

## How local politicians foster co-mobility in rural France



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**Key words:** co-mobility, car-sharing, political communication, public action, local media, discourse analysis, policy research, critical geography

**Subject:** The study analyses how car-sharing (in the wide range of practices it covers for non-experts) is regarded as a matter of public action in the statements made by local politicians, and in particular how it can be considered as a local public service.

**Corpus:** The study is based on several types of corpus on collaborative mobilities: an extensive international research database, grey literature and official texts, and the statements made by politicians in the local daily press. After taking a more global approach, we chose the Ouest France newspaper because it offers the richest and most diversified analytical material for one region, Brittany.

**Method:** The study is based on a methodological mix recommended by professionals in this field (**D'Andrea et al. 2011**): quantitative analysis of textual content and qualitative analysis of argumentative strategies in political communication. It combines semantic and narratological work on how car-sharing is perceived (political narratives or storylines) and work on the pragmatics of setting up car sharing facilities (staging political discourse in connection with publicly presenting technological tools and road infrastructure to support car-sharing).

**Findings:** The study answers the question of why and to what extent Brittany defines a specific and more accelerated trajectory than other regions in this field of public action (as a result of the intense political communication around car-sharing).

**1st Finding** - Politicians from suburban and rural areas who occupy both peripheral locations in the metropolitan territorial system and marginal positions in the governance of mobility - in short, the "small" suburban and rural politicians - have expressed views that are not necessarily subordinate to the normative frameworks surrounding car-sharing, as conveyed by the dominant public action authorities or provided by industrial and expert sources. These politicians analyse collaborative and alternative mobilities from their much divided perspective of the socio-territorial realities of their local area.

**2nd Finding** - Co-mobility is a tool for maintaining a territory's ability to function as a whole, provided that a minimum of social cohesion and access to urban areas is maintained. Consequently, car-sharing brings with it a dualist approach, one based on social attachment (to identify and strengthen dialectical social ties) and the other on spatial attachment (which invokes the right to mobility between the countryside, small towns and large cities). If we understand co-mobility as a social technique that aims to match drivers and passengers, this dualist approach leads politicians to claim an individual democratic legitimacy in terms of distributing the different responsibilities (public/private, start-ups/mobility operators/professionals and citizen mobility education networks). If we understand co-mobility as a spatial technique that requires new equipment and infrastructures, the Breton politicians have joined forces to develop well-established discursive frameworks (territorial isolation and symbolic compensation for the disadvantages of being far from the city).

**3rd Finding** - By re-defining their own car-sharing categories, politicians turn the latter into a political resource, which establishes them in a framework of values, perceptions and opinions. The study presents a typology of twelve individual argumentative schemes that were introduced when car-sharing areas were first established, which was a key moment for politicians to create political fronts for co-mobility.

**4th Finding** - The "small" Breton politicians are more committed to car-sharing and have been for longer than those in other regions. Why? Car-sharing is all the more important to local politicians as it is a matter of regional public action. This support is understood on two levels. Firstly, in order to successfully adopt an innovative co-mobility policy in the region, it must be in line with local geo-historical demographic patterns. Secondly, political coalitions need to be formed in order to connect this relatively new field of public action with a politically proven and well-established discursive framework. Brittany meets both of these conditions. Firstly, thanks to its urban structures and road networks, the region has already developed a standardised, everyday form of co-mobility that can be adapted in areas where inter-community solidarity is maintained. Secondly, over the last fifty years, Brittany has developed a very specific regional transport policy culture, which is based on a political repertoire resulting from a long battle between Brittany and the French government surrounding its road network (Breton road plan, Bonnets rouges, etc.). But a coalition does not necessarily entail a unified approach. In addition to distributing issues and fine-tuning cultural rituals between "big" and "small" politicians, Brittany has produced a series of discursive frameworks on future mobility that allow politicians to play a role in breaking down and passing on "top-down" public action objectives.

**5th Finding** - The study is relevant on two levels: the first is knowledge in support of sustainable mobility public policies (*polycymaking*) and the second is scientific knowledge on how to develop mobility policies (*polycymaking research*). It argues that car-sharing should be approached from both an endogenous and a decentralised

perspective: endogenous in that it is not based on transferring and communicating existing public policies and decentralised in that car-sharing involves political action patterns based on existing, well-established systems of governance and political communication. When viewed from this perspective, it is clear that a number of politicians still believe that it is politically beneficial to obscure the precise definition of car-sharing, as well as how it should be governed. We can also conclude that co-mobility fits well with agendas where Mobility Transition is based on maintaining the status quo of territorial representations and of institutional and geopolitical balances.

### **Generalisation**

With this condition, the study can be applied more generally. It sheds light on what is happening both at the edges of auto mobility systems (in terms of the social framework of travel techniques - a long-standing concept in the social sciences since its introduction by **Urry 2004**) and in sub-metropolitan political systems (in terms of a permanent readjustment between theoretical approaches to power and institutional approaches to governance). The case of Brittany demonstrates that a region should not be afraid of the somewhat anarchic profusion of localist ideas surrounding car-sharing, even if they are far removed from public actions, nor should it be afraid of sifting through small-scale initiatives that may not seem efficient in terms of car-sharing. This development, which proceeds from the figures of the blur and the spatial puzzle, constitutes one of the trajectories of an innovative regional and national mobility policy.

### **Recommendations**

Short- and medium-distance local co-mobility should be more closely linked with strategies to develop widespread social practices. To do this, we need to put the expectations of massification in the background and avoid dividing local, solidarity-based and home-to-work car-sharing schemes. The idea is to let politicians and their local intermediaries (certain collectives, including identity-based actors, which are at the forefront in Brittany) act from other socialisation networks than the company and the social centre. For this to happen, the public authorities would have to give the politicians a less instrumental role. It would no longer be a question of entrusting them with the task of implementing and leading public action mechanisms produced elsewhere, but of taking responsibility, if they so wish, for guaranteeing socio-spatial ties.

# 1. Theoretical framework: Car-sharing as an object of public action and a subject of political communication

This section draws on work from *critical policy studies*. It presents the theoretical framework for analysing car-sharing by distinguishing between what is a public action object, insofar as it is the product of a particular discursive framework, and what is a discourse of political communication, in terms of form, content and purpose. By focusing on the statements made by politicians, this section demonstrates the importance of identifying narrative and argumentative patterns in political communication, which are known as storylines. This section also explains the connections between the meaning of terms in everyday language (which is approached from an etymological and genealogical perspective), the discursive production of public action in the broadest sense, based on exchanges between politicians, experts, administrators and economists, and the *storylines* of political communication.

## 11. Public action produces hegemonic discourses structured around analytical categories and oriented towards applicable solutions

*“The main purpose of public communication is to present and explain public decisions and actions, to promote their validity, to defend values and to help maintain social links”.* Public communication does not represent all public policies (which are also expressed through planning, regulations, etc.). It is limited to actions that constitute public action issues, insofar as they are difficult, genuine and important. Public communication comes from a whole range of actors: politicians at different institutional levels, national and local civil servants, experts, consultants and researchers who issue opinions, studies and recommendations. There are other sources that surround and influence public communication on public action issues, such as the media, which are both vectors for relaying, commenting on and synthesising statements, as well as playing a key role in shaping public debate. Newspapers influence public opinion to some extent, but they also provide a forum for debate and controversy on public action issues. They give people the opportunity to communicate through different channels and in different ways. Their statements, arguments and opinions circulate horizontally between the different stakeholders and, of course, from one part of the territory to another. They also circulate vertically, which often leads to French public policy analyses based on a vertical interpretation of powers and institutional structures (the ladder, the staircase or the stacking effect) and on identifying the upward or downward movements of public policies. This approach, which is generally implicit, positions the European Union and national government as the dominant strategy and decision-making authorities, while giving regional authorities a planning and coordination or leading role, and the intermediate or lower levels, right down to individual cities or towns, levels of discourse that are closer related to local issues.

Researchers working in critical branches (i.e. they temporarily set aside the other dimensions of public policies, including conditions of performance, relevance, feasibility and all judgements on the merits of these policies) question public action discourses from different theoretical frameworks of sociology, political science and territorial science. Researchers working with this framework concept seek to understand how these discourses of public action appear, are maintained or are transformed, and how they face numerous “disruptions” in the field of mobility. They seek to understand how these discourses of public action are constantly being re-arranged to remain both logical and coherent, to keep pace with political, social, technological and economic transformations, as well as to remain effective, i.e. accepted and implemented by different coalitions in the field of public action (e.g. from politicians to technicians) This involves not directly applying the implicit frameworks of French vertical governance or entering directly into these disruptions by referring to the uberisation that is taking place in the field of mobility, but rather trying to understand two joint movements: firstly, how the discourse of public action is relatively fixed within an overall discursive framework, and secondly, how the discourse of public action - particularly in the field of mobility - is affected by multiple forces that give it a certain degree of variability and flexibility today.

To summarise, French critical researchers (such as **Reigner et al. 2013 & Reigner 2016**) and English critical researchers (such as **Prince 2016 a**) consider public action as “a set of rational yet imaginary ideas” (page 426). They explain that, in the field of mobility, the statements made by private actors, particularly those made by automotive or digital companies, play a very important role in shaping public discourse because, quite simply, public actors operate within a neoliberal framework. They do not adopt a simplistic approach in which neoliberal rationale directly influences discourse of public action. On the other hand, they show that hegemonic public action discourses, especially those advised by central administrations and guided by mobility experts, rely heavily on cognitive, evaluative and prescriptive frameworks to define their approach and justify it as the only relevant one. So, getting straight to the point, the most high-profile works on car-sharing directly address the question of its profitability (**Lagadic et al. 2019**). Russel Prince considers that there are quite strong links between public action discourses or, in his non-pejorative term, “technocratic” discourse, and the discourse produced by companies. He sees the public policy discourse not necessarily as an ideological discourse, in the sense that it explicitly and consciously favours market formulas, but as “a guidance discourse”, i.e. a discourse that looks at mobility problems in such a way that they can be resolved in a practical and relatively satisfactory way (what other researchers call “solutionism”). This discursive framework involves focusing on certain definitions of what is central to governance issues. It directs attention to a particular field in which solutions can or must be found. In this case, the public policy discourse directly seeks criteria, guidelines of general relevance for a solution. To this end, expertise and research are called upon to provide a wide range of analytical criteria in order to make the object in question “abstract and therefore controllable”. These analytical criteria tend to divide the object of public action into categories within the framework of an objective discourse, which is based on identifying and measuring the characteristics of the objects and sub-types, depending on the target audiences of the policies to be produced, according to the institutional jurisdictional divisions and the types of responsibilities of the authorities involved, *etc.* Thus, public action discourse, especially when produced by administrations, leads critical researchers to consider that the object of public action is poorly defined.

Above all, **Russel Prince (2016 a)** is concerned that this type of public action discourse is spreading into increasingly varied areas of social life, that it is “*travelling down*” (p. 3) into all areas of everyday life, that it is extending to the ways in which all territories are governed, pushing even the most modest public actors to take a financial and technical approach to managing people. He believes that “indicatorology” and the functionalist approach are nibbling away at the space taken up by other, less neutral, less consensual, less dominant, more political discourses in the public domain. Therefore, these critical researchers try to extract themselves from the categorical and solutionist dimension of public action discourses. They are looking for forms of mobility and variability in public action discourses and they prefer to enter through the plurality of discourses, through the diversity of speakers, and possibly through the marginality of the coalitions of actors involved in expressing different or divergent views. These researchers do not necessarily have it easy in their own professional field. By assuming a hegemonic position when it comes to allocating research and evaluation funds and organising conferences, the administration stabilises the discursive framework of public action, but also that of research in support of public policies, which often or always fails to integrate these critical and reflective dimensions. This is unfortunate for science in support of public policy, since an entire system of public actors whose own voice, more diverse, less formatted and seldom heard, plays a fundamental role in shaping public action discourse and enabling it to evolve and adapt to today’s powerful and very rapid changes. For the moment, we will leave it at that in terms of scientific and expert discourse, but we will demonstrate that political communication discourses, in particular, can stand out in public action discourses and make them more relevant in a process of circulation, translation and formalisation in order to initiate or link up cycles of public mobility policies, as well as produce reform and adaptation proposals to deal with technological innovations and global challenges.

## **12. Political communication discourses manipulate symbols. They are geared towards expressing values in order to establish a position. They have recently introduced sustainability guidelines**

French scholars such as **Garraud (1990)** and **Vignon (2005 and 2016)** explain that political communication discourses are distinctively different from public communication discourses since they are geared towards political objectives and underpinned by electoral interests. Political competition is indeed a struggle for supremacy in the order of meanings, representations, imaginaries and symbols.



The work of politicians is essentially a matter of language, through a press release for example, or a matter of language in action, through physically participating in and speaking at a public event. Political communication discourses are given in a wide variety of circumstances and situations that allow us to take performative stances on a given situation, alongside other actors (mobility start-ups, integration associations, etc.), in a location-based local context: election campaigns, local authority meetings open to the public, venue/facility openings/inaugurations, site visits, occasional statements on major or minor local issues, representative activities, etc. In this study, we will look at these two methods of political communication concerning car-sharing.

A political communication discourse is based on the persuasive work of constructing an argumentative strategy that combines values, facts, knowledge, circumstances and justifications. *“These are all opportunities to make statements to the public and to produce meaning”*. This political communication discourse is of course based on the common meaning of words in everyday language and on what is circulating about a given topic in the media, since politicians are rarely experts on the objects of public action they are talking about. While political communication discourse relies on the categories produced by public action, it does not always take the subtleties into account. The link between these contents results in a certain level of positioning and visibility in a given political system. The notion of positioning is essential and involves adopting a position and expressing arguments. First of all, let us remember that political leadership is based on three components: the individual qualities of the elected person, his or her positioning skills (institutional capacities, how they structure their party and the institutions, leadership style - executive or collective, ability to organise cooperation between different actors, ability to combine forces, etc.) and environmental aspects (the ability to draw on instruments and opportunities, such as funding, and to deal with constraints). The most important political work is the discursive work of **positioning**, which is of course interactive. The political actor not only seeks to make others see the problems as he or she sees them, but also seeks to position the other actors in a certain way.

There are four main aspects that define political communication discourse, especially that of politicians from the most distant strata of the State, such as the ministries or the research centres.

Firstly, this discourse is based on empirical facts. It gathers experience and incorporates, to a certain extent, a certain vagueness of terms as it plays with them from a symbolic point of view.

Secondly, political language incorporates values in an entirely different way than public action discourses, which are more closely related to administration or science. The discourse is no longer based on ideology in a subterranean way, but on open words, since it is a question of positioning oneself in relation to other politicians. Politicians express their commitments, e.g. by adopting a reformist or radical stance.

Thirdly, political communication discourse is not without myths, and for many critical researchers, it is always rooted in a first myth, the territorial myth. For example, mayoral localism refers to highlighting community identity and local pride, which allows them to demonstrate values and qualities that represent the community from which they have been elected (simplicity, adaptability and common sense). These values are projected into the arguments relating to the objects of public action that the political argumentation seeks to defend. These values are expressed through a process of fixation and translation that we will explain in more detail later on. So the elected official puts forward a mobility solution that reflects their community (the proposal is simple, accessible, natural, local, open, cohesive, etc.). In this sense, the political communication discourse readily supports comprehensive and holistic approaches rather than analytical perspectives, and is oriented towards governance solutions, i.e. governance 'gasworks' involving institutional or financial readjustments, etc.

Lastly, the elected official updates his or her political discourse. **Bages** shows how rapidly the local political game is evolving in the “new rurality” populated by neo-rural employees on the outer fringes of the towns and cities. After the ensuing local elections, Vignon reiterates his analysis of the ecological shift (“going green”) in mobilisation strategies and legitimacy registers of elected officials in rural areas as a result of the social and political dynamics in what he calls the peripheral electoral markets. This notion of “going green” is one way of critically addressing the discursive shift towards overall sustainability in local politics. It can help us understand how certain major paradigms circulate between different registers of public action discourse (i.e. reflecting on how big ideas influence public policy) and how these paradigms become “fixed” in certain types of discourse, notably political communication discourse.

In English-speaking countries, the critical research trend that questions public action in favour of new mobilities (smart, alternative, innovative mobilities, etc.) through analysing discourses has attracted an increasing amount of attention. All these works are based on the theory of governance that was originally developed by Michel Foucault. He argued that political action can be explained by narratological analyses (analysing storylines) since political actors disagree on definitions of social reality. **Manderscheid** demonstrates how the notion of a regime of auto-mobility can be supported by the Foucaultian concept of power. They also draw on Callon and Latour's network actor theory of narratives and discourses. All these works underline the value of combining linguistics (and more particularly narratology, the study of the production of narratives) with political sociology research.

In a few paragraphs, we introduce these approaches with the notions of storylines, vehicular ideas, sustainability fixes, importation, circulation and the formalisation of political discourses.

This study is very much focused on developing policy *storylines* for car-sharing, as opposed to the generic storylines produced by the official actors involved in governing French transport. But what is a *storyline*? *"Storylines make use of specific historical references, symbols, metaphors, and other narrative devices to persuade others to see reality in the light of the speaker"*. According to Hajer, a storyline is the main element of a "discursive agenda". "Storylines are essential in reproducing and transforming a discursive agenda in a given political domain". **Dupuis** gives the following example. The emergence of Uber and Lyft is disrupting the political communication discourse of local politicians in the US. These digital enterprises are literally exploding the regulatory and governance frameworks of metropolitan transport, but also its discursive structures, by questioning the role of national and local governments. It examines how elected officials reconstruct *storylines* to clarify interpretations and how they re-explain and justify the purpose and objective of urban transport companies following this development. While working on the self-driving vehicle, **Servou** also uses the notion of storyline supported by Hajer in her work from 2006. *"Storylines should be understood as means or resources that political actors use to present facts and evidence, as well as to share their understandings with each other. Through these storylines, they reduce the complexity of the issues involved in introducing self-driving vehicles, and this gives their narrative a greater sense of acceptability, credibility and trust. Actors can reproduce a dominant storyline to maintain and reinforce a certain set of institutions, or they can construct an alternative or counter-storyline to transform a policy. The idea of a dominant storyline versus a counter-storyline highlights the fact that storylines are developed in relation to one another or in contrast to a dominant storyline"*.

These storylines are structured around a series of circulating ideas: this is the perfect opportunity to introduce the terms "vehicular idea" and "sustainability fix". Sustainability is one of those vehicular ideas that act as a kind of dominant signification. The same can be said for new mobility and even for car-sharing. These are relatively vague ideas, relatively open-ended in their definition, which emerge when public actors seek solutions to concrete problems. These ideas can be understood as umbrella concepts under which a number of possible meanings can be sheltered and from which a number of political stances can be established. Politicians adopt these terms as a vehicle, as they are flexible enough to be shared with other public actors without creating direct opposition. The same authors explain how these vehicular ideas gather support, create a consensus and allow political (but also industrial and associative) actors to align themselves from very different opinions and representations by balancing social and economic considerations. This is how *municipal sustainability fixes* are constructed (**Temenos Mc Cann 2012** after **While et al, 2004**). The many researchers that focus specifically on adopting new mobilities in political communication discourses explain how new mobilities also establish an organisation between private interests, institutional capacities and political positions in a geographically and historically contingent context, in such a way that the dynamics of local development can continue, despite ecological and economic crises and the working classes' growing interest in the state of the environment. *"A spatially and historically contingent organization of economic interests, institutional capacities, and political positions that allows development to proceed despite economic and ecological crises and in the face of growing popular concerns about the state of the environment."*

The small politicians then establish large paradigms and ideas within a local political group. To achieve this, the process of persuasion requires borrowing and importing, capturing and translating or transferring ideas in constant circulation. This places the small politician in a learning situation and,

through this effort, brings political discourse into a process of stabilisation and formalisation: this is how a cycle of public action is set in motion, until an alternative storyline throws everything out of balance and forces them to move towards a new discursive agenda, a new provisional arrangement of narratives and values.

While a lot had been published on these processes, we simply recall here that research on mobility transitions in the broadest sense (collaborative mobilities, soft mobility, etc.) has many applications when it is included in these theoretical frameworks and when it explores their pioneering fronts. This research examines, among other things, how local models of new mobility are created and how best practices are applied locally, i.e. how elected officials produce and use their local area as a *showcase*. To achieve this, as we have already seen, they rely on local myth and proceed to translate, discursively shape and divert the attention of their constituents towards certain objects that were not previously part of public discourse (this notion of diverting attention has been taken from **McFarlane - 2011, page 360**). Politicians thus translate mobility solutions into forms of knowledge and policies that are "*locally workable*". This perspective seems to be essential in order to understand how local politicians deal with mobility issues, tackling them from political or thematic perspectives that can be considerably different (in particular, for example, by entering into political issues through social problems). This theoretical and critical corpus adds to the vision of the behaviour of the politician who is not caught up in rigid frameworks of vertical governance, but as being capable of a pragmatic and opportunistic approach to public action. Some politicians mix mainstream ideas and local myths, dominant *storylines* and alternative narratives, and bring in non-local models of public action which they mix with local resources, and in doing so, their political communication discourse re-inspires the broader discursive frameworks of public action.

The dynamic approach to the links between political communication discourse and public action discourse allows us to introduce the notion of formalisation. The formalisation process involves a number of phases in which arguments are constructed or arranged, mainly by political actors, and phases of formalisation (or discursive closure, according to Giddens), mainly by other public operators, which clarify a public action issue and establish the responsibilities and means for governing it. A discursive agenda stabilised by public action discourse has two main characteristics. Firstly, it is widely accepted by other political actors. Secondly, it triggers a relationship of trust with regard to the ability to cover a certain reality of the social order. From the perspective of a stabilised discursive agenda, listeners therefore accept the discursive implications of a given problem or a given solution. The public action discourse, backed by expert literature, combines scientific legitimacy and credibility.

However, this discursive agenda can be disrupted. It is not only disrupted from the outside (in the case of mobility we have already seen the role of GAFAM in Dupuis' article) but it can be disrupted from the inside, by political communication discourses, when elected officials or other social actors enter into confrontation, destabilise what is known and understood, propose new argumentative links and spark a rearrangement of the discursive agenda through their *counter-storylines*. *Discursive closure* phases are counterbalanced by *discursive agency* rearrangements, which involve political work. Building public action discourses therefore involves public action cycles. Although political communication discourse can convince people by changing cognitive models, it partly overshadows public action discourse and opens up a new stage of formalisation, which is rapidly stabilised by producing fixed frameworks for the issues raised, based on stable categories, and by defining appropriate standards and proposing institutional and organisational arrangements for operators, as well as organising events (conferences, studies, etc.) to spread this rearranged and re-stabilised discourse among the general public, politicians, experts and the media in order to give it weight, power and effectiveness.

Once these theoretical notions have been established, we need to conduct two types of research before we can identify how car-sharing fits into political communication discourse. The first line of research focuses on the common meaning of the term car-sharing, as this familiar and common meaning, in all its vagueness, permeates political discourse as a resource and not as a weakness. We will see later how the variability of car-sharing creates room for manoeuvre in how politicians construct arguments, allowing values and meanings to circulate, and leading actors to form ideological alignments and coalitions both inside and outside the public and local spheres. The second line of research focuses on the narrower, more precise meaning of car-sharing, in the discursive production of public actors who are not explicitly politicised (but, as we have also seen, whose ideological neutrality is no doubt apparent). We will then see how the various authorities produce not only a discursive agenda on car-



sharing, incorporating it into a series of major paradigms, but also a discursive agenda on how elected officials play a role in creating public action on car-sharing, which they are constantly circumventing.

### 13. The etymology of the word *covoiturage* (car-sharing): a common, recent and vague term but one with ancient roots

This section reflects on the origins of the obsolete term “voiturage” and the more modern term “covoiturage”. It has two main objectives. On the one hand, it moves away from the technical and regulatory term car-sharing, with its narrow application and strict meaning, and focuses simply on the words “car” and “sharing”; or in French, the word *voiture* and the prefix *co-*. On the other hand, it demonstrates that the recent introduction of the term *covoiturage*, in the Quebec and then French context, both includes and defines a new field of practices that are part of a culture of motoring that is undergoing radical change as a result of the digital and collaborative revolutions.

*Covoiturage* is a fairly recent term: 1989 according to Wikipedia. The French term *Covoiturage* was definitively introduced by the Commission d'enrichissement de la langue française (the commission for the enrichment of the French language) in 2000. In common language, the term *covoiturage* is largely due to the success of the online platform Blablacar, but for some time it seems to have been almost covered by the company name, just as Uber has covered the term and the field of practice associated with chauffeur-driven passenger vehicles.

Car-sharing (*covoiturage*) is one way of sharing a car and a journey for a fee, but it is definitely not carpooling and is more or less (free) hitchhiking. Car-sharing is based on several users making the same journey, even if it is a routine one, and is also based on an agreement, contractual or otherwise, to make a vehicle seat available (the individual driver or owner of a vehicle), to another individual (in this case, the passenger occupying the seat that has been made available). It is not to be confused with a contract between a number of users who collectively buy or rent a vehicle (carpooling).

These subtleties are not always apparent or acknowledged by all public figures and journalists who use the term car-sharing. In the part of the study that focuses on analysing the expression of politicians, we can demonstrate the existence of a profusion of expressions and word combinations for understanding and signifying the practice of car-sharing, for identifying its material supports (user drop-off areas, multimodal areas) and for identifying all the immaterial systems for organising the meetings of the travellers involved. For both politicians and the general public, car-sharing is just one word for shared mobility, and this term covers only a very small fraction of the types of shared mobility practices and public policies in favour of shared, sustainable, new and smart mobility.

#### • More about the French term “voiturage”

In modern French, a *voiture* is any transport vehicle with at least two wheels (Source: International Academy of Tourism 1961). This term comes from the Latin *vehere* which gives us both car (or in French, “*voiture*”) and vehicle. A car is an object that carries passengers (cars are cars, but trains are also made up of cars).

*In French, the term voiturier consists of transporting any object/item/person by means of any vehicle: goods or people* (Littré 1863). The term first appeared in the 13<sup>th</sup> century. According to the *Trésor de la langue française*, one of the earliest expressions is: “*Encor est des pseudomes tant Qui bien porroient voiturier*” (Baudouin de Condé, *t. I, p. 11*). At that time, *voiturier* had two meanings:

1. Go to the Holy Land (this is the context of the quoted author's expression)
2. “To move towards a direction, to convey people or objects”.

The same double meaning is repeated by Scheler (source: Gloss. Geste Liège, 310) with the first meaning of “to leave, to set out” and the second meaning of moving objects or people. In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, only the second meaning remained. Molière uses this verb in the *Précieuses Ridicules* “*Voiturez-nous ici les commodités de la conversation*” (a paraphrase to avoid using the word armchairs) and Sully uses the term in the case of cash in transit: “*L'argent que je vous ai fait voiturier...*”

The word **voiturage** appeared in 1358 - it is now a transitive verb and indicates a mode of operation. We drive someone or something, we "voiturage" someone or something, i.e. carrying, moving or transporting objects and people. The Inter-languages dictionary on meaning in context of the Crisco laboratory of the University of Caen Normandy, which is an authority on linguistics, gives a single equivalent for *voiturage*, carriage, thus linking the practice to the type of vehicle used: we *voiturage* with a car, carriage or a cart...

The vocabulary was expanded and new terms were coined from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, during which time the "**voitureurs**", who were itinerant merchants in the language of the time, i.e. traffickers and traders (Rivière 1545), even the term "**voiturons**" (or **viarons**) was used. Le Littré specifies that a *voiturier* is someone who works as a *voiturier* and that there are even *voituriers by water*, which includes boats, barges etc.

### • From *voiturage* to *co-voiturage*, a prefix that is lexically useless but significant for public action as it symbolically modernises an old practice

It follows from the above that the term "*voiturage*" should be sufficient to describe the movement of people, since it implies a driver (*voiturier* - in the modern sense) and other people who are transported, the passengers. In other words, **transporting passengers is always car-sharing**.

The main purpose of car-sharing is to get people to meet at some point, somewhere, to form a group of people travelling in the same direction. In French, the prefix *co-* (the Latin *cum*) in the term "*co-voiturage*" (car-sharing) has a double dimension:

- On the one hand, simultaneity and spatio-temporal coincidence (where two or more individuals cross paths at a given time and place), in short a "co-presence";

- On the other hand, *co-* implies an interaction, a relationship or even a collaboration between the users of a moving vehicle. With the prefix *co-*, the meaning of *voiturage* is influenced by the idea of a sociality of the practice of car travel. In a way, the meaning of car-sharing is thus drawn in opposition to forms of driving in a situation of "auto-solitude", what mobility policy professionals technically call "auto-solism" (driving alone).

More recently, in social psychology, neologisms are often used by researchers to understand the way in which individuals are reassembled during a car journey, between drivers and passengers. **Laurier et al. 2008** used the term *passengering* to question whether this is a practice, if not a social role, and to contrast it with *driving*.

One of the issues surrounding the terms *covoiturage* (car-sharing) in terms of public action lies in the tension between two interpretations of the prefix "co": between the reluctant collaborative and the eager community, between the reference framework of digital modernisation and smart mobility on the one hand, and that of the social and solidarity economy and communities on the other. This is where one of the great ambiguities of the term car-sharing arises, which was not resolved by the return of Quebec to France, when the term was coined thirty years ago. In the meantime, community and volunteer car-sharing has found another term that also marked an era, and then weakened before starting up again as a component of contemporary collaborative mobilities: hitchhiking.

### • "Hitchhiking": another term

**Rinvolucris** published an essay in 1974 entitled "Hitch-Hiking", which traces the history of hitchhiking or "thumbing a ride" in the UK since 1914. He suggested that hitchhiking began with the practice of *lorry-jumping* in the United States, where travellers rode in freight trucks, much like the hero of John Steinbeck's novel *The Grapes of Wrath*, during the Great Depression. This practice was then transferred to the automobile with the increasing popularity of the private car. Rinvolucris places the beginning of hitchhiking in France during the First World War, notably with the *Taxis de la Marne* in 1914. Soldiers would also have hitchhiked throughout the conflict. Using cars as a collective mode of transport was also a common occurrence during the Second World War, partly due to constraints on the supply and use of fuel. From October 1940 to March 1941, the British government distributed

additional petrol ration coupons to Londoners who transported their colleagues. This incentive scheme, which came to an end as quickly as it had begun, was adopted elsewhere in England, and many Britons shared their journeys with hitchhikers in the name of the national war effort. According to the author, this practice had a strong influence on the teenagers of the time, who, once they owned a car, continued to share their journeys.

These practices dating back to the beginning of the century demonstrate the following characteristics: the collective use of the individual car responds to a budgetary constraint (cost of fuel, maintaining the car) and a material constraint (no vehicle available, an event that limits the supply of fuel). This is why hitchhiking has long been very popular with students. And so, one of the first known organised hitchhiking systems in France was created: the Allostop-Provoya association, in 1958. This association, created by Parisian students, was designed to put drivers offering a ride in touch with passengers requesting a ride via a call centre that could be reached by dialling the 7 letters of the name PROVOYA on the telephone keyboard. The service was financed by membership fees, and the passenger then contributed to the costs of the journey. In the 1960s, hitchhiking was perceived by young people as a real way of getting around, a means of breaking free, of integrating into a more protesting and libertarian counter-culture, but it was also a practice that met a real economic and material need.

The Allostop-provoya association transformed the practice of hitchhiking and made it more socially acceptable. Hitchhiking, which was once considered a more or less militant or deviant practice, is finally becoming a safe way to travel and is now seen as a perfectly acceptable and normal practice. In the 1980s, the number of memberships increased due to the successive oil crises, but also due to the excessive media coverage of stories of assaults linked to hitchhiking. The classic form of hitchhiking, at random by the roadside, gained a bad reputation and the association established a more secure and organised practice with a certain amount of success, thanks to its referral service.

- **Quebec coined the term “covoiturage”, a term that covers a variety of co-mobility methods.**

The association, under the influence of members who had travelled to Canada, adopted the word “covoiturage” (car-sharing) in 1986, and created an international car-sharing card which enabled its members to use similar services in other countries, notably within the Eurostop network. Soon after, the association changed its name to Allostop-covoiturage. The term “covoiturage” appeared on the other side of the Atlantic, in Quebec, in order to avoid using the English terms that were developing at the time, and to cover a broader practice - the joint use of a private vehicle, whereas the term “organised hitchhiking” refers more to an action that brings together a driver and a passenger (Vincent, 2008). There is therefore a progressive mutation of the concept, from hitchhiking to car-sharing. There are many English terms for this practice, including *ride-hailing*, *carpooling*, *car cruising*, *car sharing*, *car clubbing* or *ride sharing*. Basically, these terms are distinguished on two levels: the type of ownership of the car (in car sharing one shares a property, whether cooperative or not), shared use (carpooling consists of renting the time to use a vehicle with other people) and how one accesses the service and/or is associated with the driver (ride-hailing corresponds to “hailing” a driver, such as a taxi or an Uber). You hire a driver as a private chauffeur to take you exactly where you want to go, without taking other passengers, without making detours or stops. It's personal transport. (Ecolane) Also, certain forms of car-sharing can be similar to ride-hailing and even carpooling. We will leave this to the expert discussions, knowing that in French, the term *covoiturage* both encompasses and masks these otherwise extremely important subtleties.

In conclusion, in order to consider the political discourse on car-sharing, we need to disassociate the term from a standard or technical understanding with a directly operational objective, and be open to the meaning invested in it by actors who are “naïve” when it comes to using the term. Politicians are almost always non-specialists when it comes to new mobilities and they use the term car-sharing from a plural, pluralist and plural-situated understanding, from linguistic conditioning and from social and territorial contexts. This is what the above etymological approach was intended for, and it reveals several important points:

- *Covoiturage* is the modern version of the lost term, *voiturage*. The term refers to a very old meaning, which delimits the scope of mobility for a non-urban and sedentary society, describing a set of status distinctions, social roles, and life styles around transport activities and actors.

- The addition of the prefix “co”, which is not necessarily useful, brings the term up to date and places it in the new world of social (community) and marketing activities (collaborative and its digital tools).

- In parallel, the development of the term “organised hitchhiking” refers to a second process of semantic reuse and distinction with regard to the term “hitchhiking” itself and what it means in terms of practice and representations. It is a term produced by public action discourse (first associative, and then state actors and experts).

- It is difficult to match the English terms for collaborative mobility with the French terms.

## **14. A functional definition of car-sharing to identify the market, the actors and the regulatory frameworks**

Institutional actors, market operators and associations are faced with a commonly used term, car-sharing, but with a vague meaning. They are making legitimate efforts to have this term technically and legally defined. The aim of stabilising the vocabulary is to dissociate car-sharing from hitchhiking or the commercial activity of taxis. This section examines the legal and regulatory frameworks and public expertise studies relating to this subject of car-sharing in order to demonstrate three main points.

Expert opinion and public action discourse quite naturally position this activity in the socio-technical field of energy transition and new forms of motoring, i.e. innovative mobility (emerging, sustainable, intelligent mobility, etc.). They favour a service-oriented approach to this practice as well as its commercial, organised and technical side. In this respect, the understanding of car-sharing is diffracted into an infinite number of sub-groups. The methods for categorising the different forms of car-sharing help us to identify the different types of technological instruments, levels of service, target audiences and territorial contexts.

Regulatory, commercial and expert approaches to car-sharing implicitly or explicitly assess the success, efficiency, profitability and feasibility of the various car-sharing arrangements, depending on how they are categorised. They reveal forms of car-sharing that are in practice and that politicians can actually talk about. We will therefore demonstrate that the legislative, technical and expert definitions of car-sharing all revolve around a black hole. They describe the different forms of car-sharing as being on the fringes of the market, at the limits of regulations, on the borders of territories, and at the forefront of experimentation. Paradoxically, they present these forms of car-sharing as being the most necessary in terms of the general interest and the least easily understood by their tools for determining and categorising the existing situation.

### **• Legal and regulatory developments relating to car-sharing**

French legislators have been using the term *covoiturage* (car-sharing) for almost forty years.

Article 28 - 1 paragraph 6 of the Loi d'orientation des transports intérieures - LOTI (inland transport policy act) states “*Encourage companies and public authorities to draw up a mobility plan and to promote the transport of their staff, in particular by using public transport and car-sharing.*”

The term *covoiturage* is given a standard definition, based on compliance with an act or use by the MAPTAM (Modernisation de l'action publique territoriale et affirmation des métropoles) law of 27 January 2014

“*Car-sharing is defined as the joint use of a motorised land vehicle by a non-professional driver and one or more adult passengers in order to share a journey.*”

At that time, the CERTU defined car-sharing in a rather blunt manner: an individual who considers that he or she is car-sharing, subject to certain conditions, is actually doing so.

“*The aim of car-sharing is to bring together individuals who are making all or part of a journey that they were previously making alone in their own vehicles. The criteria:*

- sharing a private vehicle
- the number of occupants in the vehicle (at least two occupants, so the intention must meet an actual opportunity)
- co-presence: making a common journey
- the fact that the driver is not a professional
- finally, the fact that the driver does not earn any income.”

The French Law of 17 August 2015, known as the Energy Transition Law () art. 52 - integrated into the French Transport Code, article L3132-1 states: “Car-sharing is defined as the joint use of a motorised land vehicle by a driver and one or more passengers, without payment, except for the sharing of expenses, in the context of a journey which the driver makes on his or her own account. For this purpose, they may be put in contact with each other for a fee and do not fall within the scope of the professions defined in Article L. 1411-1”. It is always a definition that involves cross-referencing different operational criteria.

Finally, the French Mobility Orientation Law defines car-sharing as “...*the joint use of a motorised land vehicle by a driver and one or more passengers, without payment, except for the sharing of expenses, in the context of a journey which the driver makes on his or her own account. For this purpose, they may be put in contact with each other for a fee.*” A Council of State decree shall determine the implementing rules of this Article, particularly the nature of the expenses taken into consideration.

There are two key articles in the LOM: Article 15 provides the conditions for the massive development of car-sharing by providing financial support to drivers and passengers who use it; and Article 26 provides a legal framework for mobility organising authorities to subsidise car-sharing. It also creates a sustainable mobility package of €400 per year per employee, exempt from charges.

## • The criteria for defining car-sharing: categories of motives, target audiences, technical processes, receiving territories, etc.

In the early stages, legislators adopted two main criteria to define car-sharing:

- **the criterion of vehicle occupancy:** car-sharing implies that the vehicle is occupied by several people, but there is still some vagueness (recently clarified by the law) as to the nature of the relationship between the people in the vehicle. Does the relationship involve any form of payment? Are the individual’s family members, work colleagues, neighbours, or not connected at all?

- **the way in which this service is organised:** this refers to the technical and contractual arrangements between the individuals, the nature and level of preparation or the time spent planning the journey, with, for example, identifying pick-up and drop-off points, negotiating the timetable, the route, the destination, etc.

**Car-sharing is then broken down into a number of sub-categories, in an attempt to define its contours.**

One study states that “*Car-sharing differs from carpooling in that the vehicle is shared only at a given time, to make a pre-defined journey. There are several car-sharing practices, which differ in terms of the system used to connect people, the frequency of the journeys or the distance travelled. People can be put together directly, informally, through a third party (association or private company managing an internet or telephone platform), by spontaneous or organised hitchhiking, or by means of a so-called dynamic application, which allows a journey to be organised in real time with other users*”.

Most operational documents include the same types and forms of car-sharing (**Bureau d'étude 6T 2015, Bourcier et al. 2017**). **The categorisation criteria are:**

- categorisation by frequency and regularity: A distinction is made between **occasional car-sharing**, which is based more on the use of dedicated platforms such as Blablacar, and **regular car-sharing**, such as home-to-work car-sharing, which is “more difficult to trace and quantify because of its informal nature”.



- Categorisation by the structure of the service: a distinction is made between **organised car-sharing**, which includes journeys made by several people through dedicated platforms, and **spontaneous car-sharing**, which includes family journeys and hitchhiking (ADEME, 2014).
- categorisation by motive and distance: a distinction is made between **short-distance journeys**, in particular family journeys, which are difficult to quantify, and **home-to-work** and **home-to-school** journeys (assimilated to daily commuting) over medium distances (between 20 and 80 km), and finally **long-distance** car-sharing.
- technological categorisation: **dynamic car-sharing** implies the possibility of locating a driver and/or passengers in real-time as opposed to **planned car-sharing**.
- categorisation by target audience and purpose: the authorities recognise the emergence of specialised car-sharing services - for example, **solidarity** car-sharing by employers and social workers in poor neighbourhoods, or **special** car-sharing for young people going to parties or discos, with a focus on safety (in order to put people in touch with each other and offer a safe car-sharing service for returning from parties where they may consume alcohol).
- These operations can be included in the register of **organised hitchhiking**, which is becoming a reality that is more or less distinct from that of **community car-sharing or free car-sharing (in terms of free software)**, through its associative organisation and its strong support from local authorities. This mode of transport is also called **informal car-sharing or collaborative hitchhiking**.

### • A priority target for public action: car-sharing for vulnerable suburban and rural users

Expert (Ba & Chassignet 2015) and institutional (Jullien & Rivolet 2016) discourses explain that car-sharing has developed where it is both easiest and least necessary to do so: either in dense urban areas, or on the long-distance segment because it is more affordable than public transport. On the other hand, for short or medium distances, for home-to-work and/or for the major share of trips that are made for other reasons, car-sharing is still very limited, which is also confirmed by foreign researchers (Namazu et al. 2018). For these journeys, the problem is infinitely more complex: in terms of organisation, we have no idea how to make the service more efficient and - above all - the economic equations are impossible to solve as the sums to be recovered for car sharers are very small. Moreover, in segments other than long-distance, private car-sharing services do not target the public who need them most. These people are considered in terms of their social and territorial circumstances.

**In social terms:** these are constrained households. Some experts distinguish three categories of mobile populations in the suburban areas.

*“Territorial assignees are households that do not have (or have difficulty in gaining) access to mobility for financial reasons (preventing them from obtaining a driving licence or purchasing a sufficient number of vehicles), physical reasons, cultural reasons (physical or psychological difficulty in leaving their territory) or behavioural reasons (lack of mobility skills). These households rely heavily on local services and facilities, “prisoners” in their own homes. As a result of these mobility difficulties, these households have a limited area to travel; they are very dependent on local services and shops, as well as their network of close family and friends. These people are mainly elderly people with no means of transport, who rely on their children, family and friends to get around and perform their daily activities (shopping and medical appointments), as well as unemployed young people with no means of obtaining a driving licence or a car, who are unable to attend training courses, attend job interviews or, a fortiori, find work outside their home town. These populations are also made up of women belonging to households with only one car, whose car is often reserved for their spouse to get to work, and who then have no alternative but to use public transport (rare), walk or cycle to perform their everyday activities, and finally, people with limited mobility skills who find it difficult to get around on their own, find their way around on a map, buy a transport ticket, etc.”*

- The vulnerable are households that allocate more than 18% of their budget to daily mobility expenses (fuel, parking, tolls, buying and repairing vehicles, insurance, etc.), risking a weakening of their current mobility practices and an increase in their proportion in the rural population. More often than not, these

households are unaware of their travel costs, which they still take relatively little into account when they move house. Saujot (2012) identifies two categories: **the “carefree”**, who tend, despite mobility expenses that are too high for their income, to keep the same practices; and **the “overwhelmed”**, who are aware of the fact that their mobility expenses are too high for their income but dare unable to rebalance their budget.

- Those who are **“set in their ways”** and the **“other commuters”** are households with **“modest to well-off” incomes** that manage to meet their own mobility needs, who make their own journeys that are not, in principle, problematic from a financial point of view. These “no-need, no-problem” commuters represent a large portion of the rural population (working or retired commuters), whose socio-economic characteristics, practices and needs are, however, not well understood at present.

Characterising these three groups allows us to identify three types of issues: It is a question of increasing the mobility of the territorially assigned and the vulnerable and making mobility more available and more sustainable for everyone.

• In territorial terms, car-sharing plays a key role: it develops in areas where **public transport services are not profitable and therefore ensures a certain continuity of public service**. Huyghe’s work shows *“highly diversified, multiple, superimposed public transport services (regular public transport lines, road transport services, rail networks, etc.) associated with a large number of intermediaries who organise public transport, but also “unofficial” transport (structures such as social action centres)”*. Car-sharing provides a solution in a territory that is perceived by experts as being difficult to understand and inconsistent in terms of the organisation of public services. *“Multiple and diverse offers create a significant range of transport services, but ones that the population may find difficult to understand and appropriate...”* and which is also often *“unsuited to the needs of populations with ever-increasing constraints”* (working hours, childcare, back-to-back appointments or activities, etc). Public transport does not always offer services adapted to these needs. Huyghe concludes that *“public transport is adapted to the needs of a fraction of the population (particularly the captives), but does not, on its own, provide a means of reducing the overall number of journeys made by rural populations. The mobility offer proposed to them must therefore include individualised services that better respond to the “new temporalities” of households”*.

In conclusion, the work focuses on a social and territorial mismatch in the short-distance car-sharing market. The inhabitants of rural and suburban areas, who make most of their daily journeys themselves, are currently under-represented in the panel of car-sharing service users and are little concerned by the offers and strategies of car-sharing companies. The least densely populated areas are where mobility needs are the greatest. Rural households drive the most kilometres, emit the most CO<sub>2</sub> into the atmosphere and make the least contribution to the turnover of car manufacturers due to the constraints of buying and maintaining a vehicle. While the need for incentives other than car ownership is quite clear, none of the existing mobility services address this potential demand for mobility and vehicles, nor are they prepared to do so. Suburban and rural areas, especially in western France (**ESO & CERUR 2012**), is therefore a **source of demand** for mobility services but not yet a market. Public actors are responsible for configuring demand and supporting private and associative actors in their efforts to innovate and respond to needs that are increasingly complex to understand.

**Public action discourse on car-sharing is marked by functionalist, constructivist and “solutionist” perspectives.** Government administration and expertise focus heavily on best local practices to overcome a number of problems that are also discursive constructs in terms of a certain reading of the social, technical and political dimensions. Among these problems, the problem of “auto-solism” (driving alone), the complexity of governing public transport, the limit of territorial relevance for adequate public transport, etc. Public action needs to produce and coordinate a whole series of instruments to develop and encourage the conditions for car-sharing practices in society: Internet applications, specially designed facilities (car parks, for example) and, more broadly, material and immaterial infrastructures and public policy measures such as calls for projects.

But there is still a major difficulty to be overcome: **expert and institutional discourses mainly develop functionalist perspectives of car-sharing, which lead them to target the forms of car-sharing to be developed, while surrounding them with a form of uncertainty.**

## 15. The forms of car-sharing to be developed remain functionally undetermined, and this calls for the involvement of local politicians

*“Establishing new forms of rural and suburban car-sharing would allow mobility services to reach a wider customer base and would allow manufacturers to find new outlets for “retrofit” vehicles. From the public and private car manufacturers’ point of view, the main focus should be to create added value for those cars already on the road, while reducing the environmental impact of older cars and accelerating fleet renewal.” - Jullien & Rivolet 2016.*

The term rural car-sharing actually covers or calls for a whole range of other terms that refer both to non-market, unofficial, informal car-sharing and to car-sharing as an emerging market.

Literature on this subject includes:

- **“informal” car-sharing** between employees of the same company or within a “circle of trust” of car-sharers, at the level of the company or the community;
- **short-distance car-sharing** based on the proximity of users and the short distance of the journeys;
- **family car-sharing** between family members;
- **solidarity car-sharing**, which is based on a vision of community development and the use of collaborative practices;
- **militant car-sharing**, which refers to the values of militant hitchhiking in the 1970s, implying a radical renewal of relationships between transport providers and users and a form of empowering the latter, with a view to refusing market values and outside solutions. This can also be linked to **de-technified car-sharing**, based on an avoidance of digital surveillance;
- **daily car-sharing**, linked to synchronised travel patterns within a “community of practice”.

### • To achieve this, the public action discourse places a series of responsibilities on political actors in the field.

Most of the expert and institutional documents on car-sharing (understood as regular short and medium distance car-sharing) consider the place of the local political actor from an instrumental point of view. The politician is less responsible for initiating public involvement in changes in mobility behaviour than for accompanying a public action strategy that is both geographically exogenous and outside of his or her area of responsibility. A 2016 ADEME publication explains that:

- The local authorities can manage a car-share networking platform;
- Communicating, promoting and publicising car-sharing can remove psychological barriers and encourage people to use car-sharing;
- Local politicians and local authorities can also develop special car-sharing facilities, such as car-sharing lanes and parking areas;
- Local actors can help in hosting local trials and experiments;
- Local authorities are encouraged to develop tools to improve access to car-sharing services in their area.

Overall, this is a very traditional view of vertical governance, i.e. the downward flow of rules and requirements. For the elected official in charge of a local authority, it is a question of assuming the role of **receiver of innovation** and **intermediary** between the origin of public action and the groups of end users, i.e. the local residents.

Public action discourse is obsessed with the need for "action", for local and regional authorities to make a solid commitment to mobility transition. This means that local politicians must adopt public action instruments for sustainable mobility. However, there is a certain amount of caution regarding local solutions and, more generally, a warning from local mobility operators regarding the frenzy of trials and experiments that fail to reach car-sharers. Also, a number of experts are in favour of pooling resources: *"Before creating yet another car-sharing platform, it would be wise to establish partnerships with existing car-sharing operators and their tools (car-sharing areas, websites, etc). This goes for cities, towns and other urban areas, urban public transport authorities, public establishments for cooperation between local authorities, counties, regions and other transport authorities (such as mixed unions). The current proliferation of local and national car-sharing platforms (more than 200 in France) makes it difficult to match supply and demand. In order to achieve a high number of matches, we recommend making car-sharing sites inter-operable with one another, with multimodal information systems (MIS)."* (Limousin & Voison 2014 p.10)

Going further, other institutional discourses warn against "maverick" politicians who develop local solutions that are socially generous but not market driven, and which depend heavily on subsidies and the re-election of the politicians who support these solutions. *"It is only natural to question the relationship between the investments made by the public authorities to develop the service and the number of people reached by these offers". "We believe that the high dependence on fluctuating political support is one of the major weaknesses of these types of services and that it is important to consider this in the future."* (Jullien & Rivolet 2016)

This highlights two important issues:

- By promoting an instrumental vision of the elected official, car-sharing is de-politicised, if we understand the nature of political power as being able to invest the meaning of the public value of the practice. The elected official is not seen as a promoter or negotiator of outside standards, but as a receiver, or interface with the public, which is a consumer (or user) of the service.
- By developing a discourse of good management of public accounts, the elected official can put a stop to and counterbalance the approaches that tend to politicise or socialise car-sharing outside public action and market frameworks.

## Conclusion

In conclusion of this first chapter, the discourse of public actors produced by institutions such as the State, their agencies and various expert circles, present car-sharing as an action to support and structure technological, legislative and social elements. The State and the expert sphere openly doubt the possibility of constituting rural car-sharing as an object of public action on the grounds that there is no market and that there are numerous socio-territorial constraints. However, these actors hope that public action will be taken up locally without making a fuss.

The elected official tries to produce political potential by positioning themselves with or against the *storylines* of public action on car-sharing. Generic public policy is only given a local dimension and is only made operational when it provides a political outlet, i.e. when the elected official can consider car-sharing as a resource for local political action. How does this process work? What does the elected official have to say about car-sharing and what does he or she do with it politically? How can car-sharing be the solution to a local - not national - public action problems? This is precisely the aim of this publication, to provide the answers. It is therefore a question of working on the link between two worlds, that of institutional governance and that of politics, in order to understand the forms of reciprocal instrumentalisation. On the one hand, institutions need a place to implement public action, for example, to carry out trials. On the other hand, the elected official picks up on this institutional development and presents it in his or her own language, which is based on common sense, and uses it to promote his or her own position and interests. There is therefore constant negotiation and confrontation between discursive agendas and frameworks that do not have the same objectives

## **2. Documentary Sources: The place of political discourses on car-sharing in the media... to the role of the media in the politics of car-sharing**

In France, the region with the highest level of car-sharing is Brittany. It is also the region in which this practice seems to have developed the earliest, and it is one of the leading regions in terms of public initiatives related to this activity. Finally, Brittany is also one of the regions where political actors talk most about car-sharing in the media. These facts seem to have a logical connection, but in what way? Why is Ouest France, the leading regional daily newspaper in the West of France, much more interested in car-sharing than other corresponding publications in France? If this newspaper makes the region's car-sharing a media object in its own right, what types and forms of car-sharing are covered and how does this approach support some original forms of public car-sharing policies?

In this chapter, we will discuss how we came to ask such questions and what answers our investigation has provided. You will see how the study has gradually focused on one region, having started with a more comparative first stage. But first, it is important to explain why we decided to work with the press - an approach that has both advantages and serious methodological constraints.

In this section, the following reasoning is also demonstrated. Firstly, Ouest France does not use the same journalistic angles as other newspapers when covering mobility issues. This newspaper presents more varied approaches and social practices of car-sharing than those that appear in other newspapers. This may be linked to the construction of a special relationship between the newspaper and its readers, which is the result of the newspaper's strategic position in response to the threats of digital disruption. Secondly, we show that this newspaper has developed a central role in the politics of Western France and has established a good relationship with its political circles. This leads to one conclusion: this regional daily newspaper is not so much a "neutral" publication for communicating the political views of elected officials as it is a central element in creating a public forum, understood as a kind of "pool" (*policy world*) in which elected officials can also assume that certain forms of car-sharing are feasible.

## **21. Car-sharing and the media**

### **• Why work on media discourse and not on interviews? Identifying both the speaker (the elected official) and the listener (the popular audience), and thus understanding the public domain of car-sharing**

The purpose of this study is to confront a number of clichés that we want to dispel immediately.

Newspapers are seldom used when studying discourses on the "new" mobilities, as if the "old world" status of written press does not fit well with mobilities that are considered as *innovative* and *digitally advanced*. An interesting thing about this source, however, is that it allows us to work over a longer period of time (i.e. we can make a historical point by linking opinions and expressions on car-sharing to a time before communication technologies were developed) and to give real context to political communication speeches within a half-century history of public action.

The second advantage is that this source allows us to read the territory with a very fine level of precision: local newspaper help give context to the speech of the political actor in terms of space, time, background and circumstances, and to work on the content of the speech itself (this is the qualitative and interpretative approach) as well as on the measures of intensity and density of the speech (this is



the quantitative approach supported by textometry software). But before you can start studying the local press, you may have to overcome a number of prejudices. Some people find it difficult to accept the existence of public arenas and a “serious” public debate on new mobilities outside of non-institutional and academic circles, so far from Paris, amongst rural public actors. We definitely felt a certain degree of condescension when presenting our work to members of a “Parisian” technocracy. Even before presenting the results, the local press is cautious. The daily press, immersed in local life, is merely a source of anecdotal information (the “dog-eat-dog” aspect). We also faced the idea that the national media bear valid and general ideas, while the local media act only as relays to spread these already formatted public action discourses, and that, at best, the local media discourses are prescriptive discourses (basically, they only contain adjurations to switch from the “old” to the “new” mobilities). Fortunately, political scientists are much less prejudiced than senior civil servants or transitional technocrats; they have already established how valuable the regional daily press is as a source of information and as research material. The regional daily press provides access to a huge gallery of political actors and therefore to a wealth of discourse within a certain context.

With these preconceptions out of the way, we will now move on to the purpose of this chapter. We seek to build up a body of context-based political communication discourse. Political action reciprocally feeds on and is shaped by media discourses which in turn shape a public forum or “space for opinion” in certain areas. One outcome of this study is to identify these local public forums and how they cover car-sharing in the media. These small public areas (in the sense that they have a certain territoriality) have a strong influence on the form and content of local politicians’ statements on car-sharing.

Let’s start with the obvious. It is well known that political communication discourse goes hand in hand with media coverage. Moreover, the media provides features, reports, with a plural editorial content, they embody the existence of a public opinion, they constitute an open political forum, and they are a place of expression, where different opinions structure the social environment. Newspapers, television and social networks are not only used to communicate individual opinions, but also to generate streams of ideas that circulate between speakers and audiences/readers. This discursive dynamic is the fundamental way in which public forums are established. However, this filtering of political discourse by the media brings us into a new form of uncertainty: media discourse partly rewrites political discourse, amalgamates it with other forms of discourse, and issues it with multiple objectives (i.e. public concerns, but also issues of media profitability). The media needs to satisfy the contradictory demands of providing both important information and entertainment (to create a buzz, to shock readers/viewers with a scandal, etc.).

By not focusing on individual interviews with elected officials, we were able to make a regional comparison, we were able to cover a much larger number of statements made by elected officials and we were able to assess the views of elected officials in the context of open opinions, at a time when they are trying to persuade a large audience: “housewives under fifty”. In contrast, when interviewed, elected officials are often more inclined to self-justification, instinctively adopting the public action frameworks and the major reference points to which they can easily commit to, without any risks. Before looking at the press, we sought to identify the major “trends” that have shaped the role of car-sharing in today’s society.

### • **Google trends for car-sharing: a recent and uneven media hype**

The term *covoiturage* has been commonly used for less than thirty years. It appears both on the web and in the traditional media. Google trends measures the number times the word “covoiturage” has been searched for on the Google search engine in France since 2004. It can be seen that the use of the term increased evenly in 2008, before peaking in 2013 and then falling back to the 2008 level in 2018. According to this tool, which allows us to visualise searches and associated terms, searches for “blablacar” gradually replaced those for “covoiturage” from 2013. The company Blablacar adopted this name in 2013, as the platform was previously called *covoiturage.fr* By 2014, the volume of searches for Blablacar exceeded the volume of searches for car-sharing in general.

The Google trends tool also enables us to visualise the volume of searches for a term by region or even by town city. It shows us that the number of searches for the term “covoiturage” has always been highest

in Brittany, followed by the regions of Pays de la Loire (representing 74% of the number of searches in Brittany), Limousin (67%) and Midi-Pyrénées (65%).

## • Car-sharing in the press: Brittany takes the lead

The regional daily press is fully catalogued and can be accessed through the online tools Europresse and Factiva.tre. By examining newspapers over a 20-year period (2000-2019) and searching for the number of articles including the term “covoiturage” in title words and headlines, we were able to rank the French regions and their main regional newspapers in absolute terms (based on the gross volume of articles) and in relative terms (by comparing the number of articles mentioning car-sharing to the total number of articles published). There is, however, a key methodological issue: we obviously need to take into account the geographical coverage of the regional daily press, which covers very different institutional regions that have been subject to change since the 2015 reform. In addition, to complicate matters further, the map of geographical coverage has become more complex because of the strong concentration of the press, which is currently in a state of crisis. But for now, there are a number of broad variables that can be taken into account without getting into these subtleties.

The information obtained by Google trends is perfectly convergent with that obtained from the press cataloguing systems. The national press has shown a growing interest in car-sharing, but in most regions, interest seems to come and go. We have noted phases of great interest followed by a relapse corresponding to the trend already identified (2010-2020 with a peak in the middle of the decade), except for the West where interest in the subject has remained constant. The media trajectories can be divided into three categories.

Category 1: Rhône-Alpes and Languedoc-Roussillon reached the peak of articles published in 2010 and 2016 respectively and then saw the number of articles decrease and interest in the subject does not seem to have returned.

Category 2: Île-de-France, Lorraine, Auvergne, Aquitaine and Hauts-de-France experienced a moderate but almost continuous growth in the frequency of publication of articles, followed by a plateau. There are rarely more than 250 articles per year in the Île-de-France and Lorraine regions, around 600 articles per year in Auvergne and Hauts-de-France, and 800 since 2014 for Aquitaine.

Category 3: Brittany, Pays de la Loire and Midi-Pyrénées have experienced very rapid growth and decline in interest in car-sharing, but with much higher volumes of articles. These three regions and their respective regional newspapers (Sud Ouest and Ouest France) produced more than 1,000 articles per year on this subject after 2017, with 2,642 articles published by Ouest-France and the Télégramme in 2017 alone.

The results are consistent when looking at relative data. In most regions, the ratio of articles on the subject varies between 1 and 3 per thousand. Aquitaine in particular stands out, with a ratio of over 5 per thousand from 2012, and is overtaken by the regions of Brittany and Pays de la Loire from 2016. These two western regions are experiencing a sharp increase in the number of articles featuring car-sharing (whereas this is a period of decline on the web): 15 articles per 1,000 in 2017 and 22 per 1,000 in 2018 in Brittany. Elsewhere, readers do not necessarily see an inflation of interest in car-sharing in the daily press, with the number of articles on the issue increasing almost as fast as the total number of articles published.

To conclude this point: both digital and print media have shown more interest in car-sharing between 2010 and 2020. This discursive timeline is fairly short. A wave would have passed through different spheres of society, from the people who use car-sharing to get around and who now type “Blablacar” directly into their phone, to other actors, including companies and public authorities, who have developed services and established public policies. However, Western France plays a more active role in this *mobility media turn*, where the term “sticks” longer in society, and in the territory, for reasons that are open to question. For this, we chose to focus on Brittany, and it is possible that the work was also consistent for the Pays de la Loire and Aquitaine. We decided to study Brittany for three reasons. First of all, Brittany is perfectly situated in terms of both the distribution of the Ouest France newspaper and

the regional boundaries: things are less simple in the Pays de la Loire region, where several newspapers cover the five counties. Secondly, the boundaries of Brittany were not modified by the Notre law of 2015, while the perimeters changed between Aquitaine and New Aquitaine, which makes it difficult to study. And finally, Brittany's cultural identity is defended by its media, and it has coalitions of elected officials who make a series of long-term political demands to Paris on particular issues. This political, cultural and media environment based on an obvious Breton "uniqueness" will prove extremely important in the continuation of this work.

## 22. Ouest France: a media empire close to politics and the territories

Ouest France occupies a leading position among the local press. Its territorial coverage makes it a force to be reckoned with. In 2005, the publication bought the Maine Libre, Presse Océan and the Courrier de l'Ouest. It circulated an impressive 68,000 copies each day in 2017. It publishes 42 local issues. Last but not least, it has the largest number of readers in France: 2.4 million people read it every day, including 1.2 million in Brittany, which is more readers than Le Monde and Le Figaro combined. Ouest France is a highly distinctive publishing brand. Since the post-war period, the newspaper has supported the Breton identity through a clear and continuous positioning that combines promoting regional independence (by supporting certain major local politicians who were historical actors in the process of decentralisation) and unfailingly supporting the region's cultural traditions.

But the local press also connects readers with local politics. Ouest France aims to be a newspaper that is close to the people and the territories, through which readers develop and maintain their local network by seeing their local politicians and association leaders, and by maintaining a "**local network capital**" which is also a prerequisite for public life and local democracy (but also, in fact, a prerequisite for mobility, insofar as it implies meeting and exchanging with different individuals and social groups).

Researchers have shown that Ouest France has developed a very special long-term relationship between the mayor and local journalists. *"For the Mayor, the newspaper is a factor of recognition, a tool for spreading knowledge, a vector for feedback from the citizens, and an indicator of popularity and discontent from below. The local newspaper is where politicians can launch a debate and where they can read about the concerns of local people"* (Goupil p. 114). While in other French regions, a very small fraction of the population still buys the local newspaper, this is not the case in Brittany, where even the urban and rural working classes still subscribe to the paper version that they receive every day in their letter boxes. And the Breton politicians are well aware of this fact. "Brittany is a region where the tyranny of media visibility in the press still exists" (...) "The smaller the town, the greater the dependence on the newspaper" (Goupil p 121). With the media world in the throes of change, Ouest France is defending itself in a very special way.

### • Ouest-France: more than just a newspaper - it's a multimedia publication that is in tune with local life

Firstly, Ouest France is in the process of being separated from the elected official-newspaper link with the development of local news websites. Before, elected officials had to go through Ouest France; nowadays they publish a press release on the local town's website. Newspapers have had to contend with the rise of local communication professionals, even in very small communities. *"Local politicians have tried to bypass the regional dailies with their local newspapers, websites and even television stations, but the Breton regional daily press retains its weight and legitimacy, hence the persistent 'political dependence' on the newspaper"*. (Goupil p. 121)

Secondly, Bretons are more likely to look to Google for local information, rather than their newspapers. To counter this additional threat of digital disruption, Ouest France has itself become a digital publication and is trying to maintain an "intimate distance" with its readers via **info-media**. This newspaper, whose very heavy logistical structure has been clearly demonstrated, is financially dependent, like all press publications, on advertisers. But with fewer classified ads, it has been forced to restructure its operations (increased debts and downsizing). **Anciaux'** thesis shows how Ouest France has diversified and digitalised its business model in response to these digital challenges. Diversification is characterised by the desire to occupy the maximum amount of time available to pay users (e.g. additional *weekend* issues). The aim is to remain a dominant player and to maximise the position acquired in the **local market** with a monopolistic tendency. Digital activities also allow for overlapping and complementary information. Basically, the Ouest France newspaper remains a strong and symbolic brand, but a series of activities with very different types of media and contributions revolve around it. Ouest France's "infolocales" are a digital edition of the newspaper that is packed full of information and the latest news. The

people of Brittany can access them by Smartphone and find out about their village, their local association and local day-to-day news: Ouest France is constantly expanding its “infolocales” in an effort to maintain this strong link to the reader that is extremely attractive advertisers.

### **23. The journalistic angles of car-sharing in the daily press: Car-sharing as a home-to-work mobility strategy for commuters in the Ile-de-France In Brittany, car-sharing is essential for the survival of rural communities**

The media participate in building frameworks that influence local political issues. Frameworks form a cultural construct that individuals and media use to transmit, interpret and assess information. The media collectively construct discourses, by accumulating repetitions of similar stories, influencing social representations. Newspapers develop writing routines based on fairly fixed journalistic angles and points of view. The **journalistic angle** is the way in which a story is presented. These angles compare ideologies with shared social and cultural representations, most often by implication, which influences the thoughts and behaviour of social actors.

A qualitative analysis was carried out on 200 articles from the Le Parisien’s 10 local newspapers. It shows a very contrasting approach, which is not surprising. Le Parisien covers the counties of Ile-de-France and is aimed at a population that lives mainly on the outskirts of Paris. Its main editorial approach is not that of decentralisation or defending cultural identity, but rather that of reflecting public life in Greater Paris and the opinions of its readers as accurately as possible. The public issue of transport is very strongly structured by the issue of commuting, and therefore by the issue of major public networks. Car-sharing can be used to complement, bypass or solve the shortcomings of the major networks. The number of articles on car-sharing in Le Parisien increases when there are technical or social events that are likely to affect the public transport sector (i.e. accidents and operating incidents on suburban trains and major public transport strikes).

In the Ile de France region, car-sharing is an occasional mobility strategy for commuters who have to cope with the hassle of public transport, especially during strikes. Le Parisien considers car-sharing as a priority, as a response to the individual “hardship” of commuters. The paper on car-sharing systematically denounces the difficult living conditions of the people living in the Ile-de-France region and, in contrast, highlights the mutual support, the resourcefulness and the positive attitude of commuters. Le Parisien gives second place to new mobilities, by presenting technological *success stories* as the brainchild of often isolated engineers. The secondary but recurring journalistic angle is interviewing an innovator who has developed a computer application to help car-sharers get together. Essentially, Le Parisien takes two angles: individual values of resourcefulness or the ingenuity of engineers. Le Parisien’s media coverage does not make car-sharing a public action or democratic issue. As a result, it is not very conducive to the political communication of elected officials, who are therefore less at ease and much less present in this title than in Ouest France. Politicians from the towns surrounding Paris may find it helpful to denounce the transport problems of their constituents during election campaigns, but what can they propose as leaders of small communities? They need to have a lot of political capital to take on big names like the president of the region, who is responsible for public transport, and the big bosses of the public transport companies like RATP and SNCF, and many of them don’t have that capital. They may choose to adopt a solution-oriented stance and promote solution providers (telecom engineers, start-ups, etc.) in the media, but this type of communication focuses on the technician rather than on building a political proposal.

In contrast, Ouest France has a wider range of journalistic angles on car-sharing. Four of these were identified in the press: debates in council (municipal council, community council), the opening of a car-sharing area, presenting organised groups and recruiting car-sharers for solidarity or local car-sharing, and car-sharing as a back-up and support for the organisation of major cultural and festive events. Elected officials are almost always present at these four moments covered by the press, while only the first two are institutional events. There is no angle in the digital media, but rather an announcement of an event with the place, time, meeting point, organising body and an invitation to car-share in order to gather as many participants as possible. Car-sharing is approached in an instrumental way, without “lecturing”.

### **24. Everyday car-sharing or the shadow of a media discourse**

Ouest France's Infolocales were thoroughly analysed on several criteria: date and location of these events, type of event and target audience over a period between 15 and 30 June 2019. We chose this period because it presents a whole series of opportunities for socialising, club meetings and local festivities.

These occasions involve audiences from many different age groups. Youth-related events were found in 26% of Infolocales proposing car-sharing. These events are organised by leisure centres and schools, which are very close to local political and technical figures. These events include school parties and fairs, public swimming pool and bathing days, waste collection operations in the forest and sporting events (football and cycling being the most popular sports in Brittany, and the most practised by modest and non-metropolitan populations). The



Infolocales (17%) that recommend car-sharing also include events targeting senior citizens: invitations to dances, church services, choir clubs, exercise classes, and operations carried out in old people's homes to move older people to cooler areas in summer. The Infolocales annuals also concern, but to a lesser extent (6%), events targeting social groups (AA meetings, youth centres' summer trips, legal advice days, social security and job centres, drop-in centres, etc.). There are also other less represented but interesting reasons. For example, a number of small communities organise car-sharing to enable residents who do not have a car to attend meetings etc. Once these various reasons are set aside, one thing remains. Approximately 50% of car-sharing proposals in Ouest France's *Infolocales* concern cultural events in the narrow sense of the term: local festivals, historical visits organised by tourist offices and therefore by the local authority, music festivals, etc.

We can also compare two different maps for Brittany. The first map was produced on the same principle as the map of Ile-de-France and shows the geographical roots of the elected officials who talk about car-sharing. The second map identifies the location of events where car-sharing is encouraged. The first is a map of political communication discourses and shows a real mosaic of towns and communes that covers almost the entire regional territory, from the coast to the inlands, from the cities to the countryside. The second map shows an intense picketing of small rural and suburban communities around the larger towns and cities, set back from the large, urbanised areas along the coast. This second map showing the amount of attention social actors pay to car-sharing and how they express it is very useful. Ouest France reveals a rural Breton social body that has internalised the possibility of car-sharing and its usefulness for a whole host of travel opportunities.

Ouest France's digital mediatisation of car-sharing forms a sort of background for a political communication discourse, which can then be legitimised. Giving out-of-market local car-sharing a media presence allows elected officials to produce a political communication discourse that relies on a commonplace social fact. These Breton politicians have less need than other politicians to prove that the existence of car-sharing is not due to failures in the major local networks (as in Ile-de-France) but that it is part of a certain normality. To some extent, the media have already answered questions about how acceptable this practice is and whether there is a latent social demand, probably more or less developed, to support a wide range of political arguments.

We decided to conduct a representational geography study. We did not map actual car-sharing practices, but we did identify discourses on car-sharing from various parts of the territory that were mediated by a newspaper that occupies a hegemonic place in the political and social life of Brittany. This study shows that car-sharing is massively favoured by people in the rural areas of Brittany. This work confirms a whole series of statistical studies on the social popularity of short- and medium-distance car-sharing among both young people and working people in Brittany. But these studies fail to measure the intensity of car-sharing in the region. Our corpus does not provide a more reliable measurement tool; however it does confirm a cultural reality, i.e. the inclusion of car-sharing in a wide variety of social practices (the term *shadow car-sharing* can be used here).

This diversion through the Infolocales provides an important input into our work on political discourse. Unlike in towns and cities, some areas do not see car-sharing as part of a discourse of transitioning, disrupting or innovating mobility, but rather as a part of everyday life. This work also shows that the *early adopters* of the so-called mobile innovation are areas that have adopted these practices over a long period of time as a result of demographic, geographical and cultural factors that we will look at more closely in Chapter 4. Perhaps these territories are more prepared than others for the major changes in mobility systems. However, they also have media outlets that shape this subject in terms of normality and habit, and in contrast to the concepts of technological leaps, changing practices and readjusting behaviour. In short, in built up areas, the social body, the media system and the public sector may consider car-sharing as a novelty and a transition, whereas in Brittany car-sharing is a recent word that has helped to maintain the continuity of three major systems: firstly, a newspaper threatened by digital disruption; secondly, a rural society in which communities often come together to form a cohesive structure that other rural areas do not have; and thirdly, the discursive action strategies of elected officials, which are reflected in the content analysis in the next chapter.

### **3. Textual and interpretative analysis**

#### **How elected officials are defending car-sharing in Brittany: The importance of socio-spatial ties**

This section presents the analysis of articles in Ouest-France containing the word car-sharing over the period 2000 to 2019. In total, there are 366 articles and 80 politicians involved.

The first part of the chapter explains what can be learned from the documents. By conducting a lexical study of the speeches of elected officials published in Ouest France, we can see how their thoughts are



organised into words and groups of words. We used tools to systematically study their frequency, their relative arrangement in relation to each other and to reveal the meaning and significance of each discourse. The objective is twofold. Firstly, we will conduct an interpretative study with a view to understanding the argumentation strategy of elected officials in order to identify the profiles of Breton elected officials in relation to the issue of car-sharing. Secondly, we will develop the definitional contours that these types of actors attribute to car-sharing, which are quite clearly different from the technocratic framing of this subject. As we have already explained, our aim is not to explain what a car-sharing policy consists of, but to demonstrate how car-sharing can sometimes have a political purpose.

## 31. A mixed method of textual analysis and its result: an “argumentative dyad”.

**The first step is to extract the data. This step** involves selecting specific terms from a lemmatised list (*Covoit (covoiturage, covoiture, covoitureur)*) and conducting a *data mining* operation in the regional daily press. The articles have been extracted and classified. We defined a subset in which the angle was political and included the actual words of one or several elected officials. Names of elected officials, speaking situations and specific quotations were recorded in a matrix table, along with the dates and full references of the publication.

**The second step is clustering. This step** involves a qualitative content analysis using NVivo software. All of the statements made by elected officials were broken down into small units, or sections, each relating to a key theme or idea. These text units (one or more sentences) were classified, transcribed and encoded in the software based on the assignment of each of these pieces of text to nodes. The clustering strategy is based on **Kennedy’s** work and aims to conduct an argumentative analysis. It distinguishes between: A) the claims made by the elected officials, i.e. what should be implemented locally, B) the goals, i.e. what is related to a desired future, C) the values or issues that the project will address, D) the resources, i.e. the reasons why the project is supposed to work, and finally E) the circumstances, i.e. all the contextualising elements.

**The third step is based on a lexicometric analysis.** It includes a series of formal calculations on the occurrence, frequency, recurrence, positioning and relative proximity of the most commonly used terms in the corpus. This step shows the lexical environment of the word *covoiturage* (car-sharing).

**The fourth step**, carried out with R software, consists of grouping the data into lexical classes and producing and discussing graphical representations (tree or cloud and dendrogram) of these types of classifications. This classification measures the respective proportions of word packages to each other and the relative weight of each word class. The number of lexical classes meets the needs of the research: the model was set at 10 classes, corresponding to a list of terms (in the dendrogram) and to a region of the word cloud. To be able to read the word cloud, we have to start from its centre (here a double centrality), and identify clusters, which we have coloured for ease of use, while taking into account the thickness of the axes, which represent more or less powerful links between pivot words and between classes.

This hierarchical classification enables us to synthesise and structure the lexical worlds into 10 word classes that represent 80% of the text segments. This graph shows the lexicon used for the extracts referring to car-sharing, categorised into classes. It gives us the first 30 lemmatised forms significantly associated with one of the classes.

**The fifth step** involves using the R software to analyse the matrix representing the list of politicians numbered from 1 to 80 in the columns and the sections of text in the rows using a principal component analysis (PCA). The aim is to transform related variables into non related variables and to produce a cross typology of word types considered as markers of car-sharing and types of elected officials. The cloud has been transformed, i.e. centred and reduced to a limited number of nodes to avoid clutter. We found that a main axis and a second vector would best explain the dispersion of the discourse and best summarise the information contained in these variables.

### • From methodological biases to blind spots in discourse

Any methodological presentation must identify the limits of relevance of the chosen strategy. And here we have two:

- Is it the elected official speaking or the media? The choice of corpus induces a particular degree of caution with regard to the results, and we can assume that the choice of the press is different from work based on in-depth interviews. It was left to the media, not researchers, to sort through the words of elected officials and highlight themes through headlines and quotes. In a way, it was the journalist who not only chose the angle but also helped profile the elected official. Interviews would have confirmed or deepened the specific nature of each elected official’s speech. However, the media allows us to see a larger picture since the large number of articles forces

us to update and diversify the editorial angle. In addition, the large number of quotations and expressions used for each elected official allows us to produce a typical profile, insofar as an elected official can, in the course of various speeches, adopt a variety of positions and opinions. However, in general, we found that elected officials take strong positions, that they push their arguments, that they have clearly developed their political communication strategy, and that they work from a different angle than the editorial one.

- What a politician does not say may be as important as what he or she does say: a semantic approach focuses on the meaning of words and phrases. It allows us to quantify occurrences and proximities between terms. But we also need to question the omissions, the unspoken words, the gaps and the silences in the text, because they are just as important as the speech itself. The main blind spots in the speeches made by elected officials can be identified on three levels.

Firstly, elected officials do not consider car-sharing to be a future mobility solution, linking it to soft mobility or public and collective transport (as is the case in administrative and expert discourse) and they view it much more as a vehicle and road issue. Secondly, elected officials do not speak about the major issues and distant perspectives (peak car, environmental and climate change, etc.) and, in contrast, put forward the societal and social perspectives (immediate household savings, etc.). And finally, they almost never use the word innovation, insisting instead on practicality and proximity, on the immediacy and simplicity of a solution within the reach of all drivers. These three blind spots in elected officials' speeches (the public transport - soft mobility block, the climate-energy block and the innovation-technology block) cannot be explained solely by a sample construction effect or by the newspaper's editorial logic, but they are beginning to outline a very specific area of meaning for political speech.

The tree, like the dendrogram, has one individual branch that stems from the trunk, the 10th class, which groups together elements of elected officials' discourse that are highlighted in the headlines, as well as in the article introductions, and which put car-sharing into context with relatively neutral terms such as travel, mobility and transport, and terms that emphasise the societal and symbolic benefits of car-sharing: a joint, sustainable, environmentally friendly and alternative mode of transport. The rest of the trunk, which gives the branches from 1 to 9, is divided into two branches, with 7 classes on the left and the right. As the shape of the word cloud also shows, the branch on the left is organised around the pivotal term social link and the branch on the right around the pivotal term car-sharing area.

## 32. Car-sharing and social ties: a reciprocal relationship

The row on the left highlights the recurrent proximity between the term car-sharing and the term social ties, in the singular or plural.

Two full quotes give the main idea. *"We want to create a link between people who are neighbours but who don't necessarily know each other. The car-sharing project encourages involvement, networking and mutual aid between residents. It is a means of creating social links."* François Besombes, 16 May 2016

*"We are moving from the individual car to the collective car."* Armelle Huruguen, 4 May 2019

The left branch features the following ten words: social (social link, social service, and social dynamics), mutual aid, solidarity, proximity, service, citizen, involvement, residents/inhabitants, association, community, collective, easy/facilitate, simplicity/simple, common sense, solution, access, and networking/relationship. These terms and the quotes suggest that car-sharing is a form of transport that is fundamentally linked to people as a community. The relationship between societal cohesion and car-sharing is reciprocal: car-sharing serves society in the sense that it is useful to its members and, in return, a certain level of social cohesion (as it exists in the territory administered by the elected official) informs certain categories of car-sharing practices. In this sense, car-sharing refers to a social discourse, to the perspective of today's rural and suburban society in Brittany, which is quite transparent and which the elected official upholds. Other quotes take it a step further, such as *"We have a citizen's car-sharing service here"*.

This means that car-sharing is both a matter of social use and civil practice. The elected official takes up intuitions that are part of the research according to which mobility is first and foremost a relational practice. It emphasises the existence of social ties, i.e. *"a spatial and social attachment that is reflected in the shrinking of catchment areas for certain travel-related reasons, as well as the gradual adoption*

of behavioural norms that value the ability to satisfy oneself and to contribute to the development of local resources that are often overlooked, in particular through associative involvement. (...) these expectations of proximity, far from being defined by the sole measure of vehicles/kilometres, refer to the territorial nature of social links and to the transformation of a spatial context into a daily resource by suburban residents” (p.59). Mobility is developed from an associative perspective, with the pleasure of companionship, to a participatory dimension extended to the entire community.

## • From a changing society to a civic service

*“Travelling in groups is more enjoyable than travelling alone as it gives you an opportunity to meet and talk with new people. But you have to stick to the timetable.” Chantal Simon Guillou, County Councillor, Finistère - 22/09/2012*

*“I visited Ouest Go (a car-sharing website) and there are a lot of people looking for a ride. The only downside is that you have to plan ahead. When I go to Quimperlé, I don't necessarily know the exact time I want to travel until the last minute. Why not create an application for people who want to travel there and then, on the spur of the moment? I think it would be a good idea. I would go out of my way to pick up someone waiting for lift! For me, this is where car-sharing systems and services could be improved. I almost always take on hitch hikers. If I'm going to Mellac and the person is going to Bannalec, I'll gladly take them Bannalec just to have a chat.” Bernard Pelleter, Mayor of Mellac*

Class 2 explains the nature and content of the social links that can be created through car-sharing and contains the terms conviviality, discussion, chatting, pleasant, etc. The elected official puts forward a series of terms that promote positive interactions during a shared journey. Following Lumsdenautour's approach to emotive motoring, the technical pleasure of driving alone, in one's own private comfort bubble, can be replaced by conversation. The elected official therefore approaches shared mobility as an opportunity to (re)build social relationships and even describes the car journey as a social activity, which is very much in line with the research carried out in the Ouest France Infolocale, where groups of people who know each other (parents of schoolchildren, sports club members, etc.) already practice it. Shared journeys make travel more sociable, more enjoyable. The experience of *fest noz* begins when you travel together with your friends to festival, not just when you arrive. The mayor is working on the argument of a moving society as a source of motivation for car-sharing in the same way that car-sharing contributes to the social integration of young people in the social networks of the small communities studied in Iceland. The virtues of motoring companionship are individual (one has had a greater moment of personal happiness) and also collective (the shared journey is an inclusive experience). It shows that people living in the same local area take an interest in each other that there is no lack of trust. This priority entry is also a way of supporting car-sharing, without directly naming vulnerable groups of people, in order to provide assistance to these vulnerable groups.

## • Care moves people

Class 5 groups together words that specify both one of the main audiences targeted by local car-sharing (unemployed, senior citizens, vulnerable groups) and the nature of the car-sharing activity (solidarity, mutual aid, responsibility).

The elected official legitimises shared mobility both ethically (car-sharing is recognised as a good way for residents to help each other) and civically (car-sharing is a form of civic commitment).

*Presqu'île de Crozon: the Octopouce association is a citizen's transport network that enables local residents to travel around the area by sharing car journeys. Armel Menez, 20 September 2017*

Researchers **Balcom et al (2019)** view the local world as a “network of care” in two highly interdependent ways. On the one hand, car-sharing is a genuine act of solidarity, and elected officials constantly refer to it as a way of helping each other out: *“Mobility is a care such as giving someone a ride”*. On the other hand, a growing fraction of mobilities, especially local mobilities, serve care purposes (e.g. picking up children). The discourse of elected officials would basically be an opportunity to create a local society as an organic community of mutual aid where those who help and those who are being helped constantly interchange their roles, where mobility is a service that allows someone who is being

helped to be able to help another person. By combining the themes of “car” and “care”, the elected officials have a slogan such as “Sharing your car to show care”, and are part of the social, solidarity and circular economy.

### **33. Car-sharing has two consubstantial networks: a road network and digital interfaces**

There are five other lexical classes that help us understand how elected officials rely on network engineering and combine two infrastructures (a road network equipped with car-sharing areas and digital tools) in order to present themselves - especially when their discourse is addressed to other elected officials - in an institutional position and in the field of planning and transport-urban relations.

The 4th class, roughly in the middle of the two branches of the dendrogram, is structured around the networks and technologies that enable networking: Smartphone, intermediation platforms, vocabulary used on the websites and in applications, etc. In the right-hand branch, classes 3 and 8 include the terms area, development, interchange/bridge, road/street, sign, parking, etc., of which correspond to road network planning. Finally, class 6 refers to the institutional and organisational aspects with respect to governing car-sharing (budget, programme, inter-municipality, department, county etc.). This side of the dendrogram moves us into a completely different position regarding political communication and how car-sharing is portrayed.

The articles from which the words and quotations relating to this field of meaning emanate cover, for the most part, opening car-sharing areas or press releases to mark the opening of car-sharing platforms. In support of this analysis, a dynamic map was produced to show how the wave of car-sharing area development constitutes an important moment in the contemporary public action cycle in the four Breton counties between 2012 and 2017. This also provides geographical information on two different scales. On a regional scale: this map specifically highlights western France, which has more registered car-sharing areas than the other French regions. On a local scale, the constellation of car-sharing areas shows that a large proportion of the areas, particularly the largest in terms of surface area and size, provide a response to traffic jams and are located at the crossroads of major roads, which are the gateways to the major towns and cities. However, there is a much finer distribution of small areas linked to the Brittany road network. This second scale leads us to interpret the multiplication of car-sharing areas in relation to how car-sharing has been politicised in this region, as well as our hypothesis that elected officials have approached this subject from a political point of view in suburban and rural areas. Finally, the trend ends with a very steep curve in the second half of the 2010s. Although the majority of Brittany's car-sharing areas are the result of the will of the four Breton County Councils, which are very active in supporting the finalisation of county-wide car-sharing plans, the laws of 2015 (MAPTAM and Notre) create a great deal of political confusion. The County Councils lose their general competence clause, while the regions become the lead agencies for mobility policies. The development of car-sharing areas is supported by the inter-municipal authorities as part of their transport responsibilities, and then, in turn, by the towns and cities themselves, whose responsibilities are being developed at the same time, with cross-subsidies from the regions and the counties, but also with a great deal of uncertainty for the individual mayors regarding the costs of managing these facilities.

In this context, the articles in Ouest France convey the words and actions of elected officials in a very specific political communication exercise: the inauguration of a car-sharing area, which is a moment of celebration and a classic expression of general self-satisfaction, but which is not marked by a certain number of questions concerning two dimensions. The first dimension concerns institutional issues and the second concerns uncertainties as to the actual usefulness of the equipment. Throughout the inauguration, the elected officials tried to define this new physical and spatial concept (it was not easy, as there was a wide variety of names: *inter-transport mode connection area*, *a sort of super bus station*, *a relay area*, etc.) and to attach political meanings to it, which therefore referred to the place of the institution that the elected official represents. The working hypothesis pursued in this part of the analysis is as follows. In order to minimise the uncertainties, the elected official “acts as if” the car-sharing area is part of the road network, rather like a roundabout ten years ago. Car-sharing policy reshapes public discourses on the virtues of the road, and, in turn, traditional discourses about roads are reinvested in



producing ideas about new mobilities that temper their innovative character and therefore their uncertainty.

### **34. The inauguration of car-sharing areas affects institutional and spatial attachments**

Before embarking on this discussion, it is important to note the potential of the car-sharing area inaugurations for our method of analysis. Methodologically speaking, textual analysis moves from semantics (focusing on meaning) to pragmatics (focusing on the study of meaning in the context in which the discourse was delivered). The relationship with car-sharing is embedded throughout the inauguration and constitutes a governance issue to which elected officials have no answer and lack transparency. The inauguration of the car-sharing area allows us to witness a public policy in the making. Elected officials react by developing this moment of political communication based on three main stages. Firstly, they develop a performative discourse, then they create a relational discursivity that circulates information, meanings and power among the elected officials, and finally, they symbolically produce liminality: they officially “cut the cord” and open the era of future mobility.

The first point of interest concerns the dimensions of performance and “Performative utterance” associated with the inauguration of the Breton car-sharing areas. On the one hand, an inauguration is always a political performance, in the sense that it is based on a specific script of words and gestures. **Rai** points out the co-constitutive dimension between performance and politics: *political action is always performed*. An inauguration, like all ceremonial events, is a political ritual that follows a certain script. On the other hand, the discourses that support car-sharing during this event are part of a Performative utterance of political discourse. By cutting the cord, the elected official is symbolically saying that he or she wants to create, and is creating, a place for sustainable mobility. The performance is visible immediately, while the performative effect and the role of the car-sharing area in transforming mobility behaviour is seen over time. We know that there are a number of small car-sharing areas that are almost abandoned or hardly used (or are used very differently, in terms of mobility and immobility, from what the politicians initially thought). The performative effect of the inauguration of the car-sharing area on the political organisation and on the rearrangement of powers between institutional levels can also be seen in the longer term.

The second key point for interpreting the speeches of politicians is to understand what is called communication in context. The politician is not alone, but is addressing an audience of other politicians. There is a variety and plurality of opinions expressed that are all based on different themes. Within this group, each politician will try to bring something more and different in order to complete the range of benefits and advantages attached to the car-sharing area and, more extensively, to the turning point of sustainable mobility that it creates for the local area. At the same time, the politicians are trying to obtain recognition of the greatest possible legitimacy of the institution in the turning point of mobility policies through this inauguration. The words and meanings attached to the car-sharing area are accumulated in such a way as to create a logical and coherent set of ideas and arguments, while displaying a unified coalition of parties, albeit one that is subtly structured and hierarchical in the script (speaking order, length of their speech, etc). This relational dimension of political communication in the context of an inauguration means that a richer, more detailed, but also more implicit argument is built around car-sharing. An inauguration is therefore a mixture of scripts and meanings whose background is formed by political cultures based on major issues such as the relationship with the State and the symbolic place of the region or the county alongside local politicians.

The first performative effect of the discourse on car-sharing areas is based on its liminality and its strength in terms of placemaking. In contrast to contemporary works that show how urban places of counter-automobility are created, for example with the parking days operations, here we see a process of place framing for automobility. The inauguration constitutes the symbolic starting point of a mobility transition for the area, which the car-sharing area, through its material form, confirms in an oscillation between spatial marginality and political centrality.

The car-sharing area is not easy to locate, to designate and the list of its functions is not complete at the time of its inauguration. Searching for words and wanting to make it much more than a car park, the elected officials sway between road, service and even urban planning interpretations of this subject. Factual elements such as the size and location of the car-sharing area, and its capacity to



accommodate, immediately or in the future, other technological facilities (electric charging stations, solar panels, automatic public transport ticket machines, toilets, bicycle racks, freshness baskets, etc.) make this task much easier. Nevertheless, the car-sharing area finds its dominant political interpretation in the paradigm of modernising and optimising traffic networks. The area is made up of tarmac, barriers and signage, and is considered to be a roadside facility. The speeches, particularly those made by local and regional politicians, open with a discourse on network infrastructure, the current issue being the intersection between physical infrastructure and new technologies with the concept of the intelligent transport system, including the use of sensors and GPS, for dynamic car-sharing, and cameras (fixed license-plate-reading cameras to make it easier to pay drivers, but also security cameras).

### • And in terms of safety?

For decades, road safety has been the central argument for developing new road facilities. In the speeches presented at the opening ceremonies, the social and spatial margin represented by the roadside facility is revisited. The elected official strongly emphasises the relevance of the location: *"It is a well-located site, which will be signposted on the motorway. Drivers will be able to find it easily, but this car-sharing area will not be accessible to heavy goods vehicles."* Robert Pédron, deputy town planner of Plérin, 21 December 2009. Its visibility is also emphasised with a strong emphasis on spatial marking (presence of signposts) *"signs are a major vector of information, especially with the new "Lila covoiturage" logo"* (Jean-Yves Ploteau, Vice-President of the Loire Atlantique county, 30 April 2015). The inauguration is therefore a place-making activity, starting with a place, often without a name or specific features, on the side of the main road, in the open air. The inaugural speeches constitute it as a place of mobility, by detailing the modes of transport supported (private cars, electric cars, buses and coaches, bicycles, etc.) and the services available (food trucks...). Beyond its functional dimension, the car-sharing area also becomes a kind of public space where a political statement is made. Of course, other layers of meaning and public use of the area are suppressed and/or fought against. Often located at the edge of a village, the space concerned by the car-sharing area may have been agricultural, or it may have been a somewhat indecisive place of ownership and destination where children once played football, or where the young people of the village come to drink together. Inaugurations of Breton car-sharing areas have been followed, within a few days, by "second" inaugurations where young people from the village take advantage of the hard parking area to organise raves, and the concern about the social control capacity of this space is prevalent in the politician's speech.

The accumulation of speeches made by local politicians is based on a fairly fixed division of roles between local, inter-municipal and county officials (sometimes MPs, senators and prefects are also present) and therefore produces a structured argument. First of all, there would be a real demand for car-sharing in the local community. But the other car-sharing areas are already filled. So the money needed to create the area being inaugurated is not wasted. Because this area is well positioned in terms of the local road network. Moreover, all the safety requirements have been met.

As a result, the car-sharing area represents a traditional infrastructure logo in public policy. Defending the road network means defending spatial attachments between the city and the countryside. The car-sharing area is therefore fully in line with the slogan "Live and work in the country", which was promoted by the Breton movement in the early 1970s. It provides an opportunity for medium-distance mobility, i.e. the possibility of living in a non-metropolitan area. In this sense the inauguration "encapsulates" a particular understanding of the political identity of elected officials in the long history of their political relationship to the state and other institutions. This unspoken fact strongly unites the elected officials by offering them a shared referent that is only functional (road planning) but political in nature. In this respect, it is a well-known fact that an inauguration is also a moment for congratulating others, where certain tensions in the power struggle between elected officials and institutions are ironed out in front of the press. A final argument unanimously underpins the collective speeches made by elected officials at the inauguration: the idea that, together, they are redefining nothing less than the cultural meanings of the regional motoring regime. Linking social engineering (as seen in the lexical classes of the left branch of the dendrogram) and network engineering (classes on the right), car-sharing provides a means of publicly addressing the excesses of the Breton motoring system (the explosion in travel and its corollary, road congestion) through efforts to discourage people from travelling alone. Auto-solism (driving alone) is not only a bad individual habit, but it also carries the danger that public action will become impotent because roads cannot be continuously widened and new networks cannot be continuously funded. The car-sharing area is, therefore, the ultimate possibility of controlling the

uncontrollable evolution of motoring and a way of reintegrating it into the areas in which elected officials have both the right and the ability to act. In this sense, the car-sharing area not only safeguards the possibility of further transport policies, it also safeguards the institutions that design and implement them. Therefore, in essence, it saves Breton society on the one hand, and the Breton political structure on the other.

*"Many (too many) vehicles are occupied by one person."* François Besombes, Concarneau Communauté

*"Local mobility is every man for himself"* Xavier Hamon, mayor of Quillio & vice-president of Loudéac communauté Bretagne centre (15 June 2019)

*"The number of car journeys has exploded in the Lorient region, and not at all for work reasons but for leisure and shopping. I urge against travelling alone. Improving the network is not enough: we need car-sharing, park-and-ride facilities, as well as water and rail transport, because the public sector can no longer pay for this infrastructure".* Olivier Le Lamer, Vice-President Lorient Agglomération, 19 March 2013

*"Through this practice, the aim is to limit individual car use in order to minimise overall energy consumption and CO2 production. This is not just an ecological solution, it is also an economic one, through the sharing of fuel costs, and a social one."* Robert Monnier, Communauté de communes Bretagne romantique, 20 February 2017

*"It's not about stopping using our cars, but rather optimising how we use it for travel."* Patrick Le Diffon, President of Pays de Ploërmel Coeur de Bretagne, 22 September 2016

*"The biggest challenge is to build up as many car sharing groups as possible in order to massively increase car-sharing in our area."* Louis Ramoné, Mayor of Lanvéoc, 11 September 2017

*"A car-sharing area has been set up, and a recent statistic proves that, on certain roads in the county, for every hundred vehicles, only 103 people are transported." Jean-Luc Chenut, President CG, Ille et Vilaine, 25 February 2016*

*"With the new community of communes, we will have to create a multi transport area, a sort of super bus station with buses and car-sharing... it is essential to develop efficient public transport."* Patrick Le Diffon, President of Pays de Ploërmel Coeur de Bretagne, 28 July 2017

The physical presentation of this road facility includes its objective characteristics (location, surface, capacity, etc.), its territorial characteristic (it is less about proximity than about the network), its importance in terms of traffic flow (it improves traffic and relieves congestion) and its positive effects (it makes people safer and more likely to be on time). We can therefore see the importance given to managerial approaches to optimising road networks, the obsession with the number of drivers per section, per vehicle and ways of optimising travelling times.

*"The Nantes - Rennes road is often saturated at peak times. Traffic takes up a lot of time for motorists and can even slow down economic activity."* André Crocq, 2nd VP, Rennes Métropole, 26 November 2019

These qualities are linked to the positioning of the car-sharing area within the road network. Car-sharing is a way for the elected official to tackle congestion problems and to relieve congestion on the main roads, particularly if the car-sharing area is located on or near a busy road. *"We have 14,300 vehicles per day on the Pontivy-Loudéac route, so the Saint-Gérand car-sharing area certainly has potential."* Claude-Ambert Le Bris, Mayor of Saint-Gérand.

These qualities are also related to the **location of the car-sharing area**, linked to a **classic managerial and security paradigm in planning discourses**. The development of car-sharing areas formalises car-sharing by positioning it as close as possible to the areas where spontaneous groupings are

observed. This development is a response a problem that is both social and technical: technical in that it enables the development and recycling of little-identified roadside spaces, abandoned plots of land that are already used as stops for spontaneous car-sharing; social in that the area provides a framework for practices that are described as improvised, if not 'wild', where poorly identified groups of young people and the poor meet on the fringes of public supervision.

*“Car-sharing is one way, among others, of ensuring that the people living on the Crozon peninsula feel less isolated.”* Chantal Simon Guillou, General Councillor of Finistère, 18 December 2012

*“The old playing field in the Bonde district has changed, people used to play football there and it now overlooks the Val Coric roundabout, it is well placed on the edge of the RN 24, at an important road junction. It is located near the centre of town, between two business parks. We quickly realised that the first car-sharing area with 35 spaces, opened back in 2006, was not big enough. Covering 5,000 square metres, this new facility serves as a regional bus station for the Pontivy-Rennes express service, a taxi drop-off point and a car-sharing area with around 100 parking spaces. There is also a free car park that can be used by those who take the express link. This facility combines comfort, functionality, energy savings and environmental protection. It also opens up the region to new possibilities. It is a gateway to train stations and airports”* Jean-Luc Bléher President of Guer communauté, 28 February 2014.

The textual analysis revealed a dual structure of the semantic universe of car-sharing in the speeches made by Breton elected officials, and this structure is not surprising. Elected officials often structure political discourse in an extremely binary way. **Mc Cann & Ward** point out the extent to which political discourse obeys this structuring method by presenting a number of constants: success/failure; presence/absence; mobility/immobility. We can therefore add this tension between car-sharing policy seen as a technology for social organisation versus car-sharing policy understood as a technology for road equipment to this list (this was evident in the inauguration of car-sharing areas), since the road itself is a spatial operator (distances and proximity to the urban area, to employment, and therefore to the potential of an isolated community). However, in the end, it is seen less as a dualism of opposition or a vision in disjointed silos than as a “relational dyad”, because, in the minds of the elected officials, the collaborative side and the road side, roughly speaking “*co*” and “*voiturage*”, are very much linked. In addition, the forms of car-sharing expressed by politicians (crisis car-sharing, survival car-sharing, citizen car-sharing, libertarian car-sharing, neighbourly car-sharing, etc.) do not cover the already known categorisations (short or medium distance, event-based car-sharing, solidarity car-sharing or home-work car-sharing). The categories produced by politicians are less inspired by an administrative technology of transport (the partitions produced in the major surveys) than by a political reading of the divides that run through rural Brittany and small towns, whether they are close to or far from the major city centres. This is consistent with **Prince**, who puts forward the idea that a political communication discourse “tells” a certain state of the vision that political actors have of the territory, what he calls the *local policy context* or the *localness of policies*. The types of car-sharing reflect a local world divided between assisted and employed groups of people, populations that stay in the area all the time (the very young and the elderly) and working-age populations that travel back and forth to outside areas or that travel through the area as outsiders. It is these divisions that politicians project onto the shares constructed during a debate on car-sharing, either as a background, or by envisaging, with varying degrees of precision and conviction, that car-sharing could be used to “address” all of these socio-spatial problems. In addition, the “small” politician does not really have any institutional competence on car-sharing, but goes beyond the reductionist notion of demand for mobility by attaching themselves to two elements of context. What basically preconditions their support for car-sharing is both the fact that they take charge of the entire geographical context and that they are able to mobilise, either individually or in a coalition of elected officials, a framework of collective action that justifies their role and status as a political actor.

## Conclusion

This study is part of critical research on the politics of motoring, an international trend that is developing in France, which has explored the way in which politicians express their support for car-sharing and, more broadly, for shared and collaborative mobility through their discourses that are transmitted and filtered by the regional daily press.

There is a lot of research on reconfiguring car-sharing as viewed from the perspective of large private actors (e.g. car manufacturers, concerned with the dynamics of the first and second hand markets, the changing regimes of use or ownership of individual vehicles). There is also a great deal of work on car-sharing from the point of view of public institutions, e.g. measuring the role that this practice could play in terms of energy transition, adaptation to climate crises and economic shocks, and even, after the “yellow vests”, in terms of territorial governance.

Most of these studies investigate the potential social demand for the practice and the acceptability of the associated behavioural changes. They primarily explore the types of public for which car-sharing is intended. They often manage to target a priority public for car-sharing, but outside the market: car-sharing is intended for a sort of third state of mobility (the “resigned”, the “assigned”, the “insular”, etc.). This study focused on three main points.

- The study chose **the prism of discourse**. Our study material is not facts but language. It touches on values, symbols and meanings that are relevant to their speakers and that make sense in a particular cultural, social, territorial and political context. The first limitation is that we cannot comment on the relevance, effectiveness or efficiency of the solutions or options that the actors express in response to the need for a solution from the point of view of public action.

- The study identified **processes of discursive re-arrangement and transfer** between the field of expert discourse, the field of public action discourse and the field of political communication discourse. Therefore, we did not work directly on car-sharing, but on the way this subject changes the links between people and the territory (this is a question of geography) and offers opportunities for political action (this is a question of politics).

- When it comes to car-sharing, as is often the case, the logic of public action is both vertical and centrifugal. Innovative mobility is gradually moving away from city centres and towards the outskirts and towards poorer social strata, far away from towns and cities. Our study takes the opposite route. Firstly, it is located at the base of the institutional power pyramid and seeks **a local political voice**. The research then **moves on** from this local base and reflects on what the puzzle of political expressions and actions in the differentiated regionalisation of public action produces. The second limitation is that, since we have not found such a dense sowing of car-sharing discourse made by politicians in other French regions through the regional daily press, we cannot claim to have learned anything about other French territories, other than by comparing them with what has been studied in the West.

This work may be of interest to mobility operators involved in renewing public service contracts, and could shed light on the reasons why some areas are more receptive than others to proposals for implementing car-sharing services.

This work will be useful if it convinces these operators to complement the studies on social demand and public demand for car-sharing with work on the structural frameworks that condition these two types of demand. In line with the work on the anthropological worlds of politics (anthropological policy world, **Shore 2011**), we argue in favour of an approach that is more attentive to transverse factors (the demand for car-sharing and changes in mobility are immersed in social and economic determinations, as **Doughty** points out).

This work also aims to help central actors consider what they can ask of local politicians and what they should expect from them in terms of support or implementing mobility policies.

The State and its services cannot simply ask politicians to impose collaborative mobility or to attract car sharers who are too rare for the experiments launched here and there using merely their charisma and their physical proximity to their fellow citizens. They should see the field not as the final stage in implementing a conceptual and technical device defined elsewhere, but as an opportunity to explain and prove the aims of collaborative mobility, which are very much based on the idiosyncrasies of local society. Also, they should allow local politicians to go beyond functional frameworks and not be afraid of politicising and territorialising transition strategies in the field of mobility.