

Questions during the 27th of April 2026 webinar

<p>Question for Jonas: In your opinion, what are the challenges of renting products that are not designed for being rent?</p>	<p>Jonas : "The core challenge is durability under multi-user conditions. Consumer products are typically designed for a single household's usage pattern - moderate, predictable, by someone who owns and cares for it. In a rental context, you have many different users, varying levels of care, and much higher frequency of use. That accelerates wear and increases the risk of damage. There are also hygiene and safety considerations - products need to be inspectable and cleanable between uses in a way that isn't always straightforward. And then there's the maintenance burden: consumer products often don't have clear service pathways or spare parts availability, so when something breaks, replacing it is often cheaper than repairing it, which undermines the sustainability logic of sharing in the first place. Finally, products often lack built-in mechanisms to track condition or usage, which makes it harder to know when something is nearing end-of-life or needs servicing."</p>
<p>And how do you ensure (through the platform) that the expected service level is actually achieved?</p>	<p>Jonas : "We use a combination of social accountability and structured feedback loops. After each rental, borrowers are prompted to report the condition of the item they received and leave it in. This creates a continuous quality signal without requiring manual inspection after every transaction. We also track return rates, damage reports, and user ratings over time to identify items or users that generate disproportionate issues. On the community side, the peer-to-peer dynamic itself does a lot of work - people are borrowing from and returning to neighbours, which raises the social cost of poor behaviour. We've found that this context meaningfully changes how people treat borrowed items compared to more anonymous rental models."</p>
<p>Can individuals propose objects for rent to enlarge library of things / availability?</p>	<p>James : Yes, residents can request items they want to see in the kiosks. Ultimately, they are going to work better when they respond to the needs of communities as we want rental to be popular. We work with Library of Things to understand if there are items that there are a lot of requests for and consider how we might swap them in. Before purchasing something and putting it into the kiosk we have to have some confidence in the level of community interest and popularity, as it will take up a space in the kiosk that another item would be holding</p>
<p>Combining social aspects by municipalities (or similar) makes sense. What are indicators of success? Number of rents (i.e., enabled</p>	<p>Sami : "Environmental KPIs include mainly number of avoided purchases thanks to the access economy. Other KPIs include access (number of people who could not access items and now can) ; financial savings, social cohesion, etc. "</p>

<p>access that would have been impossible otherwise)? Not only e.g. waste prevented?</p>	
<p>How do you prevent mis-use or in other words, to ensure return in good shape for further use?</p>	<p>Jonas : "A few layers. First, identity verification and deposit mechanisms create accountability at the transactional level. Second, our review and reputation system means bad actors face consequences that follow them on the platform. Third - and this is something specific to peer-to-peer - the neighbourhood context matters: people are less likely to mistreat something when they know it belongs to someone nearby. We also investing in clear condition documentation at the start of each rental (photos, descriptions) so that disputes about damage are resolvable with evidence rather than he-said-she-said."</p>
<p>Would you have interactions with the manufacturers to design products in a way that they are more robust and adapted to those models?</p>	<p>Jonas : "Not yet in a systematic way, but it's a direction we think about. The data we accumulate on which items get damaged most, which categories see the highest return rates in poor condition, and which products hold up well --that's genuinely valuable product intelligence that manufacturers don't typically have access to. The challenge is that we're still at a scale where that conversation is more theoretical than transactional. But as the sharing economy matures, I think there's a real opportunity for platforms like ours to feed usage insights back upstream to influence how products are designed for longevity and repairability."</p>
<p>Can you leverage the data you get from the usage phase to items manufacturer? (are they robust enough, what kind of customer is interested in this product, ...)</p>	<p>Sami : "Access economy providers work with brand manufacturers to help them understand the usage of it, what breaks, what is misused, etc. Also other information like how many times they are rented, how long they are used, etc. It's also a good opportunity for brand manufacturers to try new items before they are launched."</p>
<p>Do you use any AI? and for what use?</p>	<p>Jonas : "Yes - and one feature I'd highlight specifically is our AI listing wizard, which is worth trying out. When an owner wants to put an item up for rent, instead of filling out a form from scratch, they can just describe the item conversationally and the wizard generates the listing for them - title, description, suggested price, relevant category. It lowers the barrier to listing significantly, which matters a lot in a marketplace where supply is the harder side to grow. Beyond that, we use AI for things like support routing and internal data analysis, but the listing wizard is the one that's most visible to users and probably the most fun to play with."</p>
<p>Is there any evidence James, yet that each location is financially self-sustaining without council, grant, investor,</p>	<p>James : "As a council we would love to see these get to the point where they are popular enough to balance costs with income, but at the moment we have to provide a small level of subsidisation as part of our partnership with Library of Things. Our ambition is that these costs come down as the sites grow in popularity, but we also</p>

<p>volunteer, rent-free, or other support.</p>	<p><i>see that the added social value for our communities and environment make it a worthwhile investment.”</i></p>
<p>Thank you to the speakers. How did the partnership come about with Library of Things? Did they already have operational libraries before partnering with the boroughs?</p>	<p>James : <i>“Yes Library of Things started in West Norwood in South London and have grown to new sites across London. It was through some of these early sites in London that our attention was drawn to it and we first discussed doing something similar with them in Southwark. Since then Library of Things have continued to grow across London. Although they are not exclusively in libraries, for example we have two sites in leisure centres and one in a library. https://www.libraryofthings.co.uk/ “</i></p>