15. MaaS unmasked: how local leaders think they are resisting (and are thereby accelerating) the neoliberalisation of transport policies

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15.1 INTRODUCTION

Digitalisation and servitisation are concurrently opening novel opportunities for new types of personal transport services. For example, taxi and rental cars and conventional bus lines face the boom of Uber and other ridehailing services. Smith et al. (2018) underline that the term mobility as a service (MaaS) was primarily introduced in 2014 in a Finnish master's thesis. This concept rapidly spread after its presentation to the 10th ITS European Conference and ended in addressing a global disruption of multiple mobilities, including car uses (ridehailing, car-pooling), public transport and active mobilities. Broadly speaking, MaaS now means a user-centric approach of mobility production and an interest in behavioural change in everyday practices, the development of interoperative ticketing solutions based on data and application programming interfaces, in a context of rising corporate mobility connected with various public frameworks and incentives (Karjalainen, 2021).

Since then, MaaS has also disrupted the production of discourse on mobilities, a production which – for Foucault (1969) – constitutes an act in itself. Yet, innovation doesn't always come from central and dominant stakeholders, and the disruptive dimension of MaaS may be entangled with conflicts over memories, identities and values that go much deeper in the history of territories, communities and political cultures.

We locate the study in the most western part of France, the Bretagne peninsula. There, MaaS should not be considered a tech-oriented solution meant to meet a mobility demand, but rather as a local infrastructure of care (Balcom et al., 2020) aligned with local leaders' perception of the vulnerability of people, territories and institutions. MaaS may be conceptualised as a potential substitution to former taken-for-granted welfare state mobility services. Critical

discourse analysis is a good approach to examine such appropriations, deviations and instrumentalisations of bottom-up MaaS initiatives over mobility policies as it tackles politics holistically, as 'constellations of ideas, peoples, resources, techniques and technologies' (Temenos et al., 2019, p.104). We test this hypothesis while studying a type of political discourse in context: the inauguration of locally funded ridesharing areas.

We consider the emergence of a very basic ridehailing infrastructure in this region. Special parking lots in the vicinity of rural roads are built. Local people are invited to park their cars free of charge for the day and to join another driver (e.g. a neighbour or a friend) so as to share a trip. The logistical preparation of the meeting and the payment is left to the people. There is no in situ digital infrastructure to book or to pay for this service. Until the mid-2010s, in France, such infrastructures did not fit into any national political competency, nor into any private park-and-ride company strategy. These public facilities were conceptualised, normalised and discursively packaged by local governments. They were developed in villages and small towns primarily in the rural western part of France. We already knew that western France was a kind of anomaly for the high density of such infrastructures, yet we were more surprised when we saw that the spatial distribution of areas exactly matched the very places in which the War in the Vendée (1793–1796) took place. This counter-revolution took place during the French Revolution. The initial peasant and local aristocracy uprising (the so-called Chouans) quickly turned to the defence of restorative and conservative themes as it aimed at protecting the former Ancien Régime, the alliance of the Catholic Church and aristocracy against the Napoleonic new order.

What link may be drawn between the insurgent local elites in their fight against the Parisian revolutionary forces at the end of the eighteenth century and the struggle of rural mayors to maintain mobility capacity for everybody at the beginning of the twenty-first century? Maybe there are two: an aversion to state authority and the capacity of local leaders and the community to self-organise while holding strongly onto individual and collective resources.

Consequently, we raise the following questions:

- Could it be that there is a link, in this remote and still so distinctive region, between the historical mistrust of central government initiatives and the political capacity to develop autonomous mobility transition pathways? This is clearly a pathway dependency hypothesis.
- Is there such a thing as an automobile Ancien Régime (here we mean a post-war individualistic automobility system) that mayors are able to preserve and adapt to the actual ecological and social crisis? This is a way of questioning the reactionary dimension of ridesharing policies.

- To what extent may these local pathways remain distinct from mainstream MaaS dynamics? Such micro-initiatives initially located outside the goals of the state and industry seem to pave the way for a rapid conversion to new market-oriented mobility paradigms.

The first part of this chapter sets out the critical framework and methodology. The second part outlines the meanings within which local politicians see ridesharing and the third proposes interpretations relating MaaS public discourse to broader politico-territorial changes in western France.

15.2   MAAS AND LOCAL GOVERNANCE OF RURAL MOBILITIES: A CRITICAL APPROACH

MaaS is only one facet of ridesharing practices. Broadly speaking, ridesharing operates in the grouping of travellers within a single private car. It covers, following Nelson and Shaheen (2012), two types of activity. The first relates to acquaintance-based ridehailing systems found in remote areas where interpersonal and intergenerational solidarities still survive (Balcom et al., 2020). In this sense, ridesharing compensates for the scarcity of public transport provision, which is itself a consequence of low population density and diffuse habitats and functions (Dorner and Berger, 2018). In addition, dynamic ridesharing (the market-oriented facet) takes place between strangers relying on advance (or live) GPS-based booking. The latter form is common in big cities, it is popular among digital natives and is part of a growing digital industry searching for an ever growing day-to-day mobility demand.

Strongly influenced by the new mobility discourses and tendencies, the 2019 Loi d'Orientation des Mobilités, or Mobilities Act (République Française, 2019), is intended to prepare so-called low-density areas for a new mobility order. It reflects a techno-rationalist model dominant within government and in communities of expertise (Marsden and Reardon, 2017). The law reframes the activities, spatialities and purposes of mobility in low-density areas, and organises a redistribution of political competences between regions and municipalities. It also facilitates the marketisation of mobilities, in continuity with a neoliberal approach of mobility policies that emerged in the 1990s (Reignier, 2016). Hence, it is associated with various calls for innovation. In situ experiments prepare and smooth the transition from public services to individual self-service, namely from traditional buses and coaches to ridesharing. The intention of the law is that local governments gradually replace the budgets they allocate to public transport. Ultimately, ridesharing could reshape public transport services and car use practices in rural areas.

This transition is not only a question of modal choice or technology. The law is also an attempt to defuse a socially toxic question of inequality

among people, territories and institutions. Its promulgation closely follows the large-scale and violent Mouvement des Gilets Jaunes (Yellow Vests) protests, which occurred at the end of 2018 and focused on the diversion of citizens away from individual car use (via speed limits and petrol taxes). The public debate soon spread beyond the sphere of mobility. It revealed the car dependency and social vulnerability of France's poor white people living in non-metropolised areas. Therefore, the public debate, previously focused on energy and climate-related issues of automobility, shifted towards the domain of spatial justice.

If MaaS-oriented ridesharing solutions are now pushed by dominant private stakeholders and national institutions, the context in which western France ridesharing areas are politically produced is completely different. Enright and Rossi (2018) emphasise the importance of localising policy. The inauguration of these numerous and tiny ridesharing areas two decades before the rise of MaaS suggests that there could have existed other ways to set mobility questions in the agenda. For example: what type and what form of new mobilities did local leaders conceptualise for their community? Why did they consider that it was their task, and not for the industry, to build such a car-oriented infrastructure?

15.3 METHODOLOGY: INAUGURATIONS AS OPPORTUNITIES TO STUDY A POLITICAL DISCOURSE IN CONTEXT

The corpus used and analysed comes from the political speeches as represented by the local newspaper media. Fairclough (1992) emphasises the importance of the context of enunciation in critical discourse analysis. An inauguration ceremony is an event that constitutes a ritualised political performance. The spatiotemporal arrangement of the public speech and the carefully choreographed gestural array combine to achieve a variety of communicational goals. Politicians address an audience that is absent (the local community, the car and MaaS industry) as much as one that is present (the other mayors attending the ceremony, the State and Region Council officials, the journalists).

Certain features need to be borne in mind. The inauguration speech is first of all a liminal discourse in which temporality is essential: it symbolically marks the crossing of a threshold. It publicly announces the completion of a public project (a retrospective speech celebrates an achievement over many difficulties); it becomes a narrative (and describes the uses that the amenity will serve); it should be understood in the sense of an augury (an inchoate discourse that evokes the advent of a future process). In this way, inaugurating a mobility infrastructure has a lot to do with a political and symbolic act of opening a new era, a new ideology and new practices. The new era is the time in which taking

the car won't be a bad, but a good thing, for the planet. The new ideology is broadly speaking the advent of sustainability and energy transition, and the new practices are focused on conviviality, proximity, solidarity and circularity.

Despite – or rather because of – the diversity of the speakers, the inauguration speech constitutes a single discourse and delivers a single message. True, the volume of the working material is swelled by the number of officials who speak. But the individual discursive content is not so much contradictory as coherently juxtaposed, with each successive leader adding an idea that is both sufficiently close and sufficiently distinct to compose a whole picture of a sort of counter-model to mainstream MaaS, the Breton MaaS culture.

The material is taken from 21 inaugurations, during which the public speeches of 42 politicians (municipal councillors, mayors, presidents of intermunicipal councils) were collected. Figure 15.1 explains the progressive expansion of the ridesharing area wave in Bretagne from 2004 to 2018 and specifies the grouping of municipalities to fund the costs. Figure 15.2 shows the setting of such a political scene: an open-air ceremony, with a gathering of 10 to 20 people as a maximum. The department representative (from the intermediate institution between municipalities and regional council) is very often put in the middle of the protocol.

The material consists of direct quotations, defined as speech reported in inverted commas by journalists at the newspaper *Ouest-France*. This daily newspaper occupies a hegemonic position in the regional press. With 42 local editions, it covers a vast territory roughly from Caen to La Rochelle, and it has more than 2.4 million daily readers. Such a readership is larger than that of *Le Monde* and *Le Figaro*, the main French daily newspapers, combined. More than a third of Bretagne inhabitants read this title every day. Since its post-war launch, *Ouest-France*'s centre-right stance has kept the same editorial line. It emphasises the defence of decentralisation and the identity (but not sovereignty nor independence) of western France. As the dominant media outlet, *Ouest-France* has a very specific connection with local elected officials.

> For any mayor, Ouest-France is a factor of recognition, a tool of communication, the vehicle of feedback from voters, the barometer of grassroots popularity and discontent. (Goupil, 2014, p.114)

> The smaller the community, the greater is his [the mayor] dependence on the newspaper. (Goupil, 2014, p.121)

The material has been processed by a succession of two methods. An argumentative analysis was produced with Kennedy's (2016) analytical grid, whereby clusters of four types of content (goals, values, arguments and circumstances) were identified using NVivo software. A textometric study was carried out by means of principal component analysis, which produced a cross-typology
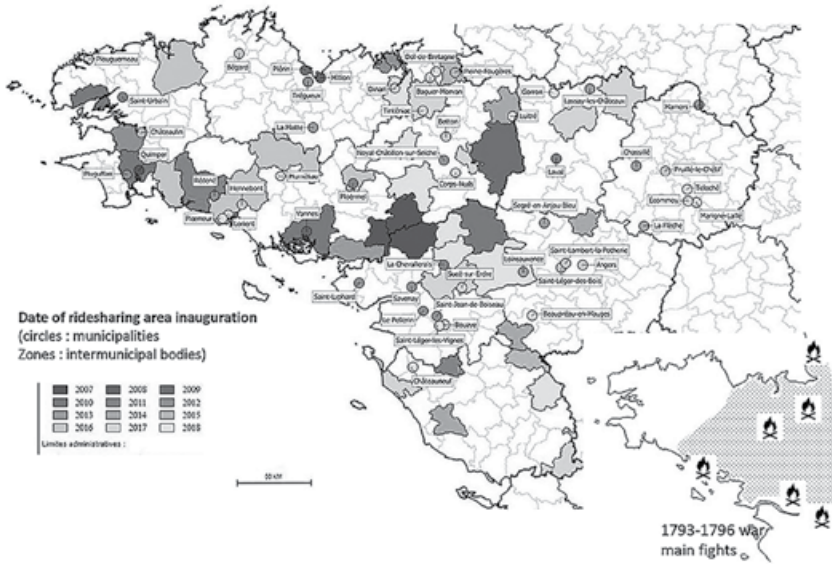
Figure 15.1   Western France local governments involved in carsharing facility building and inauguration in the shadow of the Vendée wars

Note: Held on 4 May 2019 at Ergué-Guaberic, Finistère.

Figure 15.2   Ribbon-cutting celebration of ridesharing stations

between ridesharing words (hierarchically ordered by occurrence and semantic classification) and officials (characterised by institution type, function, etc.). The point cloud was processed and centred, and the number of nodes reduced to remove noise. A small number of axes explained the dispersal of the discourse and therefore encapsulated the information contained in these variables.

In the articles dealing with ridesharing area inauguration, *Ouest-France* does not reproduce entire speeches. Hence, the corpus we build depends on the filter the newspaper applies to political speeches. However, this does not diminish the relevance of the findings, and in fact it enriches an interpretation that we can articulate of other complementary results. In previous research, we have explored more comprehensively the direct and extensive speeches of local politicians dealing with sustainable mobilities during municipal campaigns (Pigalle and Baron, 2020). We have explored *Ouest-France*'s journalistic handling of MaaS and underlined the way the local press shapes mobility questions. We have also addressed the utterances of ridesharing company representatives which are selling MaaS solutions to local public governments and, for this, adapt their sometimes too generic products to local representations of shared car mobilities (Baron and Delaunay, 2019). All this helps design a sphere of discourses, meanings and representations that circulate among politicians, industrialists, technocrats and experts, both locally and nationally. Yet, if all this helps us to consider local political speech in terms of the interdependence and the symbiotic dynamic that it maintains with other discursive fields in the public space, the voice of the western rural elite remains very specific. It is specific in that the inauguration obliges mayors to speak about the mobility transition. However, local politicians are by definition not experts, so they frame ridesharing in their own way and their own words, they mobilise their own political representations and mythologies. Once having understood this, the global sense of the inquiry was quite easy to grasp, as the local ridesharing futures are supported by two strong pillars.

15.4   RESULT 1: RURAL MAYORS' AMBITION – MIRRORING AN URBAN TREND

The argumentative study reveals a very stable logical pattern from one inauguration to the next (Figure 15.3). The politicians are ready to justify every euro. In an overwhelming majority, they struggle to convince that the project is useful and pertinent as a public investment. The starting point of the discourse consists in postulating that the area will meet a demand, as a latent demand for ridesharing does exist in the locality. Other existing stations (closer to the big cities, and implicitly more connected to MaaS) are already full. The money needed to create the station will not be wasted as this station is placed at a very busy point in the road network. Moreover, all the safety guarantees for users

are met. The station will therefore bring a tremendous ridesharing potential for the local community.
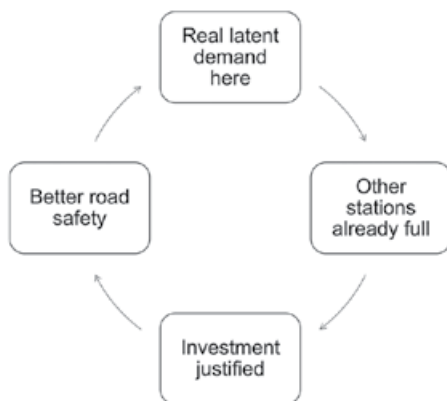

Figure 15.3   The circular justification for ridesharing facility funding

Despite the apparent robustness of this virtuous circle, the politicians grope very hesitantly in their attempts to identify the ridesharing station as they ignore the market approach of MaaS and the normative approach of the state. The vagueness of the very infrastructure that they are opening and inviting inhabitants to use comes from three of its dimensions:

1. Normative definition. The infrastructure had no administrative existence until the 2010s. The mayors innovate and explain their intent to offer security conditions to places in which informal sharing mobility services were already witnessed. They are proud of having designed road signage and other technical devices in their own technical services. And this is quite right: the standardisation of ridesharing signage in the highway code and national law in 2019 is effectively inspired by Breton road signage.
2. Functional definition. Mayors open quite small park and rides. Yet they consider that their use could evolve into a service area along with the growth of ridesharing practices. This place will soon welcome a bicycle hire point, electric vehicle-charging terminals, a tourist information kiosk, a food outlet, a comfortable place to wait in bad weather, etc. In order to let the planning process take place, local mayors introduce such broad and vague notions in which the development of services is key: 'kind of multimodal area', 'sort of roadside super-station', 'multi-service area and park-and-ride centre'.

3.   Space/place definition, or the area's location and existence as a territory in itself and inside a local territory. Local leaders make an effort to value what is seemingly a wasteland, or a mere stretch of tarmac by the side of the road. Some areas are transformed from a closed, ruined and gloomy petrol station that could be used for discreet and somewhat marginal practices, e.g. parties held by local youth, provisory stay of roaming people in campervans. The discourse tries to locate it (it is not nowhere, but 'at Menez Peulven, near Intermarché supermarket, where the circus would stop, on the former gas station' (Marie-Claude Morvan, Mayor of Hanvec, 9 April, 2019)). The discourse tries to refer to the place attachment and the memory of the attendants: 'The old playing field has changed, people used to play football there and it [the area] now overlooks the roundabout' (Jean-Luc Bléher, President of Guer intermunicipal community, 28 February, 2014). These words try to fix and reassure residents and are akin to framing the ridehailing area as a remote place out of the village's public space or as marginal. In addition, local leaders consider the project in its protective dimension and comment on the provision of cameras and the presence of police visits to prevent aggression, theft and crime.

The principal component analysis shows that the representation of ridesharing by local politicians is not structured by a distinction between local versus state services or high-tech versus low-tech ridesharing systems. The word tree and the dendrogram show a dyad in which the social framing of ridesharing and the attachment to road maintenance shape the discourse.

15.5   RESULT 2: RIDESHARING AREA IS PART OF SOCIAL POLICY

The left-hand branch of the word tree (Figures 15.4 and 15.5) highlights the following words: social bond, social service, social dynamic, benevolence, citizen, involvement, inhabitants, association, community, public, easy, simple, common-sense. The main idea is that shared car mobility is a direct derivative of a cohesive rural community. Societal cohesion and ridesharing are reciprocally nurturing themselves. Ridesharing serves society in the sense that it is useful to its members, especially the most vulnerable (e.g. the young, elderly, poor people). In return, this practice is conditional on a certain level of social cohesion. The term 'local', with its multiple resonances, underpins this representation. Local politicians imply that community cohesion exists locally and that it is one of the attributes of locality (Cochrane, 2016). Mayors call on users to see the hitchhiker not as a threatening stranger but as a well-intentioned neighbour, a member of the local community, someone to be welcomed into one's private car. Mayors encourage local people to view their day-to-day

journeys not as an act of mobility but as a routinised social event. Class 5 contains words that specify the groups that rural politicians would like to see transported (e.g. children brought to school, seniors to the weekly market) and the attitudes associated with this transport (e.g. solidarity, mutual help, responsibility). The inauguration speeches seek to strengthen for some, revive for others, an organic solidarity of the community, whose reciprocal exchanges of mobility services are perceived as relations of care (Balcom et al., 2020).
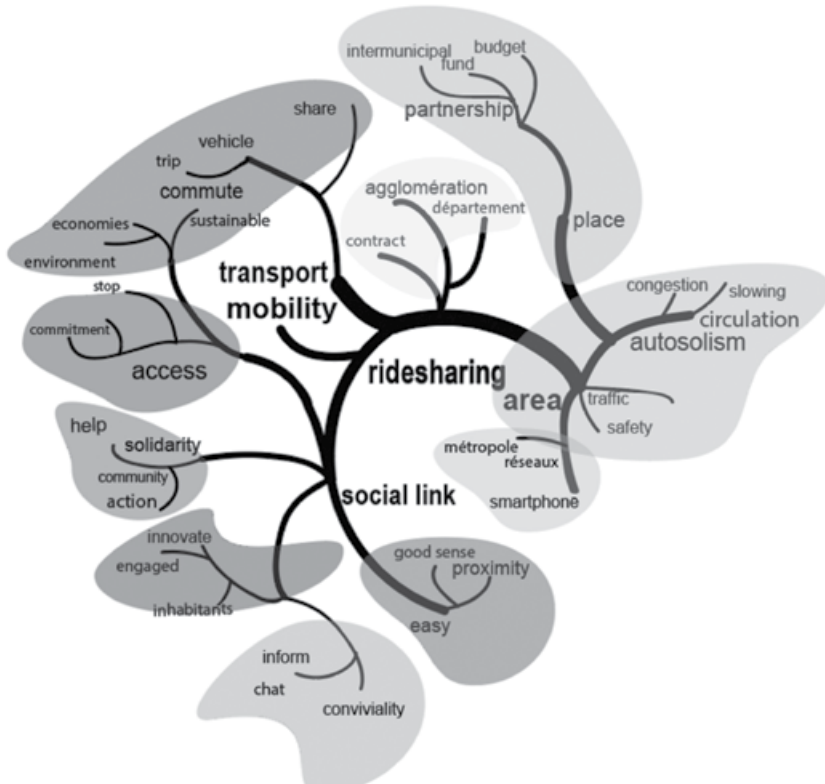

Figure 15.4   Word cloud extracted from ribbon-cutting speeches

On the right-hand side of the word tree, five other lexical classes describe ridesharing as a form of infrastructural planning, including road construction and the rollout of digital technology. Classes 3 and 8 include area and parking. Class 4 includes smartphone, digital platform, internet and apps. Class 6 includes budget, programme and intermunicipal authority. In these parts of the speeches, ridesharing areas are network amenities embedded in a kind of local
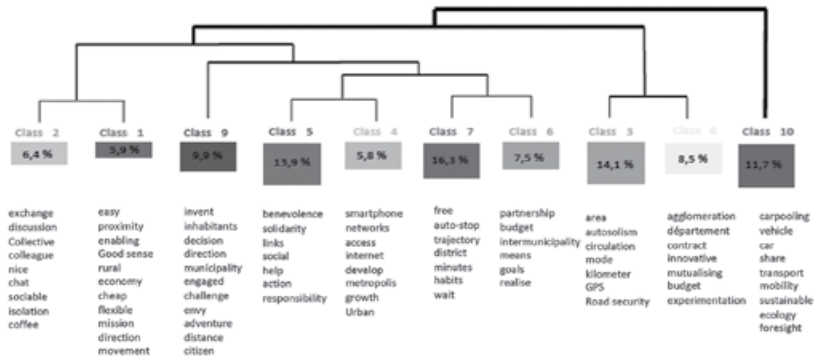
Note: Words included in Figure 15.4 correspond only to an extract of the textometric analysis of Figure 15.5. Consequently, the word cloud r is non exhaustive and reflects a geometric arrangement rather than the exact hierarchy of the terms used by locutors.

Figure 15.5   *Dendrogram resulting from the textometric analysis*

public service system. These areas are linked to the necessity, for rural villages, to protect access to main cities (and so to jobs), whatever energy crises may occur. But, to protect such a capacity to live in the country and regularly visit the city, the use of the car has to be common.

> (Too) many vehicles are occupied by only one person. (F. Besombes, Concarneau, 21 September 2016)

> Mobility in the area is a bit every man for himself. (X. Hamon, Quillio, 15 June 2019)

> On certain roads, for every 100 vehicles, only 103 people are transported. (Jean-Luc Chenut, Rheu, 25 February 2016)

Here, autosolism, or driving a car alone, is a blunt reference to the excesses of the automobile system and to the explosion in the number of trips. Politicians argue that they cannot go on widening rural roads (because of a lack of public funds) and that this would anyway be ineffective in reducing congestion. The ridesharing area is therefore the ultimate way to tame the uncontrollable development of the automobile system. It not only preserves the possibility of continuing a transport policy, and the territorial model of scattered housing throughout the Bretagne region for urban dwellers, it also preserves the local institutions that design and implement that policy, that is to say local institutions and their officials.

15.6 DISCUSSION: WESTERN FRANCE LOCAL MAAS AND BRETON LEADERS' AMBIGUITIES

This research contributes to the theories on MaaS policy diffusion in rural areas. The pathway for the automobile system on the periphery of centralised nations owes much to the recognition of localised historical, socio-economic and institutional power relations. Our analysis identifies the repertoires of political action in which the question of shared mobility is embedded.

15.6.1 Beyond Its Social and Functional Justifications, the Inauguration Performs the Existence and Resistance of a Political Body

Political capacity is defined as: 'a process in which elites and social groups produce a vision of the world that enables them both to structure the relations with each other and to define interests that they pursue collectively' (Cole and Pasquier, 2015, p.62). This enables us to interpret the purpose of inaugurations. While they are facing the press, local politicians demonstrate the capacity of local governments to shape their own way in (mobility) transition. They show strength in numbers and, at the same time, proclaim they can do the energy transition by themselves and use the areas to justify the consistency of the road infrastructure investment demands they anyway address to a state they consider too remote.

Breton politicians mobilise an inherited repertoire of public action. They express the absolute need to maintain the Gaullist model of road planning, through which the state, by means of allocations, co-funds and grants, guaranteed and still guarantees the universal and free use of the whole Breton road network. They remind how, on many occasions, claims to develop the road network have turned into harsh confrontations and have forced central government to allocate equipment. One moment remains in all minds. In 1960, as a response to demonstrations and political pressure on Breton mayors by Breton peasants eager to export (by truck) their agricultural product (especially pigs and chickens) to the rest of France and Europe, General de Gaulle allowed an exception within the national motorway scheme. He allowed all motorways in Bretagne to be completely free to use. The status quo remained untouched. In 2014, in the name of climate change, President Hollande announced a 'carbon tax' for trucks. The only opposition he faced took place in Bretagne. The red caps ('Bonnets Rouges', this name being given by Bretagne protestors who remembered a fiscal local protest extending from the late seventeenth century to the mid-eighteenth century) blocked the region's roads. President Hollande cancelled the national tax project because of Bretagne's reaction. Since then,

the argumentative strategy of local representatives has remained the same throughout history. Because of the peninsular nature of western France, free road use and road facilities (and in this moment of inauguration, ridesharing is part of the road equipment) are a just compensation for the distance to markets, jobs and the resources of France and Europe. Hence, local leaders stress that a special approach to mobility planning needs to apply in Bretagne, that they are collectively responsible for the recognition and preservation of historical rights. Protecting the status quo is, in their minds, a question of territorial equity and justice.

15.6.2   Preserving Arcadia

While describing their geographical limitations, mayors' speeches amalgamate and update socio-demographic realities and spatial ideologies. They argue that, in west France, society's dependence on the road (and on the use of the car) is not only fundamental to the way of life, but a condition of social peace. 'A Breton model of development has been established, which has produced a fairly egalitarian and peaceful society, based on an original territorial system with no single centre of dominance' (Le Couédic and Prigent, 2015, p.22).

   This territorial model is quite utopian. Nevertheless, Rennes' metropolitan expansion put aside, Bretagne is still a system of a dozen small and medium-sized cities surrounded by a very dense rurality. In the voice of local leaders, ridesharing areas will assure the resilience of this geographical pattern. The diffuse fabric with dispersed farms and a dense and regular pattern of villages forming a network across the region represents a non-negotiable aspect of local identity, and rural leaders assume their responsibility in defending this kind of territory and the way of life with which it is associated. We are not so far from a kind of *automobility Ancien Régime* defensive discourse, considering that the Ancien Régime, here, is the golden time of post-war car expansion in the countryside.

15.6.3   Protecting the Rural Car Is Opening an Avenue for the MaaS Industry

> There is no question of saying goodbye to the car. (Patrick Le Diffon Ploërmel, President of the Pays Cœur de Bretagne, 22 September 2016)

This uncompromisingly simple and direct message may be welcomed by dominant stakeholders involved in the diffusion of MaaS solutions to the countryside. We confirm Cochrane's perspective (2020) that neoliberalising governance models operate 'in and through local government'. While emphasising that they need to organise themselves, because the state is remote, and

sometimes with bad intentions, local leaders do part of the discursive work that is the basis for the acculturation of the rural masses to non-public mobility solutions. While mobilising what Pel and Kemp (2020, p.1186) call the 'the logic of organic growth' in mobility innovations, they protect the hegemony of the car against niche practices such as bike-to-work projects. But there may be great transformations behind this conservative approach. Twenty years after their emergence, the Breton ridesharing areas are still underused, save the few that operate directly to the biggest cities. The rural mayors are accepting any solution in order to avoid emptiness, as area emptiness would signify political failure. Since the beginning of the 2020s, thanks to state support to MaaS businesses enabled by the Loi des Mobilités, these Bretons are now paving the way for the consolidation of private MaaS systems. Several platforms and apps take the dense network of free ridesharing areas as opportunities to test and commercialise products. They still surf on the discourse of care and benevolence, but develop a clear value-oriented purpose.

To answer the three questions posed at the beginning, there is a strong link between the long historical mistrust of central government and the political capacity to develop autonomous mobility initiatives. In the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, in the context of rising energy costs and with jobs concentrated in the main cities, some local leaders, especially from Concarneau, Ploërmel, Fougères and Vitré, proposed to invest in car parks, so that inhabitants could save money. All these places hosted important battles during the war of Vendée. The four politicians were rapidly followed by others and a wave of area inaugurations occurred. The representation of the state as a remote administration more akin to tax creation than to concrete intervention for the sake of rural communities has determined a propension to launch the process from scratch. This inquiry does not extend to the reason for which inhabitants of western France have a stronger propension to co-drive than other French people, but this phenomenon could also be related to the long habits of peninsular communities to share services.

Is there such a thing as an automobile Ancien Régime? This expression is never explicit, but it reflects the underlying representation that the post-war car boom in Bretagne came along at a time of progress and prosperity. The concept which local leaders try to address and fight is twofold: car dependence and autosolitude (or autosolism). The first refers to the growing costs of car maintenance and fuel costs in the budget of rural commuters. The second puts stress on the unsustainable perspective of individual car multiplication on rural roads. More cars in Bretagne results in more congestion, pollution, accidents and carbon emissions. The discourse on the car is consequently quite ambiguous. Politicians say individual car democratisation shaped an Arcadian territory. This region saw residential sprawl proliferate in the last third of the twentieth century. This territorial pattern is still valued, and the local

institutions want to preserve it. This is, in a way, a car-protective discourse and a kind of counter-revolution discourse presented against what experts in sustainability ask for (artificialisation limitations, energy savings, compact urbanisation). But, at the same time, local politicians exhort the community to share cars, moving from an individual use to a more altruistic use, and this is deemed a progressive consideration.

The last question asked to what extent the local pathway would remain distinct from mainstream MaaS dynamics. Various points of authentic ridesharing solidarity remain in Bretagne. Some of them are located in geographical margins such as the islands (Sein, Molène, Ouessant and others) and the rocky peninsulas (for example, the presqu'île de Crozon community designed and still use a local system named Octopouce, a buzzword made from the words octopus and thumb/pouce). But the need to increase the use of areas led to the integration of the majority of ridesharing Breton areas into the regional MaaS platform, Ouestgo. The local leaders agreed to host business solutions to improve the coupling of drivers and passengers.

15.7   CONCLUSION

We have explored the argumentative frameworks and discursive strategies of local leaders at more than 20 inaugurations of ridesharing areas in the heart of rural western France. A cultural and historic perspective has been used, agreeing with the vision of Marsden and Docherty (2013, p.46) for which 'Habit and stabilities dominate thinking about transport trends and the policy responses to them'. In this case, too, stability and inertia of the cognitive and institutional frameworks structure the governance of transport and mobilities. Local politicians use long-term cognitive and normative resources embedded in the French political and institutional system. Their repertoires go back to post-war welfare policies. During the inaugurations, they assure the people that they are able to deal with the mobility challenges of the new century but, at the same time, they readdress many messages to the state. They show numbers, they recall the glorious historical moments in which they won mobility political battles, they reaffirm a defensive and conservative positioning to car practice and hence to the territorial pattern consisting in strong ties between rural and urban systems. The local leaders consider proudly that, while cutting the ribbon, they 'invent' their own sustainable mobility transitions.

Meanwhile, local leaders are unable to escape the contradictions and ambiguities that Freudendal Pedersen and Kesselring (2018, p.1) have already pointed out, when they note the insurmountable ambivalence of shared mobil-

ities between market forms and altruistic principles and between political instrumentalisation and the emergence of local pathways to empowerment:

> Highly ambivalent community-based cultures of sharing often constitute a paradox between being part of the capitalist economy or providing an alternative to the capitalist economy. It is not just a new phenomenon but this is at the very heart of transitory developments which may have the potential to change the socio-technical figurations of modern societies.

In our case study, we underline the ambivalence of the ribbon-cutting events and speeches. These moments balance between a progressive perspective of ridesharing (Besombes, one of the leaders, considers that he is launching 'a democratic adventure') and a reactionary perspective aiming at the consolidation of weakened local powers.

The MaaS wave, associated with a 2019 law, has already neutralised the western 'anomaly'. These local ridesharing areas now belong to recent history. The regional council, backed by state technocracies, has taken the leadership over village representatives that wanted to turn the next field into a ridesharing area. The first problem to solve is to recruit drivers and, for that, to raise a campaign on social media. Bretagne inhabitants are pushed to consume MaaS solutions and to connect with private societies that manage shared mobilities from an organisation-based activity model (including data, digital devices, virtual payment, etc.). Meanwhile, in major parts of the peninsula, mayors have (definitively?) lost centrality in the governance of the local mobility transition.

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