Politicising Practice Theory: Exploring the Potential of a Practice Ontology for Debates on Sustainable Consumption

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Publications and Conference Papers

Scheurenbrand, K. (2014) A practice-based approach to consumption: Ethnographic insights into the emerging practice of cycling in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. Unpublished conference presentation at: *9th Annual Doctoral Colloquium Northern Advanced Research Training Initiative*, June 9th-10th, 2014, Keele, UK

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Abstract

This practice-based ethnographic thesis advances knowledge about sustainable consumption through the use of practice theory as ontology. Consequently, this study accounts for consumption not exclusively through human entities but through practices as a relational compilation of different (non-) human entities. In centring practices as unit of analysis instead of the consumer, this study joins an existing family of what might be termed materially oriented –flat– ontologies in consumer research. This study further stresses that committing to practices as ontological units of analysis is not enough on its own to account for phenomena because practices themselves are merely the fabric through which social phenomena transpire (Schatzki, 2012, 2016). Therefore, the practice approach of this study is innovatively paired with Gramsci's (1971) and Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) political theories of hegemony and social antagonism to better account for the understudied relations between, or politics of, (un-)sustainable practices (Hargreaves, 2011, Hargreaves et al., 2013, Gram-Hanssen, 2011).

The empirical part of this study looks at urban cycling in Las Palmas, Spain, where car driving is the unsustainable dominant form of transport. According to a practice ontology, the research question was reframed from 'why don't people choose to cycle'? to *'why is the sustainable practice of urban cycling marginalised?'* Guided by two definitions of practices from social theory (Schatzki, 1996, Shove et al., 2012), and a research design from organizational studies (Nicolini, 2009a), fieldwork and data analysis were of a hybrid inductive nature in exploring the detailed and relational character of the practice elements *'meanings, competence and materials'*. Methods included mobile visual ethnography, historical analysis, participant observation, unstructured (group) interviews, netnography and documentary data analysis.

Findings suggest that to understand why urban cycling as a sustainable practice is marginalised we need to first examine the relationship *between practice elements inside* practices and second the politics of relations *between related practices*. Consequently, the evolution of urban cycling is hindered by both, internal and external conflicts between practices. Several practices compete with urban cycling for material, skilful, and symbolic resources, such as stealing, policing, schooling and lobbying. These seem to bundle together supporting the dominant unsustainable practice of car driving, the most obvious resource-rival to urban cycling. Building on concepts taken from Gramsci and Laclau and Mouffe, this study introduces the term 'synergist practices' to show that the existence of a sustainable (antagonist) practice is conditioned by several practices (synergists) instead by a mere dualist relationship with unsustainable practices (agonist).

The introduction of a practice ontology for the study of sustainable consumption yields three essential contributions to Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) and Macromarketing. Firstly, this study reveals how hierarchies and partnerships among practices

have the ability to constrain or enable sustainable consumption. This study thereby extends the notion of 'flattening' out consumption studies as it assesses how the equal split of agency among practice-elements, i.e. material, competence and meanings does not necessarily indicate the absence of hierarchies and domination among practices as entities.

Secondly, understanding (un-)sustainable consumption as the outcome of complex relationships between different competing practices instead of agentic consumer choice, deconstructs empirically the underlying neo-liberalistic assumptions of CCT, Macromarketing and TCR and accompanying beliefs about behaviour change. Sustainable consumption, the study suggests, depends on the (im-)possibilities of sustainable practices and their constitutive resources not on the will of the individual. This offers an alternative view on the 'green behaviour gap' (Moraes et al., 2011, Claudy and Peterson, 2014) in that consumers, although deliberately wanting one thing, are not always able to follow through with their 'beliefs'

Thirdly, transformational research to achieve well-being might best target the well-being of practices primarily to achieve effective social change for humankind. This innovative thinking also contributes to Macromarketing in that it provides a way out of the 'Dominant Social Paradigm (DSP)' (Kilbourne et al., 1997) arguing for a form of 'post-capitalistic thinking through practices'. Sustainability as priority for human kind should not be framed around choices, profitability or attractiveness to consumers, which merely perpetuates the commodification of sustainability. A practice based view of sustainability then requires a rejection of a market ideology and may possibly provide a workable alternative framework.

Acknowledgements

'Practice, practice, practice, and everything will come' Patthabi Jois

Just like my Yoga path, I have followed this PhD journey with endurance, pain and pleasure. I would like to thank myself for staying on this sometimes enlightened and oftentimes nebulous path. A thankful and devoted sun salutation goes to my incredible supervisors for guiding and supporting me until the end, through times when I lost my balance in academic and non-scholarly positions –thank you very very much! I would also like to thank my cherished partner who went with me through forward- and backbends, twists and inversions. Mom, Dad and Brüdi, thank you very much for encouraging and comforting me when I most needed it. Most of all, however, I would like to thank my participants who took me on their saddles–I spent the most incredible time with you guys! I never could have done this study without your trust, access, connections, insights and lovely riding trips. In that regard, I dedicate this piece to Las Palmas en Bici, 20" and MBC Canarias, who most need support for the sustainable transformation of their city. To cycling futures.

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1   Introduction

This thesis is positioned in the intersection of three fields of consumer research: Consumer Culture Theory (CCT), Transformative Research (TCR) and Macromarketing. The following chapters offer an opening section about the topic of the research –sustainability- in which the landscape, details and current status quo of the context is mapped out. The discussion will then navigate step by step through the three research curriculums. Beginning by exploring the genealogy and development of CCT, the first literature review presents recent debates highlighting the neo-liberalist roots from which contemporary critiques generate. The critical discussion of CCT's move towards Practice Theory distils the most pressing literature gaps resulting from this practice turn. By introducing practice theory, this chapter presents an important shift of thought in the social sciences and consumer research in particular. In doing so the first part of the front end of the thesis looks at the ontological inertia in consumer research and the resulting tension around consumer agency as well as the missing relationship between practices.

The second part starts by presenting two schools of thought in Macromarketing. Juxtaposing the two, the thesis introduces the major debates surrounding sustainability theory within contemporary marketing research. Topics cover the incommensurability of economy and sustainability and the challenge of post capitalistic thinking for sustainable consumption. At this stage, TCR debates such as consumer well-being and education are considered to crystallize commonalities and discrepancies in their approach to both CCT and Macromarketing. The thesis then pulls together debates

from all three fields to pave the way for the introduction of Practice Theory and Political Theory to sustainable consumer research.

By way of a polemic manifesto on contemporary sustainability, the introductory chapter starts by presenting the key themes outlined above. This is followed by a discussion of the rationale for this study. The chapter then leads to the research aims and proposes thoughts about the research perspectives adopted in this thesis. After giving a short overview of the methodology and research design, the chapter ends with an outline of the structure of the thesis.

1.1   What the World Needs –Another Piece of Research on Sustainability

> The political nature of matters of concern is disavowed to the extent … where climate change is framed as a global humanitarian cause. (Swyngedouw, 2010, p.217*)*

While the debate around sustainability has long hovered around the scarcity of oil and the consequent fear of not being able to enjoy our comfortable lifestyles, the latest acknowledgement of global warming brings much more pressuring topics to the table. The prognoses of increased inhabitable land on the planet, water scarcity, migration towards Europe and the consequent unavoidable wars has provided much worry about the future of our species. Unsurprisingly the political platform offers divergent engagement, opinions and actions –from strong commitment to change to blind ignorance of the issue. In 2015 most of the UNO members signed the Paris Agreement to keep global warming below 2°C (COP21, 2015). Consequently, one of the serious challenges for policy makers will be finding ways to reduce

carbonized mobility in the battle against greenhouse emissions (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014, Delbeke and Vis, 2016). The European Union concretely aims at reducing 'greenhouse gas emissions by 80-95% by 2050 compared to 1990' (Delbeke and Vis, 2016, p.7). Within this debate, public transport, and bicycles seem to be the alternatives to carbon and resource intensive vehicles[1]. However, as the arrival of 'peak oil' (Chapman, 2007, Kharecha and Hansen, 2008, Greer, 2013, Bentley, 2016) is once again postponed within the continuing oversupply due to hydraulic fracturing (Sovacool, 2014), the argument in favour of sustainable consumption –and against car driving-needs to shift accordingly. Since we have too much oil, resource-saving is not about sustaining comfortable lifestyles but about sustaining our very existence on this planet. Therefore, in order to 'thrive as a species long into the future' (Assadourian, 2010, p. 186) we need to stop doing what we are doing. This thought, however, is conflicted with the neo-liberalist notion of choice in which free individuals decide whether or not they want to consume sustainably. We must indeed live in a land of confusion as the European Union places even our annihilation under the conditions of capitalism:

> 'there is no single policy instrument that can bring down greenhouse gas emissions, the challenge has been to put a jigsaw of policy instruments together that is coherent, delivers emissions reductions, and is cost-effective' (p.2).

But what if becoming sustainable is not cost effective? Is there a need for cost efficiency in the face of the extinction of our species? Is *it* not the

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[1] I deliberately do not mention electric vehicles here. Electric vehicles do not remove the problem of CO2 emissions but merely shift them onto increased energy demand and hence production. Energy production -next to food production- is another problematic pillar of the sustainability debate (Shove et al., 2012) which is highly carbon footprint intense and should therefore not be encouraged by increased demand of electric vehicles.

greatest cost of all? Should we become extinct, there is no economy anyway, hence there is no sense in cost-conditioning sustainability. Nevertheless, the conflation of politics and economy in policy design does not come as a surprise, as political success is first and foremost measured according to economic growth, unemployment rates and per capita expenditure. This logic could not be more clearly embodied than in a business man in the white house (President Trump) who puts profit first, neglects climate change and the resulting need for renewable energy and sustainable consumption. More highways, more cars and more CO_2 emissions to make 'us' great again. Not only must we live in a land of confusion but in a world of confusion.

Unsurprisingly, policies have commodified sustainable consumption through market mechanics in educating or even nudging (Thaler and Sunstein, 2008) consumers into making better choices for themselves, however, always leaving the responsibility, and freedom to choose –if he or she wants to be more sustainable, healthy, fit or fat– to the consumer (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Hence, sustainability is presented not as a mandatory concern that requires large scale change, but one of a democratic character in which participation is up to individual preferences just like in the market place (Schwarzkopf, 2011). Consequently, the marketing discipline has paid attention to consumers' perceptions, attitudes and barriers towards sustainability and related topics (mostly recycling and the acquisition of green products) to inform policy makers about consumer's preferences. Although policy incentives based on such individualized assumptions have had little impact on changing high carbon footprint consumption patterns (Varey, 2010a,

Shove et al., 2012), few marketing studies have engaged with alternative, non-individualized approaches to sustainable consumption.

It is not until a decade ago that marketing and consumer research have begun to look at Practice Theory, which promises fresh insights into consumption. Pioneers from philosophy (Schatzki, 1996, 2001, 2002, 2012, 2013, 2016) and sociology (Shove and Walker, 2010, Spargaaren, 2011, Shove, 2014) promise insights beyond the individual and in fact beyond anthropocentric tendencies. Practice-based studies thus embody one important avant-garde approach to understand the reproduction and change of social life through a constellation of (non-)human entities (Shove et al. 2012, Hargreaves et al., 2013, Halkier, 2011). Furthermore, it has been suggested that the adoption of a practice-based approach might be one means of placing greater emphasis on the relational nature of consumption (Warde, 2005) to understand how consumers are 'locked' (Newell et al., 2015, p.537) into unsustainable patterns as a consequence of practice arrangements instead of individual lifestyle choices (Shove and Spurling, 2013, Colls and Evans, 2008, Watson 2013, Warde, 2014). Albeit practices' definitions vary, practice scholars agree that they include skilful, materialized and symbolic aspects which need to be understood in relationship to each other in order to make up a practice as entity (Schatzki, 1996).

Sociological practice scholars have argued strongly for a shift in ontological commitments suggesting that policy interventions might target challenges of sustainable change more effectively if consumption is understood as a result of practices (Shove, 2010a, 2010b, Evans 2011). In doing so, practice-based

approaches challenge the cognitive methods and assumptions of pro-environmental behaviour change by reframing policy problems as non-individualistic. For instance, instead of targeting individuals and their decisions to change their behaviour, the policy goal under a practice ontology would aim at manipulating unsustainable practices to eliminate them. By excluding individualized vocabulary from formulating the overall purpose and research questions, a practice ontology does not start by assuming that consumption is driven by consumer behaviour but regards it as outcome and expression of practices. In doing so, practices challenge the underlying assumption of the neo-liberal 'dominant social paradigm' (Kilbourne et al., 1997). Practices require a wider view on what potentially conditions consumption, which contradicts the neo-liberalist market logic of rational individuals. However, this potential has not yet been explicitly expressed, neither conceptually nor empirically (Walker, 2013). Despite these academic calls there is little evidence of practice-based thinking within the practical sphere as Delbeke and Vis (2016) put its 'policymaking is not about what can be done in theory, but much inspired by practicalities and political feasibility' (p.vv). If as per the dominant social paradigm, capitalist interests steer political success the capital interest also dictate political feasibility and thus the possibilities to become sustainable. This however means we are trapped within a system that does not cater for the future of humankind.

How can a practice ontology respond to such hierarchical dynamics? Up until now, two issues hinder the development of a response. Firstly, although the turn towards non-consumer-centred approaches has found its way into marketing and consumer research (Bettany, 2007, Bajde, 2013) most studies

have demonstrated ontological inertia by introducing practice theory as mere theoretical framework (Halkier and Jensen, 2011, Arsel and Bean, 2013). Hence, the potential of practices as unit of analysis to draw insights from has not been explored in-depth. Moreover, the theoretical positioning of practices has also limited the possibility of matching practices as ontology with a compatible theory to conceptualize these hierarchical relationships between practices. Secondly, a common focus of practice-based studies has been on single practices and the identification of their elements (Maggauda, 2011). Few practice-based studies examine practice bundles in and through which consumption and the consumer's ability to engage in sustainable ways of consuming are negotiated (Hargreaves 2011, Ham-Granssen, 2011, Shove et al. 2012, Shove et al., 2015, Hui et al., 2017,). Although these studies have identified the existence of hierarchical relationships within such complex constellation of practices, the literature has yet to conceptualize the nature of such 'micropolitics' (Hargreaves, 2011, p.93).

This thesis therefore aims to bring some noise into these quiet spots by adopting a practice ontology. Pairing this ontological commitment with political theory, this thesis explores the politics of (un)sustainable practices to advance knowledge on sustainable consumption.

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1.2 Making the case for urban cycling in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, Spain

By looking at urban cycling as sustainable practice, this thesis pays attention to a much-neglected topic. Within mainstream consumer research, urban cycling is an unpopular and somewhat simplified research area (Dalpian et al., 2014, Claudy and Peterson, 2014) just as it has been presented as a marginalised 'underdog' topic within geography (Spinney, 2010). This image is in line with the low percentages of its performance globally. With mode shares below 3% globally (Mason et al., 2015), urban cycling has an almost inexistent practice[2]. This is at odds with the health and environmental benefits cycling encompasses (Graeme et al., 2010). For example, cycling has been described as one of 'the ultimate zero carbon solution for personal transport' (Chapman, 2007, p. 363). Despite the debate around the carbon footprint of bicycle production and the impact of plant or meat based diets of the rider (Thorpe and Keith, 2016), cycling produces on an average ten times less carbon emissions than car driving (Blondel et al., 2011) and comes without air- and noise pollution. Studies have consequently calculated scenarios in which an increase of cycling mode share to 14% worldwide could already cut half of the current global carbon emissions (Mason et al., 2015).

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[2] It should not go unnoticed that the 3% cycling performance means that in some parts f the world cycling is indeed an existing practice. Examples of Beijing (Tatlow, 2017), Copenhagen (Cathcart-Keays, 2016), Valencia (Collinson, 2017) and Amsterdam (Van der Zee, 2015) are exemplary cities where cycling is already mainstreamed or rapidly mainstreamed, or is struggling but present as in London (Chappell, 2016). It is thus important to emphasise that my study is one cycling story of many –each with their own success or failure. I have deliberately chosen an example where mainstreaming is not (yet) the case.

While cycling as an umbrella term entails a plethora of cycling practices, this study uses the term *urban* to emphasise the primary motivation of getting from A to B –which may be commuting, shopping, running errands, but is delineated from cycling which does not have transport as its primary aim – such as sports or other forms of purely leisure cycling. This differentiation is important if there is a serious policy interest in establishing less carbon and resource-intensive mobility practices.[3] To advance knowledge about why urban cycling is still under-practiced in most European countries, it is helpful to look beyond individual preferences. Indeed, there is much scope for practice-based research on urban cycling, as existing literature on cycling has not made use of this approach.

This thesis emphasises urban cycling as one important example of a sustainable practice. Urban cycling is used to tease out the underlying practice contributions as sustainable practice and is thereby being given much more relevance than by trying to frame it as an isolated research topic. In doing so, urban cycling does not inhabit a separate chapter, but sections of the literature reviews on practice theory and sustainability.

According to the European Cycling Federation Barometer (2015) Spain is among the least cycle friendly European countries ranking place 18th of the 28 examined. This is confirmed by the European Commission (2013), who reports low mode shares of cycling at 1.6% of all journeys made. In contrast, car driving's mode share is 47.7% within the country. These statistics entail

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[3] I deliberately use the term 'mobility practices' as opposed to 'forms of transport' thus reflecting the need to think differently about the issue.

the even lower percentages in Las Palmas, where cycling figures with only 0.4% of all journeys made and car driving with 64% (Ayuntamiento de LPCG, 2014a). Counting with around 400.000 habitants, Las Palmas is the 9th biggest and third most congested city in Spain (La Provincia, 2016a). As seen from fig.1, the city is divided into a lower and an upper part of the city. These terms suggest an altitude difference and while the lower part of the city is especially flat, the upper part is hilly and not well connected through public transport. In fact, busses are the only public transport on the whole island, which run only somewhat frequently and with restricted routes. However, the city's image is subject to change –at least on paper. The governing party PP [Partido popular] has defined some greening objectives targeting the city's mobility to become more sustainable as they postulate in their action itinerary:

> We focus resolutely on alternative and/or subsidiary transport modes to the private motorized vehicle…In concrete, the objectives related to the mobility in LPA are: to reduce or even substitute moving in unsustainable transport modes] (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2014a, p. 10)

Such substitution aims at increasing bicycle journeys in the city from a 0,4% to a 2% mode share and to convert the bicycle into a potential 'alternativa real al coche' [a real alternative to the car] (Ayuntamiento de LPCG, 2014a, p.34). But despite the recent intense policy efforts to promote the bicycle as a mode of urban transportation, cycling figures have continued to stagnate and Las Palmas continues to be rated the 3rd worst equipped city for urban cycling (OCU, 2017). Incentives encompassed a modified bicycle

infrastructure, educational incentives and promotional events. These, however, have caused debates and conflicts on and off the roads.

Transport Modes within the city

9th biggest city in Spain

382.283 residents

Divided districts with altitude difference

Limited Public Transport
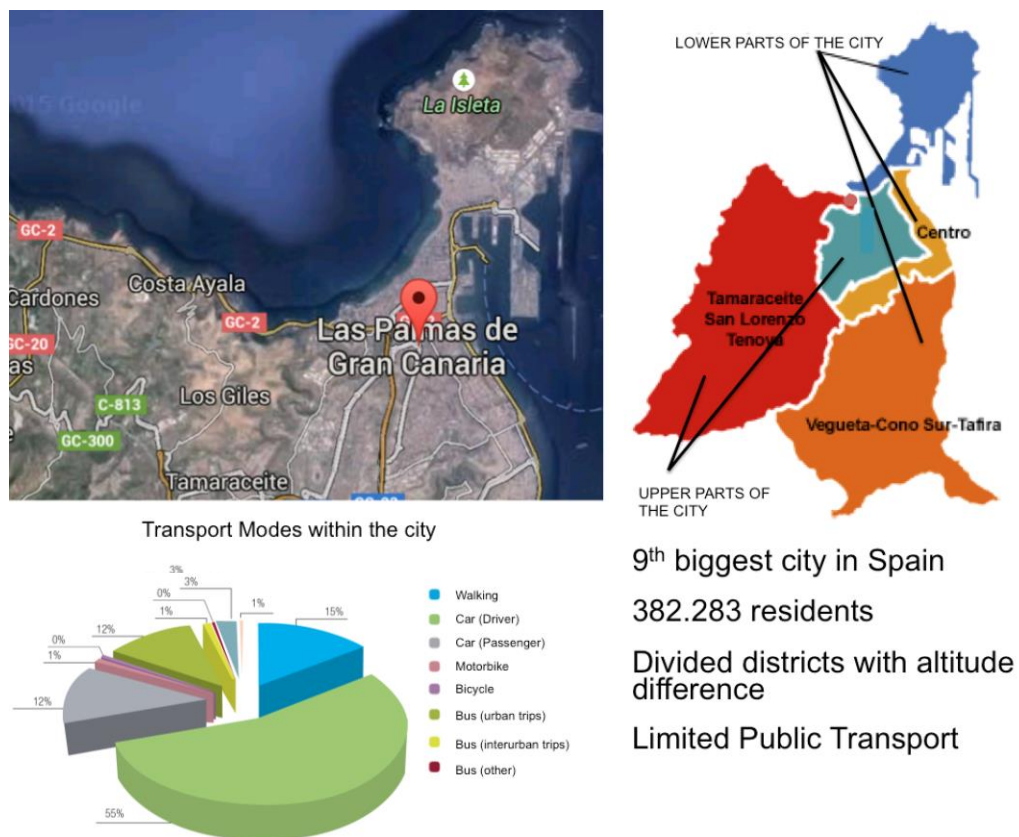
Figure 1 – Basic Information about Las Palmas

Source: Google Maps, Ayuntamiento LPGC (2014a)

Most cycling studies look at successful examples where urban cycling is mainstreamed, i.e. in the Netherlands, Scandinavia or Germany. Examples where urban cycling is marginalized have not been examined although there might be much to learn from an example where urban cycling is not mainstreamed in order to understand why the practice often struggles to establish. It might be valuable to look at real life problems that deliver accounts even if these are local and context specific (Yin, 2003) instead of looking at success stories that might lead to strategies that are extracted, taken out of context and ineffectively exported to other cities (Horton et al., 2007).

1.3   Research Aims, Objectives and Questions

The overall aim of this study is to explore the potential of a practice ontology for debates on sustainable consumption. Using the context of urban cycling – a marginalised sustainable practice– this thesis aims to improve our understanding of political relationships between practices and to explore their impact on sustainable consumption. To achieve these aims, the thesis targets the following objectives:

1. To examine how a marginalised practice struggles to thrive
   - Why is urban cycling marginalised?
   - How do elements of a single practice connect in situ and how are these relationships strengthened or challenged?

2. To examine how practices relate to one another and to explore the potential hierarchies (politics) of such relationships and their consequences for sustainable consumption
   - With which practices does cycling intersect and of what nature is this relationship?

3. To test the compatibility, -elasticity and -usefulness of political theory as ally to a practice ontology
   - How can we understand and conceptualize the relationship of (un-) sustainable practices?

4. To examine the implications of the above for the theory and practice (in particular policy) surrounding sustainable consumption
   - What are the implications of a practice-based approach for the design of policy surrounding sustainable consumption?

5. To contribute to methodological debates surrounding the translation of a practice ontology into fieldwork
   - What should a practice based methodology for consumption studies look like?

In addressing these objectives, research questions such as 'why is urban cycling marginalised'? And 'with which practices does urban cycling intersect and of what nature is this relationship?' are raised. Other triggered questions include 'what are the implications of a practice politics for the design of policy surrounding sustainable consumption?' and 'what should a practice

theoretical methodology for consumption studies look like?'

1.4   Research Perspective, Methodology and Activism

Instead of taking individual consumers as unit of analysis, this study centre-stages practices as its ontological foundation. Hence, this study offers an innovative and somewhat unusual way of describing consumption as it emphasises the relational character of practices through which consumption becomes possible rather than placing responsibility and agency for consumption on the consumer alone. This practice ontology assumes a constructivist epistemology and therefore acknowledges multiple ways of interpreting practices.

The methodology and research design are coherent with these practice assumptions and follow Nicolini's (2009a, 2012) rhizomatic zooming in and out approach to practice-based ethnography. Rhizomatic in this regard means that insights of one practice lead to insights about another practice, which in turn leads to insights about another practice and so on. The data has been collected into two phases, firstly exploring urban cycling as a single practice and its elements in-depth and secondly tracing relationships with other practices. These phases included methods that are consistent with the worldview expressed and appropriate to provide critical, authentic and plausible data (Hogg and Maclaren, 2008) supporting the research questions, which were equally practice-based. During the course of data collection, this study has naturally developed into an activist piece of research, which eventually will be given to Las Palmas en Bici, a local NGO of which I am member of the board since 2015. Hence, this research is politically engaged

in transforming the practice of cycling in Las Palmas positively (apart from wanting to join the academy and therefore undergoing the political move in becoming a PhD graduate). In taking an activist stance, my thesis aims at being reflexive throughout the chapters proposed, to enable a critical view on my personal position as researcher.

1.5   Content and Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1 offers a brief introduction to the research topic and a justification of the thesis as well as a brief outline of the research aims and objectives.

Chapter 2 sets the stage for the proposal of a practice ontology within consumer research through outlining and problematizing the development of CCT as research community and pool of research interests. The chapter then introduces and details the practice ontological assumptions, discussing these commitments in contrast to current consumer research claiming to use Practice Theory. Special emphasis is placed on the ontological inertia in consumer research in including non-human entities in the analysis of consumption and the resulting maintenance of individualist neo-liberalist 'human' beliefs about consumption. The chapter then introduces two practice definitions that have guided the research process clarifying the practice under study and the elements composing it.

Chapter 3 reviews research on sustainability within and outside the Marketing discipline. It introduces sustainability as a research interest in both TCR and Macromarketing communities, briefly outlines the genealogy of the term and carves out the close relationship of sustainability with economic and political interests. The chapter then observes the politics of practices that

have been a missing element within the practice-based research on sustainable consumption and introduces two political theories as potential 'allies' to conceptualize such politics. The chapter then provides a literature review on the cycling literature and closes by positioning this study within the research communities of CCT, TCR and Macromarketing.

Chapter 4 provides a detailed account of the methodological framework of this study. Concretizing how the underlying research assumptions have been implemented in the field, the chapter starts by presenting the research questions as starting point for the fieldwork. The chapter then presents ethnography as accompanying methodology for practice-based research. The research design is subsequently outlined in-depth, which explains and justifies each elements of the methods. Considerable emphasis is placed on the rhizomatic character of the research design as an innovative way of exploring practices methodologically.

Chapter 5 presents the findings of the study. The chapter is structured according to the elements composing urban cycling namely material, competence and meaning. It presents a detailed and rich account of urban cycling in the city just as it traces connections to intersecting practices and their role in the establishment of urban cycling.

Chapter 6 discusses the implications of the data to advance our understanding of sustainable consumption in the light of practice hierarchies. This chapter proposes a detailed conceptualization of the nature of these political dynamics and articulates first contributions to the academic debate.

Chapter 7 concludes with defining the contributions to the three marketing disciplines this study positioned itself in. The chapter then discusses the limitations of this study as well as the possibilities for future research.

2   Literature Review: Practice-Based Consumer Research

This chapter provides both a theoretical and ontological review of the landscape of practice-based consumer research using concepts of key practice authors that have influenced the practice turn in social science. Throughout my literature review, key debates that surround practice-based research in consumer research –with CCT in particular- are identified and fused into four key critiques. Firstly, marketing related consumer research has introduced practice-based approaches mainly as theoretical framework instead of ontology. This may be because the latter approach demands a relatively radical shift in the unit of analysis. Secondly, the term 'practice' is used interchangeably with 'consumption' without clear and thorough definition of the practice under study. Thirdly, there are problems with 'agency' in these accounts. Instead of embracing the flat character of practices, studies tend to attribute agency to one of the various elements making up a practice. Fourthly, consumer research has focused on single practices thereby missing out on the importance of relationships between intersecting practices. This last omission makes for a practice approach to consumption, which is largely devoid of politics. Because these critiques have both theoretical and paradigmatic/ontological dimensions there was some doubt as to whether their discussion should be placed in the methodology or literature review chapter. After some thought it was concluded that paradigmatic and ontological issues have direct impact on theoretical and methodological developments of practice-based consumer research and have therefore to be discussed in the literature review instead of the methodology chapter. The chapter begins by outlining the emergence

of CCT based on a paradigmatic change within the marketing discipline. This is important because it helps to shed light on why and how CCT scholars have approached practice theory to date. It then moves on to map out the character of the research community and critically discusses the key debates governing its development. The chapter then provides a critical analysis of the recent practice-based research within the community carving out current misconceptions and identifying gaps in knowledge.

2.1   The Emergence of CCT through a Shift of Paradigms

> Paradigms…are not open to proof in any conventional sense…any given paradigm represents simply the…view that its proponents have been able to devise, given the way they have chosen to respond to the three defining questions [about ontology, epistemology and methodology]. Answers given are in all cases human constructions…no construction is or can be incontrovertibly right; advocates of any particular construction must rely on persuasiveness and utility rather than proof in arguing their position (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p. 108)

The quote above states that there are merely convincing arguments as to why one believes the glass is half full or half empty (Crotty, 1998). However, as in real life, what we see and tell (or want to see and tell) depends on where and how we look at things. Researchers are no exception. Personal beliefs about the world are departure points that influence the way investigations are undertaken. The chosen paradigm impacts twofold on our research. It clarifies our ontological and epistemological credo of reality and how we belief to gain access to such knowledge. Overtly positioning a piece of research under a particular paradigm is supposed to give credibility in that it discovers our scholarly convictions and personal biases (Crotty, 1998). Therefore, a paradigm informs and guides our methodological research process convincingly and thus increases the quality of our scholarly work as

O'Shaughnessy (2009) puts it 'perspectives affect the way we search for, interpret, and pull together evidence' (p.27).

However, other scholars argue that a firm stand on something, which is inherently 'messy' (Law, 2004, p.2), complex and dynamically changing, like the subjects of enquiry of the social sciences, will unlikely work (Law 2004, Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Many questions may remain unresolved under one view and thus new questions emerge that require a new approach. Yet worldviews that in one era have delivered convincing understandings and explanations of society might constrain understanding in a different era when the social context has changed. It is the diversity of thoughts and ideas within the social sciences that prevents the unquestionability of a single, dominant belief system.

While consent reigns in the natural sciences about what and how to look at phenomena, scholars within the social sciences disagree about the ontological, epistemological and axiological assumptions that underpin their work. Hence different paradigms exist side by side (Kuhn 1970, Guba and Lincoln 1994, Willis et al., 2007). Arbitrary labelling of such belief systems within the social sciences are common, just like the debates about their role, purpose, or the nature of their subject of enquiry (see Flyvbjerg, 2001, Crotty, 1998, Delanty and Strydom, 2003, Guba and Lincoln, 1994). These big debates have spread into sub branches of the social sciences, management studies and consumer research in particular. The latter has experienced various paradigmatic 'turns' in the last 4 decades (Belk 2014, Warde 2014, Askegaard and Linnet 2011, Arnould and Thompson 2005).

The most symbolic of these turns was the definite assertion of the interpretivist paradigm in the 80's that challenged positivistic consumer research in regard to its methodological assumptions (Belk 1988, Arnould and Thompson, 2005, Tadajewski, 2006). A research community called Consumer Culture Theory (CCT) embodies this reformation. Arnould and Thompson (2005) define 'CCT …as a family of theoretical perspectives that addresses the dynamic relationships between consumer actions, the marketplace, and cultural meanings' (p. 868). The CCT revolution, reflecting the post-modern era of empowerment (Firat and Venkatesh 1993, Firat and Venkatesh 1995, Firat, et al., 1995, Brown, 1995, 1997, Sherry, 1991, Holt, 1997, Hirschmann and Holbrook, 1992, Slater, 1997), turned to a more cultural and sociological view of the consumer demarcating itself from the hitherto reigning positivistic paradigm, which believed in a rational and economically interested individual (Saren et al. 2007, Parsons and Maclaran 2009, Arnould and Thompson 2005, Belk, 2014). Instead of focusing on a one-sided and price-manipulative relationship with the consumer ending with his/her purchase of their products, the interpretivist approach pushed the idea of a reflective, culturally influenced individual. As such interpretivism emphasised the 'post-purchase phenomenon' (Belk, 2014, p.392), in which value is co-created between the consumer and the brands/products. The consumer is thus an agentic entity, who attaches symbolic meanings to intangible dimensions of consumption, such as experience and identity (Shankar et al., 2001, Askegaard and Linnet, 2011).

Empirically, 'this break with positivism' (Belk, 2014, p.380), was most obvious in the extensive qualitative research project called *The Consumer Odyssey*

taking place between 1985-1991. As the name suggests, this undertaking symbolises an adventurous journey of academics into the unexplored, unknown world of consumption in order 'to better understand what it is that consumers really do and think' (Kassarjian and Goodstein 2010, p. 70). Scholars behind the odyssey returned with ground breaking data that revealed a much more complex view on consumers that turned tables in how knowledge about consumers could be acquired, as at the time of the project, quantitatively measured and analysed data dominated the field in explaining consumer behaviour, which rendered qualitative data unscientific 'everyday knowledge' (Belk, 2014, p.392).

With the ethnographic naturalistic approach, in contrast, Belk et al. (2014) synthesized and executed the antecedent ideas that called for qualitative methods in consumer research (Tadajewski, 2006, Levy, 2006, Hirschmann and Holbrook, 1982, Anderson, 1983, 1986; Hunt, 1983, 1984, Hudson and Ozanne, 1988). These accounts made the case for the usefulness and acceptance of qualitative methods in academia and the practical world. Being a funded research project, the Odyssey manifested empirically 'the anti-positivist, anti-managerial, anti-authoritarian sentiment' (Bradshaw and Brown, 2007, pp. 1408-1409) that gleaned more and more through scholarly conferences and writing. With their work, Belk and colleagues paved the way for a burgeoning community of qualitative research, the acceptance of qualitative studies in peer reviewed journals, inclusion of qualitative methods into PhD programmes and teaching procedures (Belk, 2014). The branded umbrella Consumer Culture Theory through Arnould and Thompson (2005) 'consolidated and unified culturally orientated approaches' (Fitchett et al.,

2014) under the interpretive paradigm ever since.

At its core, interpretivism can be categorized under constructivism and/or constructionism, because the researcher and the researched are closely interrelated and meaning is said to be constructed through interaction between the two (Crotty, 1998, Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Della Porta and Keating, 2008). In order to understand the social world, the researcher has to engage with their participants as they collect their data; it is not enough for the researcher to 'harvest' (Alvesson and Sköldberg 2009, p.17) the obvious. Consequently, the researcher is seen as involved and inseparable from the research process (Belk 2006, O'Shaughnessy, 2009). As Della, Porta and Keating (2008) put it:

> Since human beings are 'meaningful' actors, scholars must aim at discovering the meanings that motivate their actions rather than relying on universal laws external to the actors. Subjective meaning is at the core of this knowledge (p.24)

This assumes on the other hand, that there are multiple realities possible in that each individual is different and attaches different meaning to different events or things (Crotty, 1998, Guba and Lincoln, 1994, Della Porta and Keating, 2008). Flyvbjerg (2001) sums it up beautifully:

> [Social science's] object of study –human activity- is more complex…their conceptual apparatus and research methods need to be more redefined…natural science studies physical objects while the [social science] studies self-reflecting humans and must therefore take account of changes in the interpretations of the objects of study. Stated in another way, in social science, the object is a subject' (p.30, 32).

Methodologically then, constructivist/constructionist/interpretivist research tends to prefer qualitative research methods for data collection following

frameworks that are based on convincing argumentation rather than on a general consent about what 'good' science is. Hogg and Maclaran (2008) for example have proposed 'authenticity, plausibility and criticality' (p.130) to guide interpretivist research rather than validity, reliability and generalizability. After all, if an interpretivist believes that her research is one possible story, she cannot claim it to be *the* story.

2.1.1 Three Debates Governing the Development of CCT

With interpretivism embodying a 'well-trodden path' (Hogg and Maclaran, 2008, p.1), the CCT community has established the consumer as taken for granted unit of analysis (Thompson et al., 2013, Bradshaw, 2011). However, CCT scholars have come to question this overly human approach over the last few years (Bettany, 2007, Moisander et al., 2009a, Moisander et al., 2009b, Askegaard and Linnet, 2011), embracing a range of post-human ontologies in consumer research (Bettany and Kerrane, 2011, Bettany et al., 2014, Bajde, 2013). In fact, the literature shows three central reasons that seem to justify going beyond consumer experience.

2.1.1.1 The Overly Agentic Consumer: Neo-liberalism in consumer research

In overcoming the division between structure and agency (Schatzki, 2002, Giddens, 1984, Shove et al. 2012), consumer research struggles to resolve the 'dilemma [that] corresponds in many ways to the old philosophical debate as to how far human beings are possessed of free will.' (Della Porta and Keating, 2008, p.3). Put differently, is the world –and therefore social change -made up of countless individual choices and decisions? Or are individuals

and their behaviour determined by 'external forces [and] social structures somehow bearing down on social life' (Shove et al, 2012, p.3)? In celebrating consumer empowerment, CCT sympathises with the former characterising consumers as 'interpretive agents rather than passive dupes' (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 875). With this definition, the research focus explores how consumers 'exert agency and pursue identity goals through a dialogue…with the cultural frames imposed by dominant ideologies' (Arnould and Thompson, 2007, p. 10). This 'cultural power model' (Knott et al., 2006, p.958) acknowledges that structural boundaries exist, but the research interest emphasises what consumers do within these boundaries instead of questioning the nature of these boundaries per se, or what these boundaries encompass and to what extent these boundaries might constrain the consumer (though see for an exception Thompson, 2011, Giesler and Veresiu, 2014). If consumer empowerment has been defined as the 'creative adaptations and manipulations of the marketer-intended meanings and uses of products and advertisings' (Knott et al., 2006, p.959), then CCT scholars have argued that a 'passive absorption model of consumers is not what we see' (Cova et al. 2007 p.4). Consequently, CCT has been accused of having ignored the political importance of such structural boundaries from its research agenda (Bradshaw, 2011, Zwick, 2011). As Varey (2010a) puts it

> '[arguing] that consumers are…constructors of their existential consumption practices…[in] managerial micromarketing…may have given rise to the present…consumerist society' (p.119).

While the politics of consumption have been further downplayed under the highly individualized ontology underlying the interpretivist paradigm, few –but nevertheless loud– voices argue for more structural and political consumer

research (Bradshaw, et al., 2013, Fitchett et al, 2014). These scholars resist conforming to the celebration of the dominant 'marketing myth' (Schwarzkopf, 2010, Zwick, 2013a, 2013b. Schwarzkopf, 2010) picturing empowered, sovereign, value co-creating prosumers (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) engaging cheerfully in the capitalist system (Arvidsson, 2013a, Arvidsson, 2013b). Instead, they make the case that marketing and consumer research should no longer be the servant of the managerial neo-liberalist philosophy, which necessarily places the consumer centre stage (Varey, 2010a, Varey, 2010b, Fitchett et al., 2014). As Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt (2012) put it 'without atomistic individuals pursuing their own interests unconstrained by external forces, competitive markets cannot function' (p.295). Their call for consumer research critically addresses the importance of capitalism for contemporary consumption is echoed within the climate and sustainability debate in other research communities and disciplines (Sayer, 2013, Geels et al., 2015). For the 'producing economy depends on utilitarian hedonism to justify mass production and consumption' (Varey, 2010a, p.118). Within such critiques, an ontological overhaul of consumer responsibility and choice is emphasised, especially because individualistic accounts come to a limit in accounting for seemingly unchangeable unsustainable consumption. Their answers to social change start and end with the consumer without effectively generating insights about how consumption patterns can or cannot be altered (Shove, 2010a, 2010b, Shove et al., 2012, Newell et al., 2015). In fact, consumer research has been critiqued as reinforcing the assumption that consumers alone are responsible for changing their consumption patterns (Moisander, 2007, Moisander et al., 2009b, Evans, 2011). Critical voices

strongly argue that the exclusive focus on the consumer is misleading and limiting in advancing knowledge for policy makers (Evans, 2011, Shove et al., 2012). Stewart (2015) for example postulates that policy incentives informed by consumer centred research have not resulted in effective sustainable change. Strengers and Maller (2015) echoing Shove (2010a) argue further that the individualistic paradigm obscures political interests in sustaining unsustainable lifestyles that benefit governance survival. In avoiding 'political risks of taking long-term action… actions on climate change have frequently placed responsibility back onto the consumer (Newell et al., 2015, p. 536). This characteristic of policy incentives is called ABC-Mantra: A for attitude, B for behaviour and C for choice (Shove, 2010a). However, in cognitively convincing consumers to alter their unsustainable lifestyle and 'blaming' (Evans, 2011, p.429) them for the maintenance of these, policy incentives ignore the social and material conditions under which (un)sustainable consumption takes place (Borges, 2005, Bettany and Kerrane, 2011, Bajde, 2013, Sherry and Fischer, 2009). As Bradshaw et al. (2013) put it:

> Responsibility is externalised from the state and capital alike and the consumer becomes cast as the entire frame of reference, thereby blindsiding the larger and often invisible actions that lead to planes in the sky and food on the table. (p. 211).

The human centred approach of the discipline triggered critiques of being overly phenomenologically driven (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) and of being caught up in the pride of CCT's 'creation narrative' (Fitchett et al., 2014, p. 495). Especially because CCT has focused, since its formation, on understanding cognitive reflective consumer experiences, which implicitly 'attribute…innate capacity, ability or intention to actors and their action

(Arnould, 2007, p.100). Askegaard and Linnet (2011) identify this issue as the 'continuation of the psychologizing tendency in consumer research that some of the founding fathers…strived to overcome' (p.386).

The 'marketing myth [of the] consumer as voter, judge and jury' (Schwarzkopf, 2010, p. 1) is further misleading as it presupposes that consumers have full access to information about all production stages of products (Hackley, 2009), which would be necessary to make a fully informed rational decision it legitimizes economic growth and capitalism in a neo-liberalist market. Hence, policies calling for sustainable consumption have so far aimed to educate consumers to use resources more efficiently. Or as described in Thaler and Sunstein's (2008) book 'Nudge', consumers are categorized as lazy and ignorant, incapable of choosing the 'right' things in the need to be unconsciously manipulated into 'better choices' (Goodwin, 2012).

These incentives, ignore the roots of the problem (Kilbourne et al., 1997). For instance, energy, food and transportation are sustained through a complex myriad of political, spatial and material infrastructures (Shove, 2010b). To give an example, energy and water consumption need alternative ways of production such as autonomous energy systems for each household. However, whether this is in the interest of big energy providers, which have strong connections to politics is doubtable as we have seen in the case of Vattenfall suing Germany over the nuclear phase out resulting from the recent Energiewende after the Fukushima disaster in 2011 (Spiegel, 2011). Instead of welcoming interventions that place importance on sustainable energy production, the market logic puts profit first. With the Comprehensive

(!) Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) such lawsuits and power games of multinational corporations emphasises the difficulty of 'democracy' and consumer responsibility. Are buying decisions really accountable for sustainable consumption? Are consumption choices really responsible for the survival of a product in the market? Between chloral chicken and genetically modified corn, what is possible to choose? Freedom, Theodor Adorno (cited in Madison, 2012) once said, is being able 'not to choose between black and white but to abjure such prescribed choices' (p.108). But alone the question if consumers 'can' (Kozinets, 2002) or 'should' (Arnould, 2007) escape the market underpins the highly humanist notion underlying the concept of consumer agency. By the same token, it rejects the possibility of agency being attributed to non-human beings, things and their relationships that might sustain consumption patterns (Bajde, 2013, Hui, 2012). Unsurprisingly, the debate surrounding structure and agency goes beyond human aspects of consumption.

2.1.1.2   Subject versus Object: Let's Get Flat

Following on from the structure-agency debate discussed above, CCT scholars have strongly argued for a flattening of relations between consumers and the material and non-human aspects of consumption. Bettany (2007) for example has argued that CCT has emphasized 'the radical indeterminacy of the subject' (p. 44) while the object is portrayed as 'underdetermined' (p.44). In doing so, the human ontological predisposition already treated the subject as active agent and the object as passively determined entity. The object is well framed and treated as resource for, and mediator of, self-expression and identity, but less explored as an actor itself.

There has been a strong call to reconsider the role of these non-human and material aspects. These discussions highlight the need to decentralize agency of the subject (Bajde, 2013, Bettany, 2007, Bettany and Kerrane, 2011, Bettany et al., 2014), as studies show that non-human entities have the potential to trap consumers within complex constellations of consumption (Shove, 2015, Borgerson, 2005). In questioning the attribution of agency, scholars implicitly raise the question as to whether the interpretivist paradigm with its individualistic and humanist ontology can consistently respond to this call. As Askegaard and Linnet (2011) put it:

> A hugely important discussion about the relation between subject and object underlies this issue, which at some point needs to be resolved with the social constructivism that underwrites the notion of consumer culture…The analytical challenge posed from that direction is to conceptualize the role of an object (p.390)

Borgerson (2005) expresses equal concern in saying that the:

> danger of leaving unarticulated one's theory of materiality –or assumptions about the way relations work between subjects and objects lies in contradictions that may arise between notions of consumer subject agency and implicit, yet unexplored materiality assumptions…such a move inspires interrogation of potential incompatibilities that do creep into consumer research (p.439)

Although these scholars implicitly point to ontological inconsistencies within the traditional human centred unit of analysis they do not explicitly articulate a shift in ontology. They argue for a theorizing of materiality within a 'theory heteroglossia' (Thompson et al, 2013, p.149), in which CCT encompasses a plethora of possible theoretical approaches. However, a deterministic shifting of agency between subject to object in the quest to answer the question 'who or what has more agency over the other' will unlikely be answered through

theoretical concepts without clarifying how reality is understood and what the unit of analysis is. If the world ontologically is still believed to consist of meaning-constructing consumers, 'a priori splitting of the world into active subjects and passive objects closes off the possibility of alternative enactments of consumption in theory and practice' (Bajde 2013, p. 235). Non-human entities thus, must be included on ontological grounds as part of the unit of analysis prior to any act of theorizing (Bajde, 2013, Bettany, 2007). Subsequently, post-humanist 'flat ontologies', have been put forward in CCT. Such Ontologies 'flatten the subject–object hierarchy' in treating subject and object as equally active entities in order 'to capture the extensiveness of 'consumption networks' as fully as possible' (Bajde, 2013, p. 236). In fact, Bettany (2007) has argued that the gap between subject and object under a flat ontology is reconciled:

> In these approaches what might have been called subject and object collapse into complex analyses of meaning and materiality, and things that 'matter' (i.e. that both 'materialize' and 'mean') … multiply co-emerge in inherently fragile, non-literal and ambivalent co-constitution, hybridity, impurity and complexity from within specific cultural milieu. (Bettany, 2007, p. 45)

Echoing Bettany (2007, 2011), Bajde (2013) argues that the absence of an explicit commitment to such flat ontologies ties consumer research tacitly to its human label 'the consumer'.

2.1.1.3   Context: Let's Get Flat Part Two

As part of the above excavation of individualist ontologies, scholars have looked at the scope of context in CCT as the individualist focus 'led to negligence of those (predominantly social) elements of forces shaping

consumer lives that are not necessarily part of consumer experiences' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p.397). It is therefore not clear what to include in an analysis beyond the consumer, or better –where does context start and end? The authors propose to include 'dimensions such as culture, society, ecology, materiality and history' (p. 393-394). Their quote, however, suggests that these aspects can be studied as standing external to the consumer. If such a division is assumed from an ontological point of view, then what is the unit of analysis? How do material, ecological and historical aspects relate to each other –and what position is granted to the consumer? How is the social defined? It seems as if the context related debate is closely entangled with the former two debates around flat ontologies and in sum these debates lead us to the fundamental ontological question: what is it we are looking at? If the integration of external context 'brings more advanced approach to prioritizing certain analytical connections, and…to draw conclusions of a wider analytical reach…beyond our individual identity projects' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011 p. 399-394), should such parameters not be the unit of analysis itself?

2.1.2 Reassessing CCT's Axiology?

The beginning of this chapter argued that the development of CCT is a paradigmatic one which has raised a series of ontological questions. However, with a move away from understanding 'human behaviour' (Ozanne and Hudson, 1989, O'Shaughnessy 2009), the overall positioning and aim of CCT needs to change as well. So far, CCT has foregrounded the production of humanist and individualist focused research, with the consumer as singular or plural unit of analysis as Askegaard and Linnet (2011) explain:

we consider ourselves to be at home in a broad constructivist tradition… [and] compared to sociologies of consumption, the strength of CCT has always been the inclusion of rich and detailed accounts of real-life experiences of consumers as single persons or in small groups...[as] the social always speaks through the consumer – with or without the consumer's awareness (p.397)

In comparing CCT to other disciplines highlighting the unique proposition of being consumer driven, a critique of the consumer subject is counter-intuitive. But regarding the current debate, is it possible to sustain a humanist argument in consumer research if understandings stagnate while other disciplines have come to compelling accounts about consumption under alternative paradigms? In search of 'new concepts and models…by visiting other paradigms and being inspired by the ways of their inhabitants' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011 p. 399) it seems as if consumer research is reassessing its axiology. Paraphrasing Guba and Lincoln (1994), axiology, ontology and epistemology have to be discussed together. Leaving individualistic accounts behind in the search for an alternative unit of analysis, CCT scholars seem to allude to a shift from *consumer* research to *consumption* research.

However, necessary philosophical discussions about alternative units of analysis that could lead to such a shift are scarce (Bajde, 2013, Bettany, 2007). While proposals of alternative epistemologies for consumer research exist, clear commitments to alternative ontologies, and associated alternative units of analysis are missing. However, the clarification of ontological assumptions is needed prior to the epistemological questions because the latter is determined by the former (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). In other words,

the ontological question about 'the fundamental nature of something… the fundamental nature of social life or social phenomena' (Schatzki, 2015) requires the definition of the unit of analysis. The definition of the unit of analysis leads subsequently to the epistemological question of how we can know about this phenomena, or in Guba and Lincoln's words (1994) 'the nature of the relationship between the knower … and what can be known' (p. 108), which requires thinking about methodological choices.

2.2   Introducing Practice Theory

One of such alternative flat ontologies is Practice Theory. Alan Warde published an influential manifesto about practice theory in 2005. Although practice theory since then has still not been clearly identified as ontology, he introduced practices to consumption studies as entities through which consumption can be examined 'not as a practice itself' (Warde, 2005) but as a 'moment' (Warde, 2005 p.137) within practices. Seeing consumption -in other words as a phenomenon that transpires through practices- is possible because practices are defined as a 'block' of interconnected elements (Reckwitz, 2002, p.250). These elements involve socio-cultural, material and symbolic dimensions in which consumption happens. The popular and most used definition of practices in consumer research puts this as follows:

> A 'practice' (Praktik) is a routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge (Reckwitz, 2002, p.249)

Nevertheless, there is no mutually agreed definition of the practice elements. This stems from a fragmented legacy of Marx, Heidegger, Wittgenstein,

Bourdieu, Foucault, and Giddens among others, who do not adhere to a single account of practice, but rather take differing approaches to the question of what constitutes a practice. A variety of scholars engaging with 'the practice turn' (Schatzki et al., 2001) have put forward their interpretation of entailing elements, each with another emphasis, which makes the practice turn eclectic. In order to make transparent their diverse foci on elements comprising practices, Gram-Hanssen (2011) created a seminal overview of the different authors (see table 1). In this table, she presents the most influential practice scholars for consumption studies highlighting that different authors stress different themes. While Elizabeth Shove for example foregrounds materiality, Theodore Schatzki focuses heavily on embodied knowledge [4]. These differences result from the different philosophical influences underlying each author. Theodore Schatzki (1996) for example is heavily influenced by Heidegger and Wittgenstein, who give much attention to 'being in the world and attunement' (Dreyfus, 1991, p. 40), whereas Elizabeth Shove is significantly inspired by Giddens (1984) 'duality' (p. 25) of structure and agency, whereas Warde is mostly inspired by Bourdieu's (1984) social class –bound 'habitus' (p.169) –classifying dispositions– but also his colleagues Reckwitz and Schatzki. Section 2.3.1 will give an in-depth account about the relevant elements for this study.

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[4] In a personal communication with Schatzki (02.09.2015), he stressed the inclusion of material arrangements in his column. He insists that practices are mediated through material arrangements and thought it was odd, that Gram-Hanssen ignored that he repeatedly writes about their importance (see Schatzki 1996, 2010a, 2002, 2012).

Table 1 Overview of different practice-elements

Source: Gram-Hanssen, 2011, p.64

Schatzki, 2002	Warde, 2005	Shove-Pantzar, 2005	Reckwitz, 2002a
Practical understanding	Understandings	Competences	Body Mind The agent Structure/Process
Rules	Procedures		Knowledge
Teleo-affective structures	Engagement	Meanings	Discourse/Language
General understandings			
Material Arrangements	Items of consumption	Products	Things

Practice theory then pledges to decentralize the individual because consumption is understood as being negotiated among 'the existence and specific interconnectedness of these elements, and [the practice's existence] cannot be reduced to any one of these single elements' (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 250). Nevertheless, different practice definitions assign different roles to the consumer. Although Reckwitz (2002) insists on the relational character of practices and their elements, his definition of the individual is problematic in that it redirects the centre of attention to the consumer as indispensable and agentic entity, or the 'integrator' as Shove et al. (2012, p.22) call him. In fact, there is some critical debate (Shove, et al., 2012) about Reckwitz' definition of the individual as 'carrier' (p. 250) and its consequent representation as the 'intersection of practices' (Warde, 2005, p. 143). While such interpretations run counter to the idea of a decentralized consumer (Shove, et al., 2012), some practice-interested scholars hold on tight to the conventional view of consumption as outcome of human behaviour with a practice badge. Unsurprisingly, Reckwitz' definition has been popular in CCT studies to examine the role of the individual within practices. As these debates hint towards a lacking commitment to work with a different unit of analysis than

the consumer, the next section dives deeper into the discussion about practice as ontology where I will provide a thorough discussion of how a practice ontology for consumer research might look like.

2.3   A Practice-based Ontology for CCT?

In proposing ANT as an alternative approach for CCT, advocates (Bajde, 2012, Bettany, 2007) have convincingly addressed the three questions posed by Guba and Lincoln (1994) regarding ontology, epistemology and methodology. However, there is little rigorous argument within CCT about these three issues for a practice-based approach. I argue that this has to do with the introduction of practice-based research exclusively as *theory* (Warde, 2005, Gram-Hanssen, 2011, Reckwitz, 2002, Halkier et al., 2011, Halkier and Jensen, 2011) instead of positioning it primarily as 'ontology' as suggested by Schatzki (1996, 2001, 2012, 2016). Unsurprisingly, CCT scholars have applied conceptual or theoretical practice frameworks to their work without taking practices explicitly as unit of analysis (Arsel and Bean, 2013, Molander, 2011, Schau et al. 2009, Sandikci and Ger, 2010). This has raised a range of methodological questions about how best to apply practice theory to the study of consumption (Halkier et al, 2011). This is an unfortunate debate, as taking practices as an ontological assumption resolves most methodological questions posed within the community (Nicolini, 2012) (see for an in-depth discussion of a practice methodology chapter 4).

In the following, I will argue the case for an explicit practice-based ontology for CCT, which responds well to the above posed CCT debates by engaging

with its established ontological acceptance in other disciplines (Schatzki, 1996, 2012, 2016, Shove et al., 2015, Nicolini, 2012, Nicolini and Monteiro 2017).

Ontology

Askegaard and Linnet (2011) briefly put forward practice-based research as one possible approach which might resolve the three CCT challenges of positioning and including non-human entities, defining context and the individual within analyses. However, their understanding of the drivers behind consumption contrasts with the ontological understanding of sociology:

> Drivers of consumption to a large extent originate in cultural, societal, economic and political conditions… a valid analysis should [include] social constraints and cultural continuities, which, from an analytical viewpoint, manifest themselves in consumer practice… consumer practice is conditioned by external structures, but it also works back on these structures, changing them through acts of improvisation (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p. 388)

In their quote, the authors do not embrace the notion of a 'flat ontology' (Schatzki, 2015) which stands behind a practice-based approach. Flat stands firstly for the belief that 'social and organisational life stem from and transpire through real time accomplishments of ordinary activities' (Nicolini and Monteiro 2017, p.101). Such activities are not properties of the consumer but happen within a web of (non-) human entities or practice elements, in other words, practices. Hence, practice-based studies hold that the world is made of practices and bundles of such, being made up of different elements relating to each other. All the elements that make up the practice are equally important for its

existence and have impact upon each other. Hence, in believing that phenomena transpire through practices, the flat character of practices on the one hand decentralizes agency in that non-human and material aspects are just as necessary features for the practice to be alive as the consumer himself (Warde 2005; Bottero 2015). Practices are thus suspicious of subject-object divisions, or external structures (Schatzki, 2011). Committing to a flat character expresses that 'the realm of the social is entirely laid out on a single level [namely practices]' (Schatzki 2016, p. 29).

Studies committing to the flat character then follow what Nicolini (2017) describes as:

> 'a flat ontology…suggests that all social phenomena, small-scale and large-scale, are constituted through and experienced in terms of 'micro' situations…social reality has no levels: when it comes to the social it is practices all the way down' (p.99-100)

Nicolini echoes Schatzki (2011) by inviting us to imagine micro and macro phenomena as made up of the same tissue and as such cannot be separated or 'distinguished' (Nicolini, 2017, p.112):

> 'Big issues exist, of course, but big issues do not necessarily concern large- scale phenomena and not all large- scale phenomena are big issues. Large- scale phenomena do not necessarily happen in places that are different from where 'small' ones occur. Presence and distance are not opposed' (Nicolini, 2017, p.112)

The flat character of practices describes therefore merely that practices are the one and only assumed unit of analysis. This definition of 'flat' does not exclude the possibility of hierarchies between practices as interpreted by some scholars (Hargreaves et al., 2013). On the contrary, Schatzki (2012) in his 'primer on practices' explicitly speaks about 'higher level practices' (p.15) that can bundle into such large phenomena, which is the 'aggregation of

interrelated practices' (Nicolini, 2017, p.99). I will have to say more about these higher-level practices in section 2.3.1.

Epistemology

Having discussed the practice ontology, the assumption underlying this approach is that knowledge about a particular phenomenon can only be gained by analysing practices, as it is practices out of which reality and phenomena are made of. In contrast to the traditional constructivist approach in which knowledge about phenomena needs to be drawn from human consumers exclusively, practices are more complex as they consist of a variety of elements. The researcher thus needs to analyse these practice elements which encompass human *and* non-human entities pointing towards methodological implications (see chapter 4).

The diversified character of practices also addresses the issue of context, for practices are the context of consumption (Warde, 2005, Schatzki, 2015). If we consider reality being practices that are influenced neither through macro nor micro dimensions, then everything belongs to practices or bundles of it and hence there is no need for external 'context'. As Nicolini (2012) puts it:

> Studying context from a practice perspective implies…studying analytically and processually how different practices are associated and what are the practical implications of their relationships for the practice at hand…too often the notion of context is used as a shortcut and substitute for a more detailed analysis of how the condition for actions came about. In this sense, the notion of context plays an eliminativist role, and as such should be avoided or used extremely cautiously by those interested in a practice-based approach. It is for this reason that I use the expression wider picture instead of, say, 'context' …[because] the wider picture amounts to [the] understanding of the association

> between practices and how they are kept together…. (p.234)

Thus, practice-based research reconciles both, the inclusion of material and non-human aspects as well as context related issues.

However, there is a striking silence in the literature towards another important epistemological question: what is the position between the researcher and the practice (Guba and Lincoln, 1994)? We cannot answer this without reverting back to ontological questions as to whether practices are real? Out there? Objectively observable? The oscillation between ontological and epistemological questions is important, as they 'tend to emerge together' (Crotty, 1998, p. 10). If we are to come to a coherent argument about a possible practice paradigm, there is scope to draw from other disciplines who have already engaged with questions about reality –questions that in CCT are often taken for granted. A commitment to practice-based studies, I argue, has necessarily to be a hybrid constructivist way of thinking, or what Bettany (2007, p. 44) calls 'radical constructivism', that is 'remaining authentic to the critical and constructionist nature of practice-based studies.' (Nicolini, 2009b, p.209).

Scholars from organization studies for example are not afraid of arguing that '[practices] with a 'real' purchase in the regulated manufacturing of reality…contrast with hidden forces other social theories talk about' (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017, p.107). Nicolini underlines here that if we take practices to exist and reject a macro-micro divide, then we acknowledge that there is a realist notion in taking practices as *not*-inter-subjectively constructed but rather as existing 'out-there'. The practice-based epistemology here is,

however, not more realist than is constructivism in believing that the consumer as human being is real. As this is a PhD in management studies, and an in-depth philosophical analysis of the epistemological question is far beyond the scope of this chapter, I have interviewed one of the key thinkers of the practice turn in social science, Ted Schatzki –a philosopher by training– who was kind enough to give me an answer to the under-discussed question about epistemology in practice-based research. His quote is presented verbatim:

> There is no literature specifically on practice theory and epistemology. Practice theory is realist to the extent that it claims that the social world really is composed of practices. There are some practice theorists who are not realists …who think of the concept of practices as heuristic for investigation and don't believe the world is really composed of practices…can we know the world of practices? The answer is yes… How do we do so? - that converges with methodology. What is the relationship between the investigator and the practice she wants to investigate? One has to take into account the fact that researchers and thinkers carry out practices as they research and think. So the relationship is mediated by practices. It is possible to take this in a constructivist direction, saying that knowledge is relative to investigative practices. But one can also just say that these practices give the investigator *access* to the practices she studies. Historically, people who have argued that scientific knowledge (in the sense of Wissenschaft) is mediated by social phenomena or structures of some sort have disagreed on this point, though there are more constructionists than "accessists" (to invent a word). (Schatzki, 11.12.2015 personal communication)

Schatzki's quote suggests that between practice-based scholars there is an on-going debate and any taken approach has to be argued. I argue that when it comes to the question about the relationship between researcher and fieldwork and the subsequent analysis of our data, the constructivist-epistemological idea ties in as we engage actively in discovering practices because:

> [Practices] do not have a self-evident nature. Practices need to be thematised and turned into discursive objects in order to be examined as entities both by practitioners and/or social scientists (i.e., a specific practice such as teaching). Since representations always foreground certain elements and hide others, representing practice is a theoretical and political project. The idea that practices can be simply observed and neutrally chronicled is to subscribe to specific ideological projects (willingly or otherwise) and/or scant sophistication (Nicolini and Monteiro 2017, p.108)

The authors heavily defend interpretivist work in analysing practices – and I agree with asking 'which research is not [interpretive]?' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p.382). After all, dealing with data entails and can unlikely suppress personal bias (Madison, 2012). We construct narratives that rely on a subjectively constructed research design and these inter-subjective features influence the fieldwork and data representation. However, the point is that in committing to a practice-based paradigm, knowledge about the phenomena is not assumed to rely in the individual consumer but in practices and their constituent elements. The foregrounded humanistic notion of constructivism is transcended – this is where constructivist/interpretivist labelled research and practice-based belief systems diverge (Schatzki, 2012). It is a shift in the unit of analysis, as the practice-based approach does not follow a purely human individualistic ontology as constructivism presupposes. A practice-based commitment stands therefore side by side with other not-exclusively-human 'flat' approaches like ANT in '[avoiding] the slope of radical realism [leading] towards a singular…'out there' reality…[and] the slope of social constructivism, [leading] towards realities fully…determined by humans.' (Bajde, 2013, p.229).

Axiology

While the traditional interpretivist label of consumer research has implicitly aimed to understand consumption through human behaviour of consumers (believing that consumption depends exclusively on the consumer), practice-based consumption research aims to understand consumption through practices (believing that consumption depends on practices) while not neglecting interpretive work in the research process. The difference is committing to practices as units of analysis, not the consumer. Hence, practice-based research is after understanding consumption and thus frees CCT potentially from the restraining 'very first C of CCT (i.e., 'Consumer') [that] can in several ways close off discussion taking place in CCT research' (Bajde, 2012, p. 15).

2.3.1 Peddling is not a Practice: Defining the Unit of Analysis

After having outlined the basic assumptions of the practice ontology, it is now time to concretize how it is applied in this study. In other words, this section offers an in-depth definition of urban cycling as practice under study and how it will be framed as part of a practice bundle.

2.3.1.1 Action Hierarchies and Practice Bundles

Schatzki's (1996) definition of a practice is an

> 'organized nexus of actions…[these] doings and sayings [that] are linked through (1) practical understandings, (2) rules, (3) teleoaffective structure (ends purposes, beliefs and emotions) and (4) general understandings…together [they] link the doings and sayings of a practice [and] form its organization' (p.77).

He labels these organized practices as 'integrative practices' (Schatzki, 1996,

p.98), which differ from 'dispersed practices' as unorganized entity. A dispersed practice then is 'a set of doings and sayings linked primarily…by an understanding they express [and] need not to be informed by particular…[teleoaffective structures, such as] ends, purposes, beliefs and emotions' (Schatzki, 1996, p. 91-92). Peddling for example is such a dispersed practice, which occurs and is performed in various integrative cycling practices, such as race-cycling, BMX riding etc., which each are linked by a different set of rules, practical understanding and teleoaffective structures. It is an essential sub practice of cycling, however it exclusively expresses that someone knows how to peddle on a bike, which easily can be done in a spinning lesson without further knowledge of how to cycle on the road. In a later account, Schatzki (2012) explains the idea of basic activities, that sum up to hierarchical organized activities that again in their accumulation build practices that in their bundle constitute larger practices and so on (see figure 2). In his words:

> In almost all cases, people perform further actions in performing basic ones…in turn, these 'higher level' activities typically constitute even higher level ones…a practice embraces all the activities contained in such… hierarchies (p. 3).

Figure 2 - Action Hierarchies and Practice Bundles
Source: Author's visualization

Working, Travelling, Parenting, Shopping, etc. — Practice bundle (other practices for which we move in urban settings)

Urban cycling, driving a car, riding the bus, — Practice bundle (urban moving)

Urban cycling — Practice (single, embraces all activities making up the practice)

Peddling, storing, parking, giving hand signals, breaking, ringing the bell, knowing how to behave within traffic, going from A to B. — Basic activities: organized by practical understanding, rules, teleoaffective structures, general understandings, i.e.

44

This accumulation is open ended, as practice bundles grow indefinitely through the integration and omission of practices. In looking at practices this way, it becomes clear that single practices encompass a range of activities while at the same time intersect with other practices of daily life. Nicolini (2012) echoes Schatzki in this regard by arguing that 'one practice [is] a resource in the accomplishment of other practices…[and] part of a larger configuration' (p.228). Schatzki's (2012) concept of practices, thus, invites the researcher to examine not only a single practice but to capture relationships among 'bundles' of practices. As this PhD aims to understand the relationships and consequent politics of sustainable practices, Schatzki's (2012) approach offers a useful analytical tool to look at marginalised practices in order to understand their position in relation to other practices and the dynamics between them.

In outlining his framework, Schatzki (2012) moreover puts emphasis on the material arrangements that need to be considered for the existence of a practice:

> The activities that compose practices are inevitably, and often essentially bound up with material entities…just about every practice, moreover, deals with material entities (including human bodies) that people manipulate or react to. And most material arrangements that practices deal with would not exist in the absence of these practices. Because the relationship between practices and material entities is so intimate, I believe that the notion of a bundle of practices and material and material arrangements is fundamental to analysing human life (p. 17)

With his understanding of organized practices in mind, it is possible to differentiate certain practice categories such as cycling through the different encompassing activities and material arrangements that follow different

teleoaffective structures. Cycling itself cannot be reduced to peddling as we have seen, and neither can cycling as a term itself be enough to describe the different existing cycling practices in which different types of bicycle usage exist. In order to specify urban cycling, there is a need to delineate it from its 'sister' practices.

2.3.1.2   Concretizing the Role of Non-Human Entities within Practices

Although Schatzki underlines the importance of material arrangements, his conceptualization has been criticized for not including them explicitly as part of practices (Halkier et al. 2011). Reckwitz (2002), Shove et al. (2012) and Warde (2005) in contrast include material and non-human features amongst the list of the 'ingredients' –as Shove and Pantzar (2005, p.447) call the elements constituting a practice. The authors assume that elements have a 'life of their own' (p.44) and are thus integrated in the course of the performance. Shove et al. (2012) place materiality at the very centre of their study of practices. Their model takes a more pragmatic approach in categorizing the necessary elements of a practice, these include: material, competence and meaning. Material concerns 'things, technologies, tangible physical entities and the stuff of which objects are made' (Shove et al. 2012, p.14). Competence includes 'skill, know-how and technique' (Shove et al. 2012, p.14) while Meaning categorizes 'symbolic meanings, ideas and aspirations' (Shove et al. 2012, p.14). Following Shove et al. these three elements circulate strengthening relations between themselves and thus creating and sustaining a practice. Once their relations weaken a practice can disappear or mutate into a different practice forming different bundles with other practices (see figure 3).

Figure 3 - The Establishment of Practices

Source: adapted from Shove et al. (2012)
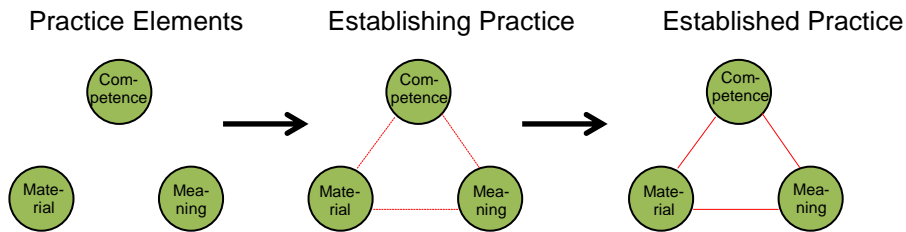
As materiality and embodied knowledge are both important aspects for the study of cycling as bodywork (Spinney, 2007), I have decided to melt Schatzki and Shove's frameworks together. Within this hybrid framework I grouped the necessary elements for the existence of urban cycling into the following scheme:

Material: I looked for bodies, vehicles and bicycles, facilities like storage opportunities (bike racks and buildings), access to private and public buildings like shopping malls etc. I looked at the infrastructure in the city; the place and space assigned to the different urban transportation practices. I looked for bike shops providing bikes, accessories and repair services.

Competence: I looked for skills and physical abilities of riding bicycles, practical understandings of urban moving, rules and norms in traffic. I looked for how bodies move, how bicycles are moved and parked in the street. If and how rules on paper are performed in traffic.

Meanings: in teasing out this category, I engaged with participants in observing their urban cycling routine and asking them about their teleoaffective structures. I also grouped under meanings general understandings of urban cycling and urban moving, which 'are expressed in the manner in which people carry out projects and tasks' (Schatzki, 2001,

p.86). However, these teleoaffectivities and general understandings were not always articulated, nor tangible. They were scattered and graspable throughout the other two categories, too. For example, when looking at the distribution of material entities, the purpose of cycling became obvious. Hence, by looking at materials and competences, meanings did permeate throughout the three categories presented. Therefore, it is in the relational character of practices that the three elements intersect and make sense only in their relationship. Schatzki refers to this reading between the lines in another personal communication explaining that general understandings can be understood as

> An ethos…maybe partly articulated but not fully…it is more diffuse…you still capture something in the air, which is orientating them in their lives…[like an] idealism, it's like the spirit in which something is happening…it is hard to put your finger on it sometime…it is a very general diffused idea that is permeating [people's] motivation and orientations. (Schatzki, personal communication, 02.09.2015)

This hybrid framework enabled me to study urban cycling in relation to other practices of urban moving. Moreover, the framework enabled me to understand the progress and struggles of urban cycling to ultimately understand and conceptualize the politics of (un-) sustainable practices better.

2.3.1.3   Urban Cycling- What is Urban?

> The first decision that must be made by a researcher who wishes to study [a] community – unless he has unlimited time and money to spend – is which '…community' he wishes to study' (Warren,1974. p.144)

In the same manner that communities need to be defined prior to the analysis, practices need explicit definition, too. As mentioned in the former

section, practices differ in their encompassing activities and embody therefore different entities. In this regard 'cycling' is not a specific practice but a term that points to bicycle usage without any articulated explanation of the entailed organizing features of a practice –as defined by Schatzki (1996) and Shove et al. (2012). During my PhD journey, quite often, academic colleagues did not distinguish between urban cycling, mountain biking, leisure cycling, race-cycling or artistic bicycle riding etc. The distinction between these practices however, might well contribute to a successful and serious re-launch of urban cycling as a transport mode in regard to policy because it reveals the many other higher level practices responsible for which we move (Shove et al., 2015).

To define urban cycling as an integrative practice becomes most obvious when reflecting on its constituent elements and features. Performing urban cycling, certain bodily and mental know-how are needed to handle the bicycle and one's own body within traffic in which practitioners –ideally- follow rules and norms, act and react to other traffic participants. It also implies purpose, i.e. to move from A to B in a defined time span mostly imposed by other practices such as working, shopping etc., that require parking the bicycle at the destination. These practices, in turn, have their own intersection with other practices and so on. The purpose of getting around quickly in performing such 'higher level' (Schatzki, 2012, p.3), practices requires most likely to carry stuff around, such as clothes for changing, documents, shopping bags etc. A characteristic of urban bicycles therefore is their utilities, which offer the ability to carry items in baskets or paniers. With stable frames, comfortable seats and grippy wheels safety is foregrounded, whereas speed

is less emphasised through gears with fewer levels.

Features of race cycling in contrast are entirely different. Instead of rolling along an inner city pace, race cycling is done on highways or interurban roads, where the co-existence with cars is of high risk. Competences of how to behave outside the city in this context are therefore different to those within the city in that changing lanes is not required as much as in city traffic as stop and go is not given. Thus, the interaction through hand signals with cars is less required and unsafe causing the lack of maintaining concentration and balance at high speed. The purpose of race cycling is speed in training and competitions –not transportation, which, in turn, requires different material equipment. Hence light weight bicycles with special gears and special clothes are at play, yet the overall quality –and prices- of the race bikes are high end. As the purpose of this practice is sportive, there is no need to park the bicycle unsupervised as in the case of urban cycling.

The same distinctions can be made for mountain biking. The competence of jumping, gliding and breaking down rocky, muddy, or dusty soil is not necessary during urban cycling. Consequently, the material necessary for mountain biking needs to support the activity of balancing and controlling steep paths. Hence, wide handlebars are requisite to perform the practice. Traffic rules do not apply in open nature, hence someone who passionately bikes mountains, is not necessarily able to ride within city traffic.

The examples above illustrate Schatzki's (2012) action hierarchies in that each of these cycling practices entail different basic activities organized through practical understanding, teleoaffective structures and norms.

Analysing the material element within the practices the examples show what Schatzki' (2012) calls the channelling of a practice by material arrangements as each practice is bound up with a specific bicycle and equipment necessary to perform the practice as well as they are with a specific space and time.

Of course, urban cycling implies cycling within urban space, in which we can also encounter parks, sea sides and BMX areas where strolling and sport take place within the city. Boundaries are therefore not fixed and can overlap. In fact, I conducted my urban research on a mountain bike –not without its consequences- because the bodily posture on a mountain bike is not favourable for neck, shoulders and spine, if stuff is carried around in a rucksack in the absence of baskets or paniers –something essentially important during urban use. Equally, who can imagine going down a steep mountain on a Dutch lady's bicycle? Or trying to keep up the pace alongside the highway with a bunch of race cyclists on a spike-tyred mountain bike (also not feasible in my personal experience). Nevertheless, even if mix-ups can occur, as my experience in the field and the following data supports, cycling practices and their entailing resources can be categorized in substantially different ways.

2.4 A practice-based reading of Practice Theory in consumer research

With Alan Warde's (2005) introduction of practice theory as potentially useful for consumer research, the topic has received intense but intermittent attention from consumer researchers. The discipline seemed intrigued by the dynamic webs in which activities 'are shaped and enabled by structures of

rules and meanings, [which are] at the same time, reproduced in the flow of human action' (Shove et al., 2012, p.3).

Consequently, a special issue of the Journal of Consumer Culture in 2011 (Halkier et al., 2011) included a compilation of consumer research that aimed to apply practice theory. This collection has since become a reference point for later practice studies in consumer research. A variety of topics has henceforward been addressed such as brands, lifestyle and taste (Arsel and Bean 2013, Maggauda 2011, Truninger, 2011, Schau et al., 2009, Southerton, 2013, Watson and Shove, 2008), but also sport (Shove and Pantzar, 2005) as well as the assimilation and place (Pristed Nielsen and Møller, 2014, Hui, 2012). Applications of practice theory have also entailed the examination of sustainable consumption and pro-environmental behaviour change (Hargreaves, 2011) regarding food (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014, Warde and Hetherington, 1994, Domaneshi, 2012, Crivits and Paredis, 2013, Halkier and Jensen, 2011) and energy (Strengers et al. 2014, Gram-Hanssen, 2008, 2011).

However, this body of practice-based consumer research entails rather eclectic and mixed angles on practices. Instead of building a common ground on which practice based consumer research could develop as an established research area, there is little integrated discourse about ontological bases, theoretical definitions and methodological procedures as every article raises different problems about how to deal with practices. My reading reveals four main issues that crystalize within the range of theoretical and methodological proposals aiming to apply Practice Theory. I argue that these issues stem from an overall lack of ontological commitment to take practices seriously as

the unit of analysis. These ontological-theoretical and ontological-methodological discrepancies are as follows.

2.4.1 Focus on single practices

First, consumer research has concentrated on single and established practices (however, Shove and Pantzar's 2005 study on Nordic Walking examines how Nordic walking emerges in the UK). I deduced this gap through a notable trend between publications claiming to use a practice-based approach until 2011 and publications from 2012 until now. Earlier publications focused on the investigation of practice-as-performance exploring the roles of single elements of a practice (Gram-Hanssen, 2008, 2011, Watson and Shove, 2008, Shove and Pantzar, 2005, Truninger, 2011, Hargreaves, 2011, Maggauda, 2011). These studies have sought to locate agency within single elements. For example, special attention has been given to materials and technology and how these impact on practices. This might be due to the inconsistencies within practice definitions as presented above (Schatzki, 1996, 2012, Reckwitz, 2002, Warde, 2005, Shove et al., 2012, Nicolini, 2012). Consequently, Maggauda (2011) in his study on digital music consumption conceptualizes materiality –the iPod- as practice-influencing and external force on practices. Hargreaves (2011) in his study on recycling in an office and Truninger (2011) in her study on cooking with a kitchen device in contrast, illustrate materials as an integral part of practices trying to relate elements together. Arsel and Bean (2013) in their study on house decor in turn argue that teleoaffectivities work as regimes that steer practices. Later studies have turned to explore the practice-as-entity, focusing on a practice' development over time. Southerton et al. (2012) for

example look at how reading declined within a century in different countries and Sahakian and Wilhite (2014) illustrate in their comparative study how changes in drinking, eating and cooling have occurred over time.

2.4.2 The legacy of the agentic consumer and methodological consequences

Second, within these tendencies, there are differences in the methodological implications identified. Studies have either given priority to consumer experiences (Maggauda, 2011) –and thus not followed through with exploring the different and material elements of practices– or have tried to explore big data in order to escape the micro-experiences of the consumer (Warde et al., 2007). Overall, the literature reveals little use of multiple sources for the examination of practices. For example, Crivits and Paredis (2013) in their study on alternative food systems, Gram-Hanssen (2011) in her study on energy consumption and heating (Gram-Hanssen, 2008), Maggauda (2011) and Halkier and Jensen (2011) in their study on food consumption draw their inferences exclusively from interviews. Schau et al. (2009) in their study on brand communities and Arsel and Bean (2013) rely on netnography, while Southerton et al. (2012) and Sahakian and Wilhite (2014) use case-study-comparative analysis to look at practices. Although there is some evidence of the use of photography (Pristen and Møller, 2014), and mixed methods (Bellotti and Mora, 2014), ethnography is less represented in practice research. Hargreaves (2011) in his study on recycling, Hui (2012) in her study on consumption-on-the-move, Truninger (2012) in her study on cooking with a machine and Domaneschi (2012) in his study of commercial cooking in Northern Italy seem to be the exception to explore different elements through

different sources. The use of single sources of data becomes critical, as it is contradictory to the assumption of a flat ontology according to Nicolini (2017) and Schatzki (2016). Gram-Hanssen (2011) for example proposes in her paper on heating practices the application of Practice Theory through the analysis of the entailing 'elements that hold a practice together' (p. 14). In her case she defines know-how and embodied habits, rules, engagement and technology as interconnecting elements. Although she claims to integrate historical analysis of energy consumption in Denmark and quantitative methods besides her interviews, inferences about the elements are drawn predominantly from interview quotes and the participants' opinions. In her paper (2008) she postulates:

,…practices in this study are explored through individuals with each their own story of why they do as they do, and these stories show how individuals have different meanings, knowledge and understandings…', (p.14)

Her account is based on the interpretation of Reckwitz (2002) emphasizing the 'carrier' of a practice' (p.249), centre staging the consumer. Schau et al. (2009) for example argue that 'people must develop shared understandings and demonstrate competencies [in order to engage in practices]' (p.31). The authors underplay that understandings and competences are attached to the practices themselves that recruit and teach practitioners. Hence acquiring knowledge is not something that happens outside of a practice but happens as part of it. This is shown by Truninger (2011), who demonstrates with her ethnographic work, how the Thermomix cooking machine trains practitioners and is thus crucial in the moment of recruitment to cooking. She echoes Shove et al. (2012) that practices are an 'ongoing reproduction…where

competence is developed through performances' (p.38). Although Truninger's (2011) work is an excellent piece dealing with the relatedness of elements, she does not infer about the cooking practice but points to individual consumer experiences as potentially 'put[ting] them off pursuing a career of practice, [while] others are positive and serve to increase confidence in the handling of technologies.' (p. 51). But if individual consumers and experiences are the ones to be understood, why bother with Practice Theories? If the existence of practice elements is key to 'de-centring the human actor' (Shove et al. 2012, p.22) then it seems inconsistent to perceive the consumer as the intersection of these elements. To understand why people do things, there is no need to frame the problem as practice-based because the unit of analysis is still the consumer and thus the research takes place under the same individualist ontological assumption, that is, the individual consumer as the responsible source of knowledge. It is the research question that expresses the commitment to a practice-based ontology, serving as starting point for the subsequent methodological implications.

Such explicit articulation of research questions problematizing practices instead of individuals who are absent in the literature. Unsurprisingly studies struggle with interview questions that produce knowledge about practices. Halkier and Jensen (2011) made an attempt to offer methodological solutions in their study about food consumption. The authors are eager to examine 'the mundane performative and relational character of practices and their consumption activities'(p.106). As such the authors verbalise their aim to

demonstrate how consumer research can empirically analyse consumption as part of practices, providing 'analytical generalisations that are not based on methodological individualism…[without] relying on analysing the individual consumer choices' (p.106-118). However, the empirical grounding from which the authors draw their theoretical inferences are interviews that concentrate on the material aspect of food and its symbolic meanings. Halkier and Jensen (2011) ask questions that pay little attention to the real-time accomplishments of the practice. Instead of focusing on the procedure – 'how' the food was prepared– questions concentrated on:

> 'Which food did you make last time for dinner?…how did you experience it?…are there different types of food for different types of guests?…how would you describe healthy food?' (p. 110).

Participants are asked to 'take pictures of everything they ate and drank' (p. 108). This photo-diary is then discussed with the interviewer. While a visual recording of the practice seems to be very helpful, the authors captured in their study merely individual accounts about past-moments of food consumption, but not the performing and accomplishment of the cooking practice itself –in situ- so to speak.

2.4.3   The absence of relationships between practices

Third, studies have paid little attention to the intersections and relationships between practices. As the practice-as-performance-approach has been critiqued as poorly accounting for how practices change as entity (Warde, 2014), Southerton et al. (2012) propose to investigate the changing trajectory of 'reading' through a quantitative study based on time diaries. The authors claim the adherence of the ontological assumption of practice theories in that they focus on what consumers do rather than on what they 'self-reportedly'

(p.244) believe about themselves. In representing this method as quantitative 'micro-detail' (p.257) while at the same time abstracting and avoiding subjective experiences meanings and opinions, the authors try to bridge the performance-entity challenge. However, the authors neither explain exactly what kind of information is entailed in these time diaries, nor how the information has been collected. Time diaries moreover do merely show the amount of time spent on reading but do not reveal details about what reading entails. Hence, although the authors show that quantitative methods can be useful in showing how a practices changes over time on a curve, it provides merely numbers and thus broad statements about when people read more or less. Questions regarding how such change happens, are unanswered. The authors admit for example, that questions about how practices relate and impact upon each other have been avoided and thus postulate that 'the challenge is to develop empirical techniques to show how multiple practices diversify, interact, undermine or support each other.' (p.258).

Sahakian and Wilhite (2014) make an attempt to deal with this question as they ex-post analyse and compare case studies of food policy. The authors probe a practical lens on these case studies to tease out elements that the policy potentially might have changed. Discussing the difficulty in identifying practices and their relationships, the authors emphasize that the rebound effect' in consumption as useful to detect connections. This effect is described as the negative outcome of a decrease in one area of consumption results in an increasing consumption within another area. For change in practices hence, it is crucial not only to focus on the targeted practice but to detect its relationship to other practices. Although the authors argue that the

underlying power between practices is important to understand and generate change, the authors do not elaborate further how this power might be explored. Hence once again the power of practices remains understudied as outlook for future research.

2.4.4 Problematic practice-vocabulary and its repercussions

Fourthly, it is unclear how consumption is defined under a practice lens. Although Warde (2005) has explicitly defined consumption as outcome of practices, scholars define –or miss to define– the relationship between practice and consumption differently. In fact, a lot of studies use the vocabulary of consumption and practices interchangeably. Maggauda (2011) for example defines digital music consumption through iPod as a practice, instead of as a part of socializing within a group of young pupils. Arsel and Bean (2013) use the term practices, consumption and teleoaffectivities interchangeably without specifying nor defining the practice they claim to examine. Their account seems to be contradictory for two reasons. Firstly, they define domestic consumption as practice. But domestic consumption hardly entails 'changing a light bulb' (p.900) practice as the authors claim but rather the integrative practice of living entails a variety of practices that encompass activities of changing light bulbs, in which the domestic consumption of a light bulb and energy takes place. Secondly, their inconstancy in defining taste is very confusing. Under a practice ontology, taste is a phenomenon that comes with the practice (Schatzki, 1987, 1996, 2002). But the authors conflate taste as a teleo-affective structure implying that taste as an 'ends, orders, uses and emotions' (Arsel and Bean, 2013, p. 901) governs practices. However, the authors then deviate from this

definition oscillating between 'viewing taste as a practice' (p.902), which would be questionable because teleo-affective structures according to Schatzki (1996) are one element of practices but are not a practice in itself. This contradictory vocabulary of consumption-as-a-practice underlies the majority of the recent literature (Pristed Nielsen and Møller, 2014, Bellotti and Mora, 2014, Crivits and Paredis, 2013).

The commitment to the practice approach 'suggest[s] that matters such as social order, knowledge, institutions, identity, power, inequalities or change result from and transpire through practices and their aggregations' (Nicolini and Monteiro 2017, p. 102). Nevertheless, there seems to be less consent about the categorization of consumption as practice of consuming or as phenomenon that has to be analysed and understood *through* practices (see Shove, 2015, Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017, Schatzki 2016, Warde 2014, Shove et al., 2012). Following Nicolini's quote, (un-) sustainable consumption could be classifiable as such a 'matter' that transpires through practices, echoing what sociologists (Shove, 2010a, Shove and Spurling, 2013, Warde, 2013) already claim. Especially when it comes to the three main pillars of unsustainable consumption (Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014) transport, food and energy, these consumption types are rarely consumed for consuming's sake but rather consumed in the process of cooking, heating and travelling/moving (Evans, 2011, Warde, 2005). To put it differently, consuming energy does not entail competences, materials and meanings. Energy is rather consumed in the course of cooking a meal, washing clothes or any domestic practice for that matter that do require skills and material entities.

CCT scholars have argued 'that it is imperative to regard consumption as practice' Askegaard and Linnet (2011, p. 388). But as seen from the former discussion, this is a convenient argument for the traditional individualist approach. In taking consumption as a practice the researcher escapes the commitment to taking the practice as unit of analysis, which allows the centre staging of the consumer. As discussed earlier, the 'aura of getting close to the consumer' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011, p. 384), is not precisely articulated, though it lingers on and throughout research design, data collection and analysis of the practice-based work done in CCT. This is not to neglect the benefits of individualistic accounts; after all, consumer research has conducted in-depth research to understand the *consumer* better. This study however, takes on a practice ontology that reframes consumption not as a practice itself but as an outcome of such. As Warde (2005) puts it

> [To] understand consumption as a process [of] appropriation and appreciation, whether for utilitarian, expressive or contemplative purposes, of goods, services, performances, information or ambience, whether purchased or not…in this view consumption is not itself a practice but is, rather, a moment in almost every practice (p. 135)

Warde's definition of consumption from a practice perspective is in line with Schatzki's philosophical definition of phenomena under practices:

> 'Important features of human life must be understood as forms of or rooted in…practices…some of the features in question are social phenomena such as science, power, organizations and social change…other features of human life [such as] psychological -or quasi- psychological- matters such as reason, identity … are features of practices…most if not all of a person's mental states and actions presuppose the practices in which the person participates' (Schatzki, 2012, p. 1)

While these definitions have paved the way in consumer research to look at consumption from a different angle, it is important to mention, that there is no ultimate consent between practice scholars about how to handle consumption (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017, Reckwitz, 2002). As discussed earlier, a practice according to Schatzki (1996, 2001) entails specific features that educate the consumer. Hence competences, skills, materials and meanings are properties of the practice. This argument is hard to sustain to define consuming as a practice. In making these lines of enquiry I argue that it is important to define the practice and the resulting phenomenon for each study and to argue for or against a view of consumption as practice or moment. In my case I have followed the sociological view of consumption as moment in practice. In doing so, I understand (un-) sustainable consumption as phenomenon that 'happens' through practices in which human and non-human entities take part.

2.5 A Practice-Based Reading of the Cycling Literature

With all the practice-based attention that has been given to food and energy consumption in the search of finding more sustainable ways of producing and eating (Beverland, 2014, Molander, 2011, Sahakian and Wilhite, 2014, Warde, 2013), it is surprising how little attention has been given to urban cycling as sustainable way of moving. Perhaps since 'the trajectories and escape routes of the bike do not follow the flows of commodities, money, and capital' (Larsen 2010, p. 32) few studies have considered it as a pressuring sustainable issue. Certainly, little qualitative consumer research focuses on gaining a better understanding of why people do not cycle (Dalpian et al., 2014, Spotswood et al., 2015).

Accounts that do consider urban cycling, come from other disciplines (Heinen et al., 2010, Spinney, 2006, 2007, 2009, Watson 2013). Urban planning and urban engineering for example have increasing interest in the promotion of alternative urban transport modes in regard to environmental protection and health care programmes (Rojas-Rueda et al., 2011, De Hartog et al., 2010, Pucher and Dijkstra, 2003). Hence research about cycling has focused strongly on the investigation of the so-called 'barriers to cycling', in order to identify the factors influencing transportation-mode choice in urban environments (Horton et al., 2007). The term 'urban transport', within these studies, is understood as commuting to work and handling every-day business by bike. Cycling research [5] has addressed the topic mainly quantitatively, in order to satisfy the demand for transferable cycling polices that could be 'exported' to other countries, where cycling is not yet a common practice (Martens, 2004, Pucher and Dijkstra, 2000). Pucher and Buehler (2011) go as far as to say as there are 'lessons to learn' (p.497) from other countries where cycling is already established as urban transport, in order to make 'cycling irresistible' (p. 497). Hence, there is a dominant belief that external factors such as infrastructure and cycling facilities such as flat surfaces, well connected and segregated biking paths would be some of the 'key component' (Larsen and El-Geneidy, 2011, p. 172) to promote and increase cycling (Kritzek and Roland, 2005, Telfer et al. 2006). However, internal factors, individual attitudes like environmental ignorance and perceptions such as fear, safety, experience, distance and comfort could

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[5] The selected reading of this thesis does not consider literature on physical access to mobility and social exclusion (Cass et al., 2005, Kaufmann et al., 2004, Lucas, 2012). This project presupposes a level of physical ability, which not everybody possesses and acknowledges that the competence to cycle or the 'capacity to move [might be] impaired' (Cass et al. 2005, p.549) by limited physical or mental ability. The danger of conflating competence and ability will shortly be addressed in 6.1.1.

equally impact negatively on transport mode choice. As a result, studies have claimed that internal and external factors should both be taken into account; as they are said to have reciprocal impact upon each other and hence on the decision of people to cycle (Martens, 2004, Pucher and Dijkstra, 2000, Horton et al., 2007, Pucher and Buehler, 2008, Heinen et al., 2011, Nilsson and Küller, 2000, Susilo et al. 2012). Larsen and El-Geneidy (2011) for example, found out that increased cycling experience can lead to higher perceived safety and increased on-street driving within car traffic, while less experience leads to preferred driving on segregated biking paths. Further Li et al. (2012) show that available space for cycling and appropriate segregation of biking paths from traffic increase perceived comfort and safety and lead to lower perceived fear.

Capturing peoples' transport choices mainly through rational categories, thereby excluding broader cultural settings that could influence cycling, the quantitative field is critiqued for their 'preconceived' (Spinney, 2009, p.818) idea about what cycling 'should be' (p.818). Qualitative cycling scholars begun to question the 'static, undifferentiated account of people's understandings and experiences' (Skinner and Rosen, 2007, p.84) of quantitative research. Spotswood and Tap (2011) for example argue that the promotion of cycling has to go beyond common cognitive appeals and establish that perceived barriers to cycling are too narrow to understand the use –and lack of bicycle use (Skinner and Rosen, 2007). Parkin et al. (2007) further argue that cycling research should '…encompass some of the wider, more cultural, issues that may affect the choice for the bicycle' (p.80). Echoing this notion, other scholars suggest rejecting ready-made policies

based on quantitative data (Bye, 2003, Brookes et al., 2010). Lavack et al., (2007) for example defend the qualitative understanding of the local cultural values and beliefs of the targeted community about cycling to effectively persuade consumers into behavioural change. The reflection of cultural insights is supposed to increase acceptability of policy programmes, as it is more likely to be perceived as authentic and credible (Bye, 2003) and as such enable voluntary behavioural change (Horton et al., 2007). As Horton et al. (2007) suggest, 'attempts to promote cycling could be much more effective if they incorporated greater understanding of cycling's complexity and diversity, even within a single society' (p.7). Within the move towards more phenomenological approaches to cycling (Furness, 2007), qualitative research on cycling paid increased attention to subjective consumer experience in their attempt to theorize barriers to cycling. Daley and Rissel (2011) for example found that public images of cycling can act as barriers to cycling, which echoes Skinner and Rosen's (2007) argument that identity of the self and others is important to the understanding of the barriers of cycling. However, while relying exclusively on interviews, real actions on the streets, the materiality and the cultural settings in which cycling takes place have largely been neglected. As a result, Skinner and Rosen (2007) call further for approaches going beyond the individual:

> 'Such an analysis should move the focus from the circumstances and choices of an archetypal individual towards an understanding of the varied conditions in which differently-placed people negotiate transport problems and choices. It should recognise that transport behaviours are part of broader constellations of attitudes and practices' (p. 85)

Although practices appear in the vocabulary of cycling research, it concentrates further on the inclusion of space. Especially the discipline of

Human Geography advances an understanding of cycling by acknowledging that moving between and dwelling within places becomes meaningful (Urry, 2007). The inclusion of place and space for a cultural understanding of urban cycling is relevant as places reflect, determine and reshape ways of moving (Urry, 2004, 2007). Depending where we are, our understanding of moving changes (Levine 1997). Whether quickly, slowly, by car, bike or afoot, to understand the cultural influences on how people move, we must understand that places embody the known world of those who reside within and build the centre and context in which transport modes are consumed.

Time and space as a structuring feature in structuring mobility is reflected in Schatzki's (1996) definition of a practice as 'temporally and spatially dispersed nexus of doings and sayings' (p. 89). With bodywork being a central aspect of cycling (Spinney, 2011), his definition of practices resembles the mobility aspect of cycling within the dynamic traffic world, which is full of the 'complex [and] emergent' (Urry, 2004, p.3), 'fleeting moments' (Spinney, 2011, p.161). Practice-based research is thus appropriate in integrating both the cultural and material and infrastructural elements to understand cycling. As a vital part of the practice's existence, infrastructure is not treated as 'simply the backdrop or context to where the real action is' (Latham and Wood, 2015, p.303) but appreciates that the action is as much made because of the infrastructure and material arrangements as it happens within them (Schatzki, 2010). Moreover, I see that practice-based research emphasizes situated 'bodywork' (Aldred, 2010, p.46) as central to urban cycling and integral to the normative, material and semiotic aspects of practices.

The notion that 'social relations are spatially organized' (Urry 2007, p.34) becomes crucial in that space and place contain collective memories and determined forms of moving through which a community expresses possible dominant behaviours. Establishing a different way of moving versus the way a community has practiced over the years, can potentially evoke resistance (Sommer, 1969, Urry, 2007). Urban cycling as a statistically underperformed practice is thus likely perceived as 'a new old thing' (Vivanco, 2013). Despite car driving being the 'predominant form of mobility…[subordinating] the other mobility-systems of walking, cycling…' (Urry, 2007, p.85), power imbalances between mobility practices have not been examined. While abundant literature exists that analyses the dominance of automobility (Featherstone et al., 2005, Featherstone, 2004, Furness, 2010, Böhm et al., 2006, Merriman, 2007, Conley and Maclaran, 2009, Mees, 2010) only few studies juxtapose urban cycling and car driving by explicitly questioning the taken for granted marginalised position of the former within the domination of the latter (Fincham, 2006, Latham and Wood, 2015). Studies on urban cycling have indicated the unequal allocation of resources among transportation practices, but have not further conceptualized the mechanics through which such allocation happens and how urban cycling is held in its marginalised position.

2.6   Summary

This Chapter has introduced Practice Theory as ontology and problematized the use of Practice Theory in contemporary consumer research. In doing so this chapter has crystallized three central gaps of knowledge: firstly, the lack of commitment to another unit of analysis than the consumer. Secondly, the lack of attention paid to the relationships between single elements of a practice, thirdly the lack of research on the relationships between practices as bundle, which is highly relevant for urban cycling and the lack of practice-based research into its marginalization. The chapter outlined a practice based reading of the cycling literature in- and outside of consumer research.

This chapter proposed a meticulous outline of how a practice ontology is being used with a clear definition of the practice of 'urban' cycling to emphasise transport as its main motivation. As a practice ontology requires a shift in the unit of analysis, this chapter has related the practice discussion to the genealogy of CCT to emphasise its dependency on the consumer subject. Since the consumer subject potentially conveys neo-liberal notions of consumption and may thus have restraining effect on sustainable consumption, the next chapter will relate the practice ontology with matters of sustainability.

3 Literature Review: Sustainability in- and outside of Marketing

This chapter provides a review of recent research on sustainability in particular on sustainable consumption in the discipline of Macromarketing and Sociology. The chapter starts by exploring the definition and genealogy of sustainability within the marketing discipline. It then moves on to present relevant literature outlining two key literature gaps. Firstly, within the Macromarketing discipline, practice-based approaches have not received attention within the sustainability debate although there is a strong call for alternative thinking about consumption and society at large. Secondly, although sociological studies have presented practice-based approaches as a challenge and alternative to the neo-liberal dominant mode of thinking about consumption, little research has explored the political relationships between practices that might impact on consumption.

3.1 Sustainability within Marketing

While sustainability as a research topic has not received much attention from CCT scholars, it is firmly embedded within the Macromarketing discipline. With three special issues (Kilbourne, 2010, McDonagh and Prothero, 2014, Prothero and McDonagh, 2015) and numerous articles outside of these compilations (De Burgh-Woodmann and King, 2013, Connolly and Prothero, 2010, Prothero et al., 2011), sustainability counts with almost 40 years of (Macro-)marketing thought (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014). However, until the discipline reconciled environmentally aware consumption studies under the umbrella-term sustainability (Kilbourne, 2010, McDonagh et al., 2012), the

field pictured a bouquet of related topics such as the 'theory of responsible consumption' (Fisk, 1973), 'sustainable consumption' (Kilbourne et al., 1997, Dolan, 2002, Holt, 2012), 'green marketing' (Prothero, 1997, McEachern and Carrigan) and the 'green commodity discourse' (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000, Prothero et al., 2010). Being labelled as 'fad' (Prothero, 1998, p. 507), all of these research interests have struggled to establish themselves as an important area within marketing. However, latest accounts have labelled sustainability as 'megatrend' (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014a; Prothero and Mc Donagh, 2014b) in and outside of academia. Being characterised as a 'seismic' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p.2) movement, that is to say uncontrollable and unorganised in nature spreading across space and time, sustainability has been emphasised as bringing 'large social, economic, political, and technological changes' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p.2).

Because 'sustainability is tied directly to the economic, political and technological institutions that underlie markets' (Kilbourne, 2008, p.189), sustainability has been presented as a matter of concern for macromarketeers. In fact, since the Macromarketing approach entails the three dimensions in question -economic, political and technological-, it has been collectively argued that only Macromarketing can address sustainability effectively (Kilbourne et al. 1997). Nevertheless, sustainability has made its way as urgent topic into Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), a research community that works closely with Macromarketing scholars (Mick et al., 2012).

Although sustainability as a term is still not clearly defined (Kilbourne, 2010, Schaefer and Crane, 2005, McDonagh et al., 2012), the overall consensus of TCR and Macromarketing studies grappling with it is that consumption goes hand in hand with production (Cohen, 2010) and ways of human over-consumption have led to the destruction of important natural resources, with the call for a change of such consumption and production patterns (Sanne, 2002). Most studies use and follow definitions published in governmental conference or policy programmes. For example, the UK Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs states:

> *'SCP [sustainable consumption and production is] continuous economic and social progress that respects the limits of the Earth's ecosystems, and meets the needs and aspirations of everyone for a better quality of life, now and for future generations to come' (Defra, 2003, p.10)*

While there is consent about the need to achieve the latter part of the quote, dispute governs both research communities as to whether or not economic and social progress are aspirations to maintain.

3.1.1 Sustainability through Marketing? Thinking inside the box

Following from the former sections, there is consent about the importance of sustainable change in society. However, there is much less consent over how to achieve such change. In fact, Mittelstaedt et al. (2014) observe that the literature of Macromarketing diverges into two schools that differ substantially in their view about sustainability as megatrend. The authors outline a 'developmental school' (p.254), which comprehends sustainability as uncritical megatrend for marketing and 'business as usual' (Kilbourne, 2010, p.119). Sustainability, according to the developmental school, is integrable into the dominant social paradigm (DSP) (Prothero et al., 2010,

Burroughs, 2010). The DSP has been categorized as the neo-liberal world-view in which capitalist structures are legitimized and justified defining the economic parameters of a society's success (Kilbourne et al., 1997). Hence, marketing is seen as a useful tool to 'greening capitalism' (Prothero and Fitchett, 2000) in that it commodifies the environment just like any other product. Kilbourne, (2008) somewhat sarcastically remarks 'ultimately in a capitalist-oriented society (or world), all issues eventually become business issues' (p.189). As such sustainability is not understood as threat to the economic, political and technological sphere but merely a new slogan that needs to be marketed through a shift in symbolic meanings 'forcing individuals to reassess their own needs' (Gorge et al., 2015, p.12).

Accordingly, studies within the developmental school have made managerial attempts to move from a market orientation to a 'sustainable market orientation' (Mitchell et al., 2010). In such marketeers can detect maximum benefits of sustainable business for stakeholders (Burkink and Marquardt 2009), higher efficiency and effectiveness of marketing activities (Meng, 2015), consumers' pro- environmental attitudes and buying behaviour (Polonsky et al., 2014, Polonsky et al., 2012, Rettie et al., 2012, Thogersen et al., 2012, Jägel et al. 2012) and 'construct sustainable consumption' (Holt, 2012, p.237) through individual's perceptions and values under the market construction paradigm. In doing so, these studies point to the 'sociocultural needs' (Schaefer and Crane, 2005, p.88), which have to be considered and fulfilled by consumption, bringing in the hedonistic cultural aspects so highly appreciated in the neighbouring discipline of CCT. These studies do not critique the marketplace itself but claim that (un-) sustainable 'taken-for-

granted perceptions [or] ideological lock-in' (Holt, 2012) is reproduced, to be understood and resolved through market dynamics in creating demand for environmentally friendly goods. In emphasising markets, perceptions and consumers, the developmental school gets closer to the consumer to serve the marketing business. Consequently, studies do not worry about sustainability possibly changing the capitalist-market-box. On the contrary, these studies rather try to fit sustainability into the box. Swyngedouw (2010), puts it eloquently 'we have to change radically, but within the contours of the existing state of the situation… so that nothing really has to change' (p.219).

3.1.2   Sustainability after Marketing? Thinking about the box

In contrast to the above, the 'critical school' (Mittelsteadt et al., 2014, p.254) understands sustainability as a 'challenge to the dominant social paradigm' (Kilbourne et al., 1997, p.4). Questioning the capitalist structure and the individualist ontology underlying it, the critical school questions the usefulness of the marketing discipline as such (Kilbourne, 2008, Cohen, 2010, Schwarzkopf, 2010, Kilbourne, 2010, Varey 2010b, Varey 2012, Varey 2013, Dolan, 2002, Assadourian, 2010). Kilbourne et al. (1997) for example argue:

> *'If the environmental crisis were only a product of specific individual behaviours, then remediation would require only a transformation of those behaviours, through market incentives, legal action, or technological fixes. This however, does not seem to be the case…the immersion of marketing academics in the DSP makes it unlikely they can react to the environmental crisis' (p.7)*

This quote sums up the general attitude of the critical school. Spelling out the end of key assumptions underlying marketing and consumer research, Varey (2013) argues that 'change in marketing is overdue' (p.355). Unlike their

fellow research community CCT, the critical school is blunt in pointing out that marketing is the 'handmaiden of economic liberalism' (Kilbourne et al., 1997). This stream of thought thus emphasises the inability of the capitalist system to initiate sustainable consumption and the 'failure of marketing to support sustainable policy' (Varey, 2010a, p.121), considering that policy incentives targeting individuals as per the developmental school have not shown success in changing consumption patterns. As sustainability is expected to change the dominant social paradigm, the critical school expects sustainability to consequently change the marketing logic (Varey, 2012).

Following these grand claims, the critical school calls for 'transformative ideas and action…for more widespread civic unreasonableness' (Varey 2010a, p.121) in thinking differently about sustainable consumption (Kilbourne, 2010) and the nature and future of marketing within a sustainable megatrend. While this call has generated several manifestos for a new marketing era (Dolan, 2002, Schaefer and Crane, 2005, Kilbourne, 2008, Kilbourne, 2010, Varey, 2010a, Varey, 2012, Varey 2013), few studies exist that apply new ways of thinking. For instance, Kilbourne at al. (1997) have explicitly called for 'a new paradigm in order for truly sustainable consumption to become reality' (p.7). However, studies of the critical school show little innovative advances in approaching consumption nor conducting empirical research under alternative ontological, epistemological or axiological assumptions that would drive a paradigm shift as discussed in chapter two. In fact, the basic understanding of consumption is just as human centred as that in the reviewed micromarketing accounts, oscillating between

either 'organic changes within the individual' or 'systemic [changes] in the transformation of social institutions' (Kilbourne, 2010, p. 110).

For instance, studies that critique the dominant social paradigm still concentrate on perceptions (Simpson and Radford, 2012, Rettie et al., 2012) attitude-behaviour inconsistencies (McDonald et al., 2012, Smith et al., 2012, Ekstroem and Salomonson, 2014) symbolic meanings and values as drivers of consumption (Guillard et al., 2014, Ourahmoune et al. 2014). They also examine the search for institutional responsibility and individual agency in sustainable consumption (Humphreys, 2014, Patsiaouras et al. 2014) as well as the collective resistance to or anti-consumption of communities (Cherrier et al., 2011, Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012, Assadourian, 2010, Landrum et al., 2016, Papaoikonomou and Alarcon, 2015, Dalpian et al., 2014, Visconti et al., 2014). Consequently, studies have not followed Kilbourne, et al.'s (1997) 'holistic and interdisciplinary' (p.19) vision of a Macromarketing analysis for sustainable consumption 'which effectively eliminates traditional methods' (p.19). A few studies are inspired by concepts from other disciplines (Beverland, 2014, Humphreys, 2014, Scott et al., 2014) but they have not fully embraced the burgeoning 'flat' ontological tendency in consumption studies. Beverland (2014) in his study on mainstreaming plant based diets for example, does not commit to a practice ontology although drawing from Shove et al.'s (2012) practice concept. This is especially obvious when he outlines a 'structure-agency' tension in describing various units of analysis that do not relate to each other but are external to practices and the consumer, which he delineates as separate entities. For instance, he claims that identity motives 'act as barriers to behaviour change' (p.374) structuring

practices –not the other way round (Schatzki, 2002). Dalpian et al. (2014) in their study about the cycling critical mass highlight in the same spirit the importance of symbolic meanings and the 'hedonic side of sustainable consumption' (p. 1) as crucial for behaviour change. Both authors refer to 'consumption practices' in different contexts without specifying what practice they allude to nor its ontological assumptions.

CCT research has received a similar set of critique in its use of practice theory. Since such critiques apply equally to Macromarketing work on sustainability, it is surprising how little exchange exists between both fields and beyond. Despite the strong argument that the marketing discipline lacks expertise in research on sustainability while other disciplines have made substantial advances (Dolan, 2002), the call for 'multidisciplinary research in the area of sustainability' (Kilbourne, 2010, p.110) has found few followers. In fact, Macromarketing scholars reflect and describe ideas of practice theories in their call for innovative advances. However, there are no references to any practice scholar. Consider Dolan's (2002) critique of the sustainable consumption context for example:

> *'Rather than simply focusing on sustainable consumption, we need to be aware of the (re) production of culture as well as commodities, and as everyday life becomes more aestheticized, the everyday commodity becomes more a cultural and symbolic artefact…achieving sustainable consumption in the historical flow and flux of social and cultural processes' (p.180)*

Dolan's quote, albeit may not be directly spelling out the term practices, but Dolan describes the essence of the understanding of consumption from a practice perspective. It is troublesome that he does not make a reference to any of the practice pioneers in his text, especially considering that

Macromarketing is after all an analysis of relational character that includes the contextual aspects of consumption –exactly like CCT (see chapter 1). As argued in chapter 1, a practice ontology as flat approach promises to relate economic, political and technological aspects. It might potentially be beneficial for Macromarketing to engage with research that has applied practice approaches to sustainable consumption (Strengers and Maller, 2015, Shove and Spurling, 2013) that maybe contribute to Kilbourne's (1997) call:

> 'change in the ideology of consumption-a shift from hyper consumption to sustainable consumption…increased concern for the environment is not required…what is needed is increased awareness of the relationship between technological, political, and economic institutions and environmental deterioration' (p.16-17)

3.1.3   Sustainability through Transformative Consumer Research and Anti-Consumption?

Since Macromarketeers have argued that 'transformative change is needed to combat and repair the [planet's] degradation' (Varey, 2010a, p.123), Transformative Consumer Research (TCR) promises to bring more 'rigorous and applied' approaches to sustainability. In the 2012 compilation of TCR studies, Mick et al. (2012) positions TCR as an activist avant-garde platform for new paradigms and case related action research. TCR positions therefore as community who transforms scientific insights into effective hands-on implications for policy, governmental and non-governmental institutions to improve consumer well-being.

TCR studies have consequently looked at pressing topics such as health, economics, technology, materialism and risk related consumer behaviour

(Mick et al., 2012). In particular, TCR studies have shown interest in addressing obesity and nutrition (Grier and Moore, 2012, Grunert et al., 2012), safe sex (Fishbein and Middlestadt, 2012) compulsive and addictive consumer behaviour such as alcohol consumption (Pechmann, et al., 2012), shopping (Faber and Vohs, 2012), watching pornography (Albright, 2012) and gambling (Cotte and LaTour, 2012). Further studies have focused attention on helping developing economies (Shultz and Shapiro, 2012), subsistence marketplaces (Viswanathan, 2012, Rosa et al., 2012, Williams and Henderson, 2012) and how the quality of life can be enhanced through digital and social media (Hoffman, 2012, Kozinets et al., 2012, Novak, 2012).

Scholars are concerned with how TCR as a field can make a difference in paradigmatic (Mick et al., 2012, Tadajewski et al., 2014), theoretical (Andreasen et al., 2012), methodological (Ozanne and Fischer, 2012), and practical spheres (Wansink, 2012). In this spirit, TCR's contributions have been positioned within five theoretical perspectives, namely consumer sovereignty, nonmaleficience, stakeholder theory, social justice and quality of life (Mick et al., 2012). Sustainability as a research topic integrates three of these theoretical perspectives –quality of life, consumer sovereignty and social inequality. Considering that 'the enhancement of human development' (Andreasen et al., 2012, p.47) depends on natural resources and thus on a healthy planet –i.e. on sustainable consumption, questions about the access to such sustainable consumption for everyone if treated like a commodity go hand in hand.

However, a reading of TCR literature from a practice perspective suggests that TCR falls into the same pitfalls as other marketing sub-disciplines. In

fact, the overall tenet of TCR literature expresses concerns that sustainable consumption is unable to satisfy hedonic aspects of consumption, which is believed to be necessary, in order to convince consumers to change behaviour (McDonagh et al, 2012, Grunert et al., 2012, Loewenstein et al., 2012, Soman et al., 2012, Litt et al., 2012, Epp and Price, 2012). Unsustainable and unhealthy consumption are represented as deliberate consumer choices over healthy and sustainable forms of consuming. Andreasen et al. (2012) for example find that the reduction of quality of life is driven by compulsive consumption due to distress and sociopathic personalities. McDonagh et al. (2012) join this canon by claiming that

> *'some obese people know they are obese and know there are health risks as a consequence of their condition, but they chose to continue eating at an individual unsustainable level…we must first stand back and recognize that there are individuals who do not want their lives and consumption activities transformed. From a sustainability perspective, how do we address this key problem?'* (p.273)

The question posed is indeed troublesome, however it is troublesome due to the underlying supposition it expresses. The disposition towards consumption as a result of individual behaviour forecloses any alternative view on eating (as a practice) that might provide alternative, non-human-non-individualist understandings of why obesity is on the rise within society (Bettany and Kerrane forthcoming). It is further very suspicious to argue that obese people *want* to be obese without citing to any empirical evidence. If there was something like an independent choice between being health-risking obese or not being obese, I highly doubt the former would be the case. Nevertheless, the quote itself justifies why an alternative ontology within TCR scholarship is necessary to approach such key problems because obviously the taken-for

granted individualist sustainability perspective within marketing offers little solutions to change society.

Descriptions of consumption as 'influenced by values and belief systems of individual consumers' (McDonagh et al., 2012, p.269) lead consumer research to the hypothesis that sustainability might be achieved through anti-consumption. That is, consumer should at least be able to resist consumption if the 'sustainable consumer does not exist' (Black, 2010, p. 406). Anti-consumption as a discipline has consequently defined not consuming as 'reasons *against* consumption' (Lee et al. 2009, p. 145), making the study of not consuming mainly a matter of consumers' deliberate attitudes towards avoiding, boycotting and abstaining from consumption as a form of deliberate decision to avoid products or brands (Lee et al., 2013, Kozinets, et al. 2010). Within this research area, scholars of anti-consumption are particularly interested in understanding and closing the green gap –the equivalent of the attitude-behaviour gap- in which consumer behaviour is often inconsistent with their deliberate beliefs and values (Moisander, 2007, Black, 2010, Eckhardt et al., 2010, Hutter and Hoffmann, 2013, Claudy et al., 2013, Polonksy, 2012, Polonsky et al. 2014, Thørgerson et al., 2012a, 2012b). In turn other forms of incidental non-consuming have been neglected by consumer research (Cherrier, 2008, Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012, although see for an exception Leiämaa-Leskinen et al., 2016). Therefore, understanding why people do not recycle, do not reuse food or do not ride bicycles for urban transportation has been a matter of reasoning within market logic. Hence studies have tended to either frame the consumer as value seeking, economically interested and environmentally ignorant or frame the marketer

as unable to 'encapsulate benefits into value statements for goods and services' (Black, 2012, p. 408).

Unsurprisingly, calls that encourage TCR to step outside the dominant social paradigm do not really follow through with their claims, as they write:

> 'it is one of the responsibilities of TCR to ensure that, as academic researchers, we do our utmost to contribute to solutions that effect change to benefit not just humankind but also the planet, because, as we know, the two can never really be separated…the challenge is to alter both the theoretical framing and practical lens through which we look at consumers, consumer research, human needs, well-being, humanity and community within the marketplace' (McDonagh et al., 2012, p. 268)

As the marketplace itself is not questioned, the neo-liberal framing of consumption remains untouched. The authors go on to pose four questions, establishing a research agenda for sustainability, which turns into consumer-centric circles:

> '…can we convince people that a sustainable lifestyle is much better than one of hyper-consumption and if so, how? what are the hedonistic, pleasurable, or fulfilling benefits of being sustainable?...how can being sustainable save money?...how can being sustainable free up time? (p.273)'

The only thought within a neo-liberal paradigm, a market rational can be applied to sustainability whose establishment is conditioned by delivering surplus value to consumers (Bradshaw, 2011). It is in the questions posed that an alteration of theoretical and practical framing as sought after by McDonagh et al. is caught up in a vicious circle hindering the escape from the DSP. As Shove (2014) suggests

> 'perhaps you should reframe your problem: what if you forgot about persuading individuals … and concentrated on how resource intensive practices take hold in society and on how they change? Surely that is the key question.' (p.417)

3.2 Sustainability outside of Marketing: The Missing Politics between Practices

Despite burgeoning practice-based literature on sustainability (Røpke, 2009, Strengers and Maller, 2015, Shove and Spurling, 2013, Watson, 2012, Spargaaren, 2011, Shove and Walker, 2010), hierarchical relationships between sustainable and unsustainable practices remain understudied (although see for a recent development in this direction Hui et al., 2017). While key thinkers like Shove et al. (2012), Warde (2014), Schatzki (1996, 2011) and Nicolini (2012) have opened up debates about practice bundles and the interplay of practices, only a small amount of studies (Gram-Hanssen, 2011, Hargreaves, 2011, Hargreaves et al., (2013) have 'explore[d] the vertical and horizontal planes' (Hargreaves et al., 2013, p.416) of practices. These studies have empirically discovered 'micropolitics' (Hargreaves, 2011) between practices. Gram-Hanssen for example argues that the practice of heating shares elements with other practices and is thus 'related horizontally and vertically' (p.61). Hargreaves (2011) comes to the same conclusion when he presents evidence how practices compete for the same material element. However, as these papers pursued different research questions, a theoretical conceptualization of these political relationships is missing. But if connecting a practice ontology to a marketing interest in sustainability then 'the goal of sustainable consumption needs [not only] to be seen as a political project recognizing the power relations between social groupings' (Dolan, 2002, p.180) but those between social practices.

Gaining a deeper understanding of such hierarchies within the realm of sustainability seems promising because practices condition the capacities of

consumption (Warde, 2014, Shove, 2014, Shove et al., 2012), which can well be unfair and thus 'lock' (Newell et al., 2015, p. 539) consumers into (un-) sustainable consumption patterns (Walker, 2013, Latham and Wood, 2015, Shove et al., 2015). Focusing on how practices negotiate power between each other might advance knowledge about why some practices, especially unsustainable practices, are strong and sustained while sustainable practices struggle to thrive. A plethora of studies have looked at how cycling can be enacted within a context of car domination (Legacy and Nouweland, 2015, Watson, 2013, Nixon, 2012, Watson, 2012, Aldred, 2010, Ilundáin-Agurruza and Austin, 2010, Chapman, 2007, Horton et al., 2007). Studies have also emphasised the role of the materiality of urban cycling such as bicycles (Manzano et al., 2015, Jones and Azevedo, 2013, Vivanco, 2013, Larsen and Christensen, 2015), space and kinaesthetic (Kidder, 2008, Spinney, 2010, Spinney, 2009, Jones, 2005), the infrastructure (Stehlin, 2015, Jones, 2012) in shaping the cyclists 'tactics' (Latham and Wood, 2015, p. 308) of manoeuvring bicycles and the barriers to sustainable travel behaviour (Song, Preston and Brand, 2013, Daley and Rissel, 2011). Only a few studies explicitly articulate a tension between urban cycling and driving specifically questioning the taken for granted marginalised position of the former and the domination of the latter (Fincham, 2006, Latham and Wood, 2015). While much attention has been paid to the materiality and infrastructure of cycling, the relationships between mobility practices have been largely overlooked.

Studies on urban cycling contain some indication of unequal allocation of resources among transportation practices, but they have not further conceptualized through which mechanics such allocation happens and how

urban cycling is kept in its marginalised position. Addressing the question about how such unfair conditioning comes about, responds to two recent limitations of practice theory, which have been expressed as urgent. Firstly, social practices have been accused of lacking 'a sense of critical or normative positioning…[being] rarely politically engaged' (Walker, 2015, p. 49). One reason for this might be that studies have either tended to omit the question of how multiple practices intersect all together (Warde, 2014) or seeking other ontologies and units of analysis to join the debate (Hargreaves et al., 2013, Crivits and Paredis, 2013).

Ignoring the ontological component has led to treating practice theory as a theory of everything, which limits its ability to embrace phenomena such as power and inequality (Walker, 2013, 2015). Consequently, the 'flat' character of practices, although useful for consumption studies in disburdening the consumer, has undermined the possibility of theorizing hierarchical mechanics among them. In order to address the issue of power between practices, Hargreaves et al. (2013) for example argue that practice theory does not cope with the vertical levels that negotiate sustainable consumption. The authors propose to combine practice theory with 'regimes' (p.402) as another ontological framework. With their mix of ontological units of analysis, however, the authors imply that there exist forces outside of practices which supports a structural divide, which a practice-based approach rejects as Nicolini and Monteiro (2017, p.102) put it

> 'coherent practice approaches posit that phenomena of various complexities are *not* made of … forces, logics or mental models'

I argue that instead of mixing different *ontological* units of analysis, a practice

ontology needs a matching *theory* to look at power and politics according to Schatzki:

> practice theory is not a TOE -theory of everything...there is a range of phenomena that occur within practices -maybe plural- and the actual concepts of practices do not get you very far in conceptualising them...all that practice theory gives you is the stage setting on which phenomena takes place...practice theory needs to form coalitions, needs to find allies, other bodies of literature from different areas of thought that have investigated these particular phenomena (compatible with the ontology of Practice Theory. (Taped oral presentation at Warwick International Summer School on Advanced Practice-based Studies, 1st September, 2015)

If sociological accounts call for new and exploratory approaches to understand what prevents urban cycling from becoming a dominant mode of transport (Horton et al., 2007, Spinney, 2009), looking at the relationship between urban cycling and car driving as unequal (Sheller and Urry, 2000) being the 'predominant form of mobility…[subordinating] the other mobility-systems of walking, cycling…' (Urry, 2007, p.85) might advance knowledge about how this subordination works and how its existence is negotiated among multiple practices and their interdependencies.

3.2.1   Political Theory for sustainable practices

Given the call for practice theory to form theoretical coalitions being a challenge to the concept of choice or 'resistance to the politics of behavioural approaches…rooted in the neoliberal paradigm' (Walker, 2013), it is surprising that practice theory has not yet been linked back to political left-wing ideas that oppose capitalism (see Nicolini, 2012 for an exception). If the commodification of sustainability is unsuccessful as argued by critiques (Sanne, 2002) and agency is not exclusively sought within individuals, then the privilege and 'democracy' of market arrangements in which private capital

of the individual decides about the (un-)sustainable participation in society under practices is challenged (Walker, 2013, Scharzkopf, 2011). But if we have to think outside classes, groups and individuals, how could the opposition between unsustainable practice and sustainable practices be conceptualized? How do unsustainable practices maintain their dominance? And how are sustainable practices kept in a marginalised position?

3.2.1.1 Gramsci's Hegemony –tracing the legacy of Karl Marx

One theoretical ally that offers support in conceptualizing domination and oppression is Antonio Gramsci –an offspring of the forgotten practice theorist Karl Marx (Kreps, 2015, Schulzke, 2015). With the excellent exception of Nicolini (2012), Marx has received little attention from practice interested management scholars. In fact, his notions of a Philosophy of Praxis, which is later developed by Gramsci (1971) is neglected in the literature that foregrounds other ancestors of the practice thought like Foucault (1978), Giddens (1984) or Bourdieu (1984) as shown in section 2.4. But in the light of sustainable consumption and the political and economic implications his intellectual legacy is of contemporary importance. But it is Gramsci (1971) who intensively distilled and extended Marx' fragmented ideas of a 'Philosophy of Praxis' (Kitching, 1988) to build his theory of hegemony. In this idea social life is thought to be relational in character, which runs counter to the strict separation of politics, economy and culture defended by economists. Gramsci (1971) has strongly emphasized the existence of a relationship between the three and affirms that domination and oppression emerge through such 'relations of force' (Gramsci, 1971). He insists that in

order to understand how oppression works, it is crucial to look at the relationships, which a dominant entity maintains across social life. These relations of force cut through what Gramsci terms 'civil society' and 'political society' (Gramsci, 1971, p.145). If an entity is successful in spreading their values through these two spheres, they build a 'hegemonic ideology' or as Gramsci puts it 'a conception of the world that is implicitly manifest in art, law, economic activity and all manifestations of life' (p.634). Civil society describes 'the State as ensemble of [private] organisms' (Gramsci, 1971, p.145), such as the church, schools, clubs, political parties, (intellectual-) organisations, the media, the arts and businesses. Political society in Gramsci's definition is 'the coercive element of the State' such as the law, regulations, military forces and the police' (Gramsci, 1971, p.532). Gramsci (1971) highlights the education system as one of the most important hegemonic influences, however broadens his definition beyond 'scholastic relationships' (p. 666) onto any educator who spreads the hegemonic ideology and where civil society and political society can blend.

His idea of hegemony in this sense describes how an oppressed entity identifies itself with an ideology established through the dominant entity recognizing and expressing these values through conduct and language as their own 'common sense' (Gramsci, 1971, p.685). It is thus not brutal coercion that maintains an oppressed entity in its position but it is their own affirmation of the status quo 'their consent and their collaboration, turning necessity and coercion into "freedom"' (Gramsci, 1971, p.502). In his version of a philosophy of praxis, Gramsci (1971) holds that in order to achieve social change –that is to say to establish a new ideology releasing the oppressed

entity from false beliefs and establishing a new manifestation of values, civil and political society cannot be separated. To put this in Macromarketing vocabulary, in order to establish a new Dominant Social Paradigm, research needs firstly to analyse –and become aware of– the relationship between

> 'the economic thrust [and] the dead weight of traditional policies—i.e. to change the political direction of certain forces which have to be absorbed if a new, homogeneous politico-economic historical bloc, without internal contradictions, is to be successfully formed.' (Gramsci, 1971, p.384)

Gramsci (1971) sharply critiques in his writings (Forgacs, 2000, Kohan, 2004, Mouffe, 1979, Schwarzmantel, 2015) the economic-driven separation of economics and politics and rejects in his vision the capitalistic illusions of a free market. Nevertheless, Gramsci (1971) is convinced that this illusion is key to the tenaciousness of capitalism that needs the 'spontaneous consent' (p.178) of the suppressed class in order to persist. In framing the capitalist worldview as being in the best interest for the suppressed class, it is 'recognized and proposed to themselves as freedom' (p.178). Hence he declares hegemony as the prerequisite to maintain entrenched, long-lasting dominance (Schulzke, 2015) as he writes:

> 'force can be employed against enemies, but not against a part of one's own side which one wishes rapidly to assimilate, and whose "good will" and enthusiasm one needs' (1971, p. 384)

Gramsci's hegemony has key parallels with the sustainability-practice debate today and in fact academics speak about the hegemony of capitalism opposing the advancement of sustainability (Schulzke, 2015, Kilbourne, et al. 1997). His concept might thus well be useful to think with under a practice ontology. However, while the concept of hegemony has been used within political and neo-liberal debates, to examine issues such as power struggles

between political parties (Johnston et al., 2002), network governance (Davies, 2012), civil rights (Inwood, 2013) as well as space and territory (Popke, 2001, Matthews et al., 1999, Laurie and Marvin, 1999, Addie, 2008), the concept is absent in practice based studies.

Gramsci (1971) outlines in-depth power struggles of opponents –in Gramsci's writings these appear as 'classes'[6]. These entities differ in economic and resourceful power, one being successful in maintaining its direct and material dominance over the other through allies within civil and political society that assure the status quo on a moral level and more importantly the necessary resources (Bellamy, 1994). Crucial in this regard is Gramsci's (1971) notion of the materialization of ideology, in which he proposes that ideas are generated and manifested through 'material forces' (p.707). He described the interdependency and reciprocal relationship between mental and physical elements when he argues that

> 'material forces are the content and ideologies are the form…the material forces would be inconceivable historically without form and the ideologies would be individual fancies without the material forces' (p.707).

If practices encompass materials, rules, skilful competences, ends and purposes, understandings and symbolic aspects (Shove et al., 2012,

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[6] The literature uses the terms class and practices differently and expresses different opinions about their relationship. The term 'class' is strongly related to Bourdieu and his concept of Habitus (see for a critique of Habitus Schatzki, 1987). Gramsci uses classes to describe opponents, which I take as a starting thought to deal with dynamics between practices. My treatment of class as an outcome of practices according to an understanding of practice as ontology (Schatzki, 2012, Nicolini and Monteiro 2017) may lead to some debate in which politically traditional advocates may claim that practices cannot 'substitute' class. While the next section will clarify more about the use of such political entities, I do not claim to substitute 'class' and a discussion of this critical thought is beyond the scope of this PhD therefore it will only be treated in the limitations.

Schatzki, 1996), practices cut through civil and political spheres embodying the social forces through which ideology is generated.

Therefore, it is not enough to deconstruct an ideology on the levels of seeding merely another idea, but to challenge these 'social forces behind [ideologies]' (p.625). Taking practices as the social forces to be challenged, his notion entails the gist of what practice scholars argue, namely that sustainability cannot succeed as idea alone but only if the practices that encompass the material resources, knowledge and meanings of sustainability are strengthened and supported (Strengers and Maller, 2015, Shove, 2014, Shove et al., 2015, Shove and Spurling, 2013). Pushing this argument in a stronger Gramscian direction, if 'capitalism is incompatible with saving the planet' (Sayer, 2013, p.177) as sustainability 'requires frugality and reduced mobility' (p.177), then sustainability is not only to be seen as an 'intellectual revolution' (Kohan, 2004) against capitalist understanding and organization of society but one that has the potential to transform the existence of (non-)human life in every (non-) material aspect. If the material manifestation of sustainability as ideology is dependent on sustainable practices whose existence is dependent on the integration of diverse elements, how to better stop practices from thriving then by preventing them from accessing their necessary resources? The marginalization of practices could thus be an indication of suppression and unfair allocation of resources just as Gramsci (1977) found in the case of the proletariat who 'has no property in its possession and is … certain never to have any' (p.167). Bridging practices with resources points towards the economic aspect accompanying the concept of hegemony (Forgacs, 2000). Needless to say,

that unsustainable practices like car driving have a direct relationship with production intensive processes, which embody important pillars of the gross domestic product, the indicator of a country's well-being in terms of employment, expenditure and income within national and international competition. Upholding these practices maintains such profit-oriented tendencies 'suiting capital businesses' (Sayer, 2013, p.173). Measuring success with economic growth, however, is incompatible with sustainable practices such as urban cycling that imply 'radically reduced CO_2 emissions' (Sayer, 2013, p.176). Gramsci's essential notion of the dynamics of politics is that 'there are always rulers and ruled, leaders and led' (Daldal, 2014, p.152). If politics between practices exist, and sustainable practice struggle to establish, are there ruling unsustainable practices and ruled sustainable ones?

In this 'contradiction between the interest of the planet and the need of capitalism to grow regardless of such interests' (Sayer, p. 177), Gramsci's mechanics outline the suppression of revolutions or antagonist movements against the ruling hegemony preventing them from becoming 'counterhegemonic' (Gramsci, 1971, Laclau and Mouffe, 2001).

3.2.1.2 Laclau and Mouffe's Social Antagonism

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) developed their theory of social antagonism based on Gramsci's (1971, 1977) idea of counterhegemonic struggle. Counterhegemonic implies that the suppressed entity as potential competitor to the established dominant entity might successfully manifest its ideology through the same material and social forces as the dominant entity. Thereby

potentially disturbing and eroding –if not replacing- the ruling hegemony with an alternative way of living. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) consequently speak of antagonisms in which key opponents are termed 'agonist' –the dominant entity and 'antagonist' –the suppressed entity. The authors define social antagonism as the 'struggle against inequalities and the claiming of rights' (p.161). As such their concept belongs to conflict theories, which aim to explain not only the conditions under which antagonisms emerge but also the relations as such. Intriguing in their account is the idea of confronting discourses[7]. In this confrontation the existence of the opponents 'signifier' and 'signified' (p.11) are negotiated as Laclau and Mouffe put 'the presence of the 'Other' prevents me from being totally myself…the relation arises not from full totalities, but from the impossibility of their constitution (p.125). This is especially interesting if looking at marginalised sustainable practices and their relation to unsustainable practices. If the presence of one practice potentially impacts on the other, then how does the presence of unsustainable practices impact on the existence of sustainable practices? If 'antagonism, as a witness of the impossibility of a final suture …constitute the limits of society, the latter's impossibility of fully constituting itself' –is antagonism between practices hindering the establishment of a sustainable society?

While maintaining the basic notion of Gramsci's concept of hegemony,

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[7] The authors conceptualize their theory on the basis of articulation, language and discursive practices. Although the term 'hegemonic practices' (p.56) appears in their account, Laclau and Mouffe do not consistently use the term 'practices' as entity. Neither do they explicitly define their understanding of a practice, nor do they outline what a practice might encompass. The authors merely point out that in their opinion practices should be seen as discursive critiquing Foucault's differentiation of practices (p.107). In this thesis, however, discourses are taken as parts of practices according to the definitions of Schatzki (1996) as 'sayings' and 'symbolic meanigs' according to Shove's et al.(2012) definition.

Laclau and Mouffe (2001) allude to the possibility of taking his essential description of struggles outside of the confinement of classes and groups in order to make his concept applicable to issues and entities of our time:

> to re-read Marxist theory in the light of contemporary problems… [is] the process of reappropriation of an intellectual tradition, as well as the process of going beyond it…many social antagonisms, many issues which are crucial to the understanding of contemporary societies cannot be reconceptualised in terms of Marxist categories…instead of dealing with notions such as 'class', the triad of levels (the economic, the political and the ideological) or the contradiction between forces and relations of production as sedimented fetishes, we tried to revive the preconditions which make their condition possible and asked ourselves questions concerning their continuity or discontinuity of contemporary capitalism (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p.vi-viii)

In their post-Marxist statement, the authors emphasise that antagonisms occur in different settings such as 'habitat, consumption [and] various services' (p.161). With their fresh approach and argumentation, the authors not only put the concept of hegemony outside traditional schemes but emphasises the wider meaning of the term *politics*. Laclau and Mouffe (2001) allow me to call this thesis 'political' or 'politicising' because they emphasize politics not as something abstract 'at the level of parties and of state' (p.153), but 'as a type of action whose objective is the transformation of a social relation, which constructs a subject in a relationship of subordination' (p.153).

Consequently, my reading of Gramsci and Laclau and Mouffe is a process of re-appropriation in the light of a practice-based ontology. In doing so, I try out the elasticity of their ideas as support in analysing and conceptualizing the relationships between (un-) sustainable practices. The descriptions of the political dynamics between entities especially the notion of how one entity succeeds in dominating another creating a 'definition of reality' (Mouffe, 1979

p.8), is particularly useful in understanding how suppressed practices are prevented from becoming dominant. If practices have the power to condition the participation within them, it is practices, too, who perpetuate *the consent and legitimization* to the constant participation in the dominant practice. This line of enquiry is further based on Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) concern that 'one needs to know what kind of society one wants to establish…this requires …an adequate grasp of the nature of power relations.' (p.xix). Applying their call to my study, the sentence needs to be: if a sustainable society is to be established in which sustainable practices take over, and we have to think in terms of practices, not individuals, then we need to obtain an adequate grasp of the power relations- and dynamics of politics between practices. Accordingly, I classified car driving as agonist –holding all necessary power and resources– and urban cycling as antagonist, embodying the relegated, resource-poor, potential counterhegemonic entity. In doing so, I was able to conceptualize how power and (ill-)legitimization of (un-)sustainable practices are negotiated through their complex constellation and their competition for material-competence-meaning.

3.2.1.3 Why not Actor-Network Theory?

Coming to the end of my argument it seems necessary to say why I have chosen *not to adopt* an Actor-Network Theory (ANT) approach and why my ontological framing follows the tendency to ascribe agency to practices as entity according to Nicolini (2012, Nicolini and Monteiro, 2016 and 2017, see also section 2.3 for an in-depth explanation of the flat-ontological character of practices).

As with all social sciences, my research project is based on selected readings. Only through these selected readings, literature gaps are opened, ideas are created, questions are asked- and hopefully are being answered through a convincing argument. Of course there are other, equally viable ways beyond my chosen approach. To give credit to another flat ontological approach (mentioned already in section 2.1.1.2), ANT might have been a possible alternative to practice theory. Both approaches share the notion of an equal treatment of agency, thus giving material artifacts a central role. Both approaches reject a micro-macro divide and consider the social world as 'flat' (see for an in-depth explanation of a practice definition of 'flat ontology' section 2.3, Bettany, 2007, Bajde, 2013). Both approaches emphasise the relational character of entities and correspondingly call their connections either 'assemblages' in ANT or 'bundles' in practice theory. Both approaches believe in a 'methodology of following' (Lamers et al. 2017, p.58) and produce ethnographies with thick descriptions of social life.

However, I have not considered ANT due to three central reasons. First and foremost, I have consistently argued throughout the literature review that in

contrast to ANT, Practice Theory has not yet been properly introduced as ontological lens to consumer research, although, it has been insightfully used as such for sustainability matters in other scholarly fields. Consequently, this is a novel and a viable contribution to my field of study. Second, the mix of practice definitions from Shove and Schatzki results as an appropriate fit to scrutinize cycling. On the one hand because cycling embodies a 'hybrid subject-object' (Spinney, 2006, p. 709), an interdependent relationship between the non-human bicycle and the human person riding it and on the other, I am interested to understand how cycling is positioned within a bundle of practices and to understand the political dynamics between them. As Lamer et al. (2017) puts it:

> 'Shove resembles ANT approaches in which human and non-human elements and agency are treated symmetrically…Schatzki becomes useful when engaging in questions of how and why these elements combine, interconnect and align, while reserving a central role for human agency' (p.62)

Lamers et al. (2017) emphasise Schatzki's (2002) 'crucial differences between human and non-human activity chains [insisting that] for Schatzki it is human agency that makes the difference' (p.57). While Schatzki has been interpreted as foregrounding human agency in the past, Schatzki himself claims to be misinterpreted (see a personal comment of Theodore Schatzki in regard to material arrangements and the misinterpretation of his accounts in section 2.2). For example in Schatzki's (2010) account on 'materiality in social life', he specifically dissects the causal, pre-figurative, constitutive, and intelligible relationship between practices and material arrangements. Schatzki (2010) insists on the impossibility of separating practices and material arrangements as social life transpires through the intimate

relationships of both. His thought to consider human and non-human entities ontologically equal while trying not to sacrifice the differences between the two is later re-introduced by Nicolini and Monteiro (2017) through the accessible example of skiing.

> 'to understand skiing as a social practice requires that we also consider skis and poles (different skis require different competencies); the slopes (different slopes perform very different skiers owing to the challenges they pose); the lifts that take you at the top of the mountain (and those who run them); the technical jargon used by skiers (if you are a beginner you want to know what a "black run" means as you should avoid them at all cost)' (p.107)

Following from this quote I arrive at the third and final reason. That is to say if 'there are no levels of the social at which a different dynamic takes place [and] everything happens in the same 'plenum' (Lamer et al., 2017, p.57) then the choice of words in ANT to describe features calling them 'actants' becomes potentially confusing in the debate surrounding agency. I am particularly interested in adopting an innovative vocabulary and thus the term 'practice' in contrast to 'actant' offers a diffusion of agency through the relational character of different elements and their interplay.

3.2.1.4   Why not Foucault? The relationships of relationships

As within the postmodern turn Foucault is the predominant philosopher used in management studies when issues of power and domination are raised (Clegg, 1998, McKinlay and Starkey, 1998, Knott et al., 2006, Shankar et al., 2006, Fougere and Skalen, 2013, Zwick et al., 2008) –and a popular theorist to mention in relation to practices– it might be useful to state why I chose Gramsci (and in extension Laclau and Mouffe) to theorize the politics of practices. While the commonalities and differences between the power

theories of Gramsci and Foucault have been analysed at book length elsewhere (Mouffe, 1979, Kenway, 1990, Kohan, 2004, Olssen, 2006, Daldal, 2014, Kreps, 2015), my emphasis is on the most significant ones for this study.

Both philosophers develop their theories of power based on the relations of force in a Machiavellian sense (Foucault, 1978, Foucault, 2008, Gramsci, 1971, 1977, Forgacs, 2000, Kreps, 2015). Both argue that power is highly relational (Kreps, 2015). Both are interested in how suppression of certain aspects of life 'that is condemned to prohibition, non-existence and silence' (Foucault, 1978, p. 6) have established. They describe ways in which power acts as a non-subjective phenomenon that emerges as a consequence of such relations, and thus postulate that power cannot be possessed or commodified. Nevertheless, Gramsci and Foucault diverge in their interpretation of Machiavelli and thus conceptualize the relations through which power emerges differently. Foucault for example rejects any location of power as he writes:

> 'Machiavelli is among the few…who conceived the power of the prince in terms of power relationships, perhaps we need to go one step further, do without the persona of the prince, and decipher power mechanics on the basis of a strategy that is immanent in force relationships.' (Foucault, 1978, p.97)

In his writings, however, Foucault is much less concrete in describing such power mechanics (Olssen, 2006). The undoing of the prince as entity of power, results in an opaque definition of power relations (Layder, 2006) which is expressed in the ontologically unspecific (Rabinow, 1994) emphasis on power as diffused phenomenon among 'relationships of surveillance and normalizing discourses' (Schulzke, 2015, p. 64). Consequently, Foucault

concentrates on 'how power constitutes [categorizes and locates] individuals [in space and time]' (Schulzke, 2015, p. 68) through knowledge and discourse. In doing so, he disaggregates collectivist aspects and rejects binary oppositions that embody 'headquarters' (Foucault, 1978, p.95) of power. Schulzke (2015) identifies this atomization of the individual as being grounded in 'the enlightenment abstraction' (p.68) and thus as anti-Marxist (Rabinow, 1994).

Gramsci's (1971) interpretation of Machiavelli is contrary to Foucault:

> Machiavelli's Prince could be … a political ideology expressed neither in the form of a cold utopia nor as learned theorising, but rather by a creation of concrete phantasy which acts on a dispersed and shattered people to arouse and organize its collective will. The Prince had no real historical existence; but a pure theoretical abstraction—a symbol of the leader and ideal condottiere... what the Prince must be like if he is to lead a people to found a new State… the Prince is not something extrinsic, tacked on, rhetorical, but has to be understood as a necessary element of the work—indeed as the element which gives the entire work its true colour, and makes it a kind of "political manifesto" (1971, p. 316-319)

In contrast to Foucault, Gramsci is ontologically clear about the units of his analysis through which he conceptualizes power (Olssen, 2006). He reads the prince as a metaphor of aggregate individuals that form 'the party' as collective and relational entity. He rejects the atomization of individuals and emphasises the relational character of the party for two reasons. Firstly, individuals alone are never as powerful as a collective entity. Secondly, the party is not an alone standing entity that can be powerful on its own, but is in turn related to other entities among which power is negotiated. Gramsci maps out the structure and relationship between the party with the state, the civil- and political society –the relationships of relationships so to speak. In doing so, he provides a theoretical specific and detailed account of the power

mechanism between opposing entities. Although Gramsci remains true to the Marxist collective character between the opposition of leader and led, ruler and ruled, the covert relationships between a range of cultural entities offers a more complex picture than that of Marx's overt theory of power (Schulzke, 2015). Gramsci provides both, a relational character of power, whose tracing is nevertheless possible through concrete entities.

3.2.2 Recapping The Key Arguments for Gramsci and Lalau and Mouffe

Gramsci is the ideal fit for a practice ontology for three essential reasons. First, he proposes power not as a result of the effort of individuals, but of concrete entities and their relationships. A practice ontology presupposes the existence of concrete entities –practices– and their constellations through which phenomena, hence power, is supposed to flow. Second, Gramsci's description of materialized social forces show parallels to Schatzki's (1996) definition of practices, though these have not yet been linked together. Especially apparent is the compatibility of both thoughts when Gramsci explains that ideology is dependent on materialization and vice versa. Thus, foregrounding that ideology can only be established through the relational and material character of social forces. Although he does not use the term 'practices' as in Schatzki's quote of section 2.3.1.1, he illustrates a similar argumentation about how an 'ethos' a general understanding of social life establishes through practices. Third, apart from the convenient fit of the underlying assumptions, the string of my argumentation has an activist motif. Gramsci's writings arise from his activist vision to change Italian society in the 1930s. His precision enables him to discover power imbalances in order

to change them through the same relationships that make up such imbalances without assuming individual autonomy. Foucault in contrast does not offer such remedy (Kreps, 2015). In regard to establishing a sustainable society and in this respect help to establish the humble, yet important sustainable representative urban cycling, Gramsci's descriptions seem to be more relevant than ever if thought as a practice struggle.

This is however not to discard the relevance of discourse and knowledge as a part of practices. Indeed, Foucault's (1978) account of how truth is established through knowledge and discourses was helpful in the course of analysing the inner 'micro' relationships between competence and meaning of urban cycling. Nevertheless, in order to conceptualize the larger connections, Gramsci offered a more tangible and workable set of concepts.

Laclau and Mouffe are used in this study as an extension to Gramsci's hegemony for two essential reasons. First, as pioneers to re-interpret Gramsci's thoughts, Laclau and Mouffe have paved the way to take his ideas outside traditional Marxist vocabulary and imprisonment of specific categories. Their account embodies an academic ticket to look at and work with left wing theory under a practice ontology. Second, their description of social antagonism with the division of an antagonist and an agonist entity provides not only suitable terms to describe the relationships of practices but also enables a conceptualization of the power imbalances between sustainable and unsustainable practices –urban cycling and car driving.

3.3   Positioning this PhD within the Research Community

In looking at a sustainable marginalised practice this PhD is situated between three research communities (see fig.4). As inferences from this study can contribute to the anti-consumption debate (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012) as well as to political and capitalist debates surrounding sustainability as 'megatrend' (MacDonagh and Prothero, 2014, p. 248), the project is located within the intersection of Macromarketing and CCT that address these topics. There is also some convergence with Transformative Consumer Research (TCR), as my study aims to create impact at social and policy levels in pursuing social change (Mick et al. 2012).
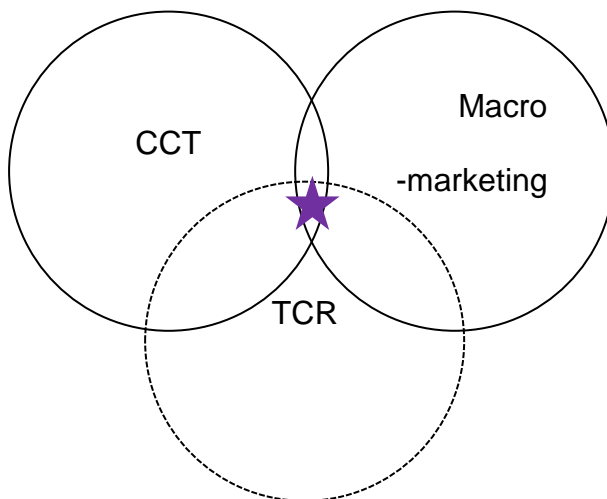
Figure 4 - Positioning this Study within the Research Areas
Source: author's visualization

4   Methodology

This study draws from an extensive empirical investigation to conceptualize the politics of practices. The purpose of this chapter is thus to clarify the methodological implementation of the commitment to the ontological assumptions outlined in chapter 2, which guided both the research design and the processes of data collection and analysis. The chapter starts by presenting the research questions. In doing so, a defence of the chosen practice-based approach is given. The chapter then describes the design of practice-based ethnographic research. As the study embraces multiple methods such as interviews, (participant-) observation, netnography, visual methods and historical- and documentary analysis, the chapter provides a thorough clarification of and reasoning behind each method used. The chapter ends with a discussion of the benefits and limitations of the practice-based approach.

4.1   Research Questions

The assumption that knowledge about consumption resides in practices that entail a variety of elements, impacted on the structure of my research questions. Instead of starting from the assumption that change has to be initiated within individuals, my research problem had to be reframed completely. That is to say, instead of asking why people do not cycle, I left out any vocabulary even considering consumers and consequently the main question had to be changed from 'why do people not cycle in Las Palmas?' into 'why is urban cycling marginalised and does not take hold in Las

Palmas?

Table 2 Aims, Objectives and Research Questions

Aim: To explore the potential of a practice ontology for debates on sustainable consumption	
Objectives and RQ located in Theory	**1. To examine how a marginalised practice struggles to thrive** • Why is urban cycling marginalised? • How do elements of a single practice connect in situ and how are these relationships strengthened or challenged? **2. To examine how practices relate to one another and to explore the potential hierarchies (politics) of such relationships and their consequences for sustainable consumption** • With which practices does cycling intersect and of what nature is this relationship? **3. To test the compatibility, -elasticity and -usefulness of political theory as ally to a practice ontology** • How can we understand and conceptualize the relationship of (un-) sustainable practices?
Objectives and RQ located in Policy	**4. To examine the implications of the above for the theory and practice surrounding sustainable consumption (in particular policy)** • What are the implications of a practice-based approach for the design of policy surrounding sustainable consumption?
Objectives and RQ located in Methodology	**5. To contribute to methodological debates surrounding the translation of a practice ontology into fieldwork** • What should a practice based methodology for consumption studies look like?

My research questions changed throughout the research process. Theoretically, current literature deals with existing practices mostly through historical analysis. But what about marginalised practices in situ with real time analysis? Shove et al. (2012) displays with her practice framework a neat and linear 'happy story' of how a practice forms and stabilizes as she post-analyses existing and well-established practices like car driving. But what about marginalised practices that are still emerging and struggling to expand? What interests this study is the nature of these relationships. Are

elements really stable? How do elements connect in situ and how are these relationships strengthened or challenged? How do other practices impact on these forming relationships and how do elements clash with existing practices?

Moreover, when we look at the contribution to the sustainability and green consumption debate practice theory promises, what about cycling as alternative transport? If the overall goal is to increase sustainability of cities by decarbonizing mobility (Urry, 2007, Watson, 2013), then why is there still not a concrete cycling policy? If 'organizations, power, science, education, and transportation are understood as constellations of, aspects of, or rooted in practices' (Schatzki, 2015, p.2) how do we have to understand the role of policy in influencing unsustainable consumption? How is policy played out in this formation/strengthening of relationships between elements? And how does lobby help to change or sustain consumption?

These questions arose nebulously as 'foreshadowed problem[s]' (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007, p. 21) during the pre-fieldwork and literature review, but concretized throughout my time in the field. This process is common for ethnographic research, where settings act as a source for research problems and influence the research questions through unforeseen events and circumstances (Madison, 2012). These events provide or block access to primary data that can potentially settle, change or dismiss research questions all together (Riemer 1977, Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007). The broad research question of 'how the marginalised practice of cycling struggles to evolve gave birth to several sub questions during the course of data

collection and analysis as well as to new overarching questions as seen in table 2.

The paradigmatic debate about practices, moreover, raises questions about what constitutes a 'good' practice-based research question? What has to be asked exactly to cope with the unit of analysis? However, these questions haven't been explicitly stated in the literature regarding practice-based studies. In fact, there is a striking silence towards a structured framework for practice-based research questions in regard to an assessment of rigour of practice-based studies (Nicolini, 2009a).

For the scope of this PhD I believe it is sufficient to argue that practice-based research questions need to be coherent with the arguments given in answering Guba and Lincoln's (1994) questions, which require a clear definition of the unit of analysis and the phenomenon under study. I do argue that it is important to explicitly make reference to the compositional character of practices as unit of analysis, i.e. to the elements making up the practice. In doing so, practice-based research questions might best encompass the action hierarchies: elements, practices, practice-bundles and the resulting phenomenon that transpire through these practices. Hence designing research questions addressing each of these features facilitates a scaling up or down of the analysis according to Nicolini (2017) as outlined in section 2.3. By using innovative vocabulary, he refers to the possibility to understand practices as a nexus of activities that can be added up to multiple practices through which large phenomena transpires. The division into single and multiple features can thus help to describe smaller or larger phenomena

(Figure 5). In my case, although the single practice of urban cycling can be investigated in isolation, its relationship to other intersecting practices might reveal useful insights into its marginalised position and hence into the politics of sustainable practices.

Figure 5 - Practice Bundles and Phenomena
Source: Author's visualisation adapted from Shove et al.(2012)

Practice Elements   Established Practice   Practice Bundles

Phenomenon

Phenomenon

Phenomenon

Phenomenon

Phenomenon

Phenomenon

Phenomenon
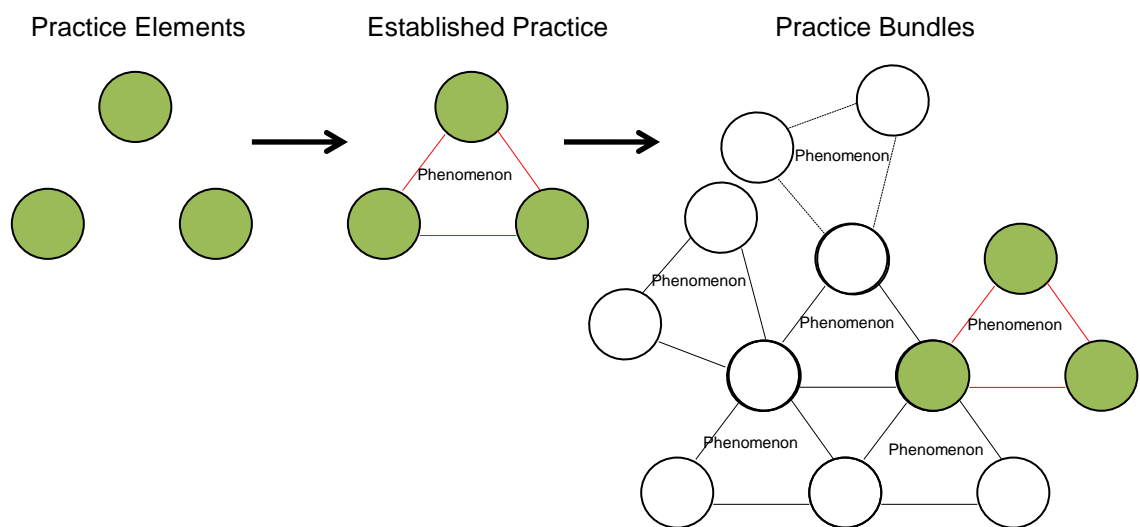
4.2   Practice-based Ethnography

Several practice scholars have stressed that ethnography is the appropriate methodology for practice-based research (Schatzki, 2012, 2002, Nicolini 2012, 2017, Gherardi, 2012, Jarzabowski and Bednarek, 2014, Hui, 2012). Schatzki (2012) for example argues that it is only through ethnography that we can 'uncover [the] ethereal' (p.24) nature of practices. Nicolini (2017) in the same manner observes that as we engage with practitioners to unravel the 'action hierarchies' (p.24) of sayings and doings that compose practices 'we need to develop a variety of approaches for appreciating and representing practice in all its complexity…identifying methods that capture different aspects of practice' (Nicolini, 2009, p.209). Schatzki (2012) in this regard presents ethnography as a container in which researchers make use

of multiple methods to access the 'practices spread out over space and time' (p.24). Temporal spatial[8] dispersed information resides in various sources that require different data collection methods. For example, I captured important insights (visual and verbal) into the practical understanding of cycling not only on the streets. Problematic and normative dynamics surrounding urban cycling were also captured through social media; netnography and appnography as indispensable methods of data collection. Schatzki's quote also underscores the need to integrate visual, verbal and observational methods. Verbal in this sense includes not only engagement with practitioners through classic single- and group interviews, but also written documentary research –recent and historical, that allow to trace the *here and now* as well as the *then and there* of practices. It is through multiple methods that we can manage the elementary character of practice analysing non-human, material, spatial and temporal aspects of practices, shifting the focus beyond the individual. As Schatzki (2012) puts it:

> [the] temporal spatial infrastructures of these practices and bundles, about how the practices and arrangements hang together and connect to others of their own ilk, about the contexts in which activities take place, and about the histories of the bundles and how they might develop in the future…will be unknown… to acquire this knowledge, the investigator has no choice but to do ethnography, that is, to practice interaction-observation. (p.24).

As ethnography captures not only what consumers say but also what consumers do, consumer research has been defending the use of

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[8] Spatially dispersed practice can mean two things: first that the practice is not exclusively 'local' but might be globally present. Cycling exists in different cities, places, and countries. Nicolini (2001) talks about this issue in his field technique of Zooming in and out. However for the scope of this PhD, a multi-sited ethnography (Falzon 2009) of changing settings was not possible for economic reasons and timing. Second, however, a broader interpretation of spatially dispersed practices would allow to argue, that aspects of practices are not only found in natural but virtual space, which is an important feature of data source today. For this PhD the second interpretation of spatially dispersed practices is assumed.

ethnography to come closer to the consumer in analysing human behaviour beyond the conscious articulations of individuals or communities of consumers (Arnould and Wallendorf 1994, Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). Ethnography under the practice ontology, however aims to get close to *practices* and combines its strength in foregrounding meanings of the 'subjective significance (emic) of [individual consumers'] experience' (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p.485) with a scattered analysis of meaning, materiality and competences across space and time. Through this thick description of practices, the consumer is decentralized in that he is part of, but not the exclusive reason for, the life of a practice.

4.3   Research Design

The focus on practices influenced my research design, the questions asked in interviews as well as the way I observed, read and listened. Nicolini's (2012) methodological approach called zooming in and out suggests a twofold fieldwork strategy, in which practices are studied in detail and in connection to each other. This entails a plethora of different methods (see table 3). This section addresses objective five in outlining how a practice based methodology for consumption studies might look like.

1) Zooming in: A very detailed view, zooming into the local accomplishment of the practice via 'proximal research methods which allow us to get close enough to the activity at hand, and which are sensitive to its material and embodied nature' (Nicolini, 2012, p.218). Zooming in, described as a fivefold task, should emphasise the nexus and relational character of practices by revealing firstly, the real-time

sayings and doings of the practice, secondly the active role of tools, materials, and the body, thirdly, the practical concerns which govern and affect practitioners, fourthly the boundaries and intersections of practices, and fifthly the legitimacy and learning of practices. Following zooming in, I looked at this nexus of urban cycling through interviews, mobile-ethnography entailing participant observation, and visual ethnography.

2) Zooming out: Based on the idea that practices are entangled and connected to each other, the relational study of the mechanics within this 'practice knot' (Nicoloini, 2012, p.229) is defined as zooming out. This is a movement in perspective between the practice under study and the connected practices that affect or are affected by the practice under study. Through uncovering connections between practices, zooming out offers 'a wider picture' (Nicolini, 2012, p.234) in investigating mutual effects, enablement and interdependencies between practices by following them in space and time. Consequently, I have looked at the 'many ways in which the practice produces effects in the world or the mutual dependencies and constraints that conjure the lived world of the practitioner' (Nicolini, 2012, p.233). Through 'immersion into the action' (Nicolini, 2012, p.237) during zooming into urban cycling, relationships to other urban moving practices like walking, car driving and travelling by bus quickly became apparent. Through the course of zooming out, less obvious, but strong relationships to practices like stealing, policing, and campaigning were

discovered in the data. Zooming out has moreover an inherently historical aspect as tracing connections to other practices entails the important question of how did it come to the current status quo of practice arrangements (Nicolini, 2012). Seeking to understand the historic development of practices in considering their connections, struggles, competitions and their emergence I used among the above mentioned ethnographic methods documentary analysis, historical analysis, netnography, and statistical analysis.

Zooming out implies some important methodological considerations regarding space and time. Cycling is a spatially dispersed practice, which means that it is not exclusively 'local' but also globally present. This forces the researcher to keep an integrative view on what is or is not happening in situ 'zooming into the local accomplishments' (Nicolini, 2009a, p.1391) while 'zooming out' (Nicolini, 2009a, p.1391) looking at what is or is not happening elsewhere in the world. Although I have traced urban cycling in other urban areas through travelling, due to the restricted amount of time, I concentrated on secondary data through on-and offline media to have a comparative eye on urban cycling elsewhere. Nevertheless, I concentrated on the connections to other practices locally.

Both, zooming in and out are closely related and happen in a mutual, reciprocal manner. In fact, during the ten months of data collection, I had days where I scheduled interviews in the morning, went to a historic museum visit at noon, summarised pieces of results in the afternoon, and conducted participant observations in the evening. Moreover, the netnographic methods

were an on-going 24/7 stream of digital listening and participating, as I am using social media platforms and smartphone apps anyway for private use. I also realised that zooming in an out do not 'neatly' occur by applying the methods that correspond to the group. Information about the accomplishment could be grasped through methods primarily used for zooming out and vice versa. As Nicolini (2012) argues 'the process [of zooming in and out] is not linear…the rhizomatic character of the study design requires [going] through multiple cycles of observation, analysis and reflection' (p.238). By attributing a 'rhizomatic character' Nicolini botanically metaphorizes the process of an infinite loop of studying practices beginning with zooming in:

> '…and then spread[ing] following emerging connections. These connections lead to other practices, which become in turn the target of a new round of zooming in…it proceeds with a zooming out movement, which exposes the relationships between practices and continues with a new effort of zooming in…and so on' (p.23)

Although this rhizomatic character is rather difficult to visualise, table 3 aims to illustrate the different zooming in- and out stages of the fieldwork.

Table 3 Fieldwork Overview

Time	Phase	Research Methods
Dec 2014- Sept 2015	Zooming In	Re-familiarisation with the field, recruitment and initial observation / ad hoc conversations and interviews • In-depth interviews with (33) practitioners • Mobile ethnography with (19 out of the 33 interviewed) practitioners (participant observation and 24 hours cycling) • In-depth interviews with (6) bicycle retailers (shop owners and employees) • Joining and participating in the local pro-cycling activist-NGO • Riding with the monthly Critical Mass • In-depth interviews with 3 of the 4 campaigning political parties • Accompanying the public bicycle repair service on their shift • Tours with the local police-on-bicycles • On-going graphic/audio-visual observation, field notes and diary (voice, video- and photographic recording of Las Palmas' traffic)
Mar 2014 Sept 2015	Zooming out	Documentation of the historical development of the urban environment and urban transportation (museums, historical archives, newspapers, online videos and movies) • Documentation of municipal traffic regulations with regards to cycling and overall, brochures of explanatory norms and rules for cycling, regulations of public transport • Documentation of urban planning outlines and strategies • Netnographic screening of social media to include Facebook cycling activist groups and Twitter feeds of politicians, businesses and activist groups • Documentation of electoral campaigning (newspaper articles, viral spots and other video material, interviews and statements) • Documentation of car lobbying (newspaper, sponsorship, clubs and presentations)

4.3.1 Zooming In

In the first phase, I explored the field by zooming into the local accomplishment of urban cycling. Saddling up on my own bicycle, I conducted a 'mobile ethnography' (Spinney, 2011, p. 161). Venturing into Las Palmas' traffic with a video camera taped to my helmet I cycled with participants talking with them (where possible) along the way about their cycling experiences. Prior to these mobile observations and conversations, I conducted in-depth interviews with participants about their urban cycling performances. My data collection in this phase constitutes a vivid blend of taped interviews with 33 practitioners about their cycling routines out of which 19 agreed to a follow-up participant observation in their every-day routines (see appendix 1 for a detailed participant list). I quickly became part of the local urban cycling community by attending and engaging in local events (e.g. participation at the weekly critical mass and other cycling events in the city), as well as becoming an associate member in the activist local non-profit organization 'Las Palmas en Bici'. Within this phase I have also talked with 6 bicycle shop owners and sales managers, as well as to 3 of the 4-major campaigning and governing political parties and the urban planning agency contracted by the town hall. During the first six months spent in the field, I have been cycling for 164 days on an average of 35 minutes a day, which equals 96 hours in total. With an average of 8 Km/h of distance per day I have accumulated roundabout 1.300km within the city. I have been using the bicycle not only for observational purposes, but also for my own daily urban transportation. I have been keeping a field diary of these performances and

observations, which embody a spaghetti junction of written notes, video clips, pictures and voice notes. In total I have accumulated 40 typed pages of diary, 846,25 minutes of video material, and 36 hours of taped interviews.

4.3.1.1 Enjoying Endorsement –Access, Recruitment and Rapport

I conducted research in Las Palmas on urban cycling for my Masters dissertation in 2011 returning to the field was therefore a lot easier than expected. Having maintained contact with my former participants, it was easy to reach out and approach them with my PhD recruitment proposal. I re-entered the field directly as an 'insider' (Calderon, 2004, p.83). In fact, participants were delighted to take part in the new study, as urban cycling in the meantime had become a major topic in Las Palmas. Word of mouth and recommendations to other potential participants accelerated the recruitment phase and I reached the initially aimed number of 20 participants faster than planned and recruited beyond that amount. It was certainly helpful to have such a good reputation and being recommended by and to urban cyclists that knew other urban cyclists who knew more urban cyclists. But I had the urge to step outside the comfort zone of networked snowball sampling (Noy, 2008), looking for urban cyclists I could informally recruit on the streets (Mariampolski, 2006). This purposive recruitment (Creswell, 2003, Belk, 2006, Spiggle, 1994, Goulding, 2005), was necessary to select practitioners of the practice under study: urban cyclists. I have been in the lucky position to be in a researcher-friendly environment, as all of the cyclists who I cold-recruited wanted to participate in my study.

Although the criterion 'urban cyclist' already makes for a certain homogeneity of my targeted group (Guest et al. 2006), I detected differences in competences and material, as some of the practitioners had just recently started to cycle, while others had been cycling for long periods of time. As knowledge acquisition in practices is an important aspect (Shove et al, 2012, Schatzki, 2012, 2001, Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017), I chose to structure my participant list by including participants with different levels of experience. Some had just started to cycle, some cycled in the city for years.

Although there seems to be little agreement over the appropriate number of participants required for an ethnographic study with recommendations typically ranging between 25-60 participants (Guest et al., 2006), the literature suggests qualitative research generally reaches 'data saturation' after interviewing 12 informants (Guest et al., 2006, p. 65). This recommendation, however, is based on an experiment for interviewing methods only. There is striking silence about the recommended number of participants for practice-based studies. If we are not describing consumers but practices then how do we gain and define data saturation? After all, analysing and representing practices, as we have seen above is supposed to be done in an elementary fashion. Hence, themes emerge not only from interviews in textual form, but from multiple data sources. For this study, I needed to expand the expression 'theoretical saturation' (Glaser and Strauss, 2006, p. 112) because stories and themes became repetitive not only in text, but visual, documentary and virtual. The question then is: how can theoretical saturation be defined in practice-based studies? Is it more efficient to talk about the outcome of data collected than participants recruited?

4.3.1.2 The Downside of Endorsement – Access as Political Integration

Accessing to important gatekeepers, such as local police officers and Las Palmas en Bici (not-for-profit organization) was surprisingly quick; surely because of well-established contacts, like in the case of Mardonio. I met Mardonio during my first study. He was the police officer who helped me to remove a car that had blocked mine. During a quick chat, it turned out that he was also a passionate cyclist. He then introduced me to his cyclist-circle, enabling me to hold a group interview. Today, Mardonio is part of the 'policia en bici' [police on bicycles], who I accompanied on several days on their patrols through the city. By becoming a member of the local non-profit organization Las Palmas en Bici it was possible to get in touch with politicians and officials on an informal level. As a member of this organization, I have been included in several activities. Among these monthly internal meetings in which the activists discussed the upcoming agenda, meetings between the activists and politicians, monthly critical mass events, political events and presentations as well as invitations to media appearances see fig.6, the writing of blog posts and press releases. Furthermore, I contributed to discussions on their blog, interacted in our WhatsApp group, the mailing list and on our Facebook page. Social media also provided me with the latest news, alerts and events surrounding urban cycling in Las Palmas.

Figure 6 - Radio Appearance at 'Onda Zero'
Source: Author's collection

With the emergence of urban cycling there is also a notable growth of specialized bicycle shops in Las Palmas. I had several interviews and meetings with staff from these shops. Here, I encountered mistrust for the first time as some shop staff assumed I was motivated by the self-serving political interests of the then campaigning party within the town hall. I quickly realized that I had to be careful in referring to my established contacts in the town hall in order not to alienate my participants as the majority of urban cyclists distrusted the intention behind the recent pro-cyclist policy. On some occasions, these connections opened up doors for new relations but locked doors in others. For example, it was only when I got the shop owners to read through the consent sheet that they realized I was not a 'spy' (Simmons, 2007, p.7).

As Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) put it:

> 'the ethnographer must balance the ease of initial access offered against the desirability of the site in other respects, as well as against any problems that such direct sponsorship by a gatekeeper might cause' (p.30).

Nevertheless, on one occasion it took several visits until the owner felt comfortable enough talking to me. The remaining ice between us melted completely when I started blogging for Las Palmas en Bici. In these posts, I critically discussed the current urban cycling policy incentives. This pro-active engagement through blog posts surprisingly ended up being the key for access to politicians and policy makers. I raised special attention when I wrote a critical blog post 'policias caprichosos?' [capricious police officers?] (Scheurenbrand, 2015) about an article in the local newspaper based on my project and the data I had collected up to that date. This (unintentional)

provocative post was not intended to raise a lot of awareness. But it did. It was shared about 100 times through social media and generated very positive comments. Although the authorities did not respond positively, I finally got a response. After four months of desperate chasing but complete silence and ignorance from the town council for mobility, traffic and transport (responsible for the sustainability policy), I got a rather 'unimpressed' WhatsApp message from him critiquing my blog post. After a very long conversation, in which I explained my study to him –again, I also mentioned the forthcoming presentation of my study in Chicago at the Macromarketing conference 2015, he asked for an immediate meeting the next day providing me with more contacts within the town hall and to other responsible in charge of public services concerning urban cycling in Las Palmas.

I learned a very important lesson that day: Science is Marketing and inherently political! As Peter and Olson (1983) already wrote, any scientific idea needs to be marketed to audiences: 'a successful theory is one which is treated seriously and studied by a significant portion of a research community' (Peter and Olson, 1983, p. 112). However, as TCR scholars argue, 'publish[ing]…in peer reviewed journals…hoping that [the] findings will find a way into the hands of the people who can use them' (Ozanne et al., 2011, p.3) is not enough anymore. Academic ideas need to be taken seriously on a practical level in order to have sought after social impact and need to be diffused as such (Ozanne et al., 2011). Especially since Universities are increasingly assessed for its policy impact (ESRC, 2016). Researchers therefore are advised to 'play a more active role in the diffusion of research results' (Ozanne et al., 2011, p.3). In short, marketers should

market their research. In my case I had to train my outreach right from the start for access reasons in order to conduct my research. As a mere PhD student, I had little success in getting information from the authorities. It was necessary to brand and market myself as an international researcher that represents their city abroad. These politics of doing fieldwork (Gubrium and Silverman, 1989, Cunliffe and Alcadipani, 2016, Davies, 1999) are not merely played out through the researcher's writing (Clifford, 1986), but by 'playing the field' (Katz, 1994, p.67) while we are in it.

To my advantage, we were in electoral times and the bicycle was an important protagonist, so I made it with my project into the local newspaper (see Appendix 2) with a daily print run of 20.000 and into a cycling blog with an in-depth interview achieving 5.000 hits on the website and 80 sharings through social media. In fact, some users posted my interview on the online profile of the mobility council. This media presence raised awareness of my presence in the field and when the print issue came out, the mayor invited me for lunch to talk about possibilities to use my study findings in the city's mobility programme. In fact, his political party wanted to pitch for European funding for urban sustainable changes, thus an international study at a prestigious university would have been an important plus factor; especially because the city lacks budget for surveys and studies. It would have been a good deal, a free study for them, policy impact for me. However, the mayor and his political party lost the elections and the party in charge as of July 2015 has not taken a clear position on sustainability policy and the role of the bicycles in the city. Nevertheless, I made so much noise around my project that I got the newly elected traffic council to write and sign a letter of interest

(see Appendix 3) to collaborate with the University of Liverpool in order to pursue the mobility programme. This is something I plan to return to on completion of the PhD.

4.3.1.3   Interviews

Interviews were conducted as first part of a two-stage process. I met with recruited practitioners –whenever possible, before the official interview to hand over and explain the informant sheet and consent form. I gave the practitioners time to think about their participation as I asked for one meeting to conduct the interview and another (or several) meeting(s) to conduct the participant's observation. Once the practitioner returned the signed consent form, we met according to his or her convenience regarding time and place. Accordingly, I conducted interviews mostly out-doors in cafeterias, at the beach, in parks, but also at their work places and in their homes. Interviews ranged between 45-90 minutes and were taped via a voice recorder with the informed consent of my participants.

Nicolini (2009) has emphasised the importance of new forms of interviewing for practice-based studies. In the mix of multiple methods to capture practices in their complexity, he proposes the 'Interview to the Double –ITTD' (Nicolini, 2009, p. 195). As *one* such technique among others out of the 'methodological toolbox' (Nicolini, 2009, p. 196), as Nicolini puts it, the interview 'offers an insight on the criteria used by members to judge the appropriateness of the situated activity… when used in combination with other observational and emic approaches' (p.196). Nicolini uses the example of an employee (practitioner) giving instructions to an imaginary novice

colleague explaining his job-related practices. In doing so, the interview data is supposed to 'provide valuable information as it brings to the surface the moral and normative dimension of practice sustained in interaction by the local community of practitioners' (Nicolini, 2009, p.206). Interviews are recommended to capture the first part of the nexus of sayings and doings, in which sayings are also doings in that 'sayings are a subclass of doings, namely, all doings that say something about something (Schatzki, 2012, p. 15).

Nicolini keeps with the ethnographic tradition that the IITTD pose open-ended questions. In contrast to phenomenological questions, which primarily foreground consumers feelings and emotions (Thompson et al., 1989). Practice-based questions –in line with the objective of representing practices, not individual consumers– target further description of a process or 'information on action' (Madison, 2012, p. 41). Consequently, practice-based questions concentrate on 'how', 'when' and 'what' questions trying to avoid justification-triggering questions (Nicolini, 2009). While Nicolini's account was very inspirational for my interviews, I needed to translate his idea for my purposes from the organizational or working environment to an urban environment and to the need for my research question. What would I need to ask practitioners in order to understand how elements within practices clash? How cycling struggles with other practices? I sat down and looked at my research design. If practices consist of elements, why not design questions according to them?

I initially designed 21 questions oriented at grasping information about material, competence, and meaning of urban cycling in Las Palmas. The

questions encompassed 'knowledge questions' (Madison, 2012, p.41), in which I asked how practitioners started to cycle, when and where and how they acquired knowledge about traffic rules and how they learned to behave in traffic. I asked them 'mini- and grand-tour questions' (Madison, 2012, p. 42), in which practitioners were asked to describe their urban cycling routine as detailed as possible to me, how urban cycling had changed in the city and their observations of how cycling in traffic related to forms of urban moving. Furthermore, I asked them 'experience questions' (Madison, 2012, p.43) – when there was an awkward silence- I told a personal anecdote of my cycling experience first to provide a platform for practitioners to engage with.

During my time in the field, this set of questions evolved and gradually broadened (Glesne, 1999). For example, I witnessed and heard during interviews about harassments of female cyclists in traffic. Consequently, I integrated this topic into the list of questions and with more confidence over time, I moved from semi-structured to unstructured interviews in the form of informal chats to gain in-depth information about urban cycling in LPA. I asked, changed, omitted and added questions appropriate to the flow of the conversation as recommended by Saunders et al. (2009). Furthermore, this interviewing technique enabled spontaneous conversations about urban cycling to turn into interviews and reveal reliable sources, which enriched my data collection and widened my participant selection. However, especially at the beginning of the fieldwork, the prepared set of questions was indispensable to kick-off interviews, keep the conversations rolling and to keep my focus on the topics I had to cover.

4.3.1.4 Observational and Mobile Visual Methods

Capturing the nexus of sayings and doings, practice scholars suggest pairing interviews with observational methods (Schatzki, 2012, Nicolini, 2012). As Spinney (2011) puts it:

> 'the embodied 'doing' of research … foregrounds experiential, affective and material aspects of practice which are often marginalised in less participative modes … we can see how [and] what people do – rather than what they say they do – [this] contests and reproduces wider spatio-temporal orderings' (p.165)

It is quite difficult to purely observe traffic without participating in it and impossible to participate in traffic without observing. Even if I did not ride my bicycle or drove any other vehicle, I still participated as a pedestrian and I witnessed encounters between cyclists and other road users. Hence, I wore my research googles 24/7 while moving around the city never mind what my purposes of moving were.

As a second stage of the process of zooming in, I cycled with my practitioners. My participant observations were about constantly and fast-moving bodies, which made it difficult to capture moments and situations without videotaping. While traditional literature about doing visual ethnography were very helpful in theory, it still suggests working with VHS recorders (Pink, 2001, Belk and Kozinets, 2005). Technology is a fast-moving sector and these accounts refer to work in a static environment and in times where heavy equipment was taken-for-granted. Shadowing cyclists, however, is highly mobile full of 'those fleeting, ephemeral and often embodied and sensory aspects of movement' (Spinney, 2011, p. 162), which require specific techniques and light equipment. My equipment was a small size HD

camera, which I secured on the top of my helmet. The quality of the footage is outstanding, especially as these cameras are developed for taping dynamic movements.

The participant observation was designed to accompany practitioners in their every-day cycling routine. I therefore cycled with them, behind them and sometimes in front of them depending on the trip, pace and the hills we had to conquer. Videotaping was indispensable, as I had to be aware of my own body, my own bicycle the traffic around me, and my movements. Spinney (2011) explains that 'the particular modalities, spatialitiesand pace of certain forms of movement pose significant problems for the researcher with respect to eliciting knowledges in the [setting] of the practice itself' (p.166). My self-awareness within urban traffic, was a problem as I often came home from participant observations with the feeling I had not seen anything because I was not attentive to what my participants did. I (necessarily) had to be so aware of myself in order to be safe. However, as I practiced urban cycling my body already knew what to do and as Spinney (2011) argues, the researcher's body serves as a 'research tool' in its own right (Spinney, 2011, 163). Cycling is embodied knowledge –in performing the practice under study, we convert ourselves into a practitioner and access an unarticulated 'sensory' (Spinney, 2011, p. 163) being there.

Without my third and fourth eye –the camera- participant observation on cycling would not have been possible. Therefore, whenever I had scheduled a participant observation I had to make sure that my technical equipment worked flawlessly. Nevertheless, technical problems did occur on occasions. Especially at the beginning when I tried out my video device, I had problems

finding the right angle and on two observations I taped the ground instead of my practitioners. During another observation I picked one practitioner up from work to film her on the way home. My camera was however not charged enough and refused to work. On this occasion, I tried to take advantage of the opportunity and had a quality conversation with her while cycling home.

Visual material can be very helpful during dynamic participant observations in which I could not concentrate entirely on my participants. The camera captured the journey for detailed post-screening. However, they captured only partial aspects of a practice (Pink, 2001). Doing mobile ethnography (Spinney, 2011) with practitioners represents slices of urban cycling in that there is no such thing as capturing urban cycling in its complexity. Not only because the camera was taped to my head (see fig.7) and therefore the vision of the practitioner could not be grasped, but visual material never stands alone as it becomes only meaningful through my interpretation alongside other methods. Furthermore, within my PhD I had to necessarily represent visual data within a textual document. Which requires taking stills of my video material. This is a highly selective and manipulative act, according to my personal and disciplinary bias where necessarily one of many possible stories is told (Belk and Kozinets, 2005).

Figure 7 - Me during Fieldwork
Source: Marcos Bolanos Photography

4.3.1.5 Diary

Newbury (2001) observes that the blurring of diary and field notes is beneficial as it melts together manifold aspects of the subjective experience of the researcher. Enriching the quality of the data, it shows how feelings, prior experience, thoughts and literature interlink. My Journal illustrates Newbury's description of blurring field notes with subjective reflection. Writing down feelings and emotions arising from concrete situations helped me to understand data from different sources within a larger picture of my personal and professional position towards cycling.

However, my field notes are not only found in a single written document. My diary rather gradually scatters throughout all methods being a vivid blend of a variety of media material in which subjective thoughts and interpretations are captured on video tape, voice recording and notes, private social media and digital communication channels. Especially videotaping made it easy to comment on live-action situations, make connections to other data, and re-live the subjective field experience whenever I needed to. Hence, I would like to extend Newbury's (2001) thoughts on research diaries by saying that a multiple method approach in my study shows how keeping a diary does not necessarily produce a single document that is separate to the data collection. Rather, collecting data *itself* is the diary and thus an active part. Hence, the diary embodies a transcendental activity that is found across the collection activities. This vivid diary is the illustration of what Fetterman (2010) Richardson (2000) and Pink (2001) mean by crystallisation of data as part of my analysis and interpretation. In fact, as thoughts and comments appeared repetitively on videos within situations during the field stay, the scattered

diary helped to detect patterns and intuitive themes and connect them directly to other types of data and literature as I spoke connections out loud.

4.3.2 Zooming out

I could also describe zooming out as the constant accumulation of secondary data. A huge container in which historical documents, statistical reports and urban planning outlines were synthesised. Netnographic methods (i.e. online community research through social networks like Facebook, twitter, YouTube etc.) and documentary data collection (advertisements, newspaper articles etc.), have also been collected, especially during the electoral time in Las Palmas.

4.3.2.1 Tracing the Bicycle in Las Palmas' Past –A Historical Screening

If practices emerge, develop and disappear over time (Shove et al., 2012), how have the mobility practices of Las Palmas developed over time? Did the bicycle ever figure in Las Palmas' past or is it a recent mode of moving in the city? With these questions in mind I went to historical archives and exhibitions in museums that told Las Palmas' urban story, such as 'ciudad y mar' [city and the sea] that ran during March-July. Not only did I gain an important amount of background knowledge about the city's history, I learned a lot about the urban mobility practices that have existed within the city. It is however a challenge to draw the line. The city has a 500-year-old history – where should I start? An overview of all available newspapers quickly revealed that the first archived document started in 1843 –although not containing 'news' as I hoped to find, nor did it exist over a longer time period

let alone issuing on a daily basis. The first printed newspaper that I could identify with was a weekly paper that existed between 1855-68. As the car became more commercialised in the early 20th century, I decided to screen documents before that time to find any possible evidence of bicycles in the city: pictures, advertisements of bicycles or repair shops, urban structures…anything that might reveal urban cycling's existence in the city.

Although I couldn't find much evidence of the bicycle as a prominent and popular form of transport, I did find some evidence of its use. The archive 'Fundacion para la Etnografía y el Desarrollo de la Artesanía Canaria - FEDAC' [Foundations for Ethnography and Development of the Canary Arts and Crafts], containing thousands of historic pictures of the city and its citizens did reveal a postcard where a single cyclist was pictured riding on the footpath in the 19th century. In 1910, the bicycle appears in a tourism newspaper presented as a sport's activity and potential attraction for tourists on the island. Very interestingly I also found an excerpt of the local traffic regulation that bans all 'toys' from the urban streets. Crystallizing this excerpt with the interviews, gave insights into the 'meaning' element of urban cycling. The connection reveals that the bicycle was seen as 'toy' for children and has been banned from the streets. If the bicycle had no legitimacy in traffic in the past, is a possible argument to make about why urban cycling didn't exist in masses, as the bicycle has never been regarded as vehicle.

4.3.2.2   Statistical Data and Documentary Analysis

Due to a lack of budget, the city has not undertaken any surveys since 2011 (see for an existing study EPYPSA, 2011). Obtaining statistical reports from

the town hall therefore was a disappointing task as the amount of data received was rather sparse. However, the town hall did provide some other, more qualitative reports about the recent developments in the city regarding the implementation of policy incentives. This was helpful to have a written reference that states the official objectives and claims of the city's mobility policy regarding sustainability (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2014a). Luckily, the national organization for consumers and users '(OCU)' collects frequent statistics regarding bicycle usage and cycling quality, in which Las Palmas was frequently ranked. Nevertheless, questions as to how many people actually have bicycles in LPA and if there is a rise in bicycle owners in the city in numbers were left unanswered. Other documents, addressing the competence dimension of the practice approach came from different sources. I received major information from one of my participants being one of the police officers on bicycle patrolling the city. He supported my study with confidential internal information and documents that normally are inaccessible to the public. Through him I also gained access to local documents regarding regulations, norms and fines otherwise not available. Other statistical reports such as the one of the town hall's service 'Limonium' responsible for teaching cycling courses. The company provided quantitative (descriptive) data that illustrated the rising demand for urban cycling courses. Moreover, newspaper also contributed to the collection of statistical data. Especially during the electoral time that took place during the field stay, articles addressed urban cycling frequently. Hence, data regarding a variety of topics, such as the public bicycle service 'ByBike' have been published. The secondary data added substantial knowledge to my study in that it

mapped out the descriptive and regulative grounds on which urban cycling takes place in the city.

4.3.2.3 Netnography

'Our social worlds are going digital' Kozinets (2010, p. 1) states and argues his case at book length about the merging social and digital life. This is mirrored in my data collection. Although Kozinets insists on 'an explicit human window' (p. 80) in studying online communities, I believe that Netnography can add to the study of practices just as well. The 'significant amount of the data collected and participant-observational research conducted originates in and manifests through the data shared freely on the internet, including mobile applications' (Kozinets, 2010, p. 79) can entail posts and debates about material and non-human entities belonging to practices just like any other negotiation or sharing of norms, instructions, processes, or actions in any format. As Kozinets (2010) puts it: 'Nethnography's focus and forte has always been the myriad communicative acts and interactions flowing through the Internet…these can be textual, graphic, photographic, audio-visual, musical…' (p.80). In this spirit I screened media interactions through Social Media channels such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, where I joined groups such as 'bicicletas robadas en Gran Canaria' and '20 pulgadas', subscribed to newsfeeds of activist's and bicycle shops' hang out and interacted on their fan pages, followed and interacted with political leaders and government institutions through their Social Media profiles, visited local blogs that covered debates about urban cycling in the city such as Las Palmas en Bici and Atlantic Paranoid, as well as comments

on digital articles on newspaper websites. As mentioned above this was an inseparable activity from my private internet surfing, running throughout the fieldwork but started way before my physical stay in the field and is still on-going after having left the field. My WhatsApp messenger became such an indispensable communication medium that I would call my approach 'Whatsethnography' or 'Appnography.' WhatsApp integrated media, documents and linked to all other social media in single and group chats with participants, friends and family. It also helped to keep track of schedules, pictures and to order data in a chronicle manner. Conversations within Social Media and Websites from users, cycling organisations, shops, clubs, and any other circulating information about urban cycling in Las Palmas from institutions that relate and possibly impact on cycling have been grasped through this dynamic technique.

4.4   Practice-based Data Analysis

The multiple methods approach in practice-based ethnography further requires a data analysis that synthesises the plethora of data to satisfy the elementary character of practices (Nicolini, 2012). In making connections between these elements, the practice framework helps to unravel the hidden character of practices, as it is in the relationships among elements that we discover how practices and practice bundles operate (Schatzki, 2001, 2012 Shove et al., 2012). Apart from guiding the researcher through the practice-based fieldwork, ethnography helps the researcher to craft the 'interpreted (etic)…significance' (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994, p.485) through 'thick descriptions' (Geertz 1973, p.3-30) of a practice, including those of the

researcher's experiences in the field. The researcher's experience cannot be underplayed as '[s]he has been living [her] analyses, testing them not only by observation and interview but also by daily living' (Glaser and Strauss, 2006, p. 225). In the practice-based spirit, Glaser and Struass quote needs to be extended in saying that the researcher performs practices converting herself into a practitioner and therefore accesses the same doings and sayings as the participating practitioners under study. It is therefore important to emphasize, that ethnography is not only a collection of methods, but a methodology in its own right (Pink, 2001).

In contrast to positivistic analysis claiming 'triangulation' (Saunders et al., 2009) of data, ethnographic analysis argues that data should be 'crystallized' (Fetterman, 2010, p.110). While triangulation suggests three symmetrical, static sides of data comparison, the shape of a gemstone is enigmatic and iridescent. Richardson (2000) suggests, that qualitative data analysis is best compared with the shape of a crystal in making up the metaphor of the oscillating researcher between voices of participants, their visual capturing, spatial observations, statistics, documentary and historical data, field notes, diaries and literature. The form of a mineral is never finished but rather changing over time and looks different from different viewpoints: 'Crystals grow, change, alter, but are not amorphous [they] reflect externalities and reflect within themselves, creating different colours, patterns and arrays casting off in different directions. What we see depends upon our angle of repose. Not triangulation, crystallisation' (Richardson 2000, p.934). In doing so, the researcher interprets the data in critically bridging his own view and ideas with theory (Belk, 2006, Peñaloza and Cayla, 2007, Spiggle, 1994,

Silverman, 2000, Coffey and Atkinson, 1996, Denzin and Lincoln, 1994). This, as Moisander and Valtonen (2006) put it 'means that data and theory are put in a dialogue, and understandings emerge through an iterative process of matching up data and theory, where ideas and preliminary interpretations are tested, challenged and revised' (p. 105).

The data analysis started with the verbatim transcription of interviews in Spanish with help of the F5 Programme. As I went along, I commented on quotes and thought-connected them to other quotes, literature, visual- and online data I had present in my memory. Once on paper, I printed the roundabout 350 typed pages out and re-read them alongside the video material. Every participant observation was watched with its corresponding interview and screenshots of emerging themes were captured. Simultaneously, I created a mind map with emerging themes on post-its, gave each theme a number and categorized each quote to the themes by numbering them. Once each quote was coded, I created a classification tree by cutting out the quotes with scissors, allocating them to each theme on a flip chart. In this step, I read the data once again to check and change categories if necessary. I could get a grasp of what category is discussed and had ideas of how to deal with overlapping categories. The video material was allocated in the same manner embodying a reiterative process in which I created progressively more categories while oscillating between the two data sets.

Once I had categorized interview and video material I woven in historical data, netnographic accounts and field diary. After I had identified the main themes, I re-initiated the reading process and added literature into the

analysis. Gradually, I created my own 'crystal' (Richardson, 2000), which grew, formed and changed itself progressively during the analysis process. Important and helpful were at this point the action hierarchies in figure 2 that helped to scale and gradually sum up details within the data to eventually arrive at the phenomena under study, or as Moisander and Valtonen (2006) put it: 'when we carry out data analysis, we … try to understand the phenomena that constitute the focus of interest in the study' (p.102). It may seem odd that in today's high-tech time, I chose to do the analysis the 'old fashioned' (Saldaña, 2009, p. 22) way. However, dealing with my data with pen and paper gave me what Saldaña (2009) calls 'control over and ownership of the work' (p.22). He argues that getting our hands dirty in working with qualitative data on both, hard copy and screen enables to 'explore the data in fresh ways' (p.22).

Alongside this process, I kept notes about the transcription and analysis procedure including thoughts, ideas and emotions that emerged. This gave me also a place for writing about frustrating moments especially during the seemingly endless transcription and when the data clustering was overwhelming. Note taking also allowed me to capture memories of certain moments within the interviews, which I coded under a specific number. This retainer of reflexive thoughts during the analysis helped writing up the finding section, in which I aimed to wave self-reflexive thoughts into. Moisander and Volton (2006) describe taking notes as useful familiarization with the data and important first step of the interpretation process: 'the first step in working on the vague and intuitive preliminary ideas that they get is to write them down, to name them and to give them form. Often a mere taking of a note

can be a prod to start thinking more carefully' (p. 122).

As the practice framework already provides mayor categories according to the entailing elements, I had to sum up the subthemes identified accordingly. This was very helpful, as the primary aim was to detect connections between the big categories through subthemes. This task revealed a highly conflicted relationship between the elements of urban cycling and revealed major struggles for the life of the practice. Through the framework I developed this half deductive half interpretive analysis, hence the framework was useful to 'remember the connection between theory, design … and data analysis from the beginning (Johnson, 1998, p. 153).

4.5   The Ethics and Politics of Studying and Representing Practices

> 'As we scrutinise practices, we must attend to two activities simultaneously: (1) the practices we aim to investigate; (2) the practices through which we attempt to re-present them (i.e., our representational activities and vocabulary). This holds both for practitioners and social scientists. The differences between the two being that while practitioners usually thematise contentious aspects of practices (e.g., broken rules; shifts of meanings; recalcitrant tools), social scientists strive for panoramic descriptions – an expectation that in turn stems from the current practices of their scholar community. (Nicolini and Monteiro, 2017, p.107)

Nicolini and Monteiro point to the political and ethical dimensions of studying and representing practices. As with any kind of ethnographic research, practice-based ethnography emphasizes self-reflexivity of the researcher within knowledge production and representation (Tadajewski and Brownlie, 2008). Since the researcher is the one that collects the data, unravels it and traces connections, there is a need to acknowledge if she was driven by social good will or rather scholarly peer pressure, funding and publications? If

the relationship between the researcher and the practice under study is mediated by scholarly practices with their own ends, task and purposes (Schatzki, 2012), the practices she participates in when entering the field might clash with the ones under study (Madison, 2012, Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007), we ought to take an ethical stance in critically and consistently questioning and screening 'our integrity…and political commitment…in the process of questioning and interacting with others' (Madison, 2012, p. 112).

Firstly, this is important because the researcher is an active part of the research and thus herself a participant of the practice under study –after all, within our data collection 'there is no alternative to hanging out with, joining in with, talking to and watching, and getting together [with] the people concerned (Schatzki, 2012, p.24). As an active part of the research, 'our intuition, senses, and emotions…are powerfully woven into and inseparable from the process' (Madison 2012, p.21), which will permeate through the engagement with and representation of our practices and practitioners. We interfere with our own beliefs and biases in a world of others, with possible 'provocative [questions and] the potential to unsettle the taken-for-granted, to open critical awareness, and to remember what was forgotten' (Madison, 2012, p.112). In doing so there is potential emotional, professional and political harm we can cause to participants, and gatekeepers that might have consequences for other researchers entering the field in the future (Madison, 2012).

Secondly, the harm researchers can cause through active fieldwork can equally be done through our written representation. It is a powerful task to decide how we represent what and who we have witnessed. Crystallization acknowledges the interpretation necessary for what Van Maanen (1988, p.4) calls 'deskwork' or 'headwork', which entails the researcher's subjective selection and representation of data. Because of the dispersed nature of practices and consequently the data collected, interpretation and representation are centre-staged in practice-based Ethnography (Nicolini, 2012, Schatzki, 2012). In order to take ethical responsibility for the written representation, Madison (2012) suggests an explicit 'positionality' (p. 20) of the researcher, in order to reveal one's own professional and cultural biases and political opinion that influence data interpretation. In doing so, the researcher makes her fieldwork and representation 'accessible, transparent, and vulnerable to judgment and evaluation [and] accountable for its consequences and effects.' (Madison 2012, p. 20). Madison's idea is very close to the 'accessist' notion of Schatzki's definition of the relation between the researcher and the practice under study in which 'none of us is purely an individual but a subject in continual formation with others' (Madison 2012, p. 21). While Madison's 'others' refers to purely human relationships, practice-based Ethnography would understand 'others' as the relationships between the various elements practices encompass and their bundles, i.e. how will my scholarly practices and commitments influence the representation of the practice I have studied? Albeit practices entail not only practitioners, self-reflexivity in ethical debates emphasizes the potential harm brought to beings –human and non-humans.

The debate about the positionality of the researcher raises the question of how the researcher can write herself into the practice narrative. While 'autoethnographic' (Larsen, 2014, p. 59) practice has been an inacceptable aspect of ethnographic writing in the past (Reed-Danahay, 2001), contemporary accounts argue that 'we cannot disentangle the personal demands of presentation of self…from the question of what one should do 'in the name of science' (Atkinson and Delamont, 2010, p. 16). Consequently, the importance of style of writing in Ethnography has been emphasized by numerous scholars (Van Maanen 2011, 2010, 1995, Golden-Biddle and Locke, 2007, Jarzabowski and Bednarek 2014). Nicolini (2009b) for example argues that:

> Studying practice is two-pronged and is far from solved once we choose and feel comfortable with a particular way of approaching the field. Both words 'ethnography' and 'ergonography' (the neologism proposed by the author to describe the study of practice) implicitly refer to the need to translate the finding into a textual form. Re-presenting practice is thus the combined effect of both observational and textualization activities, and the choice of the literary genre is just as consequential for the way in which practice is translated into discourse as is the way in which we study it (p. 206)

The cautious advice follows his quote not to be drowned in 'realist tales' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.47), in which the researcher vanishes from the scene. As fieldwork and the process of interpretation is highly active and subjective, there is no point in banishing ourselves from the representation through 'passive voice, indicating that someone 'was asked', attempting to elide the reality that the asker was the writer' (Atkinson and Delamont, 2010, p. 16). The usage of the first person –an active 'I', is therefore legitimate as we reveal 'a vigilant reflexive stance to the process of writing' (Nicolini, 2009,

p.206). In giving ourselves a self-reflexive author's voice we craft ourselves as an active part of the research process, situating 'where *we* are… as well, where others are' (Lawless, 1992, p. 302). The challenge is to craft 'impressionist tales' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.96), defined as 'evocative accounts of everyday … life, in which the researcher is embedded' (Cunliffe, 2010, p.226) but not too 'confessional' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.73) nor too 'realist' (Van Maanen, 2011, p.45).

Although the practice-based ontology and chosen theoretical frameworks inform our general and initial idea about how to start our research journey in the field, Ethnography allows us to flex these boundaries through our experience in the field. Madison (2012) elegantly argues that 'theory may inspire and guide, but it is a methodological process that directs and completes the task' (p. 28). Ethnography is a question of being in the right place at the right time and as we strive for insights in the field, we necessarily expand theoretical 'foreshadows' (Atkinson and Hammersley, 2007 p. 21) by integrating other theoretical concepts that we discover throughout the research journey. Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) call this 'opportunistic' (p.28) research. My study follows the AAA guidelines (Madison 2012), i.e. making the research as transparent as possible for those that participate in it and seeking their informed consent, being discrete about confidential information and make anonymous participant's identities and characteristics of identities. These guidelines have been approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Liverpool (see Appendix 4).

However, as my study is about urban cycling, most of the engagement with practitioners took place in traffic. My data thus entails an important ethical

concern: the breaking of rules. During my study, I have taped my participants committing infractions. From light to very severe and almost causing accidents, I have been testimony to infractions and committed infractions myself. All of them are on tape. The implicated confidentiality of the data needs special reflection: both about my participants and me as the researcher. Beyond the protection of identity, data and infractions, there are questions about physical safety within research on urban cycling. I have been, more than once in situations where my own safety was at risk and had to stop cycling while my participant rode away. In others, I had dangerous encounters with road participants that threatened me. As I reacted to protect myself interrupting the data collection, did I miss out on important data in putting my safety first? In a necessarily dynamic and exposed discipline like urban cycling, is it even possible to be safe? Can we collect authentic data without putting ourselves at risk? How will I represent this data? Discursive data can be anonymized, but when taking stills from videos will I have to out-photoshop his/her face? I encountered ignorance and rude treatment by an important informant and gatekeeper –how would I represent him without showing my personal bias? Moreover, I had to deal with and balance confidential information in order to gain access on the one hand and to build rapport on the other.

4.6   Reflexive Reflections

Revealing my personal background and professional motivations for this study, it is important to emphasise that my background is German. This PhD study is about cycling as marginalised practice *in Spain*. Germany is known as one of the top 10 most cycle friendly countries with 57% population actually using the bicycle for transportation. It might therefore not be exaggerated to say that I might have a 'preconceived idea' (Spinney, 2007, p.189) about what cycling 'should' be and how it ought to be done. I am an urban cyclist by nature. In fact, before I could even walk I already knew what it is like to get on the saddle as I grew up in the child bike seat on my mother's bicycle. Onward, I cycled with training wheels on my pink Puky bike and further on my blue mountain bike, which I still have.

With the described attitude, I assumed at the start of my fieldwork that it would be easy to maintain my position as researcher; due to my knowledge about urban cycling. Although I knew the field, when it comes to urban cycling, I still felt like a stranger researching the community. My fieldwork started off really well as my data collection went by smoothly. In the initial euphoria about the successful take-off, I didn't mind the difficulties I encountered. But with time, I did mind that I had difficulties storing my bicycle. I did mind the local road rage, although until it happened to me I just heard stories about it and thought. As a responsible, trained and experienced 'German' cyclist this wouldn't happen to me because I knew how to behave on the streets. Turns out, I did not know anything. The fieldwork and the resulting insights changed me and my position within it. I got deeply integrated into the community and I was no longer 'the other' I became one of

'us'. In fact, at the start of the fieldwork I didn't consider myself a committed activist, I gradually turned into one in the course of recruitment and rapport building. The negotiation of different roles of the researcher within ethnography has been discussed interdisciplinary (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988, Weber, 2001) and consequently the benefits and limitations of 'going native…[or]…going academic' (Fuller, 1999, p.223) debated (Katz, 1992, Stanley and Wise, 1993, Geertz, 1973, Brannick and Coghlan, 2007).

The active role of the researcher as 'activist' in order to effect social change during the course of fieldwork has received positive arguments (Fuller, 1999, Katz, 1994, Calderon, 2004, Ward, 2007, Bettany and Woodruff, 2009, Ozanne et al., 2011, Siplon, 2014, Cohen, 2010). My role changed on the one hand because I related more and more personally to the witnessed frustration of my participants being trapped within a marginalised practice. I experienced the same situations as my participants. By performing the practice and I shared their practical concerns as well as their anger. On the other hand, I had the unique opportunity to gain access to political events and meetings regarding urban cycling in Las Palmas in joining the local activists, which added a new perspective to how I thought about my project. I was on to discover a highly political problem and wanted to participate in resolving it. Siplon (2014) describes her 'road from scholar to activist [that] once you know, you are responsible' (p. 483), which happened to me in the course of my fieldwork. Through hours of interviews and meet ups, hanging out with my participants made me realize that my project could give voice to practitioners that had been ignored for a long time and argue for a topic that on an international level is still ridiculed. Maybe, I could be part of the solution

to the local problem; in using and sharing my project to return to my participant the attention they had paid to my questions. Instead of concentrating on using my insights exclusively for my academic output, the privileged access to information should be used to 'eliminate the problems we uncover' (Siplon, 2014, p. 489). In Katz (1992) words:

> To ignore our implications in the strategies of domination that inhere in all modes of representation [and fieldwork] is not only irresponsible, but ultimately disables political engagement with the structures of dominance and power (p.496)

While the detached, objective researcher and the activist have been held segregated in the past, Fuller (1999) argues for a

> 'space in which constant reassessment, renegotiation and repositioning of a researcher's various [roles] allows the development of a collaborative position…though various forms of dialogue and struggle…this space necessarily involves the removal of artificial boundaries between researcher, activist…and person [proposing] instead movement between [them] in order to facilitate engagement between and within them' (p.223-226).

Fuller (1999) illustrates further how he negotiated his roles as activist researcher in the field contributing as a 'catalyst' (p.226) to the community he was studying. He brought voices of one party together with another and mediated solutions and ideas for change and development. His account reflects exactly what I have done, too. I shared insights and quotes of participants about problems I encountered while cycling through the city with a local activist organisation representing them from a practice angle. For instance, when I framed bicycle theft as police duty not as an individual problem in tackling obstacles for urban cycling, I sensitized the activists to social aspects of urban cycling, which were less treated than infrastructural and material changes in the city. By showing them how severe the situation

is for urban cyclists and bicycle shops, programmes presented to politicians started to become multidimensional and with the installation of the public bicycle service, bicycle theft was number one on the political agenda to deal with as stealing increased with the launch of the service. With my data, I made the case for a social issue that before was ignored, ridiculed and categorized as unimportant for the promotion of urban cycling.

The example highlights the conversion from observing to contributing, which has been critiqued as threatening the validity-, credibility- and replicability of academic studies (Stanley and Wise, 1993). As this is however not a positivist PhD, there is no claim made about any of these as explained in section 2.3. In fact, Fuller (1999) argues that the awareness of coping with different roles inherent in activist research, implies three beneficial aspects, which collide with Hogg and Maclaran's (2008) arguments mentioned earlier:

> 'through transparency of thought and reflection [of the context in which data was collected] the researcher interacts with his positioning and roles… this critical engagement allow[s] academics to play a greater role in effecting social change' (Fuller, 1999, p.222)

These authors encourage academics to be active in undertaking fieldwork as (Simmons et al., 1976, p.84) state 'the real world requires involvement in social change…as part of the problem, we must participate in the solution' and emphasise that 'taking sides…in support of [the disadvantaged] maybe…the most ethical option' (Siplon, 2014, p. 483).

So, active is how I undertook my fieldwork. But active not only through channelling my data to key audiences, but active as in physical activity. I couldn't resist taking on every opportunity to conduct interviews, participant

observation and participate in events. At any time, I was available for everything and everyone. Always on the saddle and always present. In my busiest week, I participated in a race cycling training with one of my participants although I had caught a cold and couldn't breathe through my nose. Towards the end of the fieldwork I was physically and mentally exhausted.

Snow (1980) talks about this stage as the 'disengagement process' (p. 100) where the ethnographer cannot let go of the data accumulation process although he is saturated through repetitive field notes –and in some cases– physical exhaustion. Palmer (1996) argues that it is only 'by actively participating in the painful practices of everyday life that the agony of cycling becomes comprehensible' (p.135). I agree. The embodied experience is key to understand the essence of the practice. However, her account deals with race cyclists and refers exclusively on to the experienced muscle pain. I would like to extend her thought by adding that urban cycling as one of many mobility practices entails mental exhaustion, too.

As I wrote in my journal:

> *I am tired of getting screamed at every day from ignorant car drivers. I am tired to be in dangerous situations frequently. I am tired of being forced to drive defensively although I have right of way. I am tired of becoming aggressive and screaming back. I am tired of not being able to leave my bicycle anywhere outside because there are no bicycle racks –anywhere. I am tired of police officers that just don't care about cyclists' safety and frankly don't care about traffic education. I am tired of arrogant politicians and their attitude towards sustainability. (Diary 18.08.2015)*

Body and mind go together, so in the case of collecting data in a physically challenging field research, can we stop when we are mentally saturated? When a police car almost hit me and the officers reprimanded me although I had right of way, I certainly reached my saturation level. I have to admit that in my imagination I smashed my bicycle into more than one front bumper and every time something happened, my imagination got progressively more brutal. This was when I decided to take a step back from the field concentrating on regaining strength, both physically and mentally. Nevertheless, there is no clear cut or leaving the field as such. Social Media, Skype and WhatsApp make it possible to understand the field as what Vivanco (2013) describes a 'constructed set of relationships and social settings that every …ethnographic research[er] works hard to…create and cultivate (p.18).

4.7   Are sustainability projects sustainable?

To do justice to my critical and reflexive take-on of this thesis, I would like to add a critical paragraph about the sustainability of this project to challenge the binary character of what is considered sustainable and unsustainable. In a footnote in section 1.1 I have mentioned the thought that sustainability and unsustainability might be closer related than the words initially suggest, namely the exclusivity of one or the other. In reality however, these binary oppositions go hand in hand and might even condition each other (Bettany and Kerrane, 2011). Just as Bettany and Kerrane (2011) with their example of hen keeping illustrate how consumerism enables anti-consumption, I find that without unsustainable consumption my project about sustainability would

not have been possible. I have consequently calculated my carbon footprint on wwf.org.uk, which I will list below.

First and foremost Gran Canaria is accessible by plane and boat exclusively, hence instead of cycling all the way from UK to Spain (which is a tempting idea for when there is no time pressure). Flights to and from Gran Canaria to the University of Liverpool in UK (or other universities), Germany and the US (for conferences) throughout these 3 years is about 11,000 Kg. The MacBook Pro on which I am typing these lines sums 710 Kg of carbon. The electronic devices necessary to undertake my mobile Ethnography (one camera, a GoPor, a mobile phone and a voice recorder) sum up to 1,200 Kg of carbon. The production costs of my bicycle are unknown, however, riding my bike burns calories, and production footprints of my diet also count. Thorpe and Keith (2016) have argued that a meat based paleo diet can drive cycling 'emissions' up and comparable to the impact of an electric car with single occupancy. Considering such influencing issues and factors, boundaries of sustainability and unsustainability blur. As my diet is rather vegetarian I add another 123,5 Kg of carbon for the 1.300 kilometres ridden (with 0.95 Kg carbon per kilometre cycled). The carbon footprint of my project sums up to 13,033.5 Kg over a 3,5 years period. This amount presupposes the existence of 3 planets if every habitant globally conducted my project. Since even research on sustainability can go through stages of unsustainable consumption, it is worthwhile asking if studies on sustainability make sense if we cannot be one without the other? Surely there are different answers possible. I have tried to convincingly outline the motivations of a PhD journey. Not all of them are activist but not all of them are scholarly political either. I

believe that only if we scrutinize our status quo we can say something meaningful about it –even if we have to do what we are actually trying to avoid in the meantime.

4.8 Limitations and Benefits of a Practice Ontology

Although the practice-based approach offers a great alternative to analysing consumption and responds well to the current debates in consumer research, the strings attached with the ontological commitment entail limitations as well. The benefits and limitations will be explained in the following:

Structured Research Design

The practice-based approach offers a structured way to create the study's research design. This is due to the explicit ontological assumption in which the unit of analysis is outlined. The conceptual definition of the practice elements delineates the scope of what could be investigated and allowed selecting the corresponding methods. Through mapping out the fieldwork, novice researchers like me, have a concrete starting point in undertaking their data collection. Once established, the research design worked as a guideline for the fieldwork.

Concrete data collection and fieldwork

As result of the concrete guidance of the research design of zooming in and out, aligning methods in correspondence and coherence with the ontological assumption was made feasible. The design of interviewing questions for example was a lot easier by reference to the single practice elements. Of course, this technique was built for myself and is open for adjustments as

every researcher brings in particular preferences on how to plan (or not to plan) fieldwork. I have noticed that challenges and unforeseen events are much easier to overcome and integrate with some concrete agenda, which then can be altered or omitted. As Atkinson and Hammersley (2007) argue: 'research design is crucial to ethnography, but … it is not a matter of following methodological rules, nor can all the problems be anticipated, or for that matter resolved (p. 20-21).

Data analysis and representation

I like to compare this part with the light at the end of the tunnel. Practice-based research pre-structures the data analysis according to the framework chosen. As practice elements are pre-defined (material, meaning and competence), the overarching categories of the data outcome are already given. Although this might seem highly deductive, it is helpful to filter the huge amount of data, which can be a relief in the first rounds of coding. Especially valuable was this aspect for me when I dealt with data paralysis in handling small and detailed codes. Although being somewhat deductive, practice-based research emphasizes the relationship *between* the practice features, which is a helpful guidance through the analysis process and making sense of the data. The relational character of practices was picked up as well through the data collection. For example, when looking at the material element, I could grasp data that possibly could be categorized as meaning and competences. This occurred between all of the elements. The downside of this relational character, however, is that it is challenging to detangle data. That is to say, the separation of quotes or pictures into codes is tricky as they

are so closely related. Hence, coding supposed radical decisions of where to include data to avoid repetition as it fitted into multiple elements.

Intensity of Fieldwork and Volume of Data Collection

The downside of several practice features is the huge amount of data accumulated. This is exacerbated by making use of different recording devices and media channels. The plethora of types of data (visual –still and moving, spoken word converted to text, screenshots of text out of social media etc.), makes its representation within a text document tricky.

Representational Challenges

One of the biggest challenges in doing practice-based research was the representation of these practices and their bundles in a narrative that meets the ontological assumptions. The claimed distribution of agency in 'decentralizing' the individual through writing is a problem. Especially interesting is the fact that this limitation varies according to the language used. While in the English language the attribution of agency is problematic because material entities by logic cannot be personalized or have character in academic writing. This however is in opposition with the claims made in the reviewed articles that argue for decentralization of agency. Hence, how best to represent this matter in writing? In the German and Spanish language for example, the attribution of agency to non-human and material features is categorized as a particular literary style in the Romantic epoch, in which for instance mountains and trees began to speak, feel, move or do any other activity (Mahoney, 2004). Writing in English was therefore difficult to describe the story of the practice and how their relationship are supposed to have

agency. Thus, it was odd to write about the 'suffering practice', or the 'unprotected element'. Through the language barrier in English, it seems, eventually that scholarly texts -non-fictional texts- will foreground the human agency. While material arrangements will be represented as passive 'dupes' although it has been argued that they do have agency. How to overcome these literary ties?

Relational Character of the practice features

Another representational challenge is the relational character of the practice features. Everything is entwined and related to each other, which is especially important when describing a particular theme. Nicolini (2012) argues in this regard that 'practices are famously recalcitrant when it comes to being transposed in a text. This is because practices are extremely capable of speaking for themselves, and they [do] not need to be verbalized in order to exist' (p.218). I had difficulties in representing practices, due to the rigid frameworks that predefine the categories necessary to describe my unit of analysis. It was therefore tricky to represent each element on its own and then in relation to others, which made the narrative somewhat repetitive. Hence, the downside of the pre-definition of what was helpful for the data analysis is restrictive in the writing up process. Nicolini argues in this regard: 'Practice theory should…set a stage and establish a set of specific characters without then prescribing ex ante how the story should, or would unfold' (p.218). I have therefore decided not to present each element separated as single accounts. Instead, I have tried to concentrate on the inductive sub themes that emerged within the main categories and aimed to craft a coherent and flowing narrative that works and represents the single

elements but within the bigger picture in connection to each other and to other practices. In doing so I was able to use the framework to creatively 'construct specific local stories, explanations, and further theories' (Nicolini, 2012, p.218).

4.8.1 Reflections on the Politics of Paradigmatic Choices

The justification of one's paradigmatic choice is not merely for the sake of a thorough research process, it is a political move to position and label oneself in order to belong to a research community. Branding myself by saying 'I am a (insert your chosen belief system here)' implies automatically that 'I am not a (insert your chosen belief system here)' and vice versa. Throughout my annual progress reports, conferences and seminars, I found that coming out as a practice-based researcher was not always well received within the interpretivist community. Being, 'a recognized paradigmatic category' (Thompson et al., 2013, p. 151), the institutionalization of CCT tends to exclude other than interpretivist paradigmatic approaches in joining the community (Moisander, 2009a). O'Shaughnessy's (2009) argument comes convincing to mind as he argues that

> 'in academia there is…groupthink, with faculties often selected based on the likeliness in perspective…the result is…intellectual incest prone to the PLU syndrome [only 'People like Us]…perhaps it is needed to be said to remind us of how perspectives grounded in our commitments guide our judgement' (p.18).

But if the academic spirit is to question the status quo and thus belief systems, why do we need to come out as (insert your chosen belief system here)? And if we have positioned ourselves as (insert your chosen belief system here), can this position change over time?

For this PhD, I follow a practice-based approach discussed above because it offered me the ability to address literature gaps and helped me to answer the questions that arose during my fieldwork. I also believed that the practice approach offered me a unique positioning to start off as a young researcher. Furthermore, the practice approach provided me with new, useful ways of designing the research, entering the field with a concrete guideline despite being an open-ended framework. Nevertheless, I would prefer not to chain myself to any paradigmatic approach early on in my career. Restricting myself to one belief system for the future might prevent me from exploring new social challenges from necessary alternative perspectives. In this sense, I rather remain free to switch between paradigms according to my posed research problem, for

> 'every…paradigm …in the social sciences is a way of seeing and not seeing; answering different questions or offering different windows onto a problem, with some windows clearer than others, depending on the questions being addressed.' (O'Shaughnessy 2009, p.17).

5   Findings

This chapter presents the field data under three categories according to the structure of practices emerging from the literature, namely the elements of 'meaning', 'material' and 'competences'. Using the zooming in approach, each element was examined to identify the composition of urban cycling's resources in detail. Using the zooming out approach, the relationships of urban cycling to other practices were traced. The representation of urban cycling's elements, however, blends these three categories because aspects about one practice element automatically reveals insights about another and vice versa. Moreover, zooming in and -out are inseparable stages and inherently transpire as such from the data. The chapter is thus best understood as a nexus of interconnected information. Consequently, the results flow within narratives that are allocated broadly under the outlined elements.

The Chapter starts with a fictive, evocative, composite narrative (section 5.1) about the fictive character 'Luna', a young professional, who is accompanied throughout her day resembling a typical performance of urban cycling in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. The story draws from all data sources to give an impression of what will be explored in detail in the remainder of the chapter.

5.1   A slice of life: performing urban cycling in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

It is 8 am on a warm but cloudy Monday morning in Las Palmas. Luna, 34, she has just got herself ready for work and grabs her rubbish old mountain bike, which she stores inside her living room behind the sofa. When leaving

her apartment on the 16th floor, she leans her bike on the wall so that she can lock the door and call the elevator. As she pushes the button, her elderly neighbour steps out of his apartment. He tries to pass her bicycle. In doing so, his zimmer frame gets caught in the front wheel. Luna pulls the bicycle towards her and for a moment it seems like both are engaging in a tug of war until finally the zimmer frame pulls out. Grumpily mumbling 'bicis' [bicycles], the neighbour claims the elevator first and Luna has to wait for another 10 minutes before it returns empty. Finally, she can start with her daily procedure - lifting the front wheel, shoving and squeezing the bike into the elevator. Every day, the bicycle is positioned differently. Sometimes it fits perfectly leaving some space between her and the frame, other times she needs to backbend and twist a little. Today, it does not enter particularly well and when she slips through the space to pull it out on the ground floor, she stains her blazer. 'Joder' [strong language expression] she says as she steps out.

Outside, she salutes the doorman of her building. 'Lunita con la bici' [little Luna with her bicycle] he says a little patronisingly. Luna pulls a long face, hops onto the saddle, takes a short ride on the footpath towards the junction and cycles onto the big three-lane road. Occupying the right-hand lane at rush hour, a lot of cars overtake her and a couple of them honk when she tries to change lanes in order to turn left. Her route to work includes a short stretch on the newly painted bicycle lane. However, the lane, which is one way, leads in the opposite direction of the rest of the traffic. Luna starts to look scared. Although she has the right of way, cars often stray into the bike lane at intersections and she slows down before every junction to ensure that she can continue safely. From time to time, cyclists ignore the unidirectional character of the bike lane and use it illegitimately. Instead of riding steadily with car traffic, they use the bike path in the opposite direction riding straight towards Luna. Some of them go around her briefly joining the car traffic – where they supposed to ride- to avoid collision with her but under heavy protest and honks from car drivers. Others wiggle their way through by riding up and down the footpath. Luna shakes her head, and looks annoyed when yet another car driver gets upset when one of the cyclists enters what he

perceives as his territory. 'Qué desastre' [what a disaster] she mumbles 'todos los dias lo mismo' [every day the same]. The bicycle lane abruptly stops without any integration into the other street traffic 'que raro' [how weird] she thinks, 'has estado en algo que era tuyo y de repente ya no es tuyo' [you have just been on something that was yours and suddenly it is not yours anymore]. Luna finds herself at a red traffic light but doesn't stop. Instead she looks to her left and right and then continues ahead right into a side street and onto a big avenue.

Having arrived at her office building, she looks around checking for a place to park the bicycle. Due to building work in her office, the space at the end of the corridor where she used to park her bike during office hours is currently not accessible. There are no parking facilities outside the office. Luna locks her bicycle with two bike locks to the opposite side of the street fence where she can observe it from her window. She carefully secures the front wheel, back wheel and frame. During the day, she sits restless, looking down to her bicycle frequently. In the afternoon she needs to attend a meeting so she asks her colleague at the desk in front of her to keep an eye on her bicycle while she is away. Her colleague nods, smiles and teases her 'comprate una buena candado' [buy yourself a good lock]. At the end of her working day, her bicycle is still there, but when Luna tries to unlock it one of the locks has clearly been tampered with and some spokes of the back wheel are deformed. Luna knits her brows, takes off the locks and pushes her saddle back and forth to see if her back wheel still turns smoothly. It does not. On the terrace of the cafeteria next door two police officers sip coffee. One of them sees Luna and asks if she has a problem with her bike. Luna explains. They are not surprised and tell her she should better not leave her bike outside, they also comment casually that she ought to 'buy a better lock'. Luna looks at them for a short while, shakes her head, turns away and mumbles with irony 'gracias por el consejo' [thanks for the advice]. Because buses are the only public transportation mode in the city, which do not allow bicycles on board, Luna pulls out her mobile phone and calls her best friend who owns a car. After half an hour, her friend pulls over and helps Luna to

transport the bicycle to one of the few bicycle shops on the other side of town.

When they enter the shop, the owner is busy serving some race-cyclists. Luna knows the owner already. The bicycle group in the city is small, definitely not enough to make a profitable business out of it, as the shop owner complains while he examines Luna's bike. She needs to leave it overnight in the shop. When she turns around to exit, a young fellow enters the shop. His face is red and he yells some strong language while pointing to a paper in his hand. The shop owner nods when the young man leaves some flyers with a picture of a blue bicycle at the reception –his bike has just been stolen. Luna walks home. When she arrives at the entrance to her apartment building, the doormen just finished his working day. He greets her and asks stunned 'y tu bici?' [and your bicycle?]. Luna pulls a longer face than in the morning and steps into the building. When she calls the elevator, she looks into the mirror and frowns at the stain on her blazer. Stepping into her apartment she stares for a moment at the empty place behind the sofa in her living room. Sometimes life is easier without the bicycle.

5.2   Meaning

> *Pleasure! Back then it [cycling] was only for pleasure. Riding a bike was playing, it wasn't for transportation. It was mere fun. (Dacil)*

This section starts with the examination of meaning as one of the key components of a practice. Schatzki (2002) argues that 'teleoaffective structures are hierarchically ordered ends, projects, tasks…emotions and even moods' (p.80) are necessary aspects for a practice to become meaningful. As a transcendental and symbolic aspect of practices, meaning shines through material and competences and is thus an omnipresent feature. The meaning of urban cycling is both contested and the subject of political debate: what did urban cycling mean in the past? And what does it

mean in the present? What is it for and how should it be done? The following sub sections will carve out three main themes: first, the meaning of urban cycling is stuck in its development. Second, car driving has been strengthened historically. Third, urban cycling is just starting to differentiate from other types of cycling practices and manifests through its material and competence elements.

5.2.1 A Wedged Meaning: Not a toy, not yet a vehicle

The title of this subsection is supposed to allude to urban cycling's current meaning as being caught in the middle between past forms of cycling – something that was illegitimate on the street– and its future –to be a legitimate form of transport within traffic. To do so, this subsection draws from multiple sources. Historic data is used to trace evidence if there is a past of urban cycling in the city. It also reflects on personal conversations and visual material to tease out contemporary meanings in order to present possible changes and differences between past and present.

Practitioners confirm that learning to peddle was 'never meant to be anything else than toying on a Sunday afternoon for a stroll', as Emma described. Learning to ride a bike for transportation purposes was not even a topic for discussion:

> *[the intention was] to play with the bike. Every child wants a bicycle but you won't show them how to cycle on the road, not a chance. My father drove by car or travelled by bus. He never cycled. Of my family, I am the only one who uses the bicycle to transport myself in the city (Emma)*

> *When I was little I used the bike for the typical amble with my parents, within parks, I used it for leisure, not for transportation. Here nobody*

teaches their children to cycle on the road like they do in the Netherlands for example. (Julio)

During childhood not really, there was never any intention everything started when I studied at the university. (Naira)

In fact, practitioners repeatedly reported that parents themselves did not use it as transport and worried about their children if they did so:

They never rode bikes, my mom doesn't even know how to and my dad, although knowing how to peddle because he did possess one [a bike] when he was little he never used it. I have never seen him on a bike. Never. In fact, he doesn't have one. And my mom always tells me to be safe. My mom considers the car as safer. (Naira)

During my childhood, the bicycle was an expensive item. So, my parents didn't want to buy one and on top they said cycling was dangerous and so on. It was a real effort begging them until I was 16 so they would buy me one. (Adrian)

They were worried about that [cycling). I had to fight a bit to be able to cycle. Due to the possible danger, accidents etc. My parents are not fans of bicycles I could also not have a motorcycle or anything. (Abian)

I've been cycling now for almost a year –having pestered my parents intensively because they have never owned bikes themselves. They were scared and it took me a lot to convince them to let me ride…well, the whole issue made them feel uncomfortable. (Dacil)

These historical attitudes towards cycling are reflected in the wider streetscape. With the bicycle being considered a toy it is unsurprising that the street has long been seen as exclusive territory of the car. Consequently, children on bikes were only legitimate in segregated areas like parks, squares or exceptional events. Cycling as a practice to move from A to B was therefore not only non-existent but strange and weird as the following quotes express:

'even recently, 5 or 6 years ago, there was not one [cyclist], in the street not one…the people that rode bikes on the streets at that time were foreigners, but I tell you, this was an exception'. (Gabriel)

'Los guiris' [the tourists]! Maybe some young people but even that was unusual. Over that last two or three years they have started celebrating that 'bicycle day' and then well, cycling is popular as a sport but not as transport within the city.' (Flor)

The historical data reflects Barbara and Rosa's accounts with a striking shortage of evidence of urban cycling in Las Palmas' past. Unlike in the Scandinavian and mid-European countries such as the Netherlands or Germany where the bicycle was a popular mode of transport of the masses in the 1900's before the car became commercialised, I found only few pictures that showed cyclists in the city –to be exact one postal card, in which a single cyclist rides on the footpath as seen from fig.12. Winding forward in the 1960's, a YouTube video shows a lonely urban cyclist on the road in rainy weather (fig.10). In contrast, I found abundant evidence of cycling figuring as sportive practice. Being promoted in newspapers as unique touristic selling point of the island –outside the city (fig. 8)– and as exceptional show or party, in which foreigners come to the island with their bicycles in fig. 9 and 11. Overall, cycling used to be framed as something sportive, non-urban, unusual and indeed touristic.
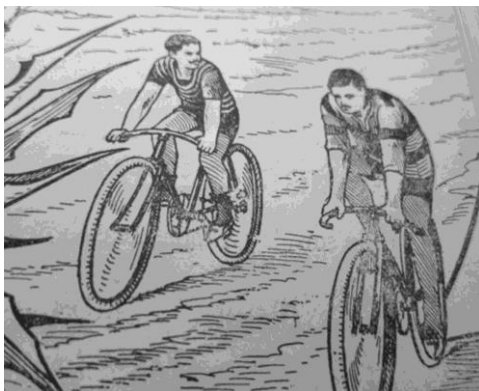
Figure 8 - Sportively dressed Cyclists
Source: Canarias Turista, 1910,
http://jable.ulpgc.es/canarias-turista

Figure 9 - Sword Battles on Bikes
Source: Canarias Turista, 1910,
http://jable.ulpgc.es/canarias-turista

Figure 10 - Welcome Ceremony to Foreign Boy Scouts
Source: FEDAC, 2015, http://www.fotosantiguascanarias.org

Figure 11 - Single Bicycle in the 60's
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_JM8EO08yz4

Figure 12 - Single Bicycle on the footpath   *Source: FEDAC, 2015, http://www.fotosantiguascanarias.org*

And even today urban cycling is celebrated in special events. For instance, the 'Domingo en bici' [Sunday on bikes], organized by the town hall, segregates bicycles still from traffic. Although these events are supposed to support urban cycling in attracting attention to using the bike as transport, the celebration consists of cutting a street within a particular district off from traffic where citizens can ride up and down behind barriers –away from traffic as fig.13 shows. But is this overprotection and separation of urban cyclists helpful in integrating the practice as part of normal traffic? Or does it underline the restricted nature of the practices itself in merely offering a determined space? Is it perpetuating in the sense that bicycles within traffic

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are dangerous and should therefore not be mixed? The extraordinary nature of these events, aimed at introducing cycling as a form of urban transport potentially create the opposite effect since they are experienced as a carnivalesque subversion of rules and conventions further marking cycling out as a practice outside the norm.

Figure 13 - Segregation of Bicycles from Car Traffic
Source: Author's collection

Looking further into historical data, the bicycle as toy is an interesting metaphor to think about. Toys embodied a problem that was banned from the streets by traffic regulations in the early 1900. Categorized as something that disturbs burgeoning infrastructural change due to growing tourism, a newspaper article about the new regulation reads: 'la chiquerilla andante' [the artillery of brats]: §106 –the traffic cannot be occupied by any toys, forbidden or not by the law' (Canarias Turista, 1911, p.17). Bicycles were an expensive commodity for the rather poor canaries in the early 1900, whose population mainly consisted of peasants and a small percentage of the bourgeoisie (Castellano and Martin, 1997, Alemán et al., 1978, Curbelo, 1990). It was therefore not a tool for everyday use but associated to fun, leisure and sports of the rich and famous. The contemporary meaning of urban cycling is impacted by the history of earlier –but different- cycling practices of racing and playing as well as by the dominant practice of car driving. A series of

historical aspects affect the establishment of meaning for urban cycling, such as the generational lack of bicycle usage, the historical representation of cycling and historical policies that restrained the presence of bicycles on the streetscape.

5.2.2 Public versus Private: Strengthening car driving by sabotaging collective mobility

Car driving historically thrived and out-ruled other forms of moving in the city. For instance, it is intriguing that contemporary Las Palmas has only one form of public transport –buses- when it used to have trains in the city. During the exhibition 'Las Palmas -ciudad y mar' [Las Palmas –city and sea] (2015), I shot figure 15-18 showing chronically how these trains looked like. In circa 1900, the train 'Pepa' –a steam engine– transported people from the north to the south part of the city. By 1910, the Canarians moved into electric trams until 1930. During the Second World War, materials of these electric trams were confiscated and its operation discontinued. In the 70's then, a new train project ran on trial on the north coast for two years. The train was supposed to connect north and south of the island of 55km after the trial. However, without having operated with customers on board, the project was discontinued for unclear reasons. Probing why this happened, the historic guide of the exposition answered:

> *'we never knew exactly what happened. There were debates coming from different directions. For example, the ecologists complained about the constructions along the coasts, the bus drivers felt threatened and worried about job losses, the automobile industry pushed autonomous mobility and the tourism sector plead for better infrastructure to facilitate accessibility to more place around the island.' (Guide)*

In a recent article, however, the digital newspaper 'El Diario' (Otero, 2017) re-opened the case of the 'tren vertebrado' [vertebrate train] and published an interview from 1979 with the responsible engineer Alejandro Goicoechea. He argues that sabotage and obstruction lead to the end of the project:

> *'The initial trial was approved by the general director of transport at that time. You know, back then the administration did lots of 'trampas' [cheating, plotting, scheming] –they probably still do- and they put a tight deadline on the project because they thought I couldn't cope with this short time frame. But then, when it came down to extend the rails, the south of the island conditioned the approval of the constructions under the premise to move the main station –from where the train should start and end-. This however would have meant the deconstruction of the whole structure, which was impossible and not purpose of the project: to connect Las Palmas with the south of the island. It would have taken too much to change this and they knew it! So that was the end of the project. Not to mention the lobby behind this scheme. The train was condemned to fail by certain people who had the power to destroy it, especially the one who owns the press.'* (Alejandro Goicoechea)

His account reflects what Laclau and Mouffe (2001) call conflicting discourses. There is evidence in promotional videos on YouTube (Rodriguez, 2014) expressing a positive discourse about the train being an 'important step', a 'revolutionary mode of accessibility and connection'. However, this positive discourse seemed not strong enough to establish a new definition of reality (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). The project lacked conditions to become an antagonistic movement due to a lack of supporting external discourses –a term used by Laclau and Mouffe (2001) to describe a contextual, overall theme in which a specific project can be related– like a call for more sustainability to initiate and sustain its claim for rights and existence. While the train emphasised the public service for collective mobility –a right to move for everyone– it challenged the profitability of the 'tourism boom' of the

canaries in the 70's, which increased the demand for rental cars embodying 'una amenaza para los empresarios transportistas…y un rival barato para prestar los servicios [a threat to the transportation businesses and a low-cost rival to their services] (Ortero, 2017). Motorized services, car- and bus-driving, in turn, promised to convey more benefits for the individual businesses and users: the creation of more employment through dependency on privatization.

Figure 14 - Steam Engine 'Pepa' ca. 1900
Source: Las Palmas ciudad y mar (2015)

Figure 15 - Electric Tramway ca. 1910
Source: Las Palmas ciudad y mar (2015)

Figure 16 - Electric Tramway ca. 1930
Source: Las Palmas ciudad y mar (2015)

Figure 17 - 'Tren Vertebrado' 1973 – 1975
Source: Las Palmas ciudad y mar (2015)

Figure 18 - Infrastructure Las Palmas ca. 1980

Source: Las Palmas ciudad y mar (2015)

As seen from fig.18, in the 1980's, Las Palmas' mobility relied on motorized traffic exclusively. Certainly, car driving then is a 'way of being' in the Canaries:

> *'The islander culture is driving by car even if it's from here to the next corner…here we use the car for everything'. (Jaime)*

> *'Like all Spaniards and especially the Canarians, I have been, since I've been little, used to be driven -and to drive- by car for everything and to go everywhere by car'. (Yeray)*

Being the dominant mode of movement in the city, driving is a way of acquiring social status.

> *'In school, I didn't even consider it (cycling) because nobody else around me did it. It doesn't just occur to you if you don't see it. This is how kids are, you go to school by car, to the shops by car, to play by car. You don't even think about doing all that by bike.' (Naira)*

> *'here when the kids turn18 they want to buy a car … we have passed this car-culture on to our children […] 'my family and everything in my environment regarding transport was associated with, well, the car. I got my license when I was 18 this was a major dream we had when we were little.' (Fabio)*

> *'Riding a bike is like 'bah you're a kid, immature half hippie' they don't take it seriously but if you drive a BMW that's a different thing.' (Lucas)*

Possessing a driving license and being able to drive a car seems to be a kind of *rite de passage* (Turner 1969). A moment marking the end of childhood and the start of adult life. People who fail to traverse this passage are not considered 'proper' adults as Alejandro commented on one occasion. He explained that the bicycle is not for 'gente normal' [normal people] but for the 'matadillos' [Dropouts]. Matadillos are indeed people who have failed to acquire social status and embark on a successful adult life, marking them as outsiders.

In fact, I witnessed the abnormality of urban cycling during a manifestation called 'bici denuncia' [bicycle denunciation]. One of the electoral campaigning parties 'Nueva Canarias' [New Canaries] tried to demonstrate that riding on the recently painted bicycle lanes is dangerous. Consequently, they organized a collective ride on these lanes with media presence. About 30 people came together to experience the promised 'life threatening' moments in which cars ignore cyclists and 'almost' crash with them at intersections. The police thwarted the organizer's plans in cutting the planned route off from car traffic. Claiming that 30 cyclists on bicycle lanes require exceptional circumstances on the road, the police ignored the unidirectional direction of the bicycle lane and demanded the group to ride in the opposite direction (see fig.19). This caused confusion and indeed annoyance for those, who were not attending the event using the bicycle lane correctly. When approaching one of the police officers about his incorrect instructions he contends: '*well, the traffic is cut off, so it doesn't matter, does it? Anyway they [the cars] will knock you over if we don't shut them off'.* But if policy aims at augmenting the percentage of journeys made by bike in the city, how would the police react if there were hundreds of cyclists transitioning bike lanes and streets every day? Would they close off the whole city? The story shows how a typical urban cycling is perceived and how the temporary subversion is indeed to reinforce the very pervasive nature of car driving as the 'normal' way of urban moving. The police officer's comments reflect the taken for granted dominance of car driving in the city and the perception that cycling is dangerous. The suspension of rules and the creation of fake conditions for urban cycling restrain the possibility to negotiating an own, ascertained

position within traffic. In fact, it restrain the possibility to becoming a normative accepted practice in every-day life. It seems urban cycling has no opportunity to establish under real-life conditions in which a dangerous image of the practice is perpetuated.

Figure 19 - Segregation of Bicycles from Car Traffic at 'Bici Denuncia'
Source: Author's collection

5.2.3 Establishing a meaning of its own: 'urban' is a kind of cycling

The former sub-section has emphasised how existing practices shape the meaning of urban cycling, how these organize the subsequent consumption of cars and bicycles for different occasions and therefore impact on individuals and their movement in urban surroundings.

This sub-section demonstrates how urban cycling needs to be differentiated from other cycling practices. In doing so, urban cycling's resource will be outlined and its relatable character of practice-elements highlighted. The presentation of meaning will therefore emphasise how it is inseparable from elements of material and competence. Despite the dominant practice of car driving, there is a small change happening in the city. However, the activist group 'Las Palmas en Bici' [Las Palmas on bicycles], which exists for almost

30 years, insists that urban cycling is still marginalized and struggling to evolve for the masses:

> Me: What role does urban cycling play in the city currently?
> Rafael: It is starting to play. It is starting to play.
> Doramas: But we are only in the first 30 seconds of the match, that's it (laughing)
> Everybody laughs
> Diego: We are a new-born, it [urban cycling] is a new-born, it is very weak and very fragile

In fact, newbies- and expert practitioners equally describe this new-born situation of urban cycling:

> *'It [urban cycling] is starting to show now and is very limited. Four years ago –since when are you here again, 2007? Well then you would know that there was nothing. There is more movement, but it doesn't reach to become what it could be. 2007 urban cycling was inexistent here' (David)*

> *'Little, really, I mean urban cycling, you see more bicycle users recently because ten years ago you went out with the bike on the street and could count on one hand the people with which you encounter on bikes. Very few. Now it augmented a little. Today it can be that if I stop at a traffic light, that we are three. And that is like a huge deal… but come on, I see little change. You know, regarding the car usage in the city it doesn't compare' (Roberto)*

While these accounts confirm that urban cycling as a practice was absent from the city traffic in the past, the historical data in the former section has shown that race- and sportive cycling was visible on the streets. The meaning of cycling as a broad term never reached beyond *'sports purposes…but as transport in the city that just started recently'* Airam explains. Consequently, bicycles now appear in other places than usual:

'In the past, people went out to do sport at the 'Avenida maritima' [a long unconnected straight bicycle lane] to exercise and for training and stuff like that. But now you see people moving by bike for transportation purposes around the city. Transport by bike –that didn't exist in the past. There were people in villages and country roads between villages but sportive, racy like, right?' (Cathaysa)

The first bicycle lane [Avenida Maritima] was made because it looked good. It started nowhere and it led to nowhere...so people, instead of using it for transportation, they used it for exercising or a stroll, little more. (Doramas)

In the last year, I have noticed more people using it as transport mode, which wasn't the case in past. You used to see only bicycles at the Avenida for sport. Now, you do see them in another context, I just saw a guy the other day in a suit all cleaned and dressed up. Even though those are still few. (Echedey)

Figure 20-23 show how this non-sporty practice involves bicycles. Urban cyclists in the city differ substantially from race-cyclists. For example, urban cycling can encompass a variety of different bicycles, from Dutch-style to mountain bike to foldable bikes. Although these bikes can potentially be used for more purposes than transportation, urban cyclists' wardrobe is most symbolic to express that people are going somewhere determined –work, school, running errands etc. Instead of active-wear, urban cyclists dress in normal clothing from casual to smart (or even formal).

Figure 20 - Casually Dressed Urban Cyclists
Source: Author's collection

Figure 21 - Smart-Casually Dressed Urban Cyclist
Source: Author's collection

Figure 22 - Dutch Ladies' Bicycle
Source: Author's collection

Figure 23 - Fully Packed Urban Cyclist
Source: Author's collection

Noticeable is that urban cyclists carry a notable amount of stuff with them in baskets and bags (fig.22) as well as bicycle locks when they are faced with leaving it unsupervised at the destination (fig.23). While urban cycling can integrate different bicycles and clothing, this is less possible in other cycling practices. Race cycling for instance needs special equipment –and knowledge- as seen from figure 24-27. I have experienced that race cycling without special equipment is unfeasible. Unrealistically, I undertook a participant observation with race cyclists and had to quit the mission after only half an hour of riding. Due to several conditions –I did not have the adequate bike, nor clothing nor competence –I was incapable of coping. The equipment of race cycling is designed for long roads where speeding is required. The speed is foremost essential because racing is of competitive nature and about arriving first to win the contest but also within training seasons, race cycling is practiced on highways (fig.24) alongside speeding cars. Therefore, expensive bicycles are needed, which have a much bigger power turn over than city bikes (fig.27). Consider fig.26 displaying race-shoes that avoid sliding off the pedals through plugging them into the hole. Last but

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not least fig. 25 shows the clothing of race cycling that entails resistant helmets, reflectants on shirts and jackets made of breathable Lycra dealing with the extreme sweat and odour that are (unavoidable) part of the practice. Race cyclists, do not have a concrete destination as the route is already their goal during training. Some even take their bikes by car to the start of the route and return to their car once the training is over.

Figure 24 - Dressed race cyclist
Source: Author's collection

Figure 25 - The Highway -Natural Habitat of the Race
Source: Author's collection

Figure 26 - Race Cycling Shoes with Holes
Source: Author's collection

Figure 27 - 10,000€ Bicycle
Source: Author's collection

The small but noticeable change in the street in which cycling appears for the first time as transportation mode, clashes with the traditional view about cycling as toying and sport. This crystallizes most obviously when practitioners talk about the reactions and comments they receive:

> *'Yeah, they [colleagues from work] mocked me a lot. At first my whole family was against this: you're old, what are you doing with a bicycle? Now [with emphasis] you want to ride a bicycle? And then at work they laughed about me a lot 'aaah ahora a donde vas' [where are you going (verbatim) –a rhetorical question in Spanish if someone beliefs that what you are doing is incredibly stupid and makes no sense]? Well and then I tell them that I need 5 minutes to reach the office, it gives me a lot of easiness I save 20 minutes' (Flor)*

Naira reports mocking and a ridiculing of urban cycling emphasizing the ignorance of people:

> *'[she makes sarcastic expressions] loooook how funny that she rides by bike everywhere –they don't take it like something serious. That they see your bike and I say that I transport myself by bike they answer: woooow you move by bike? By bike, huh, so you're doing sports, how sporty of you. The comments are like that it's always about sports not that it could actually be a transport mode' (Naira)*

Agostin shares similar experiences:

> *'I will repeat some words I heard on the streets when they launched the bicycle lanes in 'Guanarteme'. I don't like cursing but I will tell you the exact phrase as I heard it: an older aged couple maybe 70 years old were precisely next to me when I tried out the lanes in front of the language school. And I had something on my front wheel so I had to stop for a second to check. So this couple passed by me and I quote verbatim because it is stuck in my head ever since: el ayuntamiento con las mariconadas esta jodiendo a los conductores. [the town hall with these idiocies is [strong language expression for the word bothering] the drivers]' (Diego)*

In fact, the perceived 'game playing' and childishness of riding bicycles is a recurrent theme and turns into resentment when done within traffic. On the saddle, one is constantly confronted with condescending comments that are blared out of half open car windows. 'Vete a la acera que no pagas

impuestos' [go ride on the footpath, you are not paying taxes] is an example

of a taxi driver who shouted at me when he passed by. The road is the taxi

driver's capital and various encounters with them show how driving is

understood as a serious adult driving practice that stands for doing

something sensible like working:

> *'I took a taxi one morning, you know the typical day when you carry*
> *too much stuff and it's cold. There was this bicycle in front of us and*
> *the taxi driver honked at it a lot. I told him 'mister', I mean I got really*
> *angry, I said, 'mister don't you see that this lane is disclosed [as*
> *bicycle recommended]?' 'Always the same, god damn' –he said,*
> *'instead of helping the working they make it worse. This is bullshit'. He*
> *totally felt offended 'I lose money because of them' -he said- like bikes*
> *would slow down traffic and because of that he cannot take on as*
> *many clients.' (Gazmira)*

5.2.4   Summary

This section has highlighted how the 'meaning' of urban cycling is far from

established in two ways. Firstly, 'meaning' is trapped between two dominant

views about what cycling symbolised in the past and an imposed view on

what cycling is supposed to symbolise in the future, which causes struggles

in the present. Secondly, urban cycling is a specific version of cycling that

requires the establishment of its own coherent set of elements. The data has

traced the city's past and highlighted the absence of evidence of urban

cycling in traffic. With the exception of very few and singular activists, urban

cycling was inexistent until recently. Findings have shown that other cycling

practices did exist; however, these were restricted to children and sports

activities taking place segregated from car traffic or outside urban areas. In

contrast, this section provided evidence of the destruction of non-motorized

public transportation and suggests that car driving enjoyed strengthening

support in the past and has evolved to the predominant form of moving in the city. Consequently, urban cycling as transportation mode is still perceived as unusual and uncommon in the city. The data has identified how sport cycling differs from urban cycling and how different practices convey different meanings. Urban cycling is confronted with these existing, historically anchored meanings of 'toying' and 'sporty' that traps the spread of an own symbolic trait of utility and transport. The section also highlighted how meaning is bound up and inscribed in material elements like equipment, clothes, bicycles and stuff carried around, as well as in performances, i.e. speed and training. The empirical evidence indicates that meaning is transcendentally present in both elements 'material' and 'competences'. The next section will explore how meaning of urban cycling is hindered from establishing fully, as there is a lack of adequate material and competence elements in which it could become inscribed.

5.3   Material

The second key element in the structure of a practice is the material element.
The following subsections thus examine the material world of urban cycling.
Being a crucial part of the analysis of practices, Schatzki (2013) describes
material arrangements as highly complex and intrinsically bound up with
activity:

> 'activity inevitably transpires in a material world that it
> appropriates as its setting…material arrangements form
> immense interconnected networks through which causal
> processes work, affecting both the arrangements
> themselves and the human activity that transpires amid
> them.' (p.33-34).

Within this reciprocal relationship, material arrangements contain meaning
and competences necessary for practices and are thus intimately related to
these two other elements. For its sophisticated character, 'material' is an
exhaustive account in which bicycles, bodies, places and spaces as well as
the infrastructure of the city are represented. Within four main issues that
emerged from the data, this account shows how material arrangements of
urban cycling are lacking, incomplete and struggle. Firstly, bicycles as a
necessary resource for urban cycling are exposed to severe theft and
vandalism in the city. Although being an omnipresent phenomenon that
impacts negatively on bike usage in several ways, political and police
authorities ignore the situation and its far-reaching consequences. Secondly,
public and private spaces do not provide facilities for urban cycling but rather
impose conditions for its usage that are unfeasible. Parking and storing are
made impossible and require efforts. Thirdly, urban cycling does not enjoy
proper territory within traffic that steers from an unintelligible infrastructure

and lack of signs. Fourthly, this account shows that infrastructural material change is subject to long term decisions from politics and illuminates the impact of lobbying practices and lack of political commitment.

5.3.1   Problematizing Theft: The ignored practice of stealing bikes

One of the first things that struck me on entering the field was the overwhelming influence of theft on urban cycling in Las Palmas. In particular, the significant discrepancy between political and social reality regarding bicycle theft. Politicians disaffirmed bicycle theft in the city stating 'we don't have statistics that display a lot of reports, hence there is not much bicycle theft here' (Ramon). However, the observable reality and practitioners' accounts told a story of severe stealing practices that negatively impact on both, the sub practices of urban cycling such as parking, storing and buying bicycles as well as on the supply of bicycles in the city –the bicycle market. Practitioners and retailers complained in interviews about their losses and told stories of at least intended bicycle theft if not vandalism to their locked bikes. As Jose and Rayco explain:

> *'Every time I leave the bicycle in the street they try to steal it. At my girlfriend's house the other day, the whole bike hung there like they were trying to plug out the lock. Every time I leave it outside, they try to steal it. Only when I leave it at the gym that's where it is supervised. In my house, too I store it inside always. One time I left it outside and in the morning, you could see they tried to take off the saddle. But they didn't achieve taking it because I have two locks.' (Agostin)*

> *'…I slept at my friends' house, I left it outside and they destroyed it man. I think it was that, they couldn't accomplish taking it with them. They destroyed the frame, tried to steal the bell. They even put shit on the handlebars. Dog shit. A Sunday morning. I went out in the harbour area and I left it there. The lock half broken. It cost me 49 euros to repair it. The saddle, the handlebars' (Fabio)*

As I type these lines, I have just returned from the police station with Rachel, to report an incident. The thieves took off her wheels and as they couldn't smash the lock to steal the bicycle frame they destroyed the sprocket and deformed parts of the frame. This is not the first time that I was directly involved in helping out when a bike was stolen. Nestor's bike for example was stolen right after a participant observation and fortunately I had pictures taken of his bike, which I diffused through social media. I joined a Facebook group called 'bicicletas robadas en Gran Canaria' [stolen bicycles in Gran Canaria] whereas the name indicates- practitioners could post pictures and descriptions about the incidence of their stolen bicycles in the city (see fig.3). Theft seems to be a major issue and limitation for the material element of urban cycling to exist. However, according to the politicians, theft does not figure in statistics they are unable to provide. Thus, its impact is completely underestimated by politicians and the police. I have a vicious circle in mind: ineffective policing practices steer practitioners' mistrust in filing a police report. The high prevalence of theft is absent in police statistics, which (unfortunately) embody the basis for policy decisions. In turn, politicians are unaware or do not want to be aware of what is happening surrounding this still marginalized practice and consequently do not see any problem in need for resolution which perpetuates the status quo. That said I should mention that it is very intricate to access criminal statistics of the city. I have solicited theft reports directly at the main police station and was refused by the department in charge with the argument that these documents are not accessible by private individuals, they are run by Madrid [capital of Spain] on

a national level, which can only be given out when filing a bureaucratic process, which apparently even the town hall has to go through.

The lack of transparency in data and information is displayed in a lack of trust in reporting theft altogether. The Interviews and social media clearly demonstrate the frustration of urban cyclists. For example, Nestor refused to report his incident and responded on Facebook to some suggestions:

Si ██████ ya es la segunda. ████ esta vez ni me molesto en ir a poner la denuncia. Ya lo hice la otra vez y solo fué perder el tiempo y darle la oportunidad al agente que hace el parte, de recordarte una vez más, lo imbécil que eres. Paso, ya lo tengo claro. 🙂
4. März um 10:34 · Gefällt mir
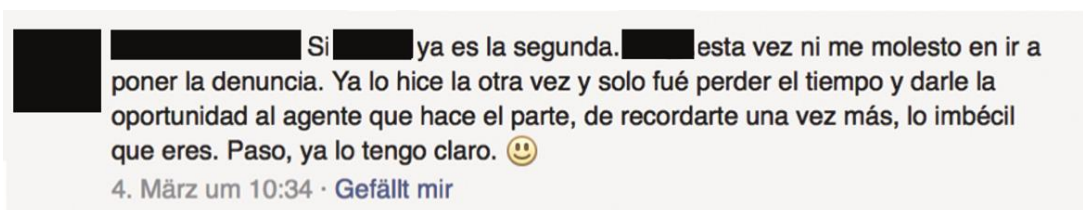
> *['Yes Roberto, it's the second one [stolen bike], Jorge, this time I didn't bother reporting it. I did the last time and it was just a waste of time, just giving the police officer the opportunity to remind you once again how stupid you are. I'll pass this time –that's for certain. ☺ '] (Nestor)*

Julio and Alba have similar opinions:

> *'I should have done it. But basically, I didn't because it's pointless to report –it doesn't lead anywhere. They won't do anything, they are not going out there to look for it. They do absolutely nothing, so for me it is an effort going there, reporting, spending two hours completing paperwork and for what? Nothing! Wasting time, they won't do anything, so I just went home walking along feeling upset about the asshole that stole my bike.' (Julio)*

> *'I don't know, I didn't even think about it, nobody even suggested that I should report it. I was around 16 years old. It's not in my way to report. I have the right to report, but I didn't really get the point then. I didn't even consider it. Rather they stole it and period' (Alba)*

Rosalva and Jorge's account anecdotally demonstrate that practitioners would rather suffer silently than report their situation. They accept the fact that bicycle theft is treated as a 'low police priority' (Sidebottom et al, 2009). In fact, stealing has been characterized as something typically Spanish, which comes as a risk when acquiring any type of property. Yet, practitioners,

although complaining conform to the fact that bicycle theft is not taken seriously. This was obvious in the various encounters I had with police officers that did not take on responsibility for safe bicycle parking. When I sought a safe place to park in front of a museum for instance, I asked a police officer who was on patrol where I could leave it and his response was: *'desde luego fuera no la dejes [la bici], porque ya sabes como son las cosas aquí!'* [Of course, you can't leave it outside [the bike], cause you know how things work here]. I wrote in my journal:

> *'How curious, I thought. If the police know how things are, then why aren't they doing anything about it? It seems that theft is not seen as a police problem. It is seen as a social 'mentality' problem' (Field journal)*

When discussing the police's reluctant reactions with Mardonio, he explained two important issues. First, he explained that the Spanish police is divided into three unities, 'Policia Nacional' [National Police], 'Policia Local' [Local Police] and the 'Guardia Civil' [Civil Guards] whose operational areas are different and do not overlap. For instance, the bicycle owners when facing theft are supposed to report to the Policia Nacional, who is in charge of resolving crimes. The Policia Local in contrast, is in charge of guaranteeing safety regarding public and urban life on the streets and concentrates on the peaceful togetherness at events, within traffic being the first authority in case of accidents. Their tasks are scaled according to the level of seriousness. Second, theft is considered a serious crime, if the value of the taken object is superior than 400€, according to the 'codigo penal' [penalty code] (Gobierno de Espana, 1995). Hence the low priority of bicycle theft. Mardonio also explained that there is little to no exchange of information between Policia

Local and Nacional, although the Policia Local is every day on the streets interacting with citizens, being the ones holding insights about circumstances within the city. He underpinned that it is no surprise if citizens complain about this situation, as there is little significance given to cycling from authorities.

In fact, police officers do not feel obliged to do anything at all as Airam complaints:

> *'I went to the police department to file a report and their response was: "yes you do file a report, it is your right, but we will not bother looking for stolen bicycles" … when talking to some staff at the university, nobody cared, they all turned away like saying "jódete, mala suerte" [strong language for tough, unlucky]. Which is unfortunate, when last year they celebrated a bicycle party to promote the transport by bike to the university, but then they don't provide any places to leave the bicycle in a safe way nor do they take on responsibility'. (Airam)*

Airam's quote explains the reluctant attitude received when filing a report and he points out to an incoherent and indeed inconsequential promotion of urban cycling. An incoherent way of executing a pro-urban cycling policy was especially obvious in the protagonism of the bicycle in campaigning practices during electoral times. Political parties used urban cycling in their campaigns as a means to pitch for votes in either showing how they make the city more sustainable and attractive for tourists or in using it as a ridiculing technique trying to downgrade the opponent. For example, the governing party 'Partido Popular' argued alongside the activists for 'menos humos, mas bicicletas' [less smog, more bicycles] (fig.28), whereas the rivalling parties 'PSOE' and 'NC' claim 'menos bicis, mas trabajo' [less bicycles, more work] (fig. 29) sarcastically patronizing the bicycle as nuisance in their viral spots representing the policy work of the governing party as irrelevant and mismanaged (see fig. 30).

Figure 28 - Campaigning Video 'PP'
Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-m5wMrDAFa8

Figure 29 - Campaigning Video 'PSOE'
Source:https://twitter.com/LasPalmasenbici/media?lang=de

Figure 30 - Campaigning Video 'NC'
Source:https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mz8lh8M9AbA

We learn from these accounts, that sustainability can be a strong campaigning slogan, however the consequent execution of such marketing claims underlies the purpose and ends –the teleoaffectivties– of campaigning practices: winning the election. Therefore, the aim is not to achieve sustainability objectives but pleasing different interests. As we will see in the section (5.3.4), this is best illustrated in the infrastructural interventions of the current bicycle policy that causes counterintuitive effects on urban cycling.

Since the bicycle as material element of cycling doesn't receive any safety-support from the authorities, practitioners see themselves in the need to avoid confrontation with stealing practices. Consequently, it was no surprise that sub practices like parking and storing the bicycles are a challenging task. In fact, parking and storing is a peculiar activity in the city. Observations

show that bicycles are kept as near as possible to practitioners when parking them in the urban environment. Fabio for example takes his bicycle into his office and right into the sand at the beach as seen from fig. 32.

The few existing bicycle racks in the city are barely used. Besides a few hubs –busy commercial avenues and the university- parking facilities were mostly empty (see fig. 31). During my time in the field random people lectured me frequently not to leave my bicycle outside. For instance, when I rode around the city to check out parking opportunities for bicycles a young stranger asked her 'enserio la vas a dejar aqui?! Yo que tu no tuviera esa costumbre de dejar la bici fuera. En diez minutos ya te la habran quitado' [are you seriously going to leave your bicycle here?! If I were you I wouldn't leave the bicycle outside. They'll take it in ten minutes].
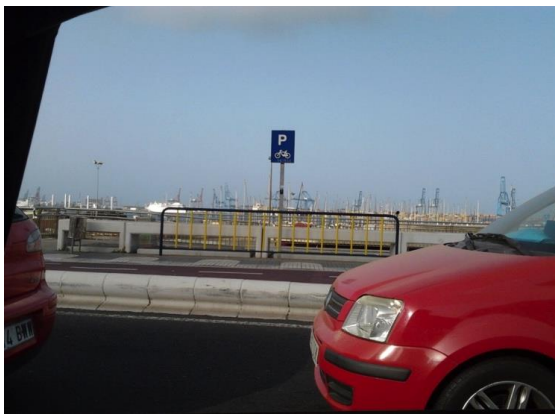
Figure 31 - Empty Bicycle Rack
Source: Author's collection

Figure 32 - Practitioner Keeping his Bike near
Source: Author's collection

Exacerbated by rather bizarre cycling regulations, parking is plagued from further restrictions. The 'ordenanza municipal' [the municipality regulation] for instance, requires bicycles to be parked at assigned bike racks within a radius of 50 meters in order to be 'recogidas' [tidied] (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2014b. p.20). Attaching the bicycle to civic and urban furniture, i.e. street lights, trees, tree guards, seating, ashtrays, litters etc. is subject to fines between 80-200€ if there is a bike rack within 50 meters. The locations of existing bike racks are documented in the 'Plan Director de la bici' [Urban Planning Report] (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2012). Fig 33. provides an overview about the distribution of the bike racks (the blue dots). Obviously, these are gathered around the beach and only few are distributed across the city centre.
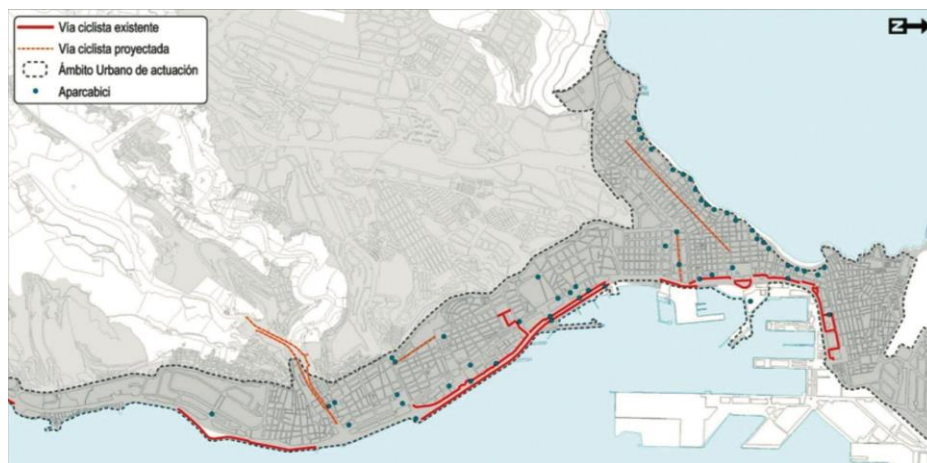
Figure 33 - Existing Bike Racks in Las Palmas
Source: http://www.sagulpa.com/documentos/category/8-

When I spoke to practitioners about their parking routines, locations other than these around the beach are not known among participants. Bike racks were rejected as parking option for their insufficient existence and lack of proximity despite the risk of being fined. Echedey, David and Emma explain:

> *'There is always a street lamp or fence. I am quite like leaving it as close as possible, if I see a rack, maybe. But it just doesn't occur to*

me. I don't think about it as there aren't any. In the street I park it wherever I want. Wherever I find a spot.' (Echedey)

'People don't leave their bikes at racks. I had coffee with a friend and the bike wasn't parked at a rack 30 m away. I had it next to me. And I don't even consider for a second to park it at a rack –not even locked! No, it's impossible, they would steal it in a second. I turn around for two seconds and I am without bike.' (David)

'Well, there are not too many bike racks anyway. They put some, but I just lock them discretely to street signals, or street lamps or to any bank. There are veeery few bike racks! I noticed this a couple of years ago that there are a lot of racks alongside the beach but when I need my bicycle here in this zone, why do I have to park it 100m away?' (Isaura)

Spotted parked bicycles in the street were mostly of one type: castoff, branded mountain bikes, secured by multiple locks (see fig.34 and 35). I observed sophisticated locking techniques that entailed motorcycle locks and chains, difficult to be cracked.

Figure 34 - Locking Technique
Source: Author's collection

Figure 35 - Cast Off Mountain Bike with Two Locks
Source: Author's collection

Observing their locking techniques, practitioners demonstrated themselves as aware and skilled:

'when I run errands, I use two locks. One in the back wheel and one in the front attaching the frame. And one securing the back wheel and the place where I lock it to. I always try to park it in visible places. Public places where there are a lot of people and where nobody –if they are going to steal it they won't do it in front of everybody, right?' (Iraya)

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> *'Well you have to lock it [the bicycle] with several chains to make it complicated for them [thieves]. One lock of the typical type -the normal one- and then another one of steal. The more challenges you add, the more they will ponder. Also, you should always park it in busy places. If they attempt stealing it, they will call attention.' (Adrian)*

Considering the data presented practitioners tend to invest as little money as possible in an item that might be stolen or damaged very quickly and thus, have rubbish bicycles:

> *'I have a repugnant bike and I wouldn't even consider buying a better one to ride around LPA precisely because with this repugnant bike I can leave it 5 nights straight outside my house. I tell you with this really thick lock, it's still necessary to be radical. They already stole one of my bikes here in Las Palmas. I left it for half an hour when I visited a friend and they stole it. Then I got this one and it was like: for what would I improve it? This way they don't steal it, right? Better this way! I think it's an advantage having an old bike so they won't steal it' (Naira)*

> *'I won't buy a good bike. I prefer to be practical and I don't need a great bike. I considered buying an electric bike but then I think, hey, I won't do it because if they steal it and I have spent 3000 euros. Otherwise I would but due to this I don't' (Roberto)*

> *Everybody can do with his money what he wants but I do not recommend using a high-quality bicycle …to move from A to B…people know when a bike is great. My sister always asks if I wasn't afraid of leaving it in the street but I feel like who's going to steal this sodding bike? You have to be very desperate to take it you know (Doramas)*

Theft was considered to be the main reason preventing people from buying new bicycles. Bicycle retailers suffer in this situation and in interviews with shops, sales managers, owners and employees reported that they couldn't survive from sales generated exclusively from urban cycling, Aday complains:

> *'As a retailer, I see myself obliged to sell bicycles 'de mierda' [crappy bikes] because people are not willing to spend money on a good one if they can't leave it in the street without the risk of getting it stolen'. (Aday)*

Sara explains further:

> *'Here people complain a lot about bicycle theft… at the end people buy their first urban bike, it gets stolen and they don't buy another one. They look rather for a second-hand bike, of low quality… If you use the bike as a transport mode here, you know you will have to leave it outside at one point. And if there is no safety, you just don't want to invest your money. Theft at the end harms the shops.' (Sara)*

David told me about the vicious circle shops go through and explains why shops struggle to specialize in urban cycling and prefer targeting sportive and race-cycling business:

> *'This world works on a professional- [race-cycling]-level…people who move by bike in the city want to spend between 80-100 Euro. Because they know if it gets stolen, they lose the minimum…what shop can allow itself to offer bikes at this price besides big retailers like Decathlon or Carrefour?... In a shop of 100 m2 there is no space in order to reach the same turn over required for such low margin…it's just not profitable. That's why this world […] is still in the hands of the big retailers and not the small specialized shops.' (David)*

Bicycle retailers are pessimistic about the future of urban cycling when they complain about the lack of ideal conditions:

> *'No no no no, there is no mobility culture here. I want you to understand this. There is no such mobility culture of cycling. Not even in Spain [mainland]. You need to go to Holland, Belgium or any other northern country and you will know what it means what an urban, sustainable cycling culture is. Here not. Here you cannot ask 'what is…' 'how does such and such work' ….it is not 'how does it work' because it doesn't work at all. And that's how simple it is. Is it going well? -What? We don't know if it is going well because it is not going at all. At the moment, there is a focus on a group, an isolated group. A minority. You CANNOT say: that's it we've arrived. We are not even on our way' (Aday)*

Aday invites us to ask a new set of questions. Instead of looking at something existent, he invites us to understand urban cycling as something absent. His quote offers to look at the absences and the struggles of urban cycling.

5.3.2 Bikes not welcome! Material Arrangements in public and private spaces

The former section has not only highlighted that urban cycling is restricted through stealing, but data also alluded to the problematic set up of parking facilities in public spaces. The following section will not only extend the unwelcoming material arrangements in public space but also examine the inappropriate material arrangements in private space.

5.3.2.1 The public space

By observing that bicycle parking is difficult in public space, the unhelpful distribution of existing parking facilities around the beach materializes the meaning of cycling: not for urban transportation. The lack of parking facilities hinders the use of bikes for running errands, shopping, commuting or any other type of transportation. The situation gets more complicated when considering that bicycles cannot enter most of the shops, garages or public places like malls. A second seemingly nonsensical regulation relates to the transport of bikes on buses. Access to bikes is only granted under conditions that are impossible to fulfil. The 'Guaguas Municipales' [City Bus] regulations state:

> *'Access is granted with luggage, beach utensils, surf boards, body boards, etc. always if they are protected and do not disturb passengers…access is granted to foldable bicycles that are as small as the size of a hand luggage, but always depending on the number and saturation of passengers. Only one bicycle is permitted per bus and it is supposed to be placed in the middle of the bus, held at anytime by its owner.'(Guaguas Municipales, 2015)*

This rather 'absurdo' [absurd] norm has been critiqued by a variety of groups such as the activist organization Las Palmas en Bici for its clear discrimination against bicycles. Interestingly other types of luggage are not subject to the same size and numerical restrictions. Neither are there similar strict guidelines stipulating how they should be stored. Moreover, the only foldable bicycle that folds into a hand luggage size is the brand Brompton (see fig. 36). This brand, however, is particularly expensive, however, expensive bicycles are not an option for practitioners in Las Palmas due to theft. Such dubious conditions obstruct bicycles usage on buses to sheer unfeasibility. This is a mechanic known as sabotage in which obstacles are subtly and indirectly placed into the way of a task until it is more viable to abandon the pursuit.

Figure 36 - Brompton Foldable Bicycle
Source: Author's collection

5.3.2.2   The Private Space

The last subsection has shown that public spaces do not provide facilities for urban cycling. This section will explore the private realm of storing the bicycle

and illustrate how the domestic architecture does not cater for the storage of bikes being designed for the storage of cars.

As parking in the streets is not an option, practitioners see themselves obligated to lift the bicycle into their offices, houses and flats to store the bicycle overnight. As figure 37-39 show, practitioners leave the bicycle within their living space and the bike enjoys –almost like a pet– the protected home of its owner. Unlike a pet, however, the bicycle does not have its own space for itself but rather blends into the apartments arrangements and home décor.

Figure 37 - Bicycle Storing in the Office
Source: Author's collection

Figure 38 - Bicycle Storing in the Flat
Source: Author's collection
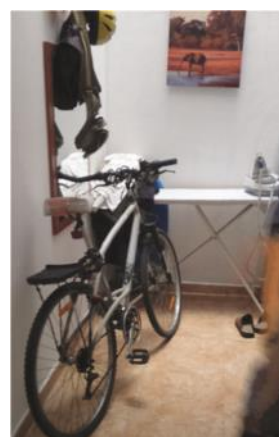
Figure 39 - Bicycle Storing in the Flat

Source: Author's collection

Taking a bicycle into an apartment implies muscle power, lifting skills and smart squeezing techniques for elevators. Buildings in the city are not thought to accommodate bicycles in anyway. Usually buildings provide car parking space in own 3-4 floor underground garages that seem like taken off a mall. But there are no facilities to lock a bike onto and staircases, just as elevators are usually narrow. Within limited space, it is a challenge to store the bike inside as Echedey and Ramon explain:

> *'I used to store it [the bike] on the balcony, but when my brother moved out, back then we shared the room, now I have more space and can store it with me.' [Echedey]*

> *'Do you know where I store my bike? –In my living room. And that was 'una discusión matrimonial' [marital argument/domestic quarrel]. You cannot imagine how I argued with my wife to be granted putting it behind the sofa. And every morning when I go to work, I have to move the sofa, pull the bicycle out, it's 'un puto coñazo' [annoyance]. If there just was a good system to store the bicycle in the street' (Ramon)*

I experienced this 'coñazo' with a shift in housing where I had to change from –luckily- storing the bicycle in a ground floor patio to storing it in a 14th floor apartment (see fig.40). Apart from the implied uncomfortable positions, strength and flexibility required to lift and shift the bike on stairs and elevators, it is inconvenient in formal outfits as the body and the bicycle – partially oiled and somewhat dirty- touch and a lot of times leave wheel prints and oil stains on clothes and skin. I hoped to develop some proficiency with moving the bicycle into the elevator after some time, however my 'clumsiness' did not go away. Fran assures that we are in this together:

> *'In my building, in the sixth floor, well I place it into the elevator and I put myself behind it. 'Hay veces que la meto mejor, otras veces que la meto peor' [There are times I shove it inside better and other times I shove it inside worst]. You know, one of the key things to consider is the wheel, depending if I lift it like this [he makes a gesture] you can*

move it into the back and you can step in easier or not. You have to twist a little' (Fran)
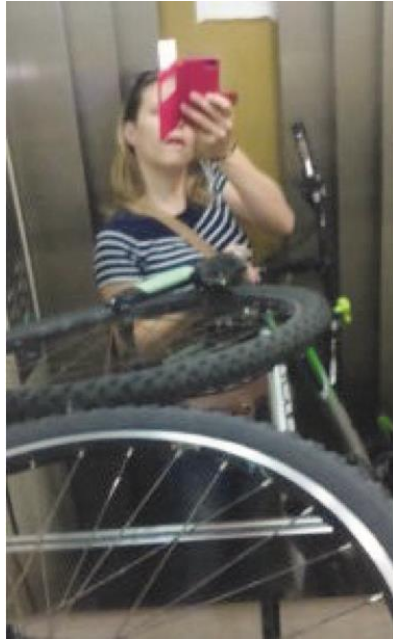
Figure 40 - The Bicycle-Elevator Acrobatic
Source: Author's collection

Handling material things is a necessary action in order to perform a practice and is an expression of competence. Schatzki (1996) reminds us that the proficiency of performing activities that make up a practice can vary, be 'irregular [and] ad hoc' (p.57) and therefore imperfect. Schatzki' (1996) categorizes these actions as 'knowing how to respond' (p. 59) to a situation at hand in relation to the accomplishment of the overall practice. Being able to respond to uncertain situations makes up the ability to get on with life in which ambiguity is daily business, which in fact is a routine of everyday life (Schatzki, 1996). Storing the bicycle therefore can entail clumsy shoving, twisting and pushing as well as unforeseen or uncomfortable movements as long as it makes sense to store the bicycle inside in relation to urban cycling. Iraya, Flor and Belen explain:

'I store them in the entrance of my house. I have had problems with storing my bicycles in buildings… if it wasn't possible to park it, I lifted the bicycle, even if it was 4 floors –I am very 'bruta' [gruff, rough] in

this regard. I don't leave it outside. If I hadn't the possibility to store it inside the building, I would lift it to my flat directly. I never leave it overnight in the street' (Iraya)

'I always have it at eye-sight or I put it into my friends' houses. There aren't places to park it. Thank god I have friends everywhere and I call them 'hey open the door for me' and I leave it inside. At work I have a garage conditioned for bikes' (Flor)

'Depending on where you go you are more dependent on whether you can store it inside…I lift it to my friend's place if there is no adequate place to leave it. I take it inside the social centre [where she works] but outside I don't leave it' (Belen)

These accounts tell a story of endurance. That despite uncomfortable efforts required by stiff material arrangements urban cyclist still do what is necessary to keep performing the practice. However, their accounts also illustrate that practitioners have some kind of privilege in being able to store their bikes 'somehow'. Be it their work place or at home, practitioners appear to be skilful and inventive in manoeuvring the bicycle into 'some' space. But this presupposes the existence of possibilities or in practice vocabulary 'elements' to be 'integrated' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005, Shove, et al., 2012). This however is not the case for everybody:

'I am very lucky because I live and work in the lower part of the city. So really now is the time when my life as urban cyclist in Las Palmas begins. In the past, I have lived or worked in the upper part of the city and that was not feasible for me I am not a race cyclist. Nor do I have the necessary physical conditions let alone the appropriate bicycle necessary for this steep incline. So, I started when two things collided: work and live in the lower part or the city' (Esperanza)

Esperanza for instance tells us that she had no possibility to integrate necessary resources 'elements' for urban cycling, as they were not available to her (Shove et al., 2012). Only when her housing and working constellations changed and aligned to a decent material arrangement, urban

cycling was possible. Her account further demonstrates how different practices (working, living) can impact upon each other in determining what practices can or cannot be performed.

5.3.3 Lack of territory: A street infrastructure that excludes bikes

This subsection will examine the infrastructural characteristics of traffic life and with what influence on urban cycling.

> *'If you ride on the road you disturb cars and if you ride on the footpath you disturb pedestrians. But then if you ride on your bicycle lane, they won't respect that either. People cross and get in the middle and if you tell them 'hey excuse me lady this is a bicycle lane' they get angry and shout at you' (Iraya)*

Iraya describes concisely that urban cycling does not 'occupy [a] spatial position' (Schatzki, 2001, p. 19) within everyday urban traffic. My observations extend her quote by showing that such competition of territory between traffic participants stems from urban design. In fact, in participant observational situations, I experienced difficulties in positioning myself within the infrastructural arrangements of Las Palmas. After having cycled around the city, in most situations I was forced to face traffic in dangerous ways, putting myself in the position to cause an accident:

> *'I have no chance to continue my journey without either crossing the street, but by crossing I can't even see if there is a car coming because the lane is coming out of a curve, or by turning and following the interrupting lane in the contrary direction on the footpath to find a spot where I can cross safely. It's really intricate!' (Video comment, 2015)*

My quote invites to reflect about the exclusion of possibilities within such inadequate material arrangements. Although I see myself as a proficient urban cyclist, I was incapable of riding in such conditions. Walker (2013)

explains this as the reproduction of inequalities through practices. My data set reflects similarly: while the infrastructure offers great materiality for car driving, it offers no accommodation for urban cycling.

I have witnessed the emergence of bicycle lanes in the city within the last ten years. Starting from when there were no bicycle lanes at all, to very confusing ones (fig. 42) to the new bicycle lanes painted in 2014 (fig.41). Keeping with the historical traffic spirit, the design of the new lanes is equally mystifying. Recent electoral times show how incentives target the materiality of urban cycling trying to push it to emerge. However, infrastructural changes rather fuel the lack of territory for urban cycling.

Figure 42 - Bicycle Lane Before Policy Intervention
Source: Author's collection

Figure 41 - New Bicycle After Policy Intervention
Source: Author's collection

Peculiar is the fact that the recently painted bicycle lanes push practitioners away. Instead of riding on the assigned space for bicycles, practitioners are found on any other road but the lanes. In fact, practitioners rather ride with cars competing for their territory than ride on bicycle paths where the assigned space is unintelligible, unprotected and invaded:

'They are not connected to anything. It's totally for leisure. The one in Mesa y Lopez is absurd this lane. It is absurd because with good weather they place the cafés' terraces on top of it –with the chairs in the middle of the lane. Then the bus stop is on top of it so it's like…I can't ride on this, it's not a bicycle lane! It is anything else but a bicycle lane. It is there because it looks nice, because its green, the colours and the lines, but it's absurd' (Belen)

'This is one of the reasons I stopped riding on this street [Secretario Padilla]. Going in this direction maybe but going back in the opposite one –not a chance. Firstly, it's not convenient if I need to go up there and secondly, because I am sick and tired of being insulted by drivers. I say to myself: I pass all these insults and it's even better for me to ride on the other road' (Doramas)

'Well, the lesser lanes they paint, the safer! The ones that there are start and end without any sense' (Esperanza)

'I feel much more comfortable riding with cars. I have more space to turn I mean, more space is better, right?' (Naira)

'I don't want to ride on the bicycle lanes anymore because I arrive every day at work in a bad mood. This morning I arrived at work with a huge 'calentura' [being furious]. On top a gentleman of my building showed me his middle finger, he pulled it out like this (she makes the finger gesture) 'niñata' [naughty girl] he said and he pulled out his finger and I am on my bike smiling very happy at 8:30 in the morning. Impossible, it's just impossible. Depending on the road because sometimes due to causing trouble and arriving at work without being absolutely irritated I ride on another road, which is longer, but I don't ride on the lanes' (Gazmira)

As bicycle lanes are discontinuing, confusing and lack explanatory signs, it is unsurprising that practitioners of various urban moving practices are put into dangerous positions. Above all, one lane –called Secretario Padilla– is turning urban cycling into a 'high risk' activity, as it is drawn in the opposite direction

of a one-way street and lacks disclosed signs for car drivers that need to take into account bicycles from reverse direction. Here, the material arrangements are disadvantageous even for car driving. In many of my routes for example, I observed how car drivers on the one hand struggle not to invade the bicycle's assigned space and on the other try to avoid the risk of smacking parked cars. Nevertheless, the former occurs much more frequent and it is striking in what taken for granted manner the bicycle lane is claimed by cars. In contrast, the space of the car is almost sacred and untouchable for urban cyclists who are disciplined immediately through shouting and honking if sidestepping into car traffic. But not only cars –voluntary or involuntary– invade assigned spaces of urban cycling. The same happens with pedestrians and animals that extend their habitat onto bike lanes as Adrian sarcastically expresses:

> *'It's the everything lane –the dog lane, the shopping trolley lane, the everything-besides-bikes-lane' (Adrian)*

Resentfully, urban cyclists see themselves forced to tolerate these circumstances through waiting times. Irene via WhatsApp remarks as she shares a picture of a town hall 'gardening truck' parking on a bicycle lane:

> *'This is the unwritten law of this city: you cannot step into car territory while there are plenty of options to irritate the weaker ones.' (Irene)*

Irene's observation is interesting because it emphasizes that the town hall – and members thereof- responsible for the bike lanes and the policy initiatives are the first to disrespect them. Participant observation underpin Irene's quote. For instance, Flor and I had to step down from our bicycles and side step due to a truck that did not have enough turning radius invading the bicycle lane (fig.46). Julio and I experienced similar situations in which cars struggled not to invade the bicycle lane while making a turn at intersections (fig.44) and when attempting to park (fig.43). It is also a recurrent theme that parked vehicles or pedestrians obstruct the bicycle lane (fig.45).

Figure 43 - Car Invading Bike Lane
Source: Author's collection

Figure 44 - Car Struggles not to hit Cyclist
Source: Author's collection

Figure 45 - Practitioners waiting
Source: Author's collection

Figure 46 - Cars Parking and Invading Bike Lane
Source: Author's collection

5.3.4 The politics of street infrastructure: Lack of political commitment?

In interviews with the contracted urban planner, I discovered how the design of the new pro-cycling infrastructure was supposed to look like fig 46B. Interesting in this regard was the fact that the best option for urban cycling would have been to remove the parking lane in order to give decent space to bicycles as seen from fig.47 'propuesta B' [proposal B]
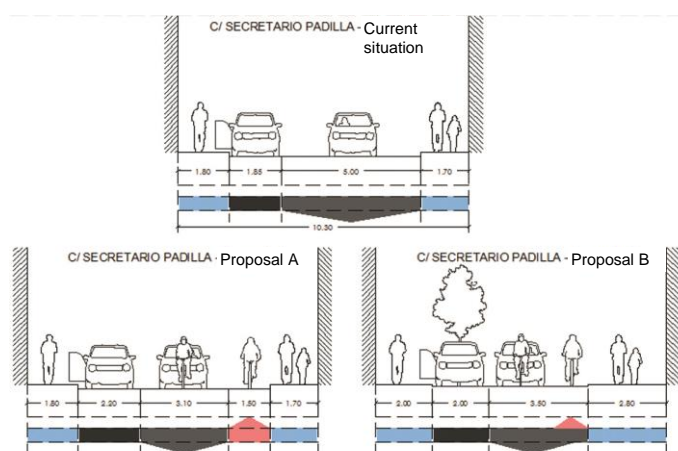
Figure 47 - Urban Planning Proposals A and B
Source: Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2012

But the governing council for transport, traffic and mobility explains that there are 'government traps' (Newell, 2015, p.1) at play, which have to be considered:

> *'From the bicycle's point of view the ideal would be to get rid of the parking cars and design a bidirectional bicycle lane. This is one point of view. My job is to consider different point of views. The point of view of the neighbour, the point of view of the beach, the point of view of the shops, the point of view of the culture we have here in the city. It would have been a too extreme and radical change. We would have gotten rid of 200 parking spaces. Not only would there have been a shit storm in the social media –but people would still protest right in front of my house.' (Ramon)*

In Ramon's account, we stumbled upon different themes. Firstly, as a

politician he sees himself in the duty of pleasing everyone in order to gain votes from different communities. But as too many cooks spoil the broth, intentions to improve things while simultaneously match dissimilar interests have the unintentional effect of making things worse. The inference drawn from this is that policy decisions and incentives are not made in alignment with the overarching objective '*to reduce or even substitute moving in unsustainable transport modes'* (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2014a, p.9) as the policy programme states. Ramon as political representative just explained that he is interested in establishing sustainable ways of moving unless these do not challenge the dominant unsustainable ways of moving. It is thus that conflicts of interest hinder a strong and committed acting to one goal or as Newell et al. (2015) put it 'policy-makers need to provide clear and unambiguous signals that convey the sustained commitment of appropriately empowered levels of government to addressing [sustainability]' (p.539). Since Ramon's account reveals the car's legitimate spatial possession over space for other vehicles, his unwillingness to take any personal blame resulting from a removal of parking facilities shed light on how teleoaffective chains of campaigning restrict the improvement of urban cycling's material element.

The spatial omnipresence of car driving makes escaping traffic within the city impossible. Even the beach and lovely parks are right next to heavily trafficked roads. I have suffered under this aspect a lot, being used to quietness. Most of my interviews have taken place outdoors and throughout the transcriptions I recorded many notes expressing the following sentiment:

'The constant background noise of the interviews is unbearable; I feel exactly the same indisposition that kept creeping up on me in the field. I have always sought-after places with less noise, but to no purpose'. [Data Transcription Notes]

In probing why there would be a problem in taking space away from the car, Angel explains the power of lobbying practices:

'There is an association of car importers in Las Palmas de Gran Canaria –FREDICA, which has an endorsed PR and a structure, so you can imagine. An entrepreneurial group called Domingo Alonso that distributes different brands and car show rooms here which are the representatives of these showrooms. We are talking Volkswagen etc. And then there are others like Angel Ferrera from Toyota, Miguel Ramirez from Mercedes they have men power, they have a Lobby built up…it is a sector that generates a lot of economy on a national level, a lot of industry car-wise here in Spain and it is a powerful sector in the canaries because the car import is increased due to the rental cars for the tourists so you have a big vehicle fleet in the canaries, a huge one. Plus, they have to renew frequently, hence it's a sector that moves a lot of money. So, what happens is, they normally aren't so martial but here they are! They interpret that because we have created pedestrian zones in 'Vegueta' [antique district] we are restricting the freedom of those that want to use the car' (Ramon)

As a matter of fact, FREDICA (national federation of car importers) is not afraid to predict a poor mobility future of the city when faced with incentives that are not in favour of car driving. Denigrating the policy intentions of reducing unsustainable modes of transportation, their vocabulary describes a 'caos circulatorio' [mobility Armageddon] in the latest press release (La Provincia, 2016b). By the same token, they interpret the town hall's actions as attack against citizen's that move by car whose 'cada día se corta más su movilidad' [mobility is being cut down more and more every day] (La Provincia, 2016a). The consequences the association foresees are horrendous. They are even convinced that because of the 'política anti-vehículo' [anti-car policies], local shop owners will lose purchase powerful consumers to shopping centres that offer easy parking facilities. FREDICA's

inference consequently is that the success of businesses depends on free parking. Spreading anxiety about the loss of free transportation choice while sustaining car driving as only legitimate transport mode is a recurrent and obvious theme within FREDICA's communication. In fact, every sustainable incentive that inherently impacts on car usage is bashed. To them, every pedestrianization is a mistake (La Provincia, 2016b), the 'centimo verde' [the green penny] for every litre petrol an assault to citizens (La Provincia, 2016c) sustaining that 'there is no explanation for this policy against citizens that use their car every day in our city … the permanent exclusion of a transport mode that represents a 70% of the citizen's mobility is not intelligible' (La Provincia, 2016b). The association ignores, however, that if car driving is the only possible way of moving within the city, there is no choice to move differently anyway –hence the 70% domination of car driving. Statistics do not show any data that would reveal if citizens move by car because they want to or have to. In fact, when it comes to pro-alternative-transport modes incentives, FREDICA's members attempt to impede urban decisions. How that works explains Juan the recently elected council of traffic and transport:

> *Well, after giving an exclusive speech to the town hall representatives about their vision of mobility in the city, they become more explicit if our program doesn't fit their agenda. And this means they might not sponsor a cultural event between other things. (Juan)*

That said, car importers sponsor every single party, market or concert in the city. How powerful the automobility sector is has been demonstrated in the 'mapa del poder de canarias' [the map of power in the canaries]. This project is a result of the master's thesis of Raul Sanchez (2013), who through a documental data analysis demonstrated how power is distributed and abused

between few businesses and the government in the Canary Islands. He revealed that there are strong, partially personal, connections between the car lobby and government, which presuppose their dominant influence. It is thus not surprising that FREDICA abuses its economic and political power in influencing decisions to their favour, leaving the involved party no choice but to accept the request; taking into consideration the consequences of a confrontation.

5.3.5 Summary

This section has shown that different practices compete for the same material resources, which are essential for each of the practices' existence. Bodies, space, infrastructure and equipment are targeted features. In this competition, urban cycling's necessary 'material' arrangements are occupied, futile, damaged, taken away or inexistent. Urban cycling lacks material strength to thrive and is haunted by past stereotypes of sportive and childish cycling activities that have materially manifested in useless facilities and infrastructure. Data indicates that the 'material' element is thus incomplete, inconsistent and conflicted. Stealing was identified as most negatively impacting practice, albeit the most ignored one. Policing with its unaware and uncoordinated organization sustains such criminal activity rather than working against it. This contrasts with the governmental pushed and somewhat ballyhooed promotion of urban cycling, whose infrastructural changes are half-heartedly undertaken and directed at winning votes. Through pleasing dissimilar interests and in order to avoid taking responsibility for radical changes, governmental practices do not follow

through with sustainable goals. Data also reveals a mayor influence of lobbying practices over governmental decisions affecting car driving through economic and social power abuse. Findings indicate that a political dynamic exists between practices in which the dominance and marginalization of practices is sustained through the interplay of direct and subtle intersecting practices.

5.4   Competence

The third and equally important element of a practice is competence. Urban cycling, in contrast to leisure and race/sportive cycling, requires different skills and knowledge about how to behave within traffic. There are different rights, responsibilities and duties corresponding to urban cyclists. For instance, regulations regarding priority, right of way and behaviour are explicit when sharing the road with cars that are supposed to protect cyclists for its vulnerability. There are certain practical understandings necessary in order to be able to ride a bicycle along other vehicles. Schatzki defines such practical understandings as

> '[a] skill that underlies activity…certain abilities that pertain to the actions composing a practice…execut[ing] the actions that practical intelligibility singles out' (Schatzki, 2002, p. 77-79).

He introduces practical intelligibility as the 'basic ordering medium in social existence' (Schatzki, 1996, p.12) and describes the term as the activity-governing feature of a practice that determines what 'makes sense to people to do' (Schatzki, 2002, p.79). As such, practical intelligibility 'specifies what [a practitioner] does next in the continuous flow of activity' (Schatzki, 2002, p. 75). Looking at practical intelligibility gives insights into how knowledge and

learning are passed on to practitioners. Practical understanding is thus the physical execution of practical intelligibility and is inseparably interlinked with norms (Schatzki, 2002).

Accordingly, this section explores physical action, norms and understanding in a synthesized manner, represented in three stories. Firstly, there is a considerable lack of learning and knowledge. The marginalized position of urban cycling demonstrates the few opportunities for new practitioners to acquire corresponding norms and rules. Secondly, the marginalization of urban cycling is exacerbated by the body of police, who is unhelpful in the distribution of traffic education through which the domination of car driving is maintained. Thirdly, the pro-cycling policy is executed with considerable mismanagement of the involved entities.

5.4.1 The lack of traffic education: No practical intelligibility no ride

> '*Actually, I don't know which rules apply for urban cycling, I mean I know the general traffic norms, yes. When I am next to a car, I follow them like a car. Now really, there are times when I need to go around something and then I take advantage of the pedestrian ROW and I ride on. But this is not following the rules... [the hand signals] I noticed that nobody performed them and I also thought that nobody would understand me if I did any gestures…like they'd think of me: and this guy what's he doing?! You know?'(Echedey)*

Physical ability to ride and handle the bike equipment as well as the knowledge about norms and signs that clarify the right of way are important in order to avoid accidents and infringements. Urban cycling escapes some rules that apply for cars. For instance, at a cross road, cyclists are supposed to position themselves in the very front and enjoy prerogative in turning to the right. Cyclists always enjoy right of way when riding on a bicycle lane according to the Spanish 'Direccion General de Trafico' (DGT, 2015a) and

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local traffic regulation (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2015) it is therefore forbidden to park on, invade or otherwise obstruct bicycle lanes.

However, practitioners seem highly unaware of such norms. In contrast to other European countries, such as Germany and the Netherlands (VVN, 2017, Jugendverkehrsschulen, 2017) practitioners highlight not having received any information regarding traffic regulations, normative behaviour and handling bicycles within traffic. Physical peddling, in contrast, was something the majority of practitioners learned from their parents but only in areas without traffic. In fact, in some interviews on plazas and in parks, I observed how children practiced their first attempts on bicycles (see fig. 48 and 49).

Figure 48 - Kids learn to peddle in the Park
Source: Author's collection

Figure 49 - Kids Learn to Peddle at 'Plaza de Pilar'
Source: Author's collection

In fact, practitioners told me that traffic education was not a topic for them until doing their driver's license. In some cases, participants remember a one-day training in preliminary school at a park of the municipal police but critiqued the quality and outcome of the session, Irene illustrates:

'When I was a child, I received a biking lesson in the municipal police of my neighbourhood…but it wasn't to drive on the street, it was the idea of well, drive around the corner and that's it… you learn the signals a little bit so you would drive a car in the future. You know, it wasn't the intention that you'd ride a bike.' (Irene)

However, as cycling is done on the road without any age restriction (DGT, 2015b) –in Germany for example, children under the age of 12 have to ride on the footpath- cycling practitioners mingle with other traffic participants clueless of the physical and normative dimension of urban cycling. The question I posed in my diaries is: *how is normative and physical knowledge necessary for urban cycling acquired? (Journal, 03.05.2015)*

Observations and interviews show that practitioners learn how to behave within traffic by osmosis –mimicking the car rather than knowing their own right of way, duties and permissions as cyclists:

'Well, I have studied for the drivers license and more less I know which traffic rules there are, but the rest is done via intuition. It is nothing from another planet either. A bit of common sense' (Gazmira)

'Even if you are walking as a pedestrian on the street, if you see a zebra crossing, you know where you have to cross. Even if nobody showed you or told you or you haven't gone to any School… if you see the traffic lights are red, I think it is a bit like logical and education so simple to see that the people and cars stop when it is red. It is imitation also and there is no need that anyone shows you anything. You know. If there is a STOP on the floor, I don't think it's so hard to stop at this sign. You ride, you arrive at the STOP, you watch out-is there a car coming? No? Well you go on. You have to obey to the same rules that any other vehicle obeys to. Because you are a vehicle.' (Aday)

Based on these accounts I wonder what this intuition implies –is pure common sense enough in order to know how to behave in traffic? Ideally, if everybody would obey to the traffic rules, which then can be followed through imitation, it might? Observations, however, show that right and wrong are blurred on the street. In fact, what is done in the streets is an improvisation,

an embodied performance hybridizing written rules. Julio for example explained that 'this is Spain after all, a STOP signs automatically downgrades to a give way sign'. I have witnessed on a daily basis a certain anarchy when it comes to the norms within traffic in which everybody 'hace lo que le de la gana' [does what one wants]. Those that are not aware of what is 'ought' to be done on paper are not aware of infractions either. In fact, Agostin, riding his bicycle for years, admitted in one interview that before joining the activist group he took for granted that his space to cycle is on the footpath and was shocked to find out that he had committed infractions for such a long time without corrections from any authority. The three accounts presented above directly reflect Schatzki's (2002) notion that *'practical intelligibility is not the same as normativity [although interlinked]. What makes sense to someone to do is not the same as what is, or seems to be appropriate, right, or correct'* (p. 73).

Imitating infractions and getting educated into taking for granted that a red light symbolises 'free to cross' perpetuates 'what makes sense' in traffic although it might not be what 'ought' to be done like we see in fig 50.

Figure 50 - Father and Child Crossing a Red Light
Source: Author's collection

Schatzki (1996) compellingly describes:

> '*a person acquires understanding through exposure to and participation in the practice whose actions express it. Once acquired, moreover, she perpetuates the practice by performing actions that signify the same understanding… but it lodges there through her introduction into and exposure to past components of the continuing practice whose present constituent behaviours continue to express it. It is only because it is "out there" in something to which she becomes party that it is also "in her."*' (p. 106).

Quite the contrary to Schatzki's account is happening to urban cycling in Las Palmas. As the historical data of section 5.2. has shown, no strong past components of urban cycling exist to express such a continuity. Hence, urban cycling is 'not' out there and it seems like competences are borrowed from existing practices in traffic that do not work well when adopted to riding bicycles. Consequently, cyclists behave not as urban cyclists but imitate car drivers and pedestrians. An understanding that is urban-cycling-specific is therefore 'not' in them, to put it in Schatzki's words. Basically, the only way to acquire normative and practical knowledge about behaviour in traffic seems to be through doing one's driver's license. The lack of a proper or own urban cycling specific practical intelligibility turns Schatzki's (1996) argument around, in that practitioners do not know how to cycle or respond as urban cyclist to traffic. While ad hoc response and improvisation might be acceptable in some sub practices like storing as seen in the last section, not knowing how to behave within a dynamic traffic environment entails danger and the risk of causing accidents. The driving license as exclusive education channel further legitimizes car driving as the serious and recognized practice on the roads. The fact that one has to study, take practical lessons and exams, perpetuates the notion that serious examination presupposes a

serious practice. Car driving is thus further represented as being an important activity that needs official authorisation and puts in turn urban cycling into the position as the unimportant, playful practice that does not need any examination of competence.

Consequently, practitioners reported to struggle with their presence in traffic before doing their driver's license as the following accounts highlight:

> *'I remember it like the first couple of weeks riding within traffic were really stressful, yes a lot of stress. On top then I didn't have my drivers' license yet and I was there in the middle of everything, right? It was completely new to me and it caused me a lot of stress.' (Belen)*

> *'I wasn't completely comfortable because I rode the bike before I made my license so I didn't really know the rules. Well, I rode very precautious. The typical if you ride with car traffic –with a lot of precaution.' (Abian)*

Disadvantaged are those that do not possess a driver's license. Practitioners face a time intensive task of gathering the information needed about norms and rules:

> *'Well the rules I had to ask my way through them as I went along, right? I talked to the mayor, with the police –I step down and we chat. I have this brochure with the norms from the town hall, I have collected the information that the town hall offered.'(Flor)*

However, only very few practitioners actually make this kind of effort of studying the norms in-depth like Flor did. Doramas, who neither possesses a driver's license, is such an exemplar of autodidact learning:

> *'I went online and looked for how to ride in the city. Obviously, I thought that there are no norms for bicycles. Actually, I thought that the norms I had to know and follow are the ones for the car. So, what I contemplated was when I go on the roads, I have to obey the rules of the car. If there is a STOP I'll break, if there is a red traffic light I'll stop, when I am going to turn, I need to show this with my arms' (Doramas)*

It is though quite an effort to do so, as the normative is not easily accessible. I struggled to obtain written documents containing traffic norms like the 'ordenanza municipal' [municipal traffic regulation]. When asking the direct publishing source: the town hall, I got confused looks and was sent to several officials without clear answers, nor documents. In fact, the ones providing me with concrete and correct information were the activist organization Las Palmas en Bici, acting as the most reliable source to consult.

Looking at possible and available knowledge-sources, I gathered information from teachers, police officers, politicians and practitioners as well as national traffic regulations of the 'Direccion general de trafico' [General directory of traffic]. Turns out, traffic education is offered to schools by the town hall, however it is a voluntary workshop that takes place within the time schedule of the school. A non-integration into the mandatory timetable of schooling is explained by Esperanza a secondary school teacher:

> *'these are voluntary workshops and we can go and participate if we want to. It isn't a workshop over a series of days it's just one day. The thing of it being voluntary is that the schooling agenda is already packed, so we [teachers] struggle to even put the students through what is mandatory' (Esperanza)*

Esperanza's quote illustrates what Watson (2013) has described by saying that practices compete for time and bodies. The competence element necessary for urban cycling is occupied by schooling practices that don't integrate cycling education as a mandatory lesson. As we have seen from the material arrangements, urban cycling lacks not only a spatial position –it doesn't occupy a temporal slot either. It can be argued of course that as with a driver's license, the traffic education of bicycles should be a private

undertaking. However, the very word 'license' implicates that in order to drive a car one needs to go through an official assessment of theoretical and practical knowledge, examined by functionaries, in order to prove the commandment of the hardware and the traffic norms. How is it possible that urban cycling, as a practice in which practitioners of various ages confront other traffic participants in different vehicles, cannot claim to be taken seriously the same way?

When talking to 'Limonium,' the cycling school that teaches courses on behalf of the town hall, they confirmed that the town hall training takes place within schooling time tables between 8:30-13:00. Limonium explains that the demand for urban cycling training has risen. They provided me with two quantitative reports presenting the increased participations of schools and individual participants in courses between end of 2012 and mid 2015 (Memoria Biciescuelas Adultos, 2015, Memoria Biciescuelas Escolares, 2015). According to their data, the demand of schools in taking courses since the end of 2013 –when Limonium started to handle the initiative- has risen 11% whereas the demand of adults applying on their own initiative has tripled since the end of 2012 with an average of 155 participants a month. In total, over 5.856 adults and children have received urban cycling education within three years, encompassing physical training on how to handle and move on bikes as well as theoretical education on traffic norms. I was very curious to participate in the 'biciescuela' [bicycle school] and applied to one of the beginner courses in order to see how adults learn how to cycle. Unfortunately, I have been put on the waiting list, as the course was full. I have been waiting ever since for a response to no avail and since the

elections got lost, the new party has stopped the bike school initiative. Apparently, this has happened to others, too, as Virginia told me that she wanted to participate in one of the beginner courses but never got any response from the organizers. It seems thus, although there is remedy to cycling education, access and administration is slow.

Limonium's data confirms on the one hand Esperanza's account that schools need to make space in their timetables in order to schedule participation. However, the data reveals that there is growing demand in knowing how to urban cycle, which is exacerbated when looking at the numbers reported by the in 2015 launched public bicycle service. The newspaper La Provincia published the data provided by ByBike reporting that the 'new public bicycle service registered 2,572 users within the launching month of March 2015. The new users add to the 22,000 clients already active in the [previous] system' (Villacastin, 2015, p.1). Based on this data, I pose the question as to why urban cycling struggles to thrive if there is an obvious substantial –and growing- number of potential practitioners. I am posing this deliberately provocative question to make an elegant transition to doubt, once again, the autonomous role of the individual and its choice as determinant of consumption. In turn, I am also drawing attention to non-consumption or anti-consumption that presumes an equally conscious reasoning behind the phenomena of not consuming (Chatzidakis and Lee, 2012). The situation in Las Palmas turns the presumption of not consuming on its head by showing that in a developed first world, a European country, the possibilities available to the consumer are so conflicted that it is indeed impossible to cycle no matter how high the motivation for cycling is or the desire to resist car driving.

5.4.2 The role of policing for traffic education

In European cities, traffic regulations are executed and supervised by the police in order to secure safety, order and stability on the roads and within society in general. In Las Palmas, however, the confusion about norms and confused performance on the roads directly reflects the confusion about urban cycling within the body of police. Time spent in the field revealed that the police ignore urban cycling on the streets. In the case of confrontation, it is not taken seriously or urban cyclists are advised to stay away from traffic and are encouraged to cycle as defensively as possible. The police maintain the lack of traffic education, as officers do not function as a channel to correctly inform practitioners and hence do not contribute to a self-confident establishment of the practice on the roads. Quite the contrary; the police spread further uncertainty among urban cyclists through their actions. Instead of clarifying rules and norms, police officers confuse matters more than they resolve them. On Twitter for instance, a frustrated practitioner who publicly queried the police about how he should travel along a particular stretch of road inadvertently provoked a heated debate. Fig. 51 tells this story as he asked for clarification of a contradictory order given by a police officer on the street. He was advised to stop and avoid riding on the road with his child, because it is supposedly 'too dangerous' but he should neither ride on the footpath. The police forcefully recommended not to cycle to begin with and then advised to ride as right as possible on the lane in order to avoid being an 'estorbo' [disturbance] for drivers. Their answer provoked a discussion involving Las Palmas en Bici and followers who demanded the concrete article specifying this spatial 'un-positioning' of cyclists. The incorrect answer

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of the local police was Article 36 in the Reglamento General de Trafico, (DGT, 2015), which applies only when riding on interurban country roads and motorways. Article 102/4 of the 'ordenanza municipal de trafico' [municipal traffic regulation] (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2015) explicitly states that cyclists riding within the city areas should ride in the middle of the lanes for safety and visibility reasons.

Las Palmas en Bici was one of the first to respond and tag the town hall councillor in order to raise more awareness about the bad public image of urban cycling the police distributes. This Twitter debate not only highlights that the local police is promoting a dangerous picture of cycling, but that it is alarming unaware about the officially written norms of the practice. Special attention should be paid to the comment of 'Guanche 123' (anonymized) frustrated practitioner within the Twitter conversation. He expresses a dilemma between what he wants to do and what is possible to do due to the lack of clear regulations. On the one hand he wants to cycle, but on the other does not want to do anything illegal let alone dangerous.

@LasPalmasenbici @Marquespalomin (1/2) Please, do not suggest forbidden conducts by law. You cannot ride in the center of the lane.

@LasPalmasenbici@PoliciaLPA I do not have this alternative, nor do I want to put my daughter at risk, neither that they give me tickets. But I want to keep on riding by bike

@LasPalmasenbici @Lumumba (2/2) You are supposed to occupy only the necessary space on the very right extreme of the lane.

@LasPalmasenbici @Guanche_123 We have looked into RGC [Reglamiento de Gran Canaria, Regulations of Gran Canaria] and we could not find the claimed specific article in the regulations for Las Palmas. We are sorry for the mistake.

Figure 51 - Twitter Conversation with the Police

Source: Author's collection - This Twitter conversation between the local Police, an urban cyclist and Las Palmas en Bici has been manipulated due to formatting reasons and the identities of the people involved have been anonymized

And in fact, police officers' lack of knowledge towards official norms of urban cycling is gleaned through several incidents. One of the activist members, Rafael, reported several times in the WhatsApp Chat Group of Las Palmas en Bici that different police officers stopped him while riding through 'Calle Sagasta' [a street name], with the justification that the street is regarded as a pedestrian precinct. However, Calle Sagasta is explicitly declared as 'vía recomendada' [recommended route] within the 'Itinerarios Ciclistas' [urban cycling itinerary] published by the town hall (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2014c) as seen in fig. 52

Figure 52 - Urban Cycling Itinerary

Source: http://lpavisit.com/es/mapas?download=96:mapa-bici-lpgc

Within a critical mass ride, the police even made the whole group step down from their bicycles insisting that the street is only free for pedestrians and that the itinerary is no longer valid due to change in regulations. This lead to a debate on Facebook, as Las Palmas en Bici writes in fig.53:

[What changing regulation is this officer referring to? The municipality regulation that is published online on the website of the town hall is from 2011. Can we as citizens possibly know which are these regulations the officers comply with and which are not diffused conveniently to the citizens? This confusion, lack of clarity and determination of the normative only creates a feeling of insecurity and discourages bicycle usage.]

Plan Bici LPA [coordinator for the impementation]: As you know, the local police already commented on this incident in this social media channel. We suppose it is the single opinion of this particular officer.

Anonymous: Well, the problem is that one doesn't know anymore if you can ride or not in the precincts assigned as the ones we were supposedly able ride in the beginning, because suddenly officers make some new normative and rules up as they go that we don't know of.

Following up on the anonymous Facebook quote, I have more than once experienced how the police can be a disincentive to urban cycling. Whenever there was a conflict with cars, police officers tended to discipline and 'talk sense' into urban cyclists. Their claim is not to rebel against car drivers but just to avoid them and concede them right of way 'para evitar problemas' [to avoid problems]. In this sense police officers undermine if ROW actually corresponds to them or not. In a particular situation, I was involved in a direct confrontation:

'I am late for a meeting with the new town council for traffic and mobility after the elections. I leave the office by bike and ride towards 'Café D'Espacio' [meeting point]. I pass 'Fuente Luminosa' [a square with an illuminated fountain] where the bicycle lanes are interrupted by the in- and out coming street sections, albeit zebra paintings continue the lane across the street next to pedestrian crossings see fig. x. I take

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my right of way on the bicycle lane as I cross one of the street sections. A police car comes along so fast that it breaks down abruptly when I cross and we nearly crash. I have to say I am not surprised or afraid anymore I am just really annoyed. It is certainly not the first time that I experience a lot of trouble and almost-accidents at these interrupted cycle lanes! Every day on my way to the office I have such a situation. So I yell at the police: 'tengo preferencia yo!' [I have right of way!]. The police officers call me but I keep on riding. When I reach the other side of the street, they are following me. They are now driving at my pace and tell me to stop at the next intersection. They block the entrance of the parking slot to which the intersection leads to and talk to me while all the other cars that want to enter the parking slot, cannot. It is a sign of power to bar the way. I think they have another goal, to 'echarme la bronca por haberles llevado a la contraria' [to have a go at me for yelling at them]. But it is not about that apparently when they start talking: 'listen, excuse me, what you did is very dangerous; you were going very fast. You cannot ride that fast on a bicycle lane. I have seen you last minute and was able to break down just on time but any other car would have 'llevado por delante' [lifted you/hit you] that's for certain. The bicycle lane says 20 km/h and you were speeding at least at 40 km/h. I respond: 'and how did you possibly measure that? You know that this is farfetched! I have right of way and you are supposed to slow down considering that pedestrians and cyclists can cross at these zebras unexpected'. The officer who drives the car responds: 'I didn't see you, you need to ride more cautiously and slower'. And I repeat 'but I have right of way! The car should go slower, not me!' They laugh 'Yes, but you also have the broken legs. The cars do not respect your right of way even if you have it because here, there is no cycling culture'. I am turning this conversation into an interview and ask again: 'But why do I have to break down and ride defensively if I have right of way?' They look at each other and shrug their shoulders 'up to you, but we tell you for your own good, because the one that gets hurt is you, we'll call you an ambulance next time and that's it. Do you want to have broken legs? You were very fast and the cars do not see you'. I try not to burst out who am I about to meet and about what I am writing my PhD and ask a last time 'well, shouldn't they slow down and consider that there could appear a bicycle?' The answer is 'no, here nobody considers you'. [Field journal]

This vignette contains two points that need unravelling. Firstly, the officers did not want to admit that they committed an infraction. As the traffic regulation states, cyclists enjoy right of way on a bicycle lane –even if it is continued and even before a police car. Instead, they directly aimed at convincing me to change my riding style by lecturing me about riding too fast.

Through intimidating assumptions about the consequences for cyclists of imposing ones right of way and a confident riding style, the officers brainwashed me into believing that cycling is dangerous. Secondly, they emphasized that the warnings are for my 'own good' -self-protection so to speak. In confirming that cars do not respect bicycles, which are therefore 'well advised' to ride cautious and defensively means automatically conceding, accepting, legitimizing and perpetuating the hegemony of car driving. Consequently, the relationship between knowledge and power becomes obvious. There is disciplinary power at work as the police officers 'construct a discourse…in which certain knowledge is possible, while other is not' (Knott et al., 2006, p.964) and therefore establish a claim about truth within street traffic. The car is dangerous, speedy and disrespectful – therefore urban cyclists, if they want to be alive- need to keep their distance. Urban cycling is rendered powerless while the power of car driving is legitimate. Instead of educating car drivers into respecting the right of way of cyclists, cyclists are educated into conforming to give right of way to cars. Policing thus helps to support the maintenance of the dominant position of car driving and by the same token demotes urban cycling in imposing itself on the street.

5.4.3 Executing Omnishambles: the (mis-) management of urban cycling policy

The former section shows quite the opposite execution of what is promised by the town hall. Through conversations with Mardonio (the police officer), it becomes obvious that the management between town hall and police

department is unaligned. Objectives and executions on both ends are not the same. For instance, when asking him about the confusion regarding the itineraries discussed above he responds:

> *'This is another 'desproposito' [inconsistency] of the little coordination and information of the police department to its officers. Another unit 'Unidad de Playa' [department of coast and beach] controls the beach, which is not ours [traffic unit]. They check the promenade and its adjacent streets. I don't know what norms they have regarding this problem, what is clear though is that in the itinerary states that you can ride by bike' (*Mardonio*, 24.05.2015)*

There are in fact two separate regulations in which article 18 (Ayuntamiento de LPGC, 2015) banns the bicycle from promenades, to which 'Calle Sagasta' is categorized. Hence, itinerary and traffic regulations contradict each other. Inma, another police officer, who works within the unit for coast and beach for example explains in this regard:

> *'It is understood that this street is precinct –hence no bicycles allowed. I guess this itinerary 'esta lejos de la realidad' [is far away from reality], but 'bienvenido al ayuntamiento de lpgc' [welcome to the town hall of Las Palmas de Gran Canaria]' (Inma)*

And in fact, Inma's colleagues had no idea about the itinerary embodying the official cycling map for the city's bicycle lanes. The untuned information between police department and town hall is further grasped through Diego, who had an accident while riding on one of the bicycle lanes. Police officers helplessly told him that they filed several reports to their line managers saying that there are urgent problems to resolve, but these reports fell on deaf ears. Mardonio, confirms this situation resentfully during our participant observations. He told me several times how he tried to get actively involved in the planning and improvement of his bicycle unit. Unfortunately, his

enthusiasm vanished quickly. In one conversation, he expressed his disappointment about the current situation within his unit:

> 'at first you think great man, that's a great idea [the mobility policy]. But then you see beyond the incentives and you realize that there is nothing. Nothing. It's what we discussed earlier. There is this promoted policy but there is little interest in change within my department. Basically, their incentives aren't based on us they just do what's fancy on the news and we don't follow through with it' (Mardonio)

Mardonio alludes to the division between policy on the surface and the politics behind the scenes. He repeatedly complaint about the hypocrisy of his supervisors towards the incentives of the town hall. In meetings, both parties agreed on the bicycle unit, but the execution is inconsistent with what is on paper. As a matter of fact, shortly after our conversation, half of Mardonio's colleagues on wheels resigned. This decreased the bicycle unit to half of its initial size. On behalf of the town hall, the unit was created to increase the presence of bicycles within traffic in an official manner, as described in a newspaper article in La Provincia (2014). However, doing their service became impossible when the actual requirements and tasks appeared not to be the ones that the town hall had assigned. After only 5 months of bike service and constant complaining to their line managers about missing equipment and unheard reports about problems within traffic in relation to urban cycling, members returned to their motorized vehicles. It seems policing as a practice lacked itself material arrangements and competences.

As a reaction to the newspaper article in Canarias 7 titled 'Police on Wheels abandons the bicycle' (Darriba, 2015) I wrote a blog post through Las Palmas en bici (Scheurenbrand, 2015). In this article, I dealt with the issues based on

the information gathered from my observations and conversations. Critiquing the lack of critical analysis in this article I wrote provocatively:

> *'Based on what is witnessed… the situation could be interpreted as a concealed obstruction of the bicycle project in the city. The management deliberately 'kept up the conditions of the service, being aware of its shortage and difficulties' to a point where officer's voluntary resigned. In doing so, the management counts on the abandonment of the staff to collapse the project. Such course of events can be interpreted as sabotage according to 'La Real Academia Española' [equivalent to the Oxford Dictionary]. Following this thought, it is doubtable if the police-on-wheels-service –and with it the development of the bicycle as equalized vehicle– is being taken seriously by, let alone supported from top down within the police department …a direct confrontation with the town hall against the sustainable mentality being celebrated these days in the city is equally doubtful. It is easier to argue that the very own officers do not want the bicycle service and decided to resign on their own. This way, the 'bicycle war' will unlikely be resolved, the bicycle will be kept in its status as 'children's' toy' and urban cycling will be what it is right now: a battle. In sum, if Las Palmas will become sustainable depends less on single police officers and citizens, than it depends on the resolution of conflicts of interest behind political curtains. (Scheurenbrand, 2015)*

To frame the data in practice vocabulary, it reveals that the practice of policing clashes with urban cycling at the level of competences. The first impression the data transmits is a story of unaware and ignorant police officers that are overwhelmed by their primary duties, rules and regulations. However, considering a bigger picture, the data invites us to look at internal, complex and multi-layered conflicts within other practices. The data suggests for example that policing struggles itself internally with lacking material, different teleoaffective chains and competences. The politics between policing-on-bikes and policing-by-car deadlock a potential development of policing-by-bike being too weak in order to be a supporting practice for urban cycling.

5.4.4 Avoiding conflict: Riding like a Phantom through (un)channelled Bodily Performances

Exacerbated by the confusing, depriving material and spatial features presented in section 5.3, the lack of practical intelligibility and clarity of norms is problematic for the performance of urban cycling within traffic. Not knowing one's own right of way leads to a defensive, subordinate and insecure way of riding in the streets that evades pedestrians and cars instead of demanding an own position and the right to co-exist as equal vehicle. Yet, observations show that although urban cyclists are supposed to have lights, be bright and colourful to avoid being overlooked, their riding style is unobtrusive and evades other traffic participants in order to avoid any confrontation:

> *I try to avoid-actually I remember that I used to hurdle up and down the footpath, all day 'zigzagueando' [zigzagging] between road and footpath. With an agility to compass streetlamps –amazing [smiles]. Now I realize that this was wrong because really, I should have imposed myself as cyclist and say, well if I ride on the road then they just have to respect me, period. And I didn't do that. It is like I turned into [pause] I got used to respect cars and pedestrians. 'Dejarme abusar' [I let them exploit me], well, as I am more agile I think of it in a good way and ride just like a phantom: I try to attract as little attention as possible be as inconspicuous as possible… it is like I am constantly looking for a way to side step the next car. (Adrian)*

> *I don't like fighting; I always evade and move on, right? Stopping to fight with someone who won't understand me anyway, well, I consider it a bit [roles eyes and pauses], but maybe it is 'mal hecho' [done wrong] not to put them on enquiry. (Bruno)*

> *A repetitive situation that happens to me is that the car has a stop and I ride on the principal road but it still rolls on. It doesn't respect that you are coming and it certainly doesn't care that it has a duty to break. Sometimes they will shout at me. Generally, I ignore this. Unless they shout something really horrible I don't say anything, ever. (Ruyman)*

> *I am convinced that I am equal with the car. But sometimes they give you the feeling that you are not. And it's not anymore about respecting you as a cyclist, but as a vehicle that is riding. They don't consider you as equal in your conditions. Just because of driving a car they*

automatically enjoy priority over bikes. And they can jump a STOP sign because you don't matter because you are slower –'ride on the footpath, you are bothering me' -and it's like, actually I am not disturbing you –I have the same right to ride here, just like you. (Naira)

The underlying tone in these accounts displays concession to being underprivileged. Through the acceptance of being dominated, it is the urban cyclist's responsibility to watch out for potential collisions, even if that means committing infractions and relinquish their right of way, as Belen, Flor and Naira describe:

I am pretty attentive because I know that they are not. So, I am very dependent especially when I ride with my son. That means, I ride with a thousand eyes and I look into the face of the drivers asking myself: did he see me? Does he know that I am here? I do not take anything for granted. First of all I assure myself and look twice, I don't trust if the traffic light is red or green –no. I look first. Of course, it is a STOP sign and they should let me pass first. But here, this is the jungle and they 'llevan por delante' [common expression to say that the car lifts the bicycle with its front, i.e. to round on so.] so, no, no…you should be attentive. (Belen)

I didn't have any accident but thanks to myself! I ride very slowly, so I can break. I ride very calm, I never speed, except I have to do a sprint because I am being bullied and shouted at and I feel distressed. There are a lot of people being in a hurry telling me to fuck off. I don't feel having any rights. That's what I feel. It is like you always, always come second or third. I feel like having nothing. What's more I talked to the police and I tell them that I am being insulted. And the police officers do not answer me or give me any kind of assertion that I have or could plead any rights. So, to me it is clear that it is up to me to open the way up [for urban cycling] in a calm way. If not, I will come home angry every day and I do not have any intention to let the bicycle stress me. I need it as [transport] tool. (Flor)

If you ride alongside the cars everybody honks, the taxi drivers honk, I need to tell them: look what is painted on the road, it's the bicycle's priority! In order to not get into trouble, I need to break constantly. (Naira)

In fact, as Naira and Flor just explained, attempts of claiming one's right of way, i.e. going in contrast to the established power positions in traffic has

uncomfortable consequences, such as honking, insults and severe road rage. The accounts presented show that there is little to no negotiation of urban cyclists' rights within traffic. Take into consideration the following vignette of my journal:

> *I ride towards home from uni and I am already 70 meters away from my doorstep when I am about to pass by a side street. There is a SUV standing half way over his stop sign and the driver looks into my direction, however when I pass by he starts going and nearly knocks me down. He stops abruptly. I assumed he didn't see me so I knock on his bonnet and make the Spanish sign to watch out –a soft tapping of the index finger at the eye-corner. He gets upset and makes aggressive hand movements. Idiot, I think, turning my head to the street again while starting peddling. But there he appears and cuts my way off from the left, unfortunately for me there is a car parking in second line to my right and I am trapped between his car and the parking car. No escape, not left not right. This is not ok I think, he shouldn't do this so I strike out my arm and hit his window with my knuckles, not hard but still firm to make a protest. He gets out off the car. I try to fiddle my bike through the narrow aisle passing by the parked car, but he comes towards me with lifted arms and screams 'que te pasa eeh que golpeas mi ventanilla eeeh' [what's wrong with you how dare you hitting my window]. I am threatened and scared. My heart starts beating heavily. I tell him that he didn't adhere to the stop sign and should watch out. He continues screaming 'que stop eh por que no te vas a la acera, vete al carajo' [what stop hey, why don't you ride on the footpath, just fuck off]. I feel a mix of fear and anger at the same time and I start shaking, however I can't help screaming back 'vete a la mierda' [go to hell]. Lucky for me he gets back into the car and drives away. I chug my bike along with me on to the footpath where I try, with trembling hands, to take a picture of the assholes car. But what is captured is just a blurred photo of my shock. I say his 'matricula' [license tag] out loud to type it at least into my notes and turn to the door. Someone opens the entrance door to my building from inside. I thank him and try to smile. My bike is suddenly so much heavier than before and I stumble over my pedals stepping into my building. When I open the door to my apartment I start crying. (Journal, 05.02.2015)*

Similar situations have happened frequently. I have one occasion on video in which a car driver, who despite seeing me riding towards him on the cycling path, invaded the cycling path in a way in which I had to break down in order not to collide. His hand gesture suggested I should go to hell while asking

aggressively 'qué quieres que te haga' [what do you want me to do to you?] after my protesting arm lift expressing as much as an annoyed 'again' though without saying anything. A couple of second after this scene I speak out loud in German:

> '*wenn man es für selbstverständlich hält, dass die Autos einen respektieren und das auch einfordert, kriegt man immer eins auf die Fresse!'* [if taken for granted that cars will respect you and you claim this respect actively, then you will get a face-plant!]

And even Iraya, a confident cyclist, describes that it took her a lot to impose herself within traffic:

> *You have to be assertive. I for example, I stick to certain norms, especially since I have become a mother I make myself stick to norms, right? For example, I put myself in the middle of the street no matter what or who honks at me, they won't get me off the street, you know? In the past, I used to ride on the very right side of the road in order not to disturb the traffic. Now if I ride with my son, I ride right in the middle of the road and it is my road just as it is yours. We are two, I go slower than you but I will put myself in front of you at the traffic lights so when I start riding again I don't have to find myself lost between cars. It is these details you know. It's like without you wanting it you impose yourself so the city won't drown you. (Iraya)*

The rivalry among road users is scary. Nevertheless, urban cyclists are brave to still sit on the saddle and ride in spite their fears and cautious style of riding. Iraya's quote reflects Fincham's (2006) findings of how riding styles can be an expression of protection –albeit perceived as aggressive. Iraya follows the contention 'either stick to the kerb and hope that nobody hits you, or assert yourself as a legitimate road user who will not be bullied' (Fincham, 2006 p.220). It is in her accounts that I wonder if fear –in contrast to quantitative studies- might not be the major reason why urban cycling does not thrive. Nevertheless, it cannot be neglected that asserting oneself requires courage. Iraya's words also carry an undertone of justification as if

the right to move just like any other vehicle was not self-evident. Her account is no exception. Practitioners articulate that they 'should' be more self-confident in claiming their right of way. However, they feel guilty about 'relentizar' [slowing down] cars and grant priority to the car. In a conversation, Adrian described this guilt to me:

> *Adrian: If there is only one lane and the cars have to line up behind me even if I speed, I suddenly notice this line of cars accumulating because of me, well, I stop for a moment and I change to the footpath, I let them pass and I incorporate myself again on the road. It's like I don't want to disturb the cars that come behind me. I even put myself in danger because I got used not to feel this pressure of the car behind my back. It's an anxiety of the pressure that because of me a lot of cars do not reach their destination on time, picking up kids, work, etc. So, a lot of times just for myself I get out of the way quickly, but in doing so, I put myself into danger. I am entitling the car when I shouldn't.*
>
> *Me: you don't have to go anywhere important?*
>
> *Adrian: yes, I do, of course I do.*
>
> *Me: aren't you slowed down if you step aside?*
>
> *Adrian: yes of course [laughs] that's for certain, clearly.*

Rosalva explains similar issues on the road:

> *It is a feeling you can't help. The car is behind you, waiting for you, waiting for the moment in which it can finally pass by. And you feel like a disturbance because where you claim space you are automatically slowing down traffic. There is no space for both. If you ride on the road, well you are bothering the cars. There is no space for you to ride at your pace and no space for cars to drive at their pace. (Rosalva)*

Their accounts reflect what Gramsci (1971) calls contradictory common sense, in which a subordinate entity struggles with two opposing worldviews (Crehan, 2011). Adrian knows that theoretically he has the right to be on the streets but still gives prerogative to the car, hence his 'theoretical consciousness [is] historically in opposition to his activity' (Patnaik, 1988, p.4). This reflects the struggle between the external imposed worldview of the

hegemonic entity –car driving- enjoying prerogative and the equality-driven worldview of the suppressed entity –urban cycling- struggling in positioning itself (Gramsci, 1971). In giving right of way to cars, urban cycling appropriates the values of car driving. In other words, although the practitioners of urban cycling want to establish themselves on the streets, the activity the practice implies is in contrast to the 'normal' status quo, challenging the established entity and is thus not consequently performed. This shows how deeply ingrained car driving as 'normal' and hence dominant practice is and how practitioners of urban cycling lose sight of their own 'subjectivity [their own] potentialities, the causalities of [their own] action' (Patnaik, 1988, p.8).

In fact, showing resistance to the ruling practice and being stubborn about being an equal vehicle adhering to 'written' urban cycling norms, not only provoked frequent confrontations, but also revealed me as foreigner. Car drivers spotted my 'strange' performances within traffic and were not afraid to ask:

> *'I am riding home from the office. It is late, 10:35pm to be exact. At the traffic light crossing Mesa y Lopez, I am waiting for it to turn green. Next to me is this elderly driver looking out of the car window asking me: 'you are not from here, right?' –I answered: 'no I am not' and he answers: 'Se nota [it shows], nobody from here would stop at a red light at night on a bicycle' (Journal, 22.07.2016)*

But it does not stop there, my clothing was perceived as strange as well. For example, I rarely wore active wear for my PO's. I was always dressed normal. If I had to go to an important meeting, I rode the bike dressed up with heels. As we have seen in section 5.2, however, riding a bike dressed up is not intelligible within the concept of when cycling makes sense, i.e. for

sportive purposes or a purposive-less stroll on a Sunday afternoon. Consider the following three incidents:

> *'I just met a colleague in the cafeteria to discuss some details of the RackTrack app [an android application I designed based on my findings]. When I leave for the PO with Jose Rosa, she asks me surprised: 'Really? Are you cycling like that? Aren't you putting on something more sporty?'(Journal, 23.04.2015)*

> *'During the photo-shoot for the newspaper La Provincia We shot in different locations, mostly big crossroads in front of the cars. People made comments about my shoes [heels], one shouted out: 'tienes que cambiarte los zapatos' [you need to change your shoes]' (Journal, 05.05.2015)*

> *'It's Friday night and I am invited to see a concert of one of my practitioner's band. As always, I ride to the place by bike, I am wearing black pants, pink pullover a black blazer and high heels. When I arrive there, four people want to take pictures of my feet and the bicycle. Several unknown people ask: 'can you ride like that?' 'are you seriously riding like that?' I knew that few people ride the bike with normal/smart-casual/business outfits. But I wouldn't have thought that the reaction to my shoes would be that exaggerated' (Journal, 05.05.2015)*

These insights illustrate how practical intelligibility is bound up with materiality and meaning. What makes sense to do, steers our bodily performance and determines which material we integrate in the course of our performances and what they might mean. In turn, this works the other way around considering section 5.3.2 in which urban cycling struggles through the lack of a spatial position: practical intelligibility can be trapped within material/spatial dimensions. Consequently, the things surrounding practitioners 'channel' our performances and practices (Schatzki, 2012). But in turn, this means that a lack of material, symbolic and competent surroundings makes such 'channelling' difficult and in the case of urban cycling what makes sense is partially unclear and thus 'unchannelled'.

5.4.5 Summary

This section has revealed that there is a lack of educational channels transmitting competences necessary for urban cycling. Data shows that urban cyclists are unaware of their own norms and therefore do not know how to correctly behave in traffic. Therefore, urban cycling struggles to build up an own position within traffic, especially because urban cyclists imitate the car instead of knowing their own right of way through borrowing regulations and norms from existing practices, such as car driving and walking. Urban cycling lacks the historical existence that potentially could carry and teach practical intelligibility and understanding, which has to establish from scratch. Urban cycling is further trapped in its unimportant and unrecognized position, as the prevalent way of learning about traffic behaviour is the driver's license, which maintains the official and authorized character of driving.

The illegitimate character of urban cycling is further demonstrated through the negative response of police services to urban cycling. Apart from spreading confused instructions and wrong regulations about the practice, police officers discourage practitioners to claim their right of ways and instead recommend giving way to car drivers. Yet practitioners are advised to conform to this relegation, which reinforces the dominant position of car driving. This power relation is reflected in the inconspicuous and insecure riding style of practitioners who assume complete responsibility for possible accidents being racked from guilt about their slow presence within traffic.

The data does not only represent the unprivileged nature of urban cycling with low police priority, but tells a story of a conflicted relationship between

policing and urban cycling, due to an unaligned relationship of norms within policing itself. Asynchronised management of departments frames the debate way beyond single police officers and points to unaligned interests within fundamental and institutional environments.

Urban cycling is hindered to thrive through restricted access to, inexistence of, or the competition for its necessary resources with other practices. Consequently, the necessary linkage between these elements is nearly impossible. The relationship between urban cycling and other practices is conflicted. These conflicts keep urban cycling in a subordinate or 'losing' position. The complexity of such relationships becomes apparent through the involvement of seemingly unrelated practices to urban cycling, which nourish and sustain the domination of car driving and in turn the marginalization of urban cycling. The findings indicate that practices carry out hegemonic mechanics, which determine the success or failure of practices and in turn restrict or enable consumption.

6 Discussion

The overall aim of this study was to explore the potential of a practice ontology for debates on sustainable consumption. This chapter aims to address objective one to four:

1. To examine how a marginalised practice struggles to thrive

2. To examine how practices relate to one another and to explore the potential hierarchies (politics) of such relationships and their consequences for sustainable consumption

3. To test the compatibility, -elasticity and -usefulness of political theory as ally to a practice ontology

4. To examine the implications of the above for the theory and practice (in particular policy) surrounding sustainable consumption

Through discussing the research questions alongside the empirical account asking why urban cycling as a sustainable practice is marginalized in Las Palmas, I discovered that the relationships between elements and the relationships between different practices are central to this marginalization. I suggest that the relationship between urban cycling and related practices is conflicted and that sustainable consumption can be constrained and enabled by the constellation of such conflicts. Building on the concepts of agonist and antagonist developed by Lauclau and Mouffe to understand the struggling relationships between practices, I propose the term 'synergist' practices. This neologism is introduced to emphasise that subordination and dominance between practices entail more than a dual relationship between agonist and antagonist. This chapter offers a conceptualization of these politics of practices discussing possible theoretical and practical implications for sustainable consumption.

6.1 Conflicted relationships and competition for resources

The analysis in chapter five provides the basis for understanding single elements of a marginalized practice and their relationship to each other as well as to other practices. The analysis has shown a series of detailed observations about these relationships first relating to internal *conflicts within* single practices, second *conflicts between* practices. While the former (internal conflicts) outlines a picture of incomplete elements that struggle to exist and build relationships with each other, the latter (external conflicts) shows a complex struggle for resources of different practices. This section addresses objectives one and two through discussing answers to the corresponding research questions outlined in chapter four.

6.1.1 Conflicts within a practice: beyond the duality of material and meaning

The findings demonstrate how internal conflicts between elements within a single practice hinder the evolution of that practice. Just as Shove et al. (2012) find in their cases of well-established practices that elements in a practice mutually influence and reinforce each other, I found that in the case of a marginalized practice elements can equally hinder and restrict each other. That is to say, an internal conflict of one element creates conflicts between other elements. If one element is hindered, the other elements cannot establish either because the necessary relationship cannot be built. Data suggests that these inner conflicts stem from the incomplete and struggling nature of elements. For example, I have demonstrated a reciprocal relationship between the lack of material resources and the lack of meaning

of urban cycling: numerous bicycle-parking facilities are located at leisure sites (such as the beach and the park) whereas useful facilities in the city centre are non-existent. The establishment of the 'meaning' element of 'urban' cycling is thereby restrained by the existing material arrangement of bicycle parking. In turn, these material arrangements also perpetuate meanings of existing practices of cycling such as sports cycling or cycling as a leisure pursuit, something that one can do in a park, or at the beach. This inscription of meaning within material arrangements reflects Schatzki's (2014) notion that 'materiality can fill out the ends and purposes for which people act' (p.33) and relates back to Gramsci (cited in Forgac, 2000) who emphasizes materiality as crucial for the maintenance of ideology.

In showing how materiality and meaning depend on each other in the perpetuation of perceiving the bicycle-as-toy as opposed to a serious form of urban transport, the data illustrates this materialization of an anti-bicycle ideology. The data supports literature campaigning for materialized consumer research which argues that consumption is embedded in complex material-semiotic webs (Bettany, 2007, Borgerson, 2005, Shove et al.,2012) thus downplaying the exclusive status of symbolic meaning alone. Pushing this argument, I suggest that while being historical (Gramsci, 2000), ideology seems to be built and maintained through practices, which suggests that ideologies perhaps result from practices. This contradicts studies that classify ideology as merely a cognitive 'system of beliefs and values' (Hirschmann, 1993, p. 537, see also Holt, 2012, Dalpian et al. 2014, p.3, Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012). My study consequently suggests that practices maintain ideologies that justify the participation in such practices and hence maintain

certain consumption patterns. Returning to sustainability debates this inference suggests that practices precede the dominant social paradigm (DSP), which has been outlined as a consumption ideology (Kilbourne et al., 1997) and 'cultural imperative' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.283). The DSP might thus best not be understood as the initial reason for consumption 'that sets the tone and context for consumption' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.283). Instead, to reveal contexts for consumption, practices need to be analysed to find out which forms of participation in (un-)sustainable practices are possible.

But restricted mechanics were not only discovered between material and meaning but between competence, material and meaning. For example, the lack of competence i.e. practical intelligibility, rules and norms, the capability to 'negotiat[ing] the physicality of the material world' (Schatzki, 2013, p. 33) of urban cycling is restricted. In other words, without knowing 'how to' behave in traffic, nor how to handle the bicycle and impose oneself in traffic, the necessary link to material elements cannot be established as the lack of competence keeps bicycles in segregated areas and spaces. While this argument seems rather straightforward, competence, as an element, deserves a closer look and more nuanced critical analysis to examine if and how competence is 'owned'. Accounts of 'motility' (Kaufmann et al.,2004) –a term that describes the 'structural and cultural dimensions of movement' (p.750)– break possibilities of moving down into access, competence and appropriation. Competence in motility-wording entails physical ability, acquired skills and organizational skills (Lucas, 2012). While physical ability is described as subject related, acquired skills refer to rules and regulations

and organizational skills refers to the 'planning and synchronizing activities' (Kaufmann et al., 2004, p.750) targeted at the distribution of know-how. The picture of who or what is competent becomes thus more complex and challenges the notion of conflating competence and ability at an individual level. In fact, although one might condition the other (Cass, 2005) competence is dispersed among different entities and thus not necessarily owned by the cycling subject. In fact, my empirical account reveals that even physical ability might be restrained by the lack of acquired or organizational skills. Consider for example how physical ability to ride is impaired by institutional incompetence. The police and schools with their incapacity to 'relating to rules and regulations of movement, e.g. licenses, permits [and to spread] specific knowledge of the terrain or codes' (Kaufmann et al., 2004, p.750) hampers to ride bikes within traffic no matter how fit the cycling subject might be. Adding the lack of alignment of the town hall regarding objectives and procedures towards a coherent bicycle policy, the lack of 'organizational skills, e.g. planning and synchronizing activities including the acquisition of information' (Kaufmann et al., 2004, p.750), the practice of cycling is indeed impaired at the 'competence' level without a specific 'incompetent cycling subject'.

In order to emphasize my argument, imagine a person with a bodily condition that impedes to peddle or hold balance on a bicycle. Imagine this person being mentally prepared and knowledgeable in terms of regulations and rules (licenses) and exists in an environment that is supportive of organizational skills, which enables the possibility of being recruited to cycling. Here the

competence to ride is restrained by an 'unowned' ability, which might or not be supported by a material solution in order to ride; be it a certain mechanical adjustment or similar. Consider now the opposite in my empirical account, in which I told tales about physically able subjects, who are surrounded by restrained material, meaningful and opportunities and a lack of regulations, rules and organizational skills. Their possibilities to becoming competent despite their physical ability seem rather low and much more complex to resolve. In both cases competence to ride is restrained by conditions, which are outside of the subject's ownership. Competence is thus 'multifaceted' (Kaufmann et al., p.750) and may depend on the relationship and interplay of different elements like meaning and material. If Schatzki (2002) has argued that 'agency… is a property of the assemblages that humans form with other entities' (p. 204), then competence too might be a property that does not reside in human subjects but arise through its interdependent character and the relationships with or lack of material- and meaningful elements.

The idea of institutional incompetence is further intriguing. My empirical account has shown progressively that the responsibility of competence is difficult to locate, in fact impossible to determine. While my empirical account pictures the police and the town hall with limited competence in supporting cycling as a practice, my empirical account has given insights into the 'government traps' (Newell et al., 2015) under which these bodies suffer. In fact, the incompetence arises not through singular individuals but rather from divergent objectives and incompatibilities of the practices involved. For example exists a gap between what cycling needs to thrive as a practice, the

sustainable values cycling represents and the economic orientation of governmental practices and the economic values that competing practices entail. At this point my argument boils down to the neo-liberalist source of the quest as to why the responsibility of sustainable living is pushed back and forth between institutions, policy and consumer? Being caught up in a web of competitive practices, my data suggests none of the three are 'competent' to resolve the problem that cycling faces. Considering consumption from this point of view –what are we left with? In a system that promotes and prefers the invisible governmental hand, can we demand carbon footprint reduction issues be resolved by law? If we think about carbon emissions as a slow, but nonetheless effective homicide, why is it not treated as such? Only neo-liberal philosophy can cover up a toxic consumption with a debate around freedom and choice as seen in the example of smoking. But at the end of the day, driving cars is comparable to smoking because the carbon emissions generated by oneself harm others. I will have to say more about the debate about sustainability and the deconstruction of neo-liberalist consumption ideology in 6.3

Coming back to the interdependent character of competence, my empirical account expresses the conflicted relationship between competence and material further restrains 'meaning' from establishing its own logic that expresses and reads bicycles as authorised vehicles. My analysis extends material calls in consumer research using practice theory (Magaudda, 2011) by showing how meaning is conditioned not only by material arrangements but also significantly by competences including knowledge, understanding,

norms and learning. Insights into meaning were gleaned across the whole range of data sources and were not expressed exclusively through practitioners. Accordingly, data echoes that meaning is 'tied to specific practices' (Schatzki, 2001, p.82) and therefore negotiated among the lacking, conflicted relationship between elements. This is in contrast to the dominant belief that symbolic meanings are tied to and constructed by the consumer as phenomenological accounts in mainstream consumer research suggest (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). My data neither coheres with CCT practice studies that have foregrounded the importance of meaning as responsible for governing practices, 'orchestrating' (Arsel and Bean, 2013, p. 913) the alignment of material and competence. By emphasizing the importance of competence for the development of material, my study extends the duality of material and meaning proposed by the literature in foregrounding the importance of the normative and skilful sphere of practices that play an important role in conditioning these semio-material resources.

While studies have placed greater importance on either materiality or meaning, my findings flatten such hierarchies by demonstrating the interdependent character of practice elements, which on their own do not enjoy greater importance over the other. In fact, my research shows how one element is reliant on the other to exist. This evidence empirically demonstrates the 'flat' character of practices (Schatzki, 2012) and supports studies arguing for the 'flattening out' (Bajde, 2013) of consumer research in which agency of the possibility to consume is distributed horizontally among human and non-human features (Sahakian and Whilhite, 2014). While these

findings suggest the need for an uninterrupted linkage of elements (Shove, 2012), they also demonstrate that urban cycling is far from enjoying these linkages – and hence remains marginalised as a practice.

6.1.2   Conflicts between practices

Turning to the conflicts between practices, findings suggest that the incomplete, struggling and lacking nature of elements (competence, material and meaning) is a result of the competition for resources with other practices. The analysis has revealed the breadth of this competition with a plethora of practices that have influence on urban cycling. Stealing, campaigning, policing, lobbying, schooling, car driving, bus riding, walking –all of these practices have some influence on urban cycling. Some of these relationships are more obvious than others some have a stronger or weaker influence, some have direct and open confrontation while others operate subtly and are concealed.

Findings suggest that in situ analysis of elements in relationship to other practices is necessary to reveal such competition for resources. This is in contrast to studies that argue for exclusively historical analyses portraying the co-existence and development of practices as a smooth process over time (Southerton et al. 2012, Shove and Pantzar, 2005, Shove et al., 2007, Warde, 2014, Warde et al. 2007). Although these studies outline that practices possibly 'colonize' (Shove and Pantzar, 2012, p. 89) resources of other practices, I found no studies, which address the real-time happening of this process. My study emphasises the real-time on-going battle between practices for competence, material and meaning. This extends Hargreaves

(2011) who finds that objects are 'involved in and support a number of different practices' (p.91). The nature of this involvement is however of a hostile character. In contrast to Shove et al. (2012), who outline a friendly sharing of elements between practices, my research suggests that because of the resources that urban cycling has in common with other practices, the relationship with them is highly conflicted instead of being supportive (Shove et al, 2012). Beyond that, my findings show how other, seemingly unrelated practices, such as schooling, campaigning and policing, interfere with urban cycling, those that at first sight do not share common resources.

With regard to material for example, my findings highlight the struggle urban cycling undergoes when attempting to establish a place within infrastructure and streetscape. Car driving and walking often transgress into spaces that are meant to be reserved for cycling, the overriding of rules and ignorance of ROWs by both walkers and car drivers is frequent. Schatzki (2010b) suggests that such conflicts arise due to the collapse of harmony in space, in which 'incompatible spatial understandings' (p.90) clash. The disrespectful way in which urban cycling's space is attacked reflects the spatial intolerance towards bicycles and shapes the dominant ordering of practices, in which urban cycling is at the bottom of the food chain. The intersection of these different practices reflects Schatzki's (1996) definition of action hierarchies and bundles of practices. Their co-existence is characterized by a variety of higher levelled and spatially organized practices. Seen from this perspective, conflicts on the streets, i.e. road rage indeed 'transpires' (Schatzki, 2002, p.173), not from individual mind-sets, but from clashing practices that take hierarchy over each other. Thinking about road rage as a symptom that

indicates disharmony between –and shortcomings of– practices offers a fruitful new way to problematize traffic conflicts. Yet resolving such conflicts goes way beyond the cognitive education (Suhr and Nesbit, 2013, Asbridge et al., 2006) of road users and instead points towards the fair allocation of resources between practices. This fair allocation is vital if sustainable practices are to exist. In turn, this argument invites policy makers to rethink their ontological starting points for social change (Shove, 2010a). This finding is especially insightful for studies in social marketing that have treated road rage as an individual, behavioural problem to date (Woodside, 2008, Crimmins and Callahan, 2003).

Less directly conflictual practices like bus driving hamper urban cycling's materiality and spatial position through exclusion. Data shows how discriminating bicycles on board hampers urban cycling's performance, as some important points of the city are not accessible by bike alone. Therefore, practitioners follow the all or nothing principle: if necessary material access and facilities are not granted or non-existent, urban cycling is unfeasible and discarded all together. The option to combine bus and bicycle is thereby blocked through the regulations of public transport, which in fact is contradictory to the concept of sustainability. Public transport is generally seen as the transport mode, which is key to embrace other forms of sustainable moving (Chapman, 2007). However, the data revealed that public transport is in competition to other practices as it might lose customers to urban cycling and therefore competes for bodies taking the bus (Watson, 2013, Paget-Seekins, 2015). However, the bus service as it is, is hardly yet an alternative to car driving. Hence, bus riding in combination with urban

cycling might actually win customers. At the moment, bus riding loses customers to car driving and thus contributes indirectly to car driving's hegemony as a practice.

The extended dominance of car driving is further demonstrated through the colonisation of competence. The analysis sketched a lack of learning and understanding as practitioners imitate cars, borrowing 'what makes sense' from what is said and done on the street, namely car driving. Car driving appears to inject know how which is inadequately applied to urban cycling. Consequently, findings do not suggest that codified knowhow of a practice (in the form of manuals or any other documents) is evidence of a 'widely shared practice' (Warde, 2013, p. 23). Former studies have argued that manuals are a key feature to train masses into the performances of a practice (Shove et al. 2012). However, my research suggests that this is not the case. Although most practitioners report to be self-taught, they are hardly aware of the standardized knowledge of urban cycling on paper. In fact, the execution of ROW, norms and rules as well as practical understandings lacked proficiency if compared with such documents. My findings show that although brochures, manuals and itineraries exist containing such 'abstracted knowledge' (Shove and Pantzar, 2012, p. 48) –let alone the Internet with all its 'how to' tips and tutorials- the practical intelligibility of urban cycling are occupied by norms corresponding to car driving. Data therefore underlines Schatzki's (1996) assertion that: 'it is what we do, how we go on, that determines the rule, not vice versa' (p. 51). Activities like riding persistently in the middle of the lane without giving into the pester power of car drivers are 'trapped within the persistent practice organization' (Schatzki, 2013, p. 40) of well-established

practices that determine traffic order. This finding deserves a closer look. Urban cycling, in its marginality is clearly not practised enough within traffic in order to 'speak for itself' (Schatzki, 1996, p.50), expressing its own norms and meaning, and therefore teaching practitioners how it should be performed. Through its limited presence on the street, urban cycling cannot provide the necessary knowledge for practitioners to perform and develop the practice. It is therefore tempting to agree with Shove and Pantzar's (2005) claim that if a practice is to exist 'people have to do it' (p. 61). After all, persistent activities reproduce the practice and vice versa (Warde, 2005, Schatzki, 2002,) and thus 'practices – new or not– require continual reproduction' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005, p.61). However, my study shows that this claim is too simple and ignores that in order for people to be able to participate in a 'new' practice, the practice itself needs resources that then can be made available to be integrated by people. For example, findings have shown that urban cycling does not have its own practical intelligibility to teach practitioners. The few practitioners that represent the practice perpetuate the imitation of rules that do not correspond to it (i.e. those of the dominant practice of car driving). Schatzki (2014) speculates in this regard that 'in absence of such [continuous] performance, practice ceases to exist' (p.40). The empirical account emphasises a more complex picture. While urban cycling does struggle to exist under the occupancy of practical intelligibility, my findings shed light on how the colonialization of that resource inhibits the establishment of its own logic and therefore the relational character of the practice. This is further demonstrated by the practitioners' reflections expressing their guilt and impotence when merely imagining

applying a cycling logic (as opposed to car driving) to their riding. However, the subsequent performance of riding serves to hold urban cycling in a marginalized position rather than leading to its termination as proposed by Schatzki (2014).

6.1.3 The history of elements and the issue of temporality

My discussion suggests that characterising elements as 'stable' (Shove et al, 2012, p.44) is misleading. It ignores the complex dynamics negotiating the existence of elements themselves and thus overlooks the necessity of elements to emerge before the practice itself does. In fact, counter to suggestions by Shove et al. (2012), my research provides some evidence that necessary elements need to establish from scratch and therefore do not necessarily have a history of their own in which they have fallen in and out of integration. The data emphasises that marginalized practices lack their own elements –be it because of the impossibility of accessing resources or the inexistence of such. Consequently, my data does not cohere with the claim that elements are merely 'out there' (Shove et al., 2012, p.123) waiting to be linked together but instead emphasises the uncertainty and dependency on other practices, whose relationship can well be competitive. Accordingly, my findings do not cohere with accounts treating elements as 'enduring over time' (Shove et al., 2012, p. 44). Studies have tended to historically analyse how elements came together, concentrating on the moment of linkage, because it has been argued that 'only through their integration in practice that elements are reproduced, eroded, or carried from one setting to another' (p.44). In doing so, however, studies have skipped over the possibility of a

moment in which elements themselves establish and struggle to be available for linkage through a competition between practices. Hence, these studies ignore the fact that integration is not a smooth process but bound up within politics of practices. My study highlights such in situ moments of hierarchical mechanics of competing practices that make the very being of elements difficult and thus suggests that the mere existence of elements alone still does not make up the 'potential' of linkage –it is dependent on what happens to them within the practice bundle.

My study therefore extends the framework in section 2.3.1.2 by an additional step as shown in figure 54, which visualizes the competition between practices. In fact, this additional step requires that we take a step back in conceptualizing how elements struggle prior to their linkage. Hence, the visualization precedes the three steps proposed by Shove et al. (2012) by starting with the establishment of elements instead of taking their existence for granted. The visualization of elements is thus not a solid, continuous line, but a dashed line. This dashed line is supposed to express the incomplete and struggling –in fact uncertain nature of existence those elements can go through. The uneven red line around the dashed elements symbolizes the conflict area with competing practices influencing the establishment as outlined in 1.2. As a result of this conflict my visualization shows how the inner relationship of elements within a single practice is conflicted as outlined in 1.1 through a reciprocal lightning bolt.
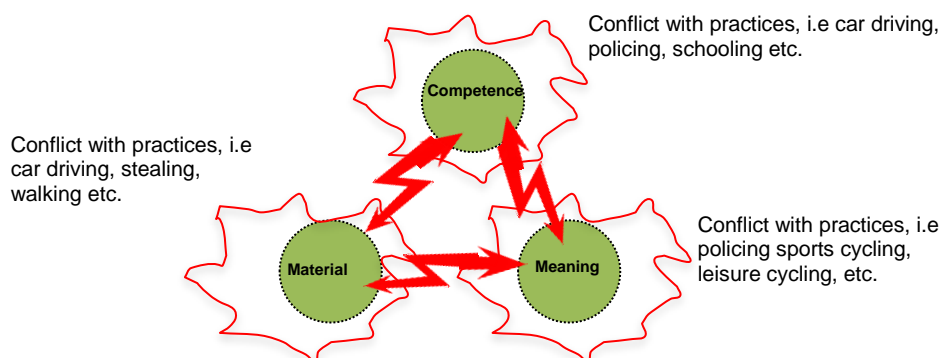
Figure 54 - Unestablished, struggling elements
Source: Author's visualization

The aspect of history deserves some more discussion. Schatzki (2013) has outlined his version of temporality as an aspect of activity in which he suggests that activity follows purposes and ends, being nourished by the time-trilogy of past, present and future. My findings map out such perpetuation of the past into the present regarding car driving. While it is widely accepted that most practices perpetuate the past (Schatzki, 2013), which is in line with Warde's (2014) interpretation of practices following Bourdieu's 'Habitus', I have also presented evidence of the absence of urban cycling in the city's past, being generally characterized by practitioners as something strange, and recent. My research coheres therefore, as well, with Schatzki's (2011) argument that 'the past does not determine the present…each present activity… is a new start' (p.6), in fact potentially itself a change or the beginning of change. This means that even the rudimentary and marginalized activities belonging to urban cycling make up a change in the city. My findings suggest therefore an addition to Schatzki's quote: maybe there must not necessarily be a past of the practice under study in order for a present activity to exist, but the past of other practices –in my case car driving just as leisure and sports cycling practices- do determine the present of urban cycling and therefore restrict change.. In other words, urban cycling struggles to write its own history because other historically anchored and well-established practices colonise necessary resources in the present and thus restrict the 'attainment of a 'cultural-social' unity' … with a single aim…an equal and common conception of the world' (Forgacs, 2000, p. 348).

That urban cycling does not possess a common conception of its own is most obvious when considering practitioners' knowledge acquisition through what they call 'contradictory common sense'. It represents the conformity and consent to car driving's governance in the street. Urban cyclists aim to imitate the car instead of performing urban cycling's own characteristic nature, a 'practice self' so to speak. Participants described this imitation as something natural, inherently logic despite the contradiction that bicycles are not respected the same way as cars, nor possess the same resources. By maintaining this idea, urban cycling appropriates car-driving values instead of establishing values of its own. In fact, practitioners express through this appropriation 'a false perception of social reality' (Hirschmann, 1993, p. 538) –one that corresponds to car driving, not to urban cycling. In this Gramscian definition of contradictory common sense, a subordinate entity struggles with two opposing worldviews (Crehan, 2011). Gramsci (1971) elaborates that a common sense establishes as 'folklore' (Forgacs, 2000, 343), a solid belief with 'imperative character' (p.346) imposed upon a suppressed entity. This suppressed entity uncritically adopts and expresses the 'crudely conservative and opposed to novelty' (p.346) ideas of the dominant entity. Just as Gramsci (1977) refers to class struggles in which the bourgeoisie oppresses the proletariat, the data proposes similar highly political dynamics between practices: the unsustainable governing practice (car driving) that possesses everything and is therefore able to suppress the sustainable, marginalized practice (urban cycling) that has nothing and struggles to exist. Considering the privileged position of car driving that colonises the majority of the resources necessary for urban cycling, I argue that urban cycling, in Patnaik

(1988) words, is 'being duped by the possibilities' (p.8) that car driving directs.

6.2   The politics of practices

The former section has contoured a hierarchical struggle between urban cycling and surrounding practices. Data suggests that these dynamics are not only a competition for resources but hegemonic –a competition for moral and intellectual leadership. Consequently, this section aims to conceptualize this competition for resources theoretically through a discussion of the data alongside Gramsci's and Laclau and Mouffe's concepts, addressing objective three.

6.2.1   The hegemony between practices

The concept of hegemony, as outlined in chapter 3 describes a mode of domination of one entity over another of the same type (Gramsci, 1971). While Gramsci (1971) concentrated on the hegemonic struggle between classes and groups, my research suggests that hegemony happens between practices. This finding extends studies that have pointed towards 'micropolitics' between practices (Hargreaves, 2011, Gram-Hanssen, 2011). Hegemony assumes that a dominant entity maintains power through spreading its values through civil society on the one hand and political society on the other (Gramsci, 1971). The data shows that car driving as dominant practice enjoys support from such civil and political practices. For example, Gramsci (1971) cites education as one of the most important civil features through which dominant entities perpetuate their power and ideology. My research has emphasized that schooling practices do not

include traffic education and thus do not embody a source of knowledge and competence about urban cycling. Failure to integrate education about sustainability is further a missed opportunity to building a resistance or counter education to the dominant practice of car driving. The absence of urban cycling as a topic from public education constitutes therefore –even if indirectly– consent to the perpetuation of the status quo. Children are brought to and picked up from school by car from their parents and thus educated into the 'normal way' of doing things within the reproduction of intelligibility or how Schatzki (2002) puts it 'what makes sense to do' (p.79). Gramsci (1971) also argued that 'the duty of the adult generation, i.e. the state is to mould the new generations' (p.174). He argues that the school can be a key figure in uncritically passing on existing affairs being unaware 'of the nature and philosophical content of their task' (p.178). In regard to sustainable consumption it is worthwhile to question the role of the school as educator of the young. After all, reducing carbon emissions is one of the most urgent issues of the United Nations and if broken down to governmental responsibility, I argue that schooling should be one important source of knowledge in preparing people to engage in sustainable practices –especially as the data suggests that opportunities to acquire knowledge about and competences for urban cycling are limited. The absence of knowledge –and consequently skills- has been interpreted as a lack of power (Rabinow, 1994), which is demonstrated by showing how a lack of competences keeps urban cycling in a deprived and vulnerable position on the streets.

This lack of knowledge is further exacerbated by what Gramsci (1971) defines as educators beyond the classroom relationship. When speaking

about education, Gramsci (1971) does not only refer to schooling but to other entities that promote a particular worldview through actions. Translating his assertion to practices and to my study, data has identified a relationship to policing when unravelling the lack of traffic education. Data suggests that policing educates cyclists into conforming to giving right of way to cars even when it is not theirs to be granted. Through not defending the rights and norms of urban cycling on the streets, policing suggests that urban cyclists 'must "live" [car driving] directives, modifying their own habits, their own will, their own convictions to conform with those directives' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 539). In doing so car driving as the predominant transport mode is legitimized. Policing through actions, speech and regulations (directly and indirectly) spreads and perpetuates the idea that bicycles are a largely illegitimate form of urban transport.

Urban cyclists are therefore 'well advised' to ride cautiously and defensively and to keep their heads down even when having a case to protest. In turn, this encourages conceding, accepting, legitimizing and perpetuating the dominance of car driving. The data contains examples in which officers emphasized that their warnings were for the cyclists' 'own good' –for their protection so to speak. Gramsci (1971) has outlined the role of the police as a mere executing body to oppress people physically by coercion and dominance. The empirical account in contrast presents policing practices as morally operating in favour of car driving withholding 'correct' knowledge and boycotting urban cycling as sustainable project. In so doing, policing practices do not help to promote cycling 'by law' as required by the official governmental objectives in the city. Instead, policing contributes to

intellectual leadership of car driving by reinforcing the legitimization of its supremacy. Policing therefore hinders urban cycling from 'creating a new ideological terrain' (Forgacs, 2000, p.192) deterring a 'reform of consciousness and of methods of knowledge' (p.192).

Gramsci (1971) presents the media as an important civil feature through which the dominant practice spreads its ideas and sustains its dominance. My research shows that pro-car driving propaganda steers from lobbying practices. In defence of car driving, lobbying plays with the neo-liberalist belief of freedom of choice. For instance, the reaction to the implementation of pedestrian areas, which result in the loss of car friendly infrastructure and parking space are harshly critiqued and accompanied by the semiotic use of fear and intimidation. Such threats use negative consequences for the individual consumer by emphasising how pro-sustainable incentives cut off consumers' freedom to choose driving by car. As a pretext of their own interests – being afraid of profit losses if car driving becomes less feasible and attractive in the city– car driving is presented as what Gramsci (1971) calls 'a necessity recognized and proposed to themselves [individuals] as freedom, and not simply the result of coercion' (p.178). By securing the 'spontaneous consent of the masses' (p.539), car driving enjoys power without means of physical direct domination.

Lobbying further illustrates how civil and political practices overlap. Lobbying maintains the strong pro-car ideology not exclusively through propaganda within newspapers, but through interference with campaigning and execution of policy. The data suggests that lobbying succeeds in defending space for the car contributing to an unfair allocation of material resources. In acting on

the material element, lobbying locks ideology in its material manifestation and attempts to avoid that 'the great masses…become detached from their traditional ideologies' (Gramsci, 1971, p. 556). This is especially apparent when the data looks at how sponsoring is used to blackmail and prevent political incentives from being executed, which aim at granting more space to urban cycling. In addition, sponsoring is used to represent car driving as the enabler of a good time, just as it represents the biggest job market on the island and therefore as the source of well-being in the city. Lobbying practices could be understood as the 'deputies' (Gramsci, 1971, p.145) of the dominant practices 'exercising the subaltern functions of social hegemony' (p.145).

Data has shown how governmental practices struggle to follow through with the official and long-term goal to convert the city into a less-car dependent place. The execution of pro-urban cycling policy is torn between the set objectives and their self-interests, or as Gramsci (1971) puts it 'the need to give coherence to [their own] party, a group, a society' (p. 753) and their self-interests. Such 'government traps' (Newell, et al., 2015) determine incentives not according to the target but according to the path of least resistance from influential practices. While studies have outlined that the success of sustainability depends on the resolution of 'consumer dilemmas between consumers' pursuit of individual, short-term and self-directed goals and their support for collective, long-term and socially-oriented interests.' (Naderi and Strutton, 2015, p.70), my research shows how such conflicts can be found among policy makers based on which policy incentives are initiated. Consequently, the data has foregrounded that the incentives to change the

city's mobility are not aligned with the town hall's goals but rather orchestrated by the on-going negotiation of different interests. It is to be seen whether or not political practices can be reconciled with sustainable goals when really politicians are influenced by the politics of re-election, which in turn are based on the conditions of the capitalist economy. Hence my study suggests in line with Shove's (2010a) argument that policy makers are 'unlikely [to] serve long term sustainability goals' (Prothero and McDonagh, 2015, p.9). My empirical account has shown how political parties juggle with urban cycling within their electoral campaign, demonstrating that sustainability is a means to win votes instead of being an end in itself. This is especially emphasised when looking at the asynchronous management of the incentives on paper and their execution in the streets. For example, my research has revealed that the town hall appointed certain pedestrian areas as cycling zones. However, without having considered the valid traffic regulations that clearly ban bicycles from these areas and without informing the patrolling unit of police officers who make cyclists step down and/or give them tickets for violations. While policy incentives presuppose the change in norms and a subsequent involvement of police officers, these are completely unaware of existence of such initiatives and thus do not follow any governmental objectives. The inference is that policing and political practices follow their own ends and purposes (Schatzki, 2015), which not necessarily have to be the official goal. Hence, policy makers themselves are potential barriers to sustainable solutions. In contrast to studies that have ignored the role of policy and governmental practices for successful incentives (Spurling and McMeekin, 2015, Prothero et al., 2011, Mick et al., 2012). My research

suggests that just as much research should talk *to* policy makers, it should critically talk *about* them and their practices. Therefore, policy should not be seen as a taken for granted, unexamined enabler for sustainability matters (Strengers and Maller, 2015). On the contrary, before looking at consumers and their responsibilities to take on or not incentives it might be insightful to look at how, and on what basis, such policy incentives are developed to reveal conflicts within and among political practices.

In addition, the data has shown how political practices are dependent on and controlled by economically powerful lobbying practices. Cars embody the driver of production, economic growth, employment and development. Considering that the success of cities, countries and unions is measured according to economic indicators, consuming less –driving less- has been outlined as a potential 'economic catastrophe' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.285). The picture of the outlined government traps becomes thus even more complex. Gramsci's (1971) quote comes to mind when he argued that the government's function 'is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level…which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes.' (p.526). Although the data pictures a government that does not exercise such deliberate agency or such a goal as described by Gramsci, it does reveal that resource-rich practices take the upper hand within the struggle. Schatzki (2010b) warned that everyday life encompassed the capitalist system. Hence practices must, too. This means, however, that sustainable practices can only thrive, once their corresponding conditions are laid out according to what sustainability means: degrowth and resource

saving.

6.2.2 Agonist, Antagonist and Synergist Practices

Throughout the former sections, the chapter has not only outlined an agonist-antagonist relationship between car driving and urban cycling of both, resource and moral intensities, but also shown a variety of practices influencing negatively on urban cycling. On the one hand, my empirical account has revealed fiery mechanics between urban cycling and car driving, in which the presence of one practice interferes with the being of the other 'preventing [it] from being totally [itself]' (Laclau und Mouffe, 2001, p. 111). In doing so my data resembles Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) concept of social antagonism. That is to say, the empirical account has outlined the struggle between two opponents, in which the agonist embodies the leading entity that 'dominates antagonistic groups, which it tends to "liquidate", or to subjugate' (Gramsci, 1971, p.212) in order to maintain its dominance. For example, data has shown how urban cycling –the antagonist practice-challenges the dominance of car driving –the agonist practice– when performed within the same space and when treated in the public discourse. Most punishment and suppression occurred in the form of road rage and disrespect when cyclists demonstrated resistance to car driving and its subsequent ideology. Claiming entitlement to right of way and territory by merely riding confidently, urban cyclists are being read as daring to enter the forbidden territory of the leader, through 'locat[ing] its signifier [bicycles] in the field of the proscribed transgression ruled out by the reigning ideology' (Sharpe and Boucher, 2010, p.108). Consider how the presence of bicycles

in the street is overruled, such as disrespecting bicycle lanes, which cars would recklessly override and park on –taking back the 'field' of the ruling practice. Urban cycling is the challenging counterpart to the car driving hegemony, which hinders car driving from claiming the road for itself. Urban cycling is 'the other camp [perceived as] the abominable stain…on society [preventing] the totality of [car driving] from becoming socially harmonious' (Sharpe and Boucher's, 2010, p. 105). As such, urban cycling needs to remain suppressed in order to guarantee car driving's dominance within traffic, which is most notable when any kind of confrontation, protest, or gesture of disagreement are silenced on the street, with the effect that urban cyclists indeed prefer to keep quiet and ride inconspicuously.

On the other hand, although urban cycling might potentially challenge the social 'harmony' nourishing car driving's dominance, the possibility of destroying such conditions is not a matter of defeating car driving on its own. Social antagonism as a concept does not conceptualize beyond the struggle of two opponents (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001). My research suggests however, that car driving is only able to sustain its intellectual and material dominance through the support from other practices –synergists, as I have called them. The former discussions suggest additionally that car driving does not directly befall these synergist practices. The data suggests that car driving passively absorbs power through the numerous direct and indirect, inner and cross-practice conflicts of synergist practices. Hence, instead of picturing single, independent, dominant 'agentic' entities (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001) exerting power over the other, my research suggests that power of one practice depends on the constellation of various practices (Hargreaves, 2011, Gram-

Hanssen, 2011) that do not necessarily have to be related to each other. As these practices pursue different objectives, they create a disharmonic interplay that deadlocks urban cycling into a resource-less existence and keeps it from becoming hegemonic. Conversely, these conditions are beneficial for car driving as they preserve its resources and the old, ingrained worldview preventing any potential other ideology from establishing itself. Such 'unintentional' transmission of power points to what Gramsci (1971) has described as the 'limits of interpreting power as an intentional concept' (Kreps, 2015, p. 66). In other words, car-driving is not deliberately using power over urban cycling –with practices, there is no 'headquarter' (Foucault, 1978, p.95) of rational power but a relational compound of it. Tweaking Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) words, it is not only 'the presence of the '*other''* *(p.111)* but the presence of the *'others'* that car driving can be car driving urban cycling cannot be urban cycling.

invites us to think about power relations between practices beyond the terms of harmonic 'chains of interdependencies of mutual support' (Shove et al., 2012, p.88) in which practices back each other up through shared resources and interests. By giving the synergists a defined place, my interpretation extends the concept of social antagonism by softening up Gramsci's (1971) notion of deliberate group alliances that 'strike together but march separately' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p. 55) due to incompatible interests but one and the same enemy [9]. Although my data has shown that the support of

synergists for car driving does seem to impact negatively on urban cycling, they rather make up an uncoordinated and unaligned bulk of ends and purposes that impact conveniently on car driving rather than being an organized purposeful conspiracy 'against' urban cycling. In other words, car driving enjoys power through the dispersed interests of different practices rather than through a possible aligned interplay of synergists helping car driving because of dependencies. Hence, the data suggests that support for the dominant practice can result from a disharmonized relationship between synergists. Interests and resources do not necessarily have to be shared with and aligned at the dominant practice. On the contrary, my study suggests that the support from synergists can be of indirect nature resulting from the absence of support for the opponent practice, which results in an absence of power for resistance. It is in the absence of support for urban cycling and the internal struggle between synergists that make up the lack of power preventing the establishment of urban cycling and the opportunity to build a practice-frame in which a counterhegemonic ideology could burgeon. If power resides in synergist practices that make up the destiny of dominant and suppressed practices, then they set the course for consumption. In fact, the idea that synergists have the power to condition consumption offers an alternative to studies that have found themselves in need to switch ontologies in order to explain hierarchies of practices (Hargreaves et al., 2013). While these studies externalize power from practices claiming that regimes hinder

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[9] Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) work is one of the fundamental pieces for the development of what is called Social Movement Theory (SMT) (Saunders, 2013, Darity, 2008, Diani, 2011, Goldstone, 2003, Rawcliffe, 1998) and it should not go unmentioned that this research could potentially been looked at –if practices had not been the focus– from a SMT perspective. It would be interesting to see how practice theory can be extended on to SMT to see how revolution is dealt with in regard to a shift in entities.

or facilitate 'innovation in practices' (p.415) and thus hinder change in consumption, I suggest that such extraction is misleading if consumption is taken to be 'a moment in practice' (Warde, 2005) and conditioned by such. Suggesting that power exists outside the practice is a suggestion for a micro-macro division, which practice-based studies try to overcome.

In conceptualizing different practices that help and hamper each other, my data resembles the anatomic-biomechanical principle of muscle groups that bundles agonist, antagonist and synergist entities together (McLester and Pierre, 2008). Biomechanics describe the agonist muscle as being principally involved in one determined body movement. Let's take flexing one arm as an example. In doing so, the agonist muscle –the biceps– dominates the opponent the antagonist muscle –the triceps, which needs to be passive without exercising resistance in order to make the dominance and the subsequent particular movement possible. However, for the successful performance of the movement, the dominance of the agonist is not enough. The agonist muscle still depends on the help of the synergist muscles – brachialis and brachioradialis. Synergist muscles support the agonist through their power like an extended contraction. Without them, no body movement is possible no matter how strong the agonist might be. Hence only the sum of power coming from synergists surpasses the power of the agonist.

In using and building on the concept of social antagonism for the analysis of relationships between practices, my data advances studies that have not further specified the nature of such relationships (Shove et al., 2012, Gram-Hanssen, 2011, Hargreaves, 2011, Hargreaves et al., 2013). The finding of synergist practices suggests that power is distributed among a practice

bundle, negotiated by more than two entities that sustain the dominance of some and the marginalization of others. On the contrary to studies that have outlined the competition between car driving and cycling as a twofold struggle (Watson, 2012, Watson, 2013). Proposing the concept of synergist practices has extended Hargreaves (2011) observation of a 'close relationship between practices and the power [which] they support and uphold' (p.93). I have done so by understanding how urban cycling –a representative of sustainable practices can possibly be kept in its marginalized position, because synergists around car driving '… ensure that … [unsustainable] practices are maintained, stabilized and reproduced' (p.93), while urban cycling in contrast lacks such synergists to support it.

Each of these synergist practices take part in what Nicolini (2017) calls 'resemiotisation' (p.109) of car driving's legitimate power. That is to say 'the process through which discourses are progressively materialised from situated and quite local talk, towards increasingly durable forms of language use' (Nicolini, 2017, p.109). For example, policing disciplines urban cyclists through fear and discouragement in daily street traffic. Written, shared and discussed in a corresponding negative language in social media, campaigning and media speaking the discourses around urban cycling are negative and positive about car driving. Or in worst case, a discourse about urban cycling is absent altogether as we have seen in the case of schooling and important educative terrains, which helps to normalize the legitimization of car driving and the normalization of the marginalization of urban cycling. The hegemony built through these practices 'renders participants doubly blind' (Nicolini, 2017, p.109) to the unfair and biased nature of this status

quo.

6.2.3 Rethinking consumer responsibility

If power flows from practices my study correspondingly says something about the positioning of consumers within practices (Warde 2005). While consumers have been characterized as the 'carrier of practices and as a place for intersection of a plurality of practices' (Halkier, et al., 2011, p. 105), my data foregrounds that the place for intersections of multiple practices –or absence of such– are the elements of practices. As their establishment is blocked and hindered by practice unfriendly relationships, consumers, the data suggests, rather struggle to manage the result of such intersections. Therefore, instead of 'carrier' (Reckwitz, 2002, p.250), my study suggests the term 'gatherer' of the resources-leftover of practice struggles. This is highlighted by the fact that urban cyclists only exercise agency when able to skilfully integrate the limited available existing elements, but are limited in changing the resourceful conditions of the practice (Walker, 2013).

Unquestionably, such improvising makes up the differences and intensities of the –even rudimentary-performances of practices (Warde, 2005). However, the condition under which the integration happens is rather unfair (Walker, 2013, Latham and Wood, 2015). Consider the defensive style in which practitioners ride. Although seeking alternative routes and creating new paths and riding styles is an expression of agency and skilfulness (De Certeau, 1984, Latham and Wood, 2015), it is of less sovereign character when urban cyclists are being pushed around, unable to establish an asserted territory of their own. The manoeuvring of bikes through saddling up and down on

streets and footpaths 'to avoid tricky situations' (Latham and Wood, 2015) has been celebrated as 'active tactics…ignoring elements of this automobilized landscape' (Nixon, 2012, p.1672). However, car drivers do not have to be constantly smart in escaping a streetscape catering for the needs of others (Latham and Wood, 2015) or escaping uncomfortable encounters in which rights of way are circumscribed. The agony of parking and storing bicycles is another example, which underlines the practitioners' creativity in lifting and integrating their bikes within their domestic space. However, it also demonstrates conformity to much less resources compared to the abundant resources available for car parking. Moreover, not everybody has the privilege to integrate elements the same way, as they are available only to some. For example, while practices in the lower part of the city offer more possibilities to gather elements, a person in the upper part of the city is restricted in the possibilities by competing practices of public transportation. These inferences foreground the inequalities entailed within the relationship of practices that enable or disable capabilities to participate or as Walker (2013) puts it 'for some practitioners, practices remain fixed and locked into different configurations' (p. 50). Hence, my study stresses that there have to be 'gatherable' practice-opportunities/possibilities available to the consumer.

Such possibilities have been taken for granted within the 'liberal narrative' (Schwarzkopf, 2010) in which classic consumer research rejects the notion of 'passive dupes of the capitalist culture industry' (Arnould and Thompson, 2007, p. 9). Instead, these studies have zoomed into empowered consumers who agentically co-create or prosume (Ritzer and Jurgenson, 2010) value in and outside the market place. Of course, and as my data suggests, by taking

the consumer as unit of analysis, the consumer will indeed appear agentic. However, if looking at the consumer from a practice perspective, there sure are constraints and passiveness to his or her agency never mind how creative the consumer could be within these boundaries. My study emphasises the necessity of switching ontological lenses and stresses ontological heteroglossia alongside theoretical heteroglossia (Thompson et al., 2013). A practice view on consumption contributes to what has been claimed in the literature as 'fulfilling sociocultural needs through consumption' (Schaefer and Crane, 2005, p. 89). Understanding consumption as outcome of practices and acknowledging that symbolic, skilful and material aspects are properties of them, inheres that practices mandate sociocultural needs to individuals (Schatzki, 2002). As the practice ontology abandons the need to 'identify social actors' (Schaefer and Crane, 2005, p.89), it indeed offers a complex picture of consumption, in which individualized mainstream and quick marketing solutions celebrated by consumer research are rejected. Most obviously, the data indicates that change in the targeted practice under study depends on change in surrounding practices (Gram-Hanssen, 2011). Consequently, my study suggests that looking at consumers and their agentic actions might not bring lucid insights into how sustainable change can be achieved. If sustainable consumption is understood as outcome of practices and not as outcome of people (McDonagh et al., 2012), Macromarketing studies look at an innovative way of holistic conceptualizing.

Thinking about change of consumption then has to be reframed substantially. My study coheres with studies that argue against pursuing individuals to change their lifestyles (Shove et al., 2015, Strengers and Maller, 2015), but

instead argue for the targeting of practices and their elements in order to change consumption. However, my data has shown that it is not enough to target only one practice. Urban cycling is not an isolated practice and it seems vital to scrutinize and align the relationships between related or unrelated practices (Spurling and McMeekin, 2015). Successful flourishing in the practice under study, i.e. to shift sustainable practices out of their marginalized position, might require changes in higher-level practices (Schatzki, 2012), which in turn requires altering the practice bundle, its constellations and relationships. In fact, the data suggests that power can flow from a lack of relationship with synergist practices. Hence the absence of a synergist relationship is a crucial issue in negotiating suppression and domination: on the one hand the lack of power immobilizes the evolution of one practice and thus its 'change' of consumption while it nourishes the maintenance of another practice and its 'reproduction' of consumption.

My study stresses the complexity of the term 'bundle' emphasizing that not only existent but also absent relationships between practices can have influence on the practice under study. Up to today, the term bundle is used only to describe existing links and relationships between practices influencing each other (Gram-Hanssen, 2011, Warde, 2014, Shove et al., 2012). I have found little evidence of studies (Spurling and McMeekin, 2015) examining difficult situations in order to account for missing and conflicting links that restrain sustainable practices. Hence, my data challenges whether it is possible and useful to delineate such a practice bundle (Warde, 2014), as power between practices are as much negotiated by existence as by lack of relationships. Therefore, instead of concentrating on changing what is

obvious and existent, the task is to examine what is not there –drawing a line around existing relationships might miss out crucial insights into what a marginalized practice lacks but needs in order to 'become' and offer a practice-platform for change. Hence, it can be said that the figure 5 drawn in chapter 4.2 is too simplistic to capture the dynamics within the myriad of practices. In dealing with power flow from absence, such invisible forces are problematic to visualize. However, we can hold on to the thought that power and therefore the subsequent possibilities of consumption are negotiated between dispersed, conflicted and even inexistent relationships between practices.

That the destiny of a practice depends on the complexity of bundles suggests thinking beyond technological solutions. For example, it is not enough to think in terms of innovative bike locks against bicycle theft sold to the consumer and therefore rolling back responsibility to protect one's own bicycle. Instead, the problem of bicycle theft would need from-scratch-reframing namely erasing the practice of stealing. This implies further reaching implications for policing and law practices that in turn will see themselves confronted with ever other entwined practices (Spurling and McMeekin, 2015) that impact on stealing –high unemployment and drug addiction to name possible ones. Acknowledging hierarchies among practices, the practice approach foregrounds connections between far reaching social problems such as inequality, poverty and power, which cannot be de-politicized (Walker, 2013). Policy is thus advised to embrace the complexity of the practice approach in taking away effective and viable solutions that target practices, not the behaviour of individuals, which merely

express symptoms of misaligned practice-constellations. This also implies working against classic marketing activities that only superficially find material remedies to a consumer problem (Kilbourne et al. 1997). This is however in contrast to the capitalist ideas behind profit oriented businesses that use consumer research to find new 'niches' of needs and ways of adding more value to products (Bradshaw et al., 2013). Solutions such as celebrated by Belk (2013) praising the way a multinational corporation created a razor that works without water based on ethnographic consumer research looking at shaving practices of deprived Indian citizens with highly limited access to water are shocking. This marketing practice does not resolve the problem – giving them free access to water. Turning the head away from social unfairness to build one's own profit and thereby arguing to have 'helped' such consumer groups in actively integrating their needs in creating such products based on their input, instead of challenging the problem per se, is just demonstrating a hypocritical face of capitalism hiding behind the charade of freedom.

6.3 Practices for Sustainability –towards a deconstruction of neo-liberal market ideology

This section addresses objective 4 through a discussion of the importance and implications of a practice ontology for theory and practices surrounding the sustainability debate.

The critical Macromarketing school of thought (Mittelsteadt et al., 2014) has outlined the reduction of unsustainable consumption as subject to economic and political change (Dolan, 2002, Cohen, 2010). My findings contribute to

this debate by proposing three essential ideas. Firstly, my findings suggest that the allocation of resources should be negotiated via sustainable practices. Thus, practices have a potential to deconstruct the idea of resource-distribution through markets discouraging the view of the consumer as 'voter, judge and jury' (Schwarzkopf, 2010, p.8) concerned with satisfying his or her needs. In doing so, practices suggest that markets should not serve as democracies (Schwarzkopf, 2011) but rather that production and consumption should be directed at nourishing sustainable practices instead of individual consumers (Shove 2014, Shove and Spurling, 2013, Strengers and Maller, 2015). This in turn, attacks the neo-liberalist rhetorical grounds on which capitalism has so far claimed its global dominance. As Schwarzkopf (2010) puts it

> 'democratized…abundance [balanced] the opportunities for capitalist growth and the necessity of capitalism's commitment to democracy without necessarily endorsing a planned economy or a powerful welfare state' (p.9)

Secondly, the practice ontology within my study foregrounds the relatedness of elements and the relationship between practices that make up the possibilities to consume. Considering that the mere possession of bikes alone does not constitute urban cycling. Stuff should be a property of the practice, not the individual. Therefore, my research suggests that practices render both private property and the mere accumulation of capital as not pivotal for them to thrive and potentially limit sustainable consumption. This is in line with Varey (2010a) who argued against the 'overtly commodified' (p.115) modern society in overcoming capitalism and the legitimisation of economic growth. Thirdly, my study suggests that the allocation of necessary

resources for practices needs to be equally distributed among the entailed elements. In fact, my data suggests that resources have to be taken back from the dominant unsustainable practices that hinder an evolution of sustainable practices to make engagement for everybody possible. If 'every pinch of salt has to be taken away from somewhere and someone' (Bradshaw et al., 2013, p.206) then so, too, the data suggests, have the resources of practices. Practices therefore emphasise the inherently social and political aspects of consumption, which have been excluded under neo-liberal justifications of capitalism (Bradshaw et al., 2013, Bradshaw, 2011). In doing so, the data outlines possibilities of consumption that entail potential inequalities coherent with Walker's (2013) notion of 'capability' of participating in such practices.

These three insights respond to the 'politics of profligate consumption' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.294) arguing against 'possessive individualism, private property and limited democratic government' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.294) underlying the DSP. My study is therefore coherent with studies that have defined research on sustainable consumption 'as recognizing the power relations between social groupings…and cultural value systems [such as] …capitalism [and] socialism' (Dolan, 2002, p.118). However, the former discussions suggest that sustainable consumption should recognize the power relations between groups of practices instead of people, reframing sustainability as much more a 'problem of practices' than a 'problem of people' (McDonagh et al., 2012, p.267). Hence, my data supports the idea of a shift in ontology within Macromarketing and TCR. The implications of this shift would potentially change the way we think about

value systems. For example, about how value system's components such as 'labour, capital, the state and sectional interests and alliances, business and consumers' (Dolan, 2002, p.180) relate to each other as part of practices. Using Dolan's words to promote my idea, practices 'encompass their own shifting power relations and struggles, which enable alternative visions of society to emerge' (p.170). Moreover, in having shifted the unit of analysis to practices, my research proposes an alternative and integral way of looking at the 'technological, economical, and political' (Kilbourne, 2008, p.189) aspects of sustainable consumption (Kilbourne et al.,1997).

In showing how sustainable consumption is limited by the opportunities laid out by practices, my data provides a very complex picture of resource distribution necessary for sustainable consumption. In positioning practices as the crucial source of sustainable consumption, my study contests the 'ontology of the consumer society' (Schwarzkopf. 2011, p.123). Therefore, my findings do not cohere with traditional marketing approaches, such as the 'green commodity discourse' (Prothero et al., 2010, p.147), which aims at provoking sustainable consumption through individuals and symbolic meanings (Prothero et al., 2011). My study therefore echoes and responds to studies that have warned against a reduction to individualist, neo-liberal way of approaching sustainable consumption for their oversimplifying character, which ultimately legitimize and perpetuate the commodification of the environment (Patsiaouras et al., 2014, Varey. 2010a).

Consumption, as the economic driver, has long had influence on the political level of society. It follows that if sustainable consumption requires an economic revolution, namely 'alternatives to market-oriented ideology'

(Sager, 2015, p.289), it requires political revolution, too. Hence if through the practice ontological shift 'responsibility for controlling the destructive insatiability of human desires' (Schwarzkopf, 2010, p. 3) cannot be handed over to the consumer himself, how should consumption be controlled in the dawn of sustainability? It is this political question that challenges the neo-liberal 'conflation of freedom of consumer choice [in the market] with democracy itself' (Cova et al., 2013, p.221), which almost religiously 'delegitimized more democratic and humane alternatives to current regimes of market capitalism' (Schwarzkopf, 2011, p.123). Nevertheless, scholars hold on tightly to the democratic myth when calling for new economical-political systems when they claim that social change should still encompass democracy (Varey, 2010a, Burroughs, 2010, Sager, 2015, Sayer 2013). However, should sustainable consumption –the protection of resources, the planet and as such our species- be subject to opinions? Within a democracy reigns dispute and debate, in which the majority decides over what and how things are done. While it is acknowledged that freedom of speech and opinion is generally positive (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001), it implies that voices against sustainability–coming mostly from profit driven powerful corporations– will always have a say about their preferences and potentially the opportunity to convince a majority to vote against sustainable consumption. Can we afford such a risk in the face of threatening climate change, shrinking essential natural resources like water and the resulting extinction of the human species?

My data demonstrates in this regard how sustainability can easily be exploited as marketing claim not for sustainability's' sake but as means to

achieve self-interested goals. Consider the case of electoral campaigns in which urban cycling as sustainable practice is used to win votes. On the one hand ridiculed by opposing parties not because there were any actual reasons to argue against the practice per se but to diminish the governing party that uses urban cycling as unique selling proposition. These political circumstances are one of the reasons suggesting that sustainability should not be treated as democratic option about which one can agree or disagree because 'political terms do not have to be coherent, they have to hit the enemy' (Schwarzkopf, 2011, p.117) disregarding their biased and unqualified contents. Therefore, my research encourages the idea that achieving sustainable consumption should not be optional but mandatory.

In the face of environmentalist crisis, maybe it is worthwhile thinking about a system that guarantees to direct all actions, production and consumption towards one overall goal –sustainability. In the non-individualist spirit, my findings support studies of the critical school and debates surrounding sustainability calling for structural regulations (Kilbourne et al., 2008, Varey, 2010a, 2012, 2013), namely by proposing those of practices. Hence, in order to avoid the 'join 'em if you can't beat 'em' supposition' (Prothero et al. 2010, p.148) of the capitalist hamster wheel, I attempt to express –even the tiniest and rudimentary–suggestion that practices could provide an alternative way of thinking about the status quo, or in Arvidsson's words 'at least the myth of an alternative' (p.409). In doing so, my study extends and reframes ideas pitching for a sustainable society through deconstructing market logic (Varey, 2010a, Papaoikonomou and Alarcon, 2015, Assadourian, 2015). For markets function if they pursue economic growth, but 'if any other objective is

imposed, then the outcome is not so clear' (Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt, 2012, p.296).

Was there a need for markets, if the overall goal of human kind would be the existence and maintenance of sustainable practices instead of self-interested accumulation of (in)tangible capital? My data is inclined to argue, no, there is not. Being an 'organised' (Schatzki, 1996, p.20) nexus, practices can be interpreted as 'structured'. Hence, with practices being the structuring unit in society, resources would be allocated around the life of the perform-ability of sustainable practices. Instead of profit, the goal is sustainability. Hence, reorganizing our lives around the functions of sustainable practices instead of personal wealth, would direct the forces of production and consumption towards social reasons instead of private economic ownership. The implication of this is to measure society's successes by the amount and intensities of thriving sustainable practices, rather than traditional profit oriented parameters (for example gross domestic product, economic growth and unemployment rates). As Visconti et al. (2014) postulate 'the amount of wealth a system generates [would therefore be] distributed across the social strata' (361). This suggests that businesses, either have to vanish from the picture or have to direct their interests to non-profit reasons with objectives serving the environment –not the consumer or, more so, themselves. I consequently argue that the practice ontology is very able to oppose and challenge the DSP (Kilbourne et al., 1997), especially economic ownerships that do not circulate around the wellbeing of the planet. I propose not to reinvent capitalism (Varey, 2010a) but to get rid of capitalism. Moreover, my study responds to Varey's (2010a) call to redefine quality of life, in which

possibly practices determine 'what people have, but also what they do' (p.116), namely away from economic goals onto a new 'life experience [that is] stimulating, rewarding and secure' (p.116). However, my study argues against the economic basis of marketing and therefore proposes either getting rid of marketing altogether or marketing acting 'without' instead of 'beyond profit' (Varey, 2010a, p.120). My study is therefore suspicious of studies that position consumer research as developer of 'better decision-making tools' (McDonagh, et al., 2012, p.270) helping consumers to choose alternative products. As Kilbourne and Mittelstaedt (2012) argue, 'avoiding an environmental disaster is not a problem we can fix by consuming better but by consuming less' (p.285). In other words, in order to achieve sustainability, we need to achieve frugality (Sayer, 2013).

In order for sustainable practices to become hegemonic however, sustainability needs to overcome being a megatrend (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014). Although being 'a broad, decentralized movement, with no orthodox ideology and no single leader or political organization' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p.3), I argue it is exactly this fragmented nature that prevents it from becoming revolutionary in transforming the dominant social paradigm. In Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) words

> 'what is at stake [in a revolutionary situation] is not merely the complexity and diversity inherent in a dispersion of struggles … but also the constitution of the *unity* of the revolutionary subject on the basis of this complexity and diversity' (p.10).

My research shows, that this unity is indeed missing. In fact, the data highlights that –conform to the megatrend definition– sustainable practices do 'pop up' in a 'seismic' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p.254) fashion, but in

order to 'represent the revolutionary process as a whole' (Laclau and Mouffe, 2001, p.11) the overall 'organized nexus' (Schatzki, 1996) is missing. Hence, the data suggests that because synergist practices do not have a common goal, they are all separately struggling and urban cycling is thus held in its marginalized position. However, Laclau and Mouffe's (2001) quote attaches meaning to my humble example of urban cycling in that they argue that no matter how small or suppressed, a sustainable practice has the potential to speak for a wider issue as to why sustainable consumption is still marginalized –not yet mainstream– despite all the attempts to promote it.

The political parallel to the left-wing movement is not arbitrary, there are similarities between the environmentalist avant-garde fighting for a sustainable transformation of the dominant social paradigm and the working class fighting for a socialist transformation of the state. In fact, it cannot be ignored that the former pursues similar objectives considering the market and capitalized basis on which the dominant social paradigm is supposed to be deconstructed (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014). However, despite all its potential of becoming a revolution, without the proclaimed unity of the movement, sustainability entails a risk of returning to what scholars have called 'mega trendy' (McDonagh and Prothero, 2014, p.249), underlying the whim of 'homo marketus' (Mittelstaedt et al., 2014, p.260).

7 Conclusion

This final chapter entails concluding thoughts about the use of practices as ontology and their politicization by articulating the main contributions and their relevance to CCT, TCR and Macromarketing as well as to industry. The chapter ends with the limitations of this thesis and the consequent opportunities for future research.

7.1 Practice Theory as Ontology

The first main contribution of this thesis to the three consumer research disciplines is the introduction of practice theory as ontology instead of as theoretical framework. This study thus innovatively looks at consumption as an outcome of practices instead of consumers' choices or identity work yielding three important sub contributions for consumer research.

First, through taking practices as ontological basis, I offer an unconventional way out of the ontological inertia within consumer research cutting ties with the underlying neo-liberalistic genealogy of marketing. In particular, through this ontological switch, I offer a counterhegemonic account of how to resist individualist neo-liberal explanations of (un-)sustainable consumption. In doing so, my study contributes to CCT and TCR but in particular to the critical school of Macromarketing by suggesting practices as one potential escape from the dominant social paradigm (DSP) in which most of Macromarketing scholarship still operates. Indeed, I insist that practice based consumption research stimulates more 'systemic engagement' (Menzel-Baker and Mason, 2012, p.559) with social change, emphasises the incompatibility of a market logic and sustainability and proposes the establishment of a sustainable

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society through sustainable practices instead of individuals, markets and economies.

Second, in proposing that consumers are 'gatherers' of possibilities to consume, my study contributes to TCR in asserting that sustainable consumption is not an outcome of consumer choices or preferences. In fact, my study stresses that the choice to use the bicycle is made (im-)possible by the constellation of practices and is therefore unlikely a driver to resist unsustainable consumption. The definition of consumer resistance and anti-consumption, my study then contends, is restrictively articulated and should consider sustainable non-consumption as a sign of constrained possibilities to consume sustainably instead of as a lack of consumer engagement, responsibility or willingness to do so.

Third, through the use of practices as ontology my study understates the importance of hedonism as a driver of behaviour change towards more sustainable consumption. As a result, I suggest a redefinition of consumption in all three consumer research domains. If sustainable consumption is to be achieved, consumer research should acknowledge consumption as phenomenon of practices and not as 'consumption practice' (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) as suggested by CCT scholars. In fact, I believe that this vocabulary is misleading as it implies that consumption can be 'done' for its own sake and for one's own preferences, which centre stages a consuming individual. My study suggests that marketing cannot continue to frame consumption as a postmodern way to resolve social imbalances. If a 'new ideology of consumption' (McDonagh et al., 2012, p.297) is needed for the

sake of sustainability, then individual hedonism, fun and preferences should not be prioritized. 'Celebratory sustainability' (McDonagh et al., 2012, p. 275) and celebratory aspects of markets and consumption only hinder an establishment of a sustainable society because they promote individual neo-liberal assumptions while practices emphasise what is good for the collective interests of human kind. In this spirit, I defend that consumer research would benefit from reconsidering its name in order to move on to understanding *consumption* better, not the consumer. Taking into consideration that academic marketing is tied to business schools that nourish themselves from neo-liberalism, the market logic and from the student-as-customer as centre of attention, my statement is highly provocative. Moreover, *consumer* research as a title has long served as the unique selling proposition for its research business. Losing this uniqueness then questions how the discipline might be different from others –non-business–consumption researchers. Nevertheless, letting go of the restraining 'c' might –at least in sustainable terms– liberate from any limiting assumptions.

7.2   The Politics of Practices

The second main contribution is the innovative approach of pairing practices as ontology with political theory yielding two sub contributions to consumer research.

First, through conceptualizing the hierarchies and relationships between practices, the study proposes an innovative theoretical extension for the analysis of sustainable consumption. By mapping practices as 'agonist, antagonist and –in my extension– '*synergists'* I propose an original way of

tracing power imbalances and an advanced understanding why and how unsustainable practices can dominate while sustainable practices are marginalized. In presenting the negotiation of consumption within a bundle of practices, I offer an important contribution to CCT, as the intersections of practices have largely been ignored and barely figure in consumer research. Especially important are such politics of practices to advance the definition of 'flattening' consumption studies. My study demonstrates how the distribution of agency among practice elements does not do away with hierarchies between practices but offers an alternative way of understanding power and dominance. This contribution embodies an important shift towards critically analysing the conditions of consumption and how these are constituted.

Second, using left wing political theory in an area dominated by non-Marxist tendencies, is in itself an unconventional and somewhat revolutionary idea. Through emphasizing that practices are inherently non-individual and thus non-neo-liberal, I offer a legitimate practice-interpretation and use of Gramsci's and Laclau and Mouffe. This merger enabled me to propose the elasticity of a political concept to advance knowledge about the hierarchies of practices as only entity. This is a crucial contribution as practice-politics have not been conceptualized before without falling back into dualist explanations, that is the use of different ontological entities.

7.3   An   Interdisciplinary   Synthesis   of   Theory,   Ontology   and   Methodology

The third main contribution is the synthesis of interdisciplinary different ontological, theoretical and methodological ideas yielding three sub contributions to consumer research.

First, through the fusion of two ontological definitions of practices from philosophy and sociology, with a methodology from organization studies and a theoretical framework from political theory, I extend the definition of 'heteroglossia' in CCT. With it I contend that heteroglossia should not only refer to theory and methodology but to ontological innovation as well. By going beyond the conventional interpretivist path, I propose a vital alternative to study consumption outside of the confinements of the research community. In doing so, my study responds to calls in TCR and contributes to the encouragement of 'paradigm diversity' (Mick et al., 2012, p.6) work interdisciplinary under new and innovative research designs to seek novel ways of understanding consumption and advance consumer well-being.

Second, by following the rhizomatic character of practices through zooming in and out of practices, I propose an advanced strategy to analyse 'the context of context' of consumption. I assert that effective contextualization of consumption is to get rid of context. What at first might sound as an oxymoron, is a clever way of avoiding the externalization and segregation of the consumer subject from the material object and social and cultural context. Instead of understanding them separately, I propose to conceive of them as part of one entity –practices- instead of undefined, vague forces. With it, I

contend that practices transcend 'context' because everything is related without more or less agency nor the notion of 'outside and inside' of consumption.

Third, and following from second, I assert that the relational character of practices is a key contribution to Macromarketing. Although practices embody a flat ontology due to the idea that there is only one entity instead of micro individuals and macro structures, practices, as humble as they might be as in my example, have the potential to bundle and add up to large phenomena. Hence the use of practices entails the opportunity to trace, analyse and understand relationships that make up a range of phenomena and can thus be put in a larger picture. The empirical evidence of my study leads to the argument that the smallest urban cycling practice on an island can make a contribution to large sustainable issues globally.

7.4   Creating Social Change –Transformative Practice Research

The fourth main contribution is the strong activist character of my practice based study yielding contributions to Transformative Consumer Research according to its five commitments (Mick et al, 2012).

Firstly, I have addressed 'a specific problem and opportunity of well-being' (Mick et al., 2012, p.11) in a situated and sociocultural context, where my presence and research has concretely contributed to a transformation of the improvement of urban-cycling in Las Palmas. For example, based on the data collected about the unawareness around theft, I have teamed up with two IT/Application programmers with who I developed a social iOS-Mobile App called RackTrack, in which users can report bicycle theft in real time and

consequently their incident is fed into a data list which track hour, location and details of the incident, which then are sent to the town hall in order to raise awareness of the seriousness of the issue. In a –hopefully near- future, this app is supposed to link policing practices with urban cycling as one incentive against theft.

Secondly, my study engaged with agents of social change beyond academia, such as the practitioners themselves but also the important NGO 'Las Palmas en Bici' of the city, politicians, and merchants.

Thirdly, my study actively collaborated with consumers throughout the research process and beyond by sharing outcomes and insights with them and other 'relevant stakeholders' (Mick et al., 2012, p.6) through open presentations, guest speaker invitations and presence in the media (radio, newspaper, blogs and social media interaction).

Fourthly, because of my activist stance, this study is revelatory in nature. I have actively taken part in the transformation of my research by joining Las Palmas en Bici in working closely with my colleagues in order to improve the life of the practice of urban cycling, which subsequently reveals the difficulties and disadvantages of urban cyclists.

Fifthly, I have done so by asking why a practice struggles to evolve instead of emphasising the struggle of individuals or groups of consumers. This had important consequences for an establishment of sustainable mobility in the city, as policy and incentives have to approach and target urban cycling in a different way than before and programmes have to embrace the complexity of intersecting practices offered by a practice ontology which requires

adjustments of various practices. Consequently, this study has a lot to say to (and about) policy makers and therefore provides practical wisdom as required by Mick et al. (2012).

7.5   Practical Implications of a Practice Ontology

Turning to the issue of sustainable policy I believe I have a series of important insights to bring to the table. I have identified the mechanics behind why sustainable practices such as urban cycling come to be marginalised while other unsustainable practices such as car driving, come to dominate. But to engage with my illustration, policy thinking needs a key shift in seeing not the consumer as the root of the problem but practices as conditioner of consumption (and non-consumption).

In fact, I ask policy makers to seriously consider practices as a unit of analysis for social life. As such, rather than seeking to impact individual consumer behaviour through a series of policy incentives, policy maker should concentrate on altering practice' elements and their constellations recognising that consumers are locked into unsustainable patterns as a consequence of practice arrangements. Within the practice arrangements, the analysis of an absent practice becomes critical to reveal real-time conflicts of non-consumption, which ideally 'should' be resolved by policy makers and incentives respectively in order to make sustainability possible. In coping with Steward's (2015) call that 'sound policy making requires information about this complexity [as] much policy research begins with rather simplistic assumptions' (p.2), the present study indeed foregrounds a

complex vision as to why people do not use the bicycle for urban transportation –or to put it differently– do not resist car consumption.

I assert that policy needs to understand non-consumption as one result of a multifaceted construct of practice bundles because synergist practices might reach way beyond the targeted practices. I argue therefore that altering the marginalized practice is not enough. Policy makers should be prepared to encounter practices, whose alteration is not an easy undertaking, as they might not be obviously related at first sight or out of reach of local governments. My empirical account for example has shown that such practices encompass schooling and policing as well as governmental practices themselves. There are two things to clarify here. First, changing schooling practices might have to be altered on a national level and might intersect with other practices that need altering and so forth. Hence, alteration of such practices might need strong political commitment, as simple policy incentives are not enough. Second, I strongly argue that policy cannot be used uncritically as a solution to unsustainable consumption, instead we need to recognise that policy practices themselves might contain internal conflicts that are in need of resolution. In my empirical account, I have revealed the discrepancy between what 'ought to be' in policy and 'what is'. I have identified that teleoaffective chains are tied to practices –and the ends, aims and purposes of campaigning practices, is winning elections. The elephant in the room are therefore the governance traps in which policy makers are conflicted between seeing sustainability as the ultimate goal to which incentives should be aligned in order to encourage sustainable ways of life; and seeing sustainability as a marketing claim for the sake of increased

votes. Hence, policy incentives themselves are a means to achieve the ends of policy practices instead of taking urban cycling as an ultimate objective to be achieved.

Apart from practical wisdom for policy makers, my study also contributes to policy research in embodying an important tool for 'policy analysis' (Steward, 2014, p. 2). Practice-based research successfully identifies, analyses and connects the five p's i.e. problems, processes, policies, procedures and protocols of policy (Steward, 2014). Rather than just describing policies and the phenomenon under study (problem), practice-based research clusters regulations, social movements, groups of interests, such as activist and lobbyists relevant for policy (processes), policy incentives (procedures) and outcomes or 'standards' (protocols) and critically explores their relationships to each other. In doing so, practice-based research reveals hierarchical positions, conflicts and harmonies between practices that determine not only the marginality or dominance of consumption but also the effectiveness and (will-)power of policy incentives. Hence, with special attention to time, space and activity, practice-based research embraces the notion that 'policies evolve over time and the process by which that evolution occurs is important to understand those policies' (Steward, 2014, p.2). Indeed, as seen from my empirical account, practice-based research provides a richer understanding of policies because it reveals conflicts between policy practices, the practice under study and beyond. Hence, at 'the intersection of public policy and marketing' (Steward, 2014, p.1) I believe that practice-based research is an important new way of approaching sustainable consumption in order to 'make the full link to policy' (Steward, 2014, p.2).

7.6 Limitations and Future Research

'Remember Klara, the best PhD is the one that gets accepted –not the one that saves the world' (*Stanley Shapiro, personal communication 2nd July 2015)*

However incomplete this study may feel, there is no such thing as a complete study, as I have learned from the quote above. Hence, limitations come with the possibilities of a three-year research project, which at the same time offer opportunities for future research.

My study does not offer a simple solution to a complex problem. On the contrary, my study problematizes urban cycling –which has been treated as a simple and somewhat ridiculed topic– in an innovative way, illustrating it as a multifaceted issue that needs more attention. Hence, there might well be critique from a managerial view requiring quick solutions to problems. However, I follow John Law (2004) in offering a messy picture of what I have encountered in the field. Maybe another researcher finds in the same setting another picture. Until then, I do not aim to make less mess than the one I experienced out there. What do simple solutions offer besides treating symptoms? I strongly believe that messiness of social life needs to be embraced instead of abstracting it just for publications' sake.

However, the local context of my study raises issues. First and foremost, I do not claim any generalization or replicability at any point because urban cycling is spatio-temporally dispersed and hence is not 'marginalized' per se in other places in the world. As expressed in the introduction, although urban cycling is globally still underperformed, it is a mainstreamed practice in some

exemplary cities. Therefore my study offers merely –with humble intentions– theoretical extension. I do however claim authenticity and plausibility within the limits of my interpretation, my personal and professional bias, which cannot go unnoticed, as I have taken actively and politically part in this research. Secondly, I have, of course, attempted to convince the reader that cycling is in need of 'mainstreaming'. However these terms need theoretical awareness and as mentioned in the introductory section 1.2 I have made the case for urban cycling pitching that urban cycling is indeed mainstreamed in quite some places while in others it is not. In order to empower the audience to be as critical as necessary about my work, I intended to make every step of this research as transparent as possible. For instance, I have aimed at notating any personal preferences and positioning and to incorporate reflexivity 'provoking the recognition and examination of differences' (Hogg and Maclaran, 2008, p.133). For instance, I represent as much data as possible in the original language throughout chapter 5.

Nevertheless, in order to empower the audience to be as critical as necessary about my work, I intended to make every step of this research as transparent as possible. For instance, I have aimed at notating any personal preferences and positioning and to incorporate reflexivity 'provoking the recognition and examination of differences' (Hogg and Maclaran, 2008, p.133). For instance, I represent as much data as possible in original language throughout chapter 5. While I do not claim any generalization or replicability at any point I do claim authenticity and plausibility within the limits of my interpretation, my personal and professional bias, which cannot go unnoticed as I have taken actively and politically part in this research.

This research is very specific about its ontology with strong assumptions about how to generate knowledge about the phenomenon under study. These assumptions automatically close off other possibilities to acquire knowledge and are therefore inherently biased. However, the well-explored assumption that agentic individuals construct reality is also a strong belief about a particular unit of analysis, which deliberately closes off other possibilities to understand consumption. While the interpretive approach has demonstrated its usefulness, practice-based ontologies have not earned their credits just yet. Nevertheless, if not tried out empirically, they will never establish. In the spirit of science, it is worthwhile to explore new ways of understanding. Hence more research is needed to establish practice ontologies within mainstream consumer research.

The establishment of practice ontologies is indeed necessary because it inhabits issues that need further examination. Writing and representing practices is a challenge when trying to cope with the 'flat' ontological assumptions –avoiding to write 'exclusive' agency into consumers– while trying to produce a flowing and easily readable account for the reader. This is due to two reasons. Firstly, as a human being, in my everyday 'micro' life, I live and breathe as individual. I have conversations with other individuals, I order food and drinks, go shopping and ride my bike and yes, I do have to make decisions. Writing practices is therefore a discipline that requires to look beyond the very own micro existence; to balance 'the self' and 'the others', the competence' and 'the stuff' in order to represent 'the nexus' –the relational character. This is sometimes possible and sometimes not. Secondly, writing in the way the ontology mandates reads awkwardly.

Language is used in a certain way and writing practices sounds like an alien text at times because I am supposed to not just represent experiences. Although some guidance exists on how to analyse practices, there is still no elaborate strategy on practice-writing that might create a certain standard or vocabulary to do so. Hence my representation of practices might not be continually on the ontological track simply due to maintaining a comprehensible expression and aesthetics of language. Finding an audience being used to reading a 'practice style' might not be the time just yet. Thus, in order to establish this innovative way of writing practices, future research might concentrate on such rhetorical issues, which definitely deserve attention on its own and which I have only marginally treated in this study.

Another issue that has only marginally been mentioned in this research is the relationship between class and practices. A practice ontology –as I have argued throughout this document– would assume that class is constituted by practices and their relationships. However, this needs further empirical evidence and needs future attention on its own. What I have done in this study, is to use Gramsci's description and analysis of the dynamics and power struggles between classes as a starting thought to deal with the dynamics between practices. My treatment of hegemony may lead to some debate about the appropriateness of 'substituting' the dynamics between classes with those between practices. Some practice scholars refer to Bourdieu in this regard, however, Schatzki's ideas diverge from Bourdieu's – see for a critique of Habitus, Schatzki (1987). I make no claim of having substituted anything. I have used Gramsci's and Laclau and Mouffe's descriptions of oppositional dynamics to further conceptualize the political

dynamics between practices. That is to say, I have attempted to draw links between ideas that resemble certain issues and conceptualize an innovative and empirically supported idea about practices by 'standing on the shoulders of giants'.

Another aspect for future research is the bigger relevance of urban cycling for sustainability. Scholars in this field should not be afraid to make bigger connections to seemingly smaller phenomena like the importance of riding bikes to political and economic issues. The marginalization should be seen as a reason to understand urban cycling as holding huge potential in contributing to a sustainable society. In doing so, much more practice related work is necessary to curve out the disadvantages that urban cycling undergoes in the constellation with other practices.

This is especially important in relation to the theoretical contribution of this PhD, which encompasses the politics of practices. My exploration of hierarchies between practices is just the beginning of an understudied terrain. For example, I have made a first attempt at combining practice ontology with political theory in order to look at domination. However, I have only marginally hinted towards the fact that stealing practices might indicate to poverty and therefore future research might link big phenomena such as sustainability to poverty and see how these two relate to each other through practices.

Closer attention to strong practices is crucial. Through my fieldwork, lobbying practices were omnipresent and seemed much more influential or higher levelled than other practices. Although it can be defined as an integrative

practice according to Schatzki and Shove, it can be attributed to specific entities such as importers and insurance companies that have particular interest in sustaining or destroying certain practices. These practices seem thus both dispersed and specific at the same time. There is not much research on lobbying, hence future research might want to consider studying lobbying practices to explore and assess their role and power to sustain certain practices and phenomena.

The activist take-on of my research, the distribution of my findings and the open approach in sharing knowledge to improve urban cycling comes not without its risk that my insights might fall into the wrong hands. Profit oriented companies and institutions will not be impressed by my anti-capitalistic, non-neo-liberalist practice ideology promoting the establishment of sustainability as overall goal for society. Nevertheless, once made transparent how the politics of practices work, these entities could attempt at maintaining the status quo by instructions. This is to say that the knowledge of how to block the development of practices can have severe influence in hindering the establishments of sustainable practices.

The idea to introduce a practice ideology to renovate the politico-economic system is in its infancy. This PhD pleas for a social restructuring of society and the theory I have used is heavily left wing according to my interpretation of the practice-ontological assumptions. It would be interesting to see if future research follows this path of thinking. Hence, this PhD merely puts forward a seed on which more thoughts need to sprinkle in order for it to grow bigger. For example, I have not elaborated on how we could do away with currency and how this could be implemented. Especially because this raises another

debate on who needs to take the first step in order to make a new beginning happen. Although my PhD does not resolve the structure-agency debate, it is a manifesto to stop looking for solutions inside the status quo and to at least acknowledge the possibility of another social (non-) economic and political understanding of our existence than the one we currently perpetuate.

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Appendix 1 – Participant Lists

	Practitioners	Profession	Age	Gender	Cyclist	Cycles for transportation within city since (in years)	Drivers License	Drivers license before using the bike as transport	Experience Abroad
1	Mardonio	Police	47	m	urban/sport		x	x	
2	Nestor	Entrepreneur	46	m	urban	1,5	x	x	x
3	Yeray	Student	32	m	urban/sport	5	x	x	x
4	Abian	Sales	32	m	urban	8 months	x	x	
5	Echedey	Journalist	32	m	urban	15	x	x	
6	Dacil	Student	23	f	urban/stroll	1	x	x	
7	Julio	Physiotherapist	32	m	urban	2	x	x	x
8	Inma	Police	37	f	urban/sport	4	x	x	
9	Gazmira	Fashion	30	f	urban	12			x
10	Doramas	Enfermero	26	m	urban	1			x
11	Isaura	Call Centre	31	f	urban	1	x	x	
12	Esperanza	Teacher	50	f	urban	4	x	x	x
13	Airam	Ingeniero	36	f/m	urban	2			
14	Martin	Musician	34	f/m	urban	2			
15	Virginia	Journalist	24	f	urban/stroll	1	x	x	x
16	Alba	Marketing	27	f	urban/stroll	1			
17	Roberto	Lawyer	33	m	urban	18	x	x	x
18	Flor	Administrative	53	f	urban	1			x
19	Naira	Engeneer	30	f	urban	7	x	x	x
20	Fabio	Sales	29	m	urban	11	x	x	x
21	Jaime	Designer	48	m	urban	13	x	x	
22	Lucas	Administrative	32	m	urban	3	x	x	x
23	Gabriel	Pensioner	51	m	urban	6 months	x	x	x
24	Adrian	Airport services	47	m	urban	11	x	x	x
25	Belen	Yoga Instructor	36	f	urban	3	x	x	x
26	Iraya	Teacher	35	f	urban	20	x		x
27	Emma	Teacher	34	f	urban	19	x		x
28	David	Teacher	32	m	urban/sport	20	x		x
29	Cathaysa	Nurse	34	f	urban/stroll	6 months	x	x	
30	Rafael	Designer	44	m	urban	30	x		
31	Diego	Teacher	49	m	urban	10	x	x	
32	Irene	Bran Manager	46	f	urban	12	x		x
33	Agostin	Finance	43	m	urban	12	x	x	

Political Parties/Name		Age	Gender
Equo/ Salma	Campaign-ing Party	45	f
PP/ Ramon	Council Traffic and Transport	36	m
PSOE/ Matias, Juan	Campaign-ing Party (now governing party)	48, 52	m
Shops			
Aday		39	m
Pepe			m
Sara		24	f
Manuel		31	m
Ivan		46	m
Paco		28	m
By Bike			
Ibai		52	m
Sergio		32	m
Limonium (Biking School featured by the townhall)			
Raul		36	m
Urban Planning Agency			
Fran		33	m

Appendix 2 – Newspaper Article

Las Palmas de Gran Canaria

Klara Scheurenbrand, este martes, en su bicicleta en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria. | SABRINA CEBALLOS

Chicago conocerá el ciclismo urbano de la ciudad gracias a una joven alemana

La investigadora Klara Scheurenbrand participará en la Conferencia Internacional de Macromarketing para exponer su tesis sobre el uso de la bicicleta en la capital

Miguel F. Ayala
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA

La joven alemana Klara Scheurenbrand, estudiante de la Universidad de Liverpool que realiza su tésis doctoral en la capital grancanaria, expondrá el próximo mes de junio -entre el 25 y el 28- en la ciudad estadounidense de Chicago su estudio sobre el ciclismo urbano en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, "un fenómeno raro ya que nace de un nivel cero en una ciudad que tiene pocas alternativas al transporte privado", explica.

La invitación a la joven investigadora ya luce en la revista académica *Journal of Macromarketing*.

"Mi estudio doctoral", cuenta Scheurenbrand, "trata de explorar cómo se establece la práctica social del ciclismo urbano bajo influencia política, con el fin de poder ganar mayor comprensión de cómo y contra qué desafíos se crea el uso de la bicicleta en sistemas de auto movilidad. El ciclismo", según su visión, " ha recibido un gran silencio en el debate académico aunque tiene un papel importante en lo que afecta al debate sostenible. Menos aún se ha escrito sobre un caso como el de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria en que la bicicleta nunca ha existido como transporte urbano, explorando cómo compite con otros modos".

Klara Scheurenbrand, que incluso se inscribió para documentarse en el colectivo Las Palmas en Bici,

comenzó en "enero con la acumulación de datos", consistente en entrevistar y observar a los usuarios y responsables en puestos oficiales. "A mis participantes les sigo en sus rutas y tareas diarias, dándoles la oportunidad de compartir conmigo sus experiencias, dificultades y éxitos. Está planeado dedicar un año a la investigación de datos primarios. A parte de poder cumplir con mi desafío teórico, mi estudio puede aportar importantes implicaciones practicas para la mejoría del ciclismo urbano en Las Palmas de Gran Canaria", razona.

"En Las Palmas de Gran Canaria hay guaguas y taxis y se suma la dificultad de acceder a puntos de la ciudad con el transporte público

y la inexistencia de un transporte bici *intermodal* entre la ciudad alta y la baja. Así que hay una gran dependencia del vehículo motorizado propio", asegura. "En cualquier otro entorno sería mucho más complejo y sería imposible ver tan claro el cambio y los desafíos contra los cuales se establece el ciclismo urbano ya que hablaríamos de transportes alternativos como metros y tre-

> "Es un fenómeno raro; nace de cero en un lugar con pocas alternativas de transporte"

nes", dice la estudiante.

Plantea incluso en su proyecto "si existe interés político" en apostar por una actividad sostenible. "Es más fácil mantener la idea de que un cambio de uso depende de cada uno de nosotros porque si los incentivos políticos no funciona", argumenta, "pues se puede decir siempre que el usuario simplemente ha decidido que no quiere cambiar. Pero si hablamos de cambios hacia un consumo sostenible en transporte, alimentación y energía, ¿Cuánta libertad de decidir tenemos realmente?", concluye esta joven que conoció Gran Canaria en 2007 y "quiere promover que le permitan utilizar toda Canarias y España como campo de investigación".

Rutas por los castillos de ByBike LPA

El Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria, a través del Área de Movilidad, ofrece a los ciudadanos seguir las huellas de los históricos ataques a la ciudad de los almirantes Francis Drake, en 1595, y Pieter Van der Does, en 1599, por medio de un paseo en bicicleta por la Ruta de los Castillos y Piratas. El recorrido, elaborado por el Servicio Público de Bicicleta, ByBike LPA, tiene como objetivo animar a los ciudadanos a conocer estas históricas edificaciones de la ciudad a través de un paseo desde el Castillo de La Luz (actual Fundación Arte y Pensamiento Martín Chirino) hasta el Castillo de San Cristóbal, recorriendo a su paso la Base Naval, donde se encontraba la antigua Fortaleza de Santa Catalina o el Museo de la Ciudad y el Mar Castillo de Mata. La ruta, que se puede consul-

tar a través de la página web del Servicio Público de Bicicleta (*www.bybikelpa.com*), en la pestaña Bici-Paseos, se convierte en una ruta por la ciudad, pero también por el tiempo. El itinerario ciclista reconstruye a través de las fortificaciones el mayor ataque sufrido por la Ciudad en su historia, al tiempo que se repasan protagonistas y escenarios de leyenda. La Ruta de los Castillos y Piratas se enmarca dentro del programa de las cinco primeras bici-rutas pensadas para descubrir la ciudad a pedales, gracias a recorridos tematizados que aportan una perspectiva alternativa de la capital grancanaria. Estos paseos, realizados con el apoyo del estudio de arquitectos Arquypiélago, permiten vincular la bicicleta al ocio y al recreo, así como al fomento de la curiosidad y el conocimiento. **LP / DLP**

Guaguas mejora su aplicación para móviles que avisa de la llegada del bus

La 'app' muestra datos como las rutas, la próxima parada o los puntos de venta

LA PROVINCIA / DLP
LAS PALMAS DE GRAN CANARIA

Guaguas Municipales ha desarrollado una nueva versión de su aplicativo informático para dispositivos móviles *Guaguas LPA*, que avisa de la llegada de la línea a la parada a través de una alarma, permite saber al viajero cuál es la siguiente parada de su guagua y geolocaliza los establecimientos donde se puede adquirir el nuevo Bono-Guagua, entre otras novedades, además de incorporar utilidades clásicas como horarios, mapas y tarifas.

La App *GuaguasLPA* que ya se puede descargar de forma gratuita a través de App Store (para iOs) y Play Store (para Android), dispone de una nueva versión para los usuarios, que amplía la información de los servicios más relevantes que presta la compañía municipal de transporte. En el buscador de estas dos tiendas virtuales, basta con escribir *GuaguasLPA* para encontrar sin problemas la aplicación. Existen otras aplicaciones con nombres parecidos, pero no disponen de funcionalidades similares ni información oficial.

La nueva aplicación, que mejora sustancialmente las prestaciones en todos los apartados a la que venía funcionando en los últimos meses –que sólo ofrecía el tiempo de llegada de la guagua-, ya ha sido descargada por más de 12.000 usuarios en la plataforma Android y 4.000, en la plataforma iOS, según los datos proporcionados por cada una de las plataformas.

Una vez descargada y abierta la nueva aplicación, el interfaz muestra nuevos iconos con diferentes ítems de servicios. La información se exhibe de manera accesible, ordenada e intuitiva para todo tipo de público, por lo tanto, su uso es sencillo para los usuarios más avanzados –generalmente los jóvenes- y también está pensado para los clientes más mayores.

A cada uno de los nueve iconos de la pantalla principal le acompaña un texto descriptivo. Están dispuestos en la interfaz por criterio de utilización: Ruta, Próxima Guagua, Próxima Parada, Líneas y Horarios, Puntos de Venta, Tarifas, Favoritos, Guaguas al minuto y Ayuda.

Esta iniciativa tecnológica incorpora la información y combinaciones de 42 líneas regulares, 3.789 expediciones semanales y 784 paradas distribuidas por el municipio capitalino.

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Appendix 3 – Letter Ayuntamiento

Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de Gran Canaria
Distrito Centro

Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de
Gran Canaria

████████████████

Council Transport and Traffic

University of Liverpool
Paul Drake (Head of Department)
Management School
Chatham Street, Liverpool L69 7ZH

Collaboration between Ayuntamiento de Las Palmas de GC and University of Liverpool

Dear Mr. Drake

We would hereby like to express our interest in joining forces with Ms. Scheurenbrand and the University of Liverpool respectively, in order to pitch for European Funding for an implementation of her PhD project within our mobility policy.

Yours sincerely

████████████████

Appendix 4 – Ethics Approval

Dear Liz and Klara

I am pleased to inform you that the ULMS Ethics Committee has approved your application for ethical approval. Details of the approval can be found below.

Ref: **2014.18**

PI: **Liz Parsons**

Title: A practice theoretical approach to consumption: Ethnographic insights into the emerging practice of urban cycling and bicycle consumption in Las Palmas d. Gran Canaria.

School: **Management School**

Department: **Marketing and Operations**

First Reviewer: **Philippa Hunter-Jones**

Second Reviewer: **Hossein Sharifi**

Date of initial review: **17 September 2014**

Date of Approval: **8 October 2014**

This approval applies for the duration of the research. If it is proposed to extend the duration of the study as specified in the application form, the ULMS Ethics Committee should be notified. If it is proposed to make an

amendment to the research, you should notify the Research Administrator by following the Notice of Amendment procedure outlined at http://www.liv.ac.uk/researchethics/application/forms_and_templates/ . If the named PI / Supervisor leaves the employment of the University during the course of this approval, the approval will lapse. Therefore please contact the Research Administrator at j.s.roberts@liv.ac.uk in order to notify them of a change in PI / Supervisor.

Professor Helga Drummond

Chair of ULMS Ethics Committee

University of Liverpool Management School

Chatham Street

Liverpool

L69 7ZH

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