

Moving to a life with no car in a system of automobility? A practice-theory approach

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Abstract

In European societies characterised by an already old 'system of automobility' (Urry, 2004), how can committed car drivers get out of this system? Which processes are involved? Through which conditions is this change made possible? What is the importance of contextual factors, such as regional mobility policies and so on? And, last but not least, on a theoretical point of view, which relevance do the social theories of practice have for studying this phenomenon?

A small-scale qualitative and exploratory study aims at giving some answers to these questions. A dozen biographical or in-depth interviews have been realised in 2012 in Belgium with persons having driven a car for at least ten years and presenting themselves as having quit this habit and sold their car.

Results indicate the importance of a good and efficient public-transportation system, the effectiveness of certain policy instruments and, in conjunction, the availability of at least one close relative (the spouse, a parent ...) who has a car and helps the interviewee get rid of his/her car without being excluded from the system of automobility.

Introduction

European societies are characterised by an already old 'system of automobility' (Urry, 2004). The research question of this paper is to investigate the processes, conditions and consequences for committed car drivers to get rid of their car in this system

of automobility. The theoretical framework used is the social practice theories, which are summarised in the first section of this article. The qualitative methods for collecting the material used in this exploratory research are then presented. The main part of the paper is devoted to the results presentation and discussion. The paper ends with two suggestions to social practices theories.

Conceptual framework

SOCIAL PRACTICE THEORIES

Social theories of practice are more and more used as conceptual framework in studies on energy consumption. Halkier *et al.* (2011: 5) note that 'Possibly the most vigorous application of practice theoretical repertoires citing Warde's article may be found in the interstices between technologies, utilities, resource consumption and the problematic of sustainability.' Indeed, much of empirical research drawing on practice theories focus on practices such as daily mobility (Warde 2005), practices regulating thermal comfort at home (Gram-Hanssen 2010a, 2011; Bartiaux 2008; Bartiaux *et al.* 2011), or several 'green' practices (Connolly and Prothero 2008; Bartiaux and Reátegui Salmón 2012). Hargreaves (2011) has also applied social practice theory to study pro-environmental change on a workplace.

Practices are collective

Social practice theories draw on Bourdieu's works on practices and habituses (1972, 1980, and 1994) and on Giddens' structuration theory (1984), namely for the key role of routines in structuring societies. Practice theory was formulated by Schatzki (1996) and further elaborated by Reckwitz (2002a). In

his book entitled “Social Practices”, Schatzki (1996) underlines the extent of Wittgenstein influence on this new way of thinking, departing from the usual dichotomies such as holism/individualism, structure/agency, macro/micro, and mind/action.

So Schatzki clearly departs from individualist theories that “problematize any construal of social existence as simply inter-relations among individuals” and “all give theoretical pride of place to the actions, strategies, mental states, and rationality of individuals, the cooperation, negotiations, and agreements reached among individuals, the rules, norms, and threats governing people’s behavior, and the unintentional consequences of behavior that often extend beyond actors’ purview.” (Schatzki, 1996: 1, 4). In so doing, he obscures issues of power and conflict, whose relevance in social sciences has been shown by Foucault and others.

Both Schatzki and Reckwitz underline the collective character of practices. Reckwitz (2002a: 249–50) explains that “[t]he single individual – as a bodily and mental agent – then acts as the ‘carrier’ (Träger) of a practice – and, in fact, of many different practices which need not be coordinated with one another.” Furthermore, “[a]s there are diverse social practices, and as every agent carries out a multitude of different social practices, the individual is the unique crossing point of practices, of bodily-mental routines.” (p. 256).

For Shove (2010: 1279) practice theories are irreconcilable with psychological models based on attitudes and behaviours, given “the incommensurability of these contrasting paradigms”: theories of practice “emphasise endogenous and emergent dynamics” and view individuals as carriers of practices whereas psychological theories view individuals as autonomous agents of change and “focus on causal and external drivers” (see also Shove *et al.* 2012: 143–164).

Linking doings and sayings

For Schatzki (1996: 89), a practice is a coordinated entity, *i.e.* a “temporally unfolding and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings” with major “key components of the nexus identified by Schatzki as linking doings and sayings in order to constitute a practice” (Warde, 2005: 139).

The nature and the number of these linking components are discussed (for a synthesis, see Gram-Hanssen 2010b). In addition, several authors have underlined the relevance of integrating material structure, products and technical arrangements in the theories of practices, such as Reckwitz (2002b), Shove and Pantzar (2005), Watson and Shove (2008), Wilhite (2008, 2010), Gram-Hanssen (2010a, 2010b, 2011), Schatzki (2010). They conclude by acknowledging its usefulness and most of them by also illustrating this relevance with sharp empirical analyses. In this line of thought, I will consider here for mobility-related practices four linking components like Gram-Hanssen (2010a) and Bartiaux *et al.* (2011): material arrangements, know-how and routines, institutionalized rules and teleo-affective structures.

Warde (2005) outlines the first works of Schatzki and Reckwitz and demonstrates their interest for consumption studies by illustrating it with a practice of particular relevance for this research, namely car driving. Dant (2004) does not refer to practice theories but does explain the “car-driver” assemblage, and therefore shows how the practice of car driving is sustained by material arrangements, here the car.

How do practices change?

For Shove *et al.* (2012: 21), “practices emerge, persist and disappear as links between their defining elements [*i.e.* in Schatzki’s terms, their linking components] are made and broken.” They precise change pathways as follows: “new practices involve novel combinations of new or existing elements. (...) such integrations are themselves transformative: material, meaning and competence are not just interdependent, they are also mutually shaping” (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 32).

Shove *et al.* (2012) deal with the various mechanisms of practice change: one of them is new practitioners’ recruitment – as illustrated by Truninger (2011) – and another one is practitioners’ defection, such as the topic of this article. Their “central proposition is that the contours of *any one* practice – where it is reproduced, how consistently, for how long, and on what scale – depend on changing populations of more and less faithful carriers or practitioners.” (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 63). They continue by showing that “for the careers of the practices themselves”, at “any one moment, ‘a practice’ consists of a composite patchwork of variously skilled, variously committed performances enacted and reproduced by beginners and by old-hands alike. Patterns of career development are, in combination, relevant for the trajectory of the practice as a whole. This so in that newcomers and those with more experience inevitably reproduce somewhat different variants.” (p. 71).

The dynamics of defection

According to Shove *et al.* (2012: 75), several processes may explain defection. They began by considering fads. First, they return to an aspect already underlined by Warde (2005): performing such a practice well does not provide anymore the practitioners with sufficient internal reward. As Shove *et al.* write: “[t]o put this observation the other way around, practices are, perhaps ironically, better able to retain commitment when they afford scope for innovation.” Second, a practice may disappear “as rapidly as it arrived because it had no symbolic or normative anchoring: it was not strongly associated with either good or bad behaviour, with the reproduction of distinctions, or with fulfilling injunctions and obligations.” A third related possibility to explain that a practice “expires” (in Schatzki’s terms) is that it is “not obviously connected to and not obviously dependent on any other practice” (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 75). Obviously, car-driving is not a temporary fad but defecting from this practice of car-driving may be partially explained by diminishing internal rewards; at least, this is a hypothesis worth testing to explain this practice defection.

Shove *et al.* (2012: 76) continue by explaining how an incoming innovation, such as car-driving for going to the workplace, may cause the disappearance of another practice, cycling in this example. “In thinking about how cycling lost so many carriers in such a few years we need to think about how practices fit together. Cycling to work was, for a while, deeply embedded in a whole set of social and institutional arrangements. (...) this interdependence was a source of weakness: the entire cycle-based regime caved in as automobility took hold.” (*Ibidem*). As explained below, several social and institutional arrangements have contributed to the defection of some interviewed car-driving practitioners.

They finally argue that “the margins of a practice, its ability to capture and retains recruits and prevent them from defecting depend on its positioning in a sea of other practices, each with relatively volatile, relatively static trajectories on their own.” (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 77). From the practitioner’s point of view, “[d]efection is inevitable as childish ways are put aside, as new loves are found and as bodies gain and lose strength and agility.” (*Ibidem*). This last situation is the one of the oldest interviewees although some are reluctant to admit it.

Role of other practitioners

Regarding the potential role of other practitioners in sustaining a practice, Schatzki (1997: 168) subsumes it into the linking components:

By itself, the practice theoretical consolidation of practice as a nexus and practice as do-ing reveals practice as a site of sociality in human life. For the interrelatedness of participants in a practice is secured merely by the fact that the understandings, rules, and teleoffective structure organizing the practice govern actions of all participants.

About smaller communities, such as couples that are of special interest for this article, Schatzki (1996: 184) says the following:

Partnerships, for example, are always established and consummated within specific practices (e.g., those of business, recreation, and sex), and are thus at least partly determined by the organization of these practices (...). Partnerships are what they are, in other words, only within the relevant practices.

Practices are thus considered as compact entities whose content and linking components are equally shared by the partners. However, this proposition does not always hold true as illustrated by some of the following results.

THE MOBILITY PARADIGM (URRY)

Urry (2004: 27) defines the automobility system as “a self-organizing autopoietic, nonlinear system that spreads world-wide, and includes cars, car-drivers, roads, petroleum supplies and many novel objects, technologies and signs”. In an earlier work, Urry (2002) introduces the concept of “co-presence” to explain why people move especially with the development of new communications technologies: social life is embodied, and this requires “complex, overlapping and contradictory mobilities”.

In his book entitled “Mobilities”, Urry (2007: 46–54) defines “the new mobility paradigm” in length and then summarises it: “[t]his paradigm examines how social relations necessitate the intermittent and intersecting movements of people, objects, information and images across distance. (...) This paradigm forces us to attend to this economic, social and cultural organization of distance, and not just to the physical aspects of movement.” (p. 57).

Of course car-driving is central to the automobility system and to ensure co-presence. The new mobility paradigm is also useful in this exploratory study to comprehensively consider “the intermittent and intersecting movements of people, objects, information and images”. However, a full integration of practice theories with the mobility paradigm is out of the scope of this paper.

Methods

This exploratory study is based on a small-scale qualitative study. A dozen biographical or in-depth interviews have been realised in 2012 in Belgium with persons having driven a car for at least ten years and presenting themselves as having quit this habit and sold their car. The persons interviewed were different on various characteristics: age and lifecycle stage, gender, socio-economic status and profession, marital and family situation, urban or rural areas. These interviewees were found by various intermediaries, such as pharmacists, general practitioners, acquaintance of acquaintance ... No interviewer knew the person s/he would meet before the interview took place. The interviews of both types lasted about one hour and have been wholly transcribed. All interviews have been collected by some of my students of a course on qualitative methods during their master in sociology or anthropology. All names have been changed.

Seven biographical interviews and four in-depth interviews have been collected and analysed following the method of Bertaux (1997) and Kaufmann (2011) respectively. For Kaufmann (2011), each person, thus each interviewee is “a concentrate of the social world”, which the researcher wants to describe and understand, and is thus quite knowledgeable about his/her world: therefore, Kaufmann (2011) sees the interviewees as “informants” and call them so, and I will do the same in this article.

Regarding the topics discussed during the interview, the guide for the biographical interviews was structured into three periods: before getting rid of the car (*i.e.* while having and driving a car), while being without his/her own car, and in the future: projects and projections (back to an own car or not?). The questions grid of the in-depth interviews was dealing with the following topics: first, the narrative of activities during a normal week, the day before the interview and the last week-end; second, the changes, if any, in leisure, relations with family and friends and daily mobility practices (for work, shopping and so forth) since the informant has quit the practice of driving his/her car. Third, a last question was about the transportation system in the future, and the gendered aspects, if any, of such an evolution.

Results

The results of this exploratory research are presented by first explaining the main changes in the configuration of linking components, then by showing how the four linking components are contributing to bring about car-drivers practitioners’ defection in their long-lasting practice. And as for Shove *et al.* (2012: 24), “practices disintegrate when links are no longer sustained”, these links between the four linking components are also examined below.

A CHANGING CONFIGURATION OF LINKING COMPONENTS

According to Shove *et al.* (2012: 31), “elements of meaning and materiality also co-evolve.” A large majority of informants report such a changing configuration: fuel prices and repairing costs are increasing and driving his/her own car simply becomes too expensive. Furthermore, the offer of public transport has globally increased in frequency and quality.

Additionally, some circumstances of practitioners’ life, such as retirement, unemployment (of the informant or his/her spouse

or partner), divorce or separation and a new dwelling, car accident or serious health problems (sometimes only anticipated) also contribute reconfiguring the meanings given to the practice of car driving. These life circumstances are well recorded by biographical interviews but do not fit that well in the framework provided by practices theories, which offer, at best, “a series of snapshots, each capturing the materiality, meanings and competences at different moments” (Shove *et al.* 2012: 29), of course at a macro scale. Integrating the contributions of socio-biographical approaches into social theories of practice is thus a necessity and a challenge to be tackled.

TECHNOLOGIES AND MATERIAL STRUCTURE

Technologies and material structure play an important role in sustaining the defection of car-driving practice by committed practitioners. As expected, the public transportation system is quite important in this respect, as are bicycles for a minority of informants. But quite surprisingly, the cars of other persons appear to be crucial when stopping car-driving practicing: in fact, some practitioners do continue to drive a car, not theirs anymore, but the car of a family member or a friend while others are driven by familiar persons. Taxis are also used whereas rented cars and car sharing appeared to be of lesser relevance for our informants when quitting the practice of driving a personal car. Other important material arrangements cited by the informants are shopping trolleys and personal computers, for e-mailing or consulting an Internet website on weather forecast.

Material arrangements

These material and technological arrangements often combines several transportation means and are illustrated with relevant quotes below.

Public transports and near realtions' cars

Public transports are often used in conjunction with the car of close relations, either on a travel basis (Wendy) or on a weekly basis (Angélique):

When I have a meeting, I organise myself, I go by bus and friends are driving me back. (Wendy, 79, retired, previously employee, l. 129–130).

She organise herself by using new communications technologies for emailing to friends who also participate to the meeting. Another combination including the car of a familiar, here the spouse, is illustrated by a young mother whose spouse drops her at the bus stop:

You cannot totally rely on public transportation, on trains ... For me it is not possible. While family life permits it, OK [for her to take the bus to go to work], but there is a moment when ... I think that one vehicle, it's sure and certain that it is necessary but there is a moment when a second one is, I think, inevitable. (Maria, 34, human resources manager in a public transportation company, living with her spouse and their baby).

... my partner often comes on Saturday. He does have a car, he comes in the evening (...) at 7 PM and we spend the weekend together. And then, I do travel! (Angélique, 32, civil servant, living alone, l. 124–127).

Michel (75, previously computer scientist) also associates public transportation and the car of his spouse, with whom he regularly goes to a main city.

For her weekly shopping, each Saturday afternoon, Angélique goes by bus to a shopping centre and comes back home by taxi. To save time, she calls the taxi when queuing at the supermarket cash. Her way of doing thus involves several types of mobilities differentiated by Urry (2007: 47): “corporeal travel” of people, physical movements of objects to producers, consumers and retailers, and “communicative travel” through person-to-person messages via mobile phone. A bundle of practices is assembled.

Bicycles and weather website

Grégoire (34, civil servant in an environmental office), on his side, associates his corporeal travels by bike to a “virtual travel” by first checking a website that shows the exact location of precipitation, if any (www.buienradar.be). This is another example of a bundle of practices, the same bundle that Wendy uses to prepare by emails her “corporeal travels” when she is driven back by a friend of hers after a meeting in the evening.

Shopping trolley, rented car, taxi and car sharing

Wendy, like other older informants (Jules, Julie), uses one of her shopping trolleys when she is shopping:

I have a small shopping trolley and a larger one with three wheels, which can climb stairs and in which I tell myself: “I won't put more than 2 kilos!”, and then I charge it to a maximum when I get out for shopping (Wendy, 79, retired, previously employee, l. 120–124).

Only one informant has said that she rents a car at several occasions, namely for going on holidays; for the rest, Anita (62, employee, living alone in Brussels) uses the tram for going to work, and the train for visiting friends on some Saturdays. A few respondents, such as Angélique, occasionally take a taxi. Marjolaine, 86, had thought to do so when she sold her car but she has so many acquaintances ready to drive her that during three years, she never took one!

Car sharing is a practice that gained many practitioners these last years, especially so in Brussels and in the region of Louvain-la-Neuve, a pedestrian city. Two older informants (Julie and Jules, 74 and 82 years old, previously secretary and managing director) live in this new city and sometimes use that service, but they find it very expensive.

Relations with other linking components

“Virtual travel” by Internet or emails necessitates computer-related competences and cycling, physical abilities. The most obvious relation, however, is between material arrangements and the values given to a life without owning and driving a car: exchange of services and a lesser consumption for Wendy, a feeling of independence and a sense of agency for Anita, an environmental concern for Victor (see below) and so on.

KNOW-HOW AND EMBODIED HABITS

The habit of driving a car is so well embodied and mentally rooted that it appears to be unquestioned, or unquestionable. Several informants were questioned by one of their children, such as Victor (“But Dad, you're too stupid, if you really want to save energy, well, you should take the train!”) or Wendy

("[and my eldest son told me one day [...] 'how long are you looking for finding a parking place?']"). For others, a serious health problem, a car accident (as for Jim) may also trigger this reflexion.

Other embodied habits that are useful when defecting the practice of car driving are obviously walking and bicycling:

... and here [in his new dwelling, after a divorce] I got back to the bike, the bike that for years I had a little neglected, but I told myself, "I'll get back on the bike", so I bike up to my office and I bike down. Thus I used the car even a little less. (Victor, 58, architect, l. 109–111).

As shown above, computer-related competences are useful for "virtual travels" that often precede "corporeal travels", to quote Urry's terms. Other organisational skills are also necessary, such as checking time schedules, possibly on Internet.

Relations with other linking components

These competences are mainly associated to the material arrangements replacing his/her own car.

INSTITUTIONALISED RULES

The campaign "Your license plate against 2-year free bus" has helped one informant (Christina) to get rid of her car (<http://www.infotec.be/index.aspx?PageId=633010025105678462#cambio>). This policy measure also gives a less expansive access to the main car-sharing system in Belgium. Since several years, a congestion charge is in discussion in the Brussels Region but not yet effective.

Another one, Maria, has a free bus pass as she works for a public transportation company. Still another one, Angélique, is reimbursed for her fees of public transportation by the public administration where she works. Since February 2009, it is mandatory for all private companies to pay their employees 75 % of the cost of transportation between home and the workplace if the trips are made by public transport.¹

Two older informants report that the social service of their municipalities has organised a municipal van to help citizens for occasional rides. It is just necessary to call the service the day before a ride. Depending on the municipality, this van is called either a "social taxi" or a "public taxi". Michel (75, previously computer scientist) often uses it and Jules (82, previously managing director) has just heard about this new service in his municipality.

Schedules of public transports are another type of rules and many informants point at the scarcity of public transport after 10 PM, when they want to come back home from the theatre, the cinema or a meeting. They have then to rely on the goodwill of friends, such as Wendy quoted earlier.

Relations with other linking components

These facilities, whether material, legal or financial, aim at changing the trade-off between the costs and benefits associated to travelling by car, thus between the material arrangement and the teleo-affective structure sustaining the practice of driving his/her own car. The internal reward provided to

practitioners is also supposed to decline with the implementation of these facilities.

TELEO-AFFECTIVE STRUCTURES

For many informants, the teleo-affective structure is made of several dimensions that are often paradoxical. These paradoxes are illustrated below and show that defecting from the practice of driving his/her own car is not an easy process for this practice has been normal and normalised during decades. All informants aged over 50 refer to the slogan "My car is my freedom" that was propagated during the sixties. But freedom may also be an intellectual freedom that is associated to the feeling of being a pioneer, such as Wendy who bought a car in the seventies, get divorced at the same time, was later involved in new social networks of exchange of services, get rid of her car, get used to new communications technologies (including Internet and emails), and became less dependent on a consumerist society. But the trade-off between dependence and independence is always noticeable:

But I don't like to have the impression of too much ... benefiting too much [from the help of friends] so I try to organise myself (Wendy, 79, retired, previously employee, l. 146, my emphasis).

Beside self-organisation, trust in family members and friends who do have a car is central in the trade-off between dependence and independence:

Now I have a small boy who is 15 months, I still arrive to arrange myself to drive him to the babysitter, thus my partner does drive, I have my parents who live very close by, so I have a lot of facilities (Maria, 34, human resources manager in a public transportation company, l. 64–67).

In this respect, an allusion to an environmental concern may be an attempt to 'pack' the contradictions in a socially accepted way, as Jules begins to say:

But, for me ... environmentally, I was glad to tell myself: well, on the one hand it costs me too much to get it repaired now, I already had large costs and on the other hand, I find that it is not anymore ... it is not anymore a working tool, so it's a little, a little of luxury. But luxury, you know, it's not really a luxury if you want to get out a little ..., if you want to not depend on others, not have to go shopping for heavy purchases that require a car (Jules, 82, retired, earlier Managing Director, l. 213–219).

But Michel (75, previously computer scientist) explains that he has moved to a village in his search of simplicity, not for ecological reasons.

So, autonomy and dependence are mixed up with economic constraints and inconvenience, especially for purchases that are bulky or heavy to carry. This point is also made by an older woman with again a paradox between money and time saving, and some convenient aspects but also inconvenient ones:

[and my eldest son told me one day ...] "but when you go to (name of a main city), how long are you looking for finding a parking place?" I said: "really, quite some time!" Then, he told me: "yes, ultimately, if you want it to be profitable, well you must stop before the town centre and then take a bus

1. www.cnt-nar.be/CCT-COORD/cct-019-octies.pdf (Accessed 13-1-2013).

or go to a paying parking”; so he said, “after all, taking into account time and money, it is not necessarily the best”, and that made me think and I said to myself: “Yes. Yes, it’s true, it’s true but there are packets to carry though, when one has no car.” (Laughs). (Wendy, 79, retired, previously employee, l. 68–75).

Somewhat surprisingly, Anita (62, employee, living alone in Brussels) manages to associate the defection from car-driving to enhanced independence. She explains indeed that when she had a car, several decades ago, her brothers were asking her to borrow it “for this, for that, and they were giving it back to me to refuel it, to change the brakes, to restore it. Then I’ve said: ‘it’s over.’” (l. 76–77).

Independence and autonomy are deeply associated to the practice of car driving and are sustaining it. The reconfiguration of these values is not easy and brings about paradoxes and contradictions. The financial benefit of car-driving defection is never sufficient to balance the loss of these values, except if car-driving defection is reconfigured as a chosen adaptation to societal change (such as increasing oil prices) or to evolving life circumstances.

Relations with other linking components

These reconfigurations of meanings associated to car driving is sustained and reinforced by new institutionalised rules and policy instruments that both reshape material arrangements, in a socio-historical context characterised by reflexivity, rising unemployment, peak oil and increasing oil prices, global warming: all these phenomena combine to reconsider the practice of car driving, though the automobility system is still largely prevailing.

ROLE OF NEAR RELATIONS

The role of children who question their parents’ practice of car-driving has already been illustrated with Victor’s daughter and Wendy’s oldest son.

This exploratory research has shown that close relations – often the spouse or the partner – play an important role in helping defecting practitioners in their daily (Maria), weekly (Angélique), monthly (Michel) or seasonal (Jules and Julie, for holidays) travels by driving them in their car. This is an unexpected and paradoxical result: practice defection is made possible by a probably growing intensity of this very practice for still committed practitioners. Therefore, the role of near relations in sustaining, or not, a practice is not always channelled through the linking components, as Schatzki expected, but through the practice itself. The practice of traveling alone in his/her own car is then slightly reconfigured in the practice of traveling together (at least two people) in one’s car. This may increase the distances travelled by car. However it is also used in policies such as high occupancy car lanes in the US and car pools for e.g. commuting.

These two results on the role of near relations in sustaining or reconfiguring the practice of car driving call for more theoretical research on this role and are in line with Hargreaves’ opinion (2011: 79) “emphasizing a need for it [a practice-based approach] to develop a greater understanding of the role of social interactions and power relations in the grounded performance of practices.”

Conclusion

This paper presents the conceptual framework and the main results of an exploratory research that investigates the social mechanisms involved when moving to a life with no car in a system of automobility. Social theories of practice are useful to understand such a change in the practice of car driving by calling the attention to the reconfigurations of each of the four components linking doings and sayings as well as to the changing relations between them. The empirical material, made of biographic and in-depth interviews, has given many illustrations of this evolving pattern. Furthermore, the analysis of biographic interviews suggests the need of further theoretical and methodological work for integrating the contributions of socio-biographical approaches into the social theories of practice.

Defecting from the practice of car driving relies indeed on new material arrangements that often include several “objects”, of the same type (means of transport) or not (means of transport and new communication technologies). Diverse competences are associated in novel ways (emailing or surfing on internet before traveling with others or by bicycle). New institutionalised rules sustain the defection from the practice of car driving and these new instruments are related to various policies – from transportation policy to labour and social policy. Changing the teleo-affective structure seems quite challenging, as the meanings associated to automobility, such as freedom and autonomy, are deeply rooted in our society; this ‘structure’ appears to be less ‘structured’ during car-driving practice defection for the teleo-affective structure is traversed by contradictions and tensions, especially between independence and dependence to others and to public transports schedules.

Finally, the role of close relations in sustaining or not a practice, or its defection, appears to deserve more attention in practice theory. This holds true for integrating the concept of co-presence introduced by Urry (2002). Social life is embodied and a practice performance, or its defection, may require the co-presence of close relations. This research has shown that the roles of family members and friends are not always channelled through the linking components, as Schatzki expected, but through the practice itself. Indeed, the actual practice of car driving appears to be paradoxically a condition for its defection.

Thus, for the majority of our informants, moving to a life with no car in a system of automobility is only conceivable if moving with the car of others is feasible for them for not being excluded from this system of automobility.

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