for commercial accommodation be sought (i.e. where property owners were not resident), and owners had been given 2 years to secure these permissions. The intention of the legislation was to stop residential housing—and particularly social housing—being illegally converted into short-term commercial accommodation. Further, in recent personal communications with this author, a government official further clarified that "the Senate Department for Urban Development and the Environment does not undertake any regulatory activity with regard to the tourism sector, the sharing economy, the collaborative economy or the hotel and guesthouse sector" and that "the new law does not contain any regulatory elements that are specifically targeted at the tourism sector, the sharing economy or the collaborative economy" (Dredge, Gyimóthy, Birkbak, Jensen, & Madsen, 2016). Put simply, the legislative response was simply designed to protect housing availability and affordability and not ban any particular platform. So, while collaborative economy accommodation platforms and some second homeowners and property investors might have been adversely affected by the new legislation, the claim that Airbnb had been banned was an exaggeration. Lawmakers, taking into account their duties and responsibilities as elected representatives to their constituencies, were simply making ethical decisions about what were appropriate actions to protect public interests.

Not only does this episode illustrate inaccurate reporting of the developments in Berlin (and why we need to remain critical to the claims in media in particular), but it also illustrates the complexity of ethical decision-making faced by policymakers. Policymakers have to decide what issues are more or less important, what values they will uphold, what values can be traded-off, what stakeholders they answer to, and, ultimately, what are responsible actions from a government's perspective bearing in mind their legal and moral responsibilities to citizens, communities and the private sector. These decisions are based on ethical considerations and inevitably result in winners and loosers. In the above case, sharing platform companies were perceived to be the loosers, and Berliners in search of affordable housing, were the winners.

Smith and Duffy (2003), Fennell (2006) and Jamal and Menzel (2009) argue for strengthening philosophical engagement with the ethical dimensions of tourism development. This is the challenge to which this chapter responds. At a global level, supporters of the collaborative economy reiterate that it is a sustainable alternative to current consumption-oriented modes of economic activity (Owyang, Samuel, & Grenville, 2014). Botsman (2010) explains:

> . . .I believe we're actually in a period where we're waking up from this humongous hangover of emptiness and waste, and we're taking a leap to create a more sustainable system built to serve our innate needs for community and individual identity. I believe it will be referred to as a revolution, so to speak—when society, faced with great challenges, made a seismic shift from individual getting and spending towards a rediscovery of collective good.

But is the collaborative economy really a more responsible economy? Do these claims of responsibility translate into more responsible behaviours by the range of actors involved in the collaborative economy? The starting point for this chapter is that moral responsibility in the collaborative economy is a reflection of our identities (i.e. who we are and what we want to be). Notions of responsibility are socially constructed and politically framed, so it is important to be critical of what we claim as responsible. To this end, this chapter seeks to encourage greater theoretical reflection on the ethics of what ought to be done or not be done, what is right and wrong, good and bad, and how this gets played out in collaborative economy practices (Lawton, Van der Wal, & Huberts, 2016).

2 Why Are Ethics Important?

There are four key reasons why a deeper exploration of ethics in the collaborative economy is urgently needed. First, *the disruptive nature of the collaborative economy demands immediate action which should be proactive not reactive*. In the collaborative economy responsibility for addressing impacts and consequences are complex and distributed (Anderson & Um, 2015; Leigh, 2016; Slee, 2016). The speed of change means that politics is driving public responses. Reflection and theorising, if done at all, is post-hoc. Not only is greater understanding of the ethical decisions and trade-offs in collaborative economy practices needed, but we also need tools and frameworks to help us deliberate.

Second, *moral responsibility is relational*. The collaborative economy is a distributed system comprising a range of actors including service providers, property owners, investors, consumers and platform capitalists. It also relies on public assets and common pool resources, such as publicly funded tourism marketing activities, and intangible community assets and attractions that are not acknowledged within peer-to-peer transactions. As a result, the effects of the collaborative economy can impact upon a range of actors and public interests beyond those involved in direct transactions (Dredge & Gyimóthy, 2015). For example, residential communities, future residents and property investors may not necessarily be

directly involved in peer-to-peer transactions but may experience the consequences of collaborative economy practices. Moral responsibility in the collaborative economy therefore involves multi-lateral relations.

Third, *responsibility in the collaborative economy requires public-private action*. The governance literature reminds us that neither public nor private sectors have exclusive control and negative externalities[1] are a shared responsibility (Haufler, 2013; Vigoda, 2002). Collaborative economy platform actors have displayed quite varied willingness to act and their behaviour and attitudes towards the impacts of the collaborative economy have at times raised controversy (Sundararajan, 2014). The very different organisational cultures and values of the platforms mean that reaching an understanding of ethical responsibility requires dialogue and shared understanding.

Fourth, *the liquid organisation of the collaborative economy makes assigning responsibilities difficult*. Liquid organisation denotes a fluid organisational form that does not have rigid boundaries or membership and it is characterised by autonomous actors operating to pursue their own loosely aligned values (Clegg & Baumeler, 2010). Globalisation has facilitated the operation of liquid organisations where responsibilities can be shifted elsewhere or even avoided. The collaborative economy comprises a myriad of such liquid organisational platforms and practices, which governments have found difficult to deal with (Monbiot, 2014, 2015; US Federal Trade Commission, 2015).

Together, these reasons highlight that the collaborative economy is dynamic, liquid and resistant to the rule bound ways that governments assign responsibilities and make laws (i.e. a justice ethics approach). Instead, impacts and issues vary and expectations and values (i.e. what might be good or bad, right or wrong) differ so that universal principles and rules are difficult, if not impossible, to identify. Furthermore, relationships between actors spread out in all directions so that good actions towards one set of stakeholders might not yield desirable results in another set of stakeholders (e.g. resident communities in destinations). Herein lies the difficulty of thinking about moral responsibility in the collaborative economy.

This chapter does not, therefore, seek to determine or make any universal claims about who should take responsibility for what issues and impacts. My intention instead is to promote critical thinking about ethics and to move beyond superficial claims that the collaborative economy is more responsible than current models of economic production and consumption, a claim that Dredge and Gyimóthy (2015) see as hollow and lacking in evidence. Drawing from care ethics, the chapter argues that it is possible to excavate some core values that can help move us towards a normative theory of responsibility in the collaborative economy. However, before exploring the nature of caring and responsibility in the tourism accommodation

---

[1]A negative externality is a cost or impact suffered by a third party (e.g. a community group or resident) as a result of an economic transaction between two parties. In a simple example, residents in an apartment building may be subject to the disruptive behaviours of sharing accommodation guests even through they are external to the transaction between the provider (host), the guests and the collaborative economy platform.

collaborative economy it is first important to briefly explore key terms and concepts.

3 Key Terms and Concepts

Ethics is a branch of philosophy that explores what is right and wrong, good and bad, and helps us to make decisions about what we ought to do or not to do. Different theoretical strands within the philosophy of ethics help us to theorise, systemise and determine what ought to be done. Determining responsibility inevitably involves moral questions about what is the right course of action (deontological ethics); what action will lead to the best and most acceptable consequence (consequentialist ethics); and what is the most virtuous thing to do in order that society lives well and flourishes (virtue ethics). Traditional discussions of moral responsibility—whether we deserve praise or blame for our actions—are quite complex philosophical questions and often require consideration of what sort of person we are and want to be; what we can do within the capacities and limitations that we possess; how we understand and interpret all the possible actions that are open to us; and how much control we have to undertake action. While deeper discussion is not possible here, it is important to note that when governments make decisions and enact laws that determine who is responsible for what, they rely on universal principles and rules that can be applied equally, are accountable (to whom is another question!) and justifiable. The case of Berlin above illustrates that these universal rules and principles are underpinned by emotional and political responses to the problem and the value systems that permeate the debate.

Moral responsibility is the consideration of whether a response or action deserves praise or blame, and is often associated with a sense of duty, fairness or obligation. Being responsible implies praise for a given action, while being irresponsible implies blame for the negative consequences of an action. A philosophical view on moral responsibility invokes a much deeper discussion than I currently have space for in this chapter. Instead, my intention is to retain a pragmatic focus on exploring responsibility as moral agency in the collaborative economy.

Four key observations are raised with respect to moral responsibility. First, the concept of responsibility cannot be simply cast as individual action undertaken within private life; it also encompasses the actions of groups or collectives of individuals operating jointly and/or on behalf of others (Boston, Bradstock, & Eng, 2010). This perspective opens up the opportunity for us to consider the ethical dimensions of how groups of actors such as politicians, policy makers and private sector representatives work collectively to take morally responsible decisions and actions for the public interest as in the above example in Berlin. Second, consideration of what moral responsibility is in the collaborative economy invokes a range of reactive emotions including empathy, care, goodwill, thoughtfulness, and so on (Shafer-Landau, 2013). In the Berlin case, policymakers were empathetic to the

poor who were experiencing a housing affordability crisis. Third, the process wherein an individual or collective assigns praise or blame involves rule-bound and value-based judgements. This socialisation of responsibility means that certain actions are expected to be more or less responsible. The controversy arose in Berlin because two sets of values about what is responsible—protecting housing for the poor and support for the collaborative economy as a market innovation—came into conflict. On this point, Ims and Jakobsen in Bina and Guedes Vaz (2011, p. 176) warn that we need to pay greater attention to what kind of people and values our current economic systems foster, because this affects the character and collective moral agency of society to be responsible for our actions.

In line with this thinking, a *care ethics* approach to responsibility is adopted. *Care ethics* draws attention to the interdependent relationship between self and other, where caring for the other is not a rational, rule-bound exercise but one in which deliberation takes into account contextual, relational and emotional considerations (e.g. Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Robinson, 2010). Care ethics highlights the mutually independent, connected and potentially vulnerable and asymmetric relations between states, institutions and individuals (Collins, 2015). It recognises that moral responsibility involves reciprocity, mutuality and dependency in the face of unequal power and resources (Pettersen, 2011). This relational ontology of care, and its reciprocal mode of caring for others, offers a framing of responsibility that is not as well developed in conventional ethical theories and is suited to the collaborative economy.

Emerging out of feminist writings in the 1980s and 1990s, care ethics raises attention to the way that men and women construct moral problems differently (e.g. see Gilligan, 1982; Noddings, 1984; Tronto, 1993). Gilligan's work explored questions of responsibility, the role of the self and others, and she focused attention on the distinction between the ethics of care and ethics of justice. She noted that women tend toward an ethics of care, framing responsibility as a relational and deeply personal response to care for the self and others. In the ethics of justice, responsibility is constructed around legal rules and concepts such as fairness, rights, sanctions or consequences, and tends to be masculine in orientation (McKeon, 1957; Ricoeur, 2000). Gilligan (1982) argued that the mature human practises both ethics of care and ethics of justice: girls had a more developed ethics of care as a result of the closer relationships developed with their primary caregiver (generally the mother) and that boys' disconnection with women at an earlier age was a driving factor in perpetuating patriarchal societies (p. xxiii).

Building upon this early work, and broadening its application beyond gendered practices of caring and responsibility, Tronto (1993) built a normative ethics of care and argued that care ethics was broadly applicable to moral dilemmas in society. Tronto (1993) defined "care" as "everything we do to maintain, continue, and repair our world so that we can live in it as well as possible" (p. 103). Thinking of responsibility as caring invites us to think of the moral landscape in terms of the way we conceptualise an issue, how we see and interpret injustice and inequity, and also how we might respond given our interdependence to others in the issue (Engster & Hamington, 2013). In this way, the ethics of care rebalances the

dominance of universalising and rule-bound ideas about ethics as justice towards ethics as a relational and contextualised response motivated by a desire to sustain, nurture and protect (Held, 2005; Stensöta, 2016).

Public policy has been characterised as "what governments choose to do or not to do" (Dye, 1978). The object of public policy ultimately determines who wins and looses and how the benefits and costs of those actions are distributed among present and future actors. Returning to Berlin, as described in the introduction to this chapter, what government chooses to do about the conversion of residential apartments into collaborative economy accommodation is an ethical issue. What interests should government care for and prioritise in their policy response? European labour and capital mobility benefits the middle classes who are able to invest and profit in second homes that they can advertise on platforms such as Airbnb. Increased tourism associated with the sharing economy accommodation sector contributes to economic growth producing economic indicators that might also make elected representatives look good. The poor will bear the costs in terms of rising housing costs and decreased supply. Elected officials might act in their own self-interest or they might seek to address a broader collective set of public interests. In doing so, they are required to understand, evaluate and make trade-offs about what is more or less important, and who will shoulder the benefits and costs of those decisions. Public policy addressing the collaborative economy accommodation sector therefore involves quite complex ethical decisions ranging from how the problem is framed; what are potential actions and their consequences; what values and actions are prioritised or cared for; and how these consequences are valued and by whom.

Influenced by rationalism, modern policymaking has commonly adopted universal rules and abstract reasoning to determine a moral position on what should be done. Issues were framed and decisions made based on, for example, cost-benefit analysis and other techniques that removed emotions such as empathy, compassion, caring and so on (Held, 2014). Ironically, these deliberations are usually underpinned by a set of values that are not always explicit, and can be deeply embedded and ideological but these were obscured under the guise of rationalism. For example, Bramwell (2011) and Dredge and Jenkins (2007, 2012) discuss the shifting ideological landscape shaping the role of government including the desirability for the operation of free markets and declining support for interventionist policy. Furthermore, as Porritt (2007) argues, these neoliberal values associated with the global economy have become so embedded that there is no longer any discursive space available to consider ethical questions about what governments ought to do or where their responsibility lies. Instead, responsibility has become a matter of what actions will support global economic development within the parameters of a neoliberal agenda. This point is taken up further in the next section, where in trying to isolate some core values in the ethics of care in the collaborative economy, we also need to confront the unquestioned values embedded in neoliberalism that dictate definitions of responsibility that tend to prioritise markets and growth over other societal issues.

4 Core Values of Care and Responsibility

Proponents of the collaborative economy argue that collaborative economy innovation unlocks idling assets. Monetising these assets contributes to goals such as economic growth and job creation, and it opens up ecologies of economic innovation leading to increased competition (Botsman, 2010). These advantages are aligned with neoliberal values, and the unquestioned acceptance of these values provides some policymakers with clear direction on what ought to be done with respect to the collaborative economy—i.e. what we need to do to embrace its growth potential and avoid regulatory measures that might stymie its development. However, drawing from Porritt's (2007) earlier point, these values are so embedded that the notion of responsibility in the collaborative economy is unquestioned, and our consideration of responsible actions are narrowed to only those that feed the rolling out and consolidation of neoliberalism. The rationale underpinning neoliberalism is built on abstract rules and universal laws that require us to remove feelings and emotions and to make objective, "considered judgements" about what ought to be done (Held, 2014). Ironically, these "considered judgements" are based on deeply embedded values and subjectivities that assume responsible actions are those that lead to greater competition, free markets and growth. To date, reflection and the questioning of these neoliberal values in the collaborative economy have occurred on the margins of mainstream discussion (e.g. see Bauwens, 2005; Scholz & Schneider, 2016; Slee, 2016). They have also had to compete with the well-resourced research and media campaigns of collaborative economy platforms.

Critics seeking to broaden the notion of responsibility beyond neoliberal values have also argued that the extractive model exploits precariat[2] workers where their labour is subsumed into the product (Slee, 2016); it extracts wealth from common pool resources, redistributes and privatises it (Slee, 2016); and it is disruptive to communities and residents who bear the costs of overcrowding, rent increases, housing shortages and declining community cohesion without receiving benefits (Bauwens, 2005; Scholz & Schneider, 2016). For these critics, responsibility in the extractive collaborative economy entails being responsive to the impacts and negative externalities of the collaborative economy, the burden of which is currently being shouldered by the precariat (e.g. informal workers, silenced communities, the urban poor) (Slee, 2016). Here, a care ethics approach appears a useful alternative to help flesh out a broader understanding of responsibility in the collaborative economy.

Care ethicist, Virginia Held (2014, p. 109) argues "morality is less a matter of rational recognition and more a matter of taking responsibility for particular other

---

[2]The term "economic precariat" refers to the increasing number of people living precariously in late modern capitalism. They generally lack the security of a living wage and the predictability of regular income. The precariat often have to undertake extensive unpaid labour in order to remain in the labour force, and the phenomenon is often associated with underemployment.

persons in need". She argues against a rational approach and calls for greater attention to contextual, relational and emotional factors in determining responsibility. She argues that the relational approach triggers a different kind of action that fosters caring for human values. Building upon the work of Gilligan (2013), the ethics of care offers resistance to injustice, to the silencing of alternative voices and to the distancing of democracy, conditions that characterise current neoliberal modes of governance.

But while the ethics of care is appealing as a way of re-orienting our deliberations on what ought to be done, a caring ontology is difficult to capture in normative guidance (Held, 2014; Pettersen, 2011). Normative theories attempt to provide us with general guidance on how we should act or behave. A normative theory of care is difficult to articulate because care, as discussed above, rests on relational qualities that are contextual, emotional and cannot be easily coded into general principles (Collins, 2015). Despite these reservations, some care ethicists remain undeterred arguing that we cannot afford to give up and that it is possible to identify "the normative heart of care" to guide us (Pettersen, 2011; Stensöta, 2016).

Pettersen (2011, p. 54) argues a twofold normative approach to care being "the universal condemnation of exploit and hurt, and the universal commitment to human flourishing". The relationship between the two values is further explained:

> Care as a normative value is indeed related to the ideal of not inflicting harm, but it must also include a reasonably limited commitment to actively working for the prevention of harm. Furthermore, the normative value of care is related to the ideal of contributing to the promotion of good, but it must be narrowed down in order to not entail self-sacrifice or the sacrificing of the well-being of a third part. Care, the normative core of the ethics of care, can be portrayed as a merging of the principle of non-maleficence when it is expanded to allow for certain types of interventions, and the principle of beneficence when it is restricted to the prevention of systematic self-sacrifice and the surrendering of the concrete others' interests (Pettersen, 2011, p. 54).

Public policy researchers have also tried to capture a normative basis for care ethics. Stensöta (2016), for example, argues for a public ethics of care (PEC) as a general approach to facilitate policy formation and implementation that builds, nurtures, sustains and protects relationships that promote societal well-being. Drawing from the literature (e.g. see Barnett & Land, 2007; Held, 2005; Stensöta, 2016; Tronto, 1993), the following core features can be identified:

1. *Context matters*. A caring response necessarily requires an appreciation of the experiences, capacities, histories and relationships with others.
2. *Relationships matter*. A caring response recognises relational entanglements, interdependence and dependence, and the flow of impacts and consequences in different directions.
3. *Values and emotions matter*. Emotions, such as empathy, injustice and inequity, and values such as respect, reciprocity and mutuality inform and motivate moral commitment and can trigger deeper and more personal actions.
4. *Individual and collective action matter*. Care ethics involves an action orientation that is both an individual and a collective responsibility to care.

In taking into consideration these above dimensions, care ethics opens up a political thought project that triggers deeper philosophical thinking about how we can frame responsibility as our capacity to care and be morally responsible for others; it allows us to examine the relational consequences of actions; and it prompts us to think about aspects such as generosity and obligation to whom and for what purpose (Hooft, 2016; Massey, 2004). However, this normative heart of care ethics is not complete or exhaustive, and care ethicists argue that a mature approach to responsibility will also take into account a justice perspective (Pettersen, 2011).

In developing this normative core of care ethics, theorists draw attention to the role of the moral agent, their situatedness within their personal sphere, and their role in society, as a citizen, as a professional, as an economic, social and political actor. As a practice, care ethics requires continuous negotiation of caring—for one's own interests, for others' interests, and for the collective interests of society. On one hand an overemphasis on altruistic care and concern for others is debilitating, undermining autonomy, integrity and personal growth. On the other hand, a self-centred approach to care can be equally isolating, leading to narcissism, violence and intolerance. To avoid overdeveloped altruism or self-centredness, an understanding of the core values of care discussed above and the capacity to reflect upon care in context are essential. Thus, moving care ethics from a philosophical position to pragmatic normative guidance requires that we "analyze and articulate value systems, draw attention to problems and possibilities, and supply well-founded justification when necessary" (Pettersen, 2011, p. 61). In the following section, the challenges of caring within the collaborative economy are discussed.

5 Responsibility and Caring in the Collaborative Economy Accommodation Sector

In the literature, discussions of responsibility in the collaborative economy have generally circulated around two broad overlapping themes: (1) a justice inspired view of ethical responsibility based on rules about who ought to take responsibility for various impacts and consequences (Cannon & Chung, 2015; Koopman, Mitchell, & Thierer, 2014); and (2) discussions about where *moral responsibility* lies in the collaborative economy (Bauwens, 2005; P2P Foundation, 2015). However, and as previously discussed, caring is an individual and a collective activity and caring relationships, motivations and values go in all directions. The discussion below illustrates just two types of caring that have been expressed in the collaborative economy accommodation sector[3]: hosts caring for guests, and a platform caring for

---

[3]These expressions of caring have been chosen only to illustrate the challenges, however there are mutiple expressions of caring and fuller investigation of all these expressions is a potential line of future inquiry.

the broader community. These are used for illustrative purposes and are not intended to represent a comprehensive discussion of caring in the collaborative economy.

In the first, collaborative economy platforms are keen to project hosts' commitment to caring for guests:

> If you can, make someone feel special. That cannot be explained. Nothing gives you joy like making someone happy. That is, I think, the reason that motivates me to be a host. Being a host, it's not a very, very, casual decision. Being a host is a responsibility. India's a dynamic country. My objective is, if someone comes here they should be connected to the place in the right way. Me, as a host, I think is kind of connecting these different dots together, a kind of narrator. . . . We have an old (Indian) scripture: "Your mother is a god. Your father is a god. And your guest is a god". The presence of the guest here is that you treat them as your family. They trust me, and I trust them. And that's the reason it works. So hospitality, if you ask me, is about taking care, It's about welcoming with an open heart. . .' (Transcript from host, Airbnb, 2016).

Readers might make a cynical quip about whether this passage expresses genuine caring or is an attempt by Airbnb to highlight a competitive advantage that differentiates the homestay product[4] offered by its hosts from the commercial hospitality sector. Cynicism aside, the above passage draws attention to the potential for genuine caring between accommodation providers and guests to be present in the collaborative economy accommodation sector. Caring in this case demonstrates all the above core values—context-dependent, relational, emotional and values-based and it is action-oriented at individual and collective levels. However, the use of this quote on Airbnb's website suggests that caring may also be a staged or managed claim and that caring about the business is heavily intertwined in the motivation to care for guests.

Second, caring is also manifested at a collective level as evidenced in the Airbnb Community Compact released at the Airbnb Open in Paris in late 2015:

> Based on our core principles to help make cities stronger, Airbnb is committed to working with cities where our community has a significant presence and where there is support for the right of people to share their homes, both when they are present and when they are out of town (Airbnb, 2015).

Airbnb further indicates a willingness to work with cities around the world to "treat every city personally and help ensure our community pays its fair share of hotel and tourist taxes". . . (i.e. caring is context dependent) "to build an open and transparent community". . . (i.e. caring as a value) and to "promote responsible home sharing to make cities stronger" (i.e. caring for communities through action) (Airbnb, 2015). The impacts of short-term rental accommodation are threatening the very presence of Airbnb in some cities (Ikkala & Airi, 2015; Kassam, 2015; New York State Department of the Attorney General, 2014). In response, Airbnb has launched an

---

[4]The Airbnb product comprises the rental of whole apartments, rooms and beds. In most destinations, homestay experiences (taken to mean the renting of a room or a bed where the host is onsite and personal service is provided) makes up a relatively smaller proportion of the product offer than whole apartments where the host is absent.

action platform (www.airbnbaction.com) that outlines its commitment to addressing various impacts, including addressing the concerns of hosts, communities and governments. The platform is clearly intended to engage directly in this debate by acknowledging concerns and by helping to maintain a positive constructive debate. The Community Compact (Airbnb 2015) further states:

> Based on our core principles to help make cities stronger, Airbnb is committed to working with cities where our community has a significant presence and where there is support for the right of people to share their homes, both when they are present and when they are out of town.

In this quote, Airbnb is not taking responsibility for the impacts emerging at a community level, but is expressing a willingness to work collaboratively to address emerging issues. In this sense, the Community Compact might be regarded as an expression of Airbnb's corporate social responsibility intentions. The extent to which Airbnb is responsible for a range of issues currently being linked to the platform's growth (e.g. housing supply and affordability issues, resident-visitor impacts) is a contested point. Many of these issues are derived from historical policies and pre-existing conditions in housing, tourism marketing, property investment and labour mobility (see Dredge et al., 2016). The linking of housing supply and affordability issues with Airbnb, whose operations *may* have exacerbated problems in some cities, has resulted in calls for the platform to take responsibility for wicked policy issues well beyond its capacity and responsibility despite its immense power as a corporate citizen. The global nature of the organisation further exacerbates the difficulty of deciding where responsibility starts and ends. Moreover, accommodation providers are not employees but independent operators, so Airbnb's obligations are ill-defined in relation to the broader commitments that the company is undertaking in its Community Compact.

The platform and their providers have *some* responsibility for contributing to the wicked problems associated with the collaborative economy housing accommodation sector, but the extent and nature of this responsibility is very unclear. The platform must work collectively with its accommodation providers; providers must work collaboratively with their market (guests); and platforms, providers and the market must work collaboratively with governments to address the issues. This discussion demonstrates that responsibility is both an individual and a collective issue, and is a public-private concern. Responsibility is also an expression of the caring relationship between the individual/collective. The Community Compact also illustrates Airbnb's relational and contextualised city-by-city approach.

However, the global and liquid nature of collaborative economy platforms operating across jurisdictions, and governments' difficulty in implementing regulatory approaches (which would go against neoliberal ideology that promotes economic innovation), suggest that utilitarian and rule bound approaches to defining and apportioning responsibilities are problematic. A care ethics approach to responsibility, that relies on articulating values, establishing emotional connection to place and people/communities, and that encourages public-private collaborative action towards a caring end may offer a way forward in addressing community

impacts. The object of caring is a central consideration here, since individuals and collectives can simultaneously care for very different ends. Caring about markets, growth, corporate image and reputation are traded off against caring for communities and people. The critical point here is that who is cared for, and what is cared about are complex issues that do not receive the attention they deserve.

6 Discussion

This chapter has argued that care ethics offers an alternative approach to defining moral responsibility in the collaborative economy and has briefly explored two expressions of caring in the collaborative economy accommodation sector: hosts caring for guests, and a collaborative economy platform (extractive model) taking moral responsibility for impacts on communities. In undertaking this exploration of how care ethics might be used to guide moral responsibility in the collaborative economy, the deep political entanglements between global and local, between public and private, between individual and collective, and between self and other have been (albeit briefly) excavated. These entanglements should be understood as dynamic tensions, simultaneously pushing and pulling stakeholders' attention, resources and action to care for some interests and impacts more or less. Care ethics, as a philosophical approach to moral responsibility, sees action as both a personal and collective response to relationships, emotions, values and context. In conceptualising moral responsibility in this way, it is possible to balance rule-bound and universal approaches to ethics with an ethics of care.

The challenge lies in moving the care ethics approach from a philosophical pledge to normative directions and actions. The opportunity to introduce care ethics relies on unlocking the opportunities that exist in the space between the fast moving, liquid, global and highly politicised world in which issue identification takes place and where action happens. Focusing on the opportunities to care that exist within this space, to increase our capacity to care and take moral responsibility requires that we resist quick judgement and expedient policy solutions. It requires deliberation, reflection, mutual recognition and co-created understanding of the impacts and consequences of the collaborative economy.

In the above discussion of care ethics in the collaborative economy we identified four core values: context matters; understanding relations matters; values and emotions matter; and individual and collective action matters. But when and where in the policy and decision making process can these aspects be fully considered? In the rapid, often contested and highly pressured arena of public policy and media-led debate, it is often difficult to find the opportunity to consider who should we care for and what should we care about. We need to slow down and expand the "space" of deliberation. We need to expand the space of opportunity that lies between two steps in policymaking—between issue identification and decision making—so that we may discuss and deliberate more fully on the notion of care.
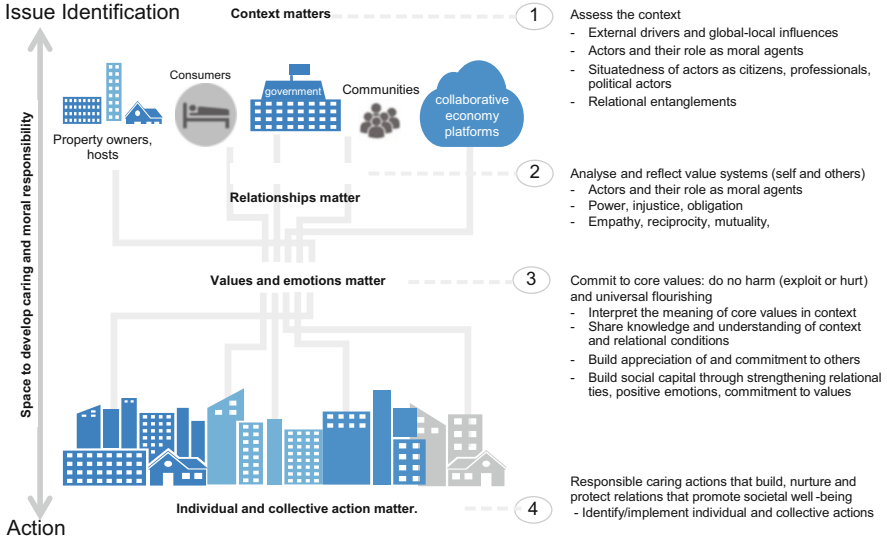
Fig. 1 Space of caring and moral responsibility in the collaborative economy

Figure 1 conceptualises and expands this space between issue identification, decision making and action drawing upon the earlier discussed directions from care ethics. In this figure, we start by acknowledging that context matters and that analysis of the context is also important. Relationships also matter, so we need to identify the range actors and understand their relational entanglements. Values and emotions also matter, so emotional connections and commitments between actors need to be understood expanded and deliberated upon. Considered actions at both individual and collective levels can then emerge.

Figure 1 is a conceptual framework that identifies opportunities for expanding the space between issue identification and action, a space for creative exploration, deliberation, and for the development of caring and moral responsibility. The Figure acknowledges that interest structures are complex and that relations extend in all directions. There will be shared values as well as individual values and these common interests will co-exist with mutually exclusive interests.

7   Conclusions

The focus of this chapter has been on exploring moral responsibility in the collaborative economy using a care ethics approach, and the extractive collaborative economy accommodation is used as the context for exploration. The chapter has traversed difficult philosophical terrain in order to investigate relationships between concepts such as ethics, responsibility and policy action. The traditional approach is

for governments to adopt universal rules (justice ethics) to determine who is responsible for what consequences and to prescribe remedies or consequences. However, attempts to develop universal rules that prescribe roles and responsibilities have proven to be highly political, difficult to implement, and significant questions remain over the effectiveness of such approaches. Moreover, the diversity of sharing economy models means that determining universal rules is a difficult task. Factors that have contributed to this impasse include: the liquid, mobile and global character of the collaborative economy; high levels of individualisation and self-interest of heterogeneous stakeholders (platforms, hosts, consumers, residents, governments, etc.); the highly contextualised and location specific nature of impacts; and the power differentials that exist between powerful and well-resourced platforms and governments and communities.

These factors mean that not only is it difficult to establish rules and responsibilities, but the limitations of state sovereignty mean that implementing these rules and demanding platforms and other actors take on responsibility defined by external actors is fraught with difficulty. Under these circumstances it becomes clear that responsible actions need to be generated from the emotional and interdependent relationships and connections that actors have to the problem and to the consequences of their actions on others. In order to do this, greater attention of the space between issue identification and action is required.

References

Airbnb. (2015). *The Airbnb community compact*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from https://www.airbnbaction.com/compactdetaileden/

Airbnb. (2016). *Hosting standards*. Accessed April 20, 2016, from https://www.airbnb.com/hospitality

Anderson, L., & Um, S. (2015). *Behind the bargains: How the sharing economy impacts health*. Toronto: Wellsley Institute.

Barnett, C., & Land, D. (2007). Geographies of generosity: Beyond the "moral turn". *Geoforum, 38*(6), 1065–1075. doi:10.1016/j.geoforum.2007.02.006.

Bauwens, M. (2005, December 1). 1000 days of theory—The political economy of peer production. *cTheory*. Accessed May 22, 2016, from www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=499

Berlin has banned Airbnb. (2016). Accessed May 21, 2016, from http://www.huhmagazine.co.uk/11457/berlin-has-banned-airbnb

Berliner Mieter Gemeinschaft. (2016). *Tenant report*. Accessed May 30, 2016, from http://www.bmgev.de/mieterecho/mieterecho-online/ihk-bericht.html

Bina, O., & Vaz, S. G. (2011). Humans, environment and economies: From vicious relationships to virtuous responsibility. *Ecological Economics, 72*, 170–178. doi:10.1016/j.ecolecon.2011.09.029.

Boston, J., Bradstock, A., & Eng, D. (2010). Ethics and public policy. In *Public policy why ethics matters* (pp. 1–20). Canberra: ANU Press.

Botsman, R. (2010). The case for collaborative consumption. *TED Talk*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from https://www.ted.com/talks/rachel_botsman_the_case_for_collaborative_consumption/transcript?language=en

Bramwell, B. (2011). Governance, the state and sustainable tourism: A political economy approach. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism, 19*(4/5), 459–477.

Cannon, B., & Chung, H. (2015). A framework for designing co-regulation models well-adapted to technology-facilitated sharing economies. *Santa Clara Computer and High—Technology Law Journal, 31*(1), 23–96.

Clegg, S., & Baumeler, C. (2010). Essai: From iron cages to liquid modernity in organization analysis. *Organization Studies, 31*(12), 1713–1733. doi:10.1177/0170840610387240.

Collins, S. (2015). *The core of care ethics*. London: Palgrave MacMillan.

Dredge, D., & Gyimóthy, S. (2015). The collaborative economy and tourism: Critical perspectives, questionable claims and silenced voices. *Tourism Recreation Research, 40*(3), 286–302. doi:10.1080/02508281.2015.1086076.

Dredge, D., Gyimóthy, S., Birkbak, A., Jensen, T. E., & Madsen, A. K. (2016). *The impact of regulatory approaches targeting collaborative economy in the tourism accommodation sector: Barcelona, Berlin, Amsterdam and Paris* (Impulse Paper No. 9). Brussels: European Commission.

Dredge, D., & Jenkins, J. (2007). *Tourism policy and planning*. Brisbane: Wiley.

Dredge, D., & Jenkins, J. (2012). Australian national tourism policy: Influences of reflexive and political modernisation. *Tourism Planning and Development, 9*(3), 231–251. doi:10.1080/21568316.2012.678379.

Dye, T. R. (1978). *Understanding public policy* (3rd ed.). Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.

Engster, D., & Hamington, M. (2013). Introduction. In *Care ethics and political theory* (Vol. 15, pp. 583–605). Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fennell, D. (2006). *Tourism ethics*. Clevedon: Channel View Publications.

Gilligan, C. (1982). *In a different voice*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Gilligan, C. (2013). *Joining the resistance*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Haufler, V. (2013). *A public role for the private sector: Industry self-regulation in a global economy*. New York: Carganie Institute.

Held, V. (2005). *The ethics of care: Personal, political, and global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Held, V. (2014). The ethics of care as normative guidance: Comment on Gilligan. *Journal of Social Philosophy, 45*(1), 107–115. doi:10.1111/josp.12051.

Hollersen, W., & Mingels, G. (2012). *Real estate boom threatens to end dream of affordable life in Berlin*. Accessed May 29, 2016, from http://www.spiegel.de/international/germany/real-estate-boom-threatens-to-end-dream-of-affordable-life-in-berlin-a-859420.html

Hooft, S. V. (2016). Ricoeur on responsibility. *Borderlands, 3*(1), 1–6.

Ikkala, T., & Airi, L. (2015, March 14–18). *Monetizing network hospitality: Hospitality and sociability in the context of Airbnb*. Cscw Conference. Vancouver, BC: Canada.

Jamal, T., & Menzel, C. (2009). Good actions in tourism. In J. Tribe (Ed.), *Philosophical issues in tourism* (pp. 227–243). Bristol: Channel View Publications.

Kassam, A. (2015). Airbnb fined €30,000 for illegal tourist lets in Barcelona. *The Guardian*. Accessed July 7, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2014/jul/07/airbnb-fined-illegal-tourist-lets-barcelona-catalonia

Koopman, C., Mitchell, M., & Thierer, A. (2014). *The sharing economy and consumer protection regulation: The case for policy change*. Arlington: Mercatus Center.

Lawton, A., Van der Wal, Z., & Huberts, L. (2016). The scope and scale of ethics in public policy and management. In *Ethics in public policy and management: A global research companion*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Leigh, A. (2016). *Sharing the benefits of the sharing economy*. Accessed March 9, 2016, from http://www.policyforum.net/sharing-benefits-sharing-economy/

Massey, D. (2004). Geographies of responsibility. *Geografiska Annaler, 86B*, 5–18.

McKeon, R. (1957). The Development and the significance of the concept of responsibility. *Revue Internationale de Philosophie, 13*(1), 3–32.

Monbiot, G. (2014). Taming corporate power: The key political issue of our age. *The Guardian*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2014/dec/08/taming-corporate-power-key-political-issue-alternative

Monbiot, G. (2015). Uber and the lawlessness of 'sharing economy' corporates. *The Guadian*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2015/jul/28/uber-lawlessness-sharing-economy-corporates-airbnb-google

New York State Department of the Attorney General. (2014). *Airbnb in the city*. New York. http://www.ag.ny.gov/pdfs/AIRBNB_REPORT.pdf

Noddings, N. (1984). *Caring: A feminine approach to ethics and moral education*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Oltermann, P. (2016). *Berlin ban on Airbnb short-term rentals upheld by city court*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from https://www.theguardian.com/technology/2016/jun/08/berlin-ban-airbnb-short-term-rentals-upheld-city-court

Owyang, J., Samuel, A., & Grenville, A. (2014). *Sharing is the new buying: How to win in the collaborative economy*. Accessed November 28, 2015, from http://tms.visioncritical.com/sites/default/files/pdf/sharing-new-buying-collaborative-economy-report.pdf

P2P Foundation. (2015). Commons transition: Policy proposals for an open knowledge commons society. Amsterdam: P2P Foundation. http://commonstransition.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Commons-Transition_-Policy-Proposals-for-a-P2P-Foundation.pdf

Payton, M. (2016). *Berlin stops Airbnb renting apartments to tourists to protect affordable housing*. Accessed May 21, 2016, from http://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/europe/airbnb-rentals-berlin-germany-tourist-ban-fines-restricting-to-protect-affordable-housing-a7008891.html

Pettersen, T. (2011). The ethics of care: Normative structures and empirical implications. *Health Care Anals, 9*(1), 51–64.

Porritt, J. (2007). *Capitalism as if the world matters*. London: Earthscan.

Ricoeur, P. (2000). *The concept of responsibility: An essay in semantic analysis*. Chicago: Chicago University Press.

Robinson, F. (2010). After liberalism in world politics? Towards an international political theory of care. *Ethics and Social Welfare, 4*(2), 130–144. doi:10.1080/17496535.2010.484257.

Scholz, T., & Schneider, N. (2016). *The rise of platform cooperativism. A new vision for the future of work and a fairer internet*. New York: OR Books.

Shafer-Landau, R. (2013). *Ethical theory: An anthology* (2nd ed.). Malden: Wiley Blackwell.

Slee, T. (2016). *What's yours in mine: Against the sharing economy*. New York: OR Books.

Smith, M., & Duffy, R. (2003). *The ethics of tourism development*. London: Routledge.

Stensöta, O. (2016). A public ethics of care: Bringing ethics of care into public ethics research. In A. Lawnton, Z. Van der Wal, & L. Huberts (Eds.), *Ethics in public policy and management: A global research companion*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Sundararajan, A. (2014). *What Airbnb gets about culture that Uber doesn't*. Accessed May 22, 2016, from https://hbr.org/2014/11/what-airbnb-gets-about-culture-that-uber-doesnt

Tronto, J. (1993). *Moral boundaries: A political argument for an ethic of care*. New York: Routledge.

US Federal Trade Commission. (2015). *The "sharing" economy: Issues facing platforms, participants, and regulators*. New York: US Federal Trade Commission.

Vigoda, E. (2002). From responsiveness to collaboration: Governance, citizens, and the next generation of public administration. *Public Administration Review, 62*(5), 527–540.