1.

Hitchhiking

Classic hitchhiking is an informal[1], immediate, free practice that developed in North America and Europe following World War II, essentially as a way of travelling long distances. The idea is simple: the hitchhiker stands along the side of the road and waits for a driver to bring him or her towards their destination. B. WECHNER[2] identifies three reasons for using this mode of transport: economic (even if the free trip results in longer, more tiring trips); social (hitchhiking allows the traveler to travel "alone" in a different way); and the desire for "risk" that accompanies hitchhiking.

As sociologist Stephanie VINCENT[3] , explains, the spread of the car, especially among young people, rarified the practice of "classic" hitchhiking in the 1980s. Nevertheless, the practice is still very much alive in Eastern Europe and Russia, where many hitchhiking clubs exist and organize competitions that turn it into a veritable sport.

More than a mode of transportation, classic hitchhiking today is, above all, an experience, an adventure that allows one to "find oneself and put daily life aside."[4] . According to anthropologist Patrick LAVIOLETTE[5], new technologies have contributed significantly to the development of the practice, both before the journey (by facilitating access to information in preparation for the trip) and during it (by making it possible to stay in touch with people far away).

Local hitchhiking[6] falls somewhere between classic hitchhiking and carpooling. Unlike the first, it is used for short, daily trips. Particularly suited to rural and peri-urban areas, it can compensate for the lack of competitive (with regard to the car) public transportation options.

The fear of unpleasant encounters is a major obstacle to hitchhiking. Drivers are rarely willing to pick up hitchhikers they do not know. While this prerequisite is unlikely to be met in classic hitchhiking, it is entirely possible in the case of local hitchhiking. To facilitate meetings between drivers and passengers and ensure optimal safely, communities are have been created for each hitchhiking network:

members register, identify themselves and sign a charter of good conduct. In exchange, they receive a "hitchhiking kit," with the community's colors, allowing members to recognize one another[7].

Networks are structured either around existing bus stops or ones specifically created by the community or local government in strategic locations, so that hitchhikers can wait in safety and find a ride quickly.

Specifications

Local hitchhiking networks are the result of civic initiatives, or are developed inter-municipally. Since the creation of the first local hitchhiking association – VAP[8] (Voitures A Plusieurs) in Belgium in 2005 – many such networks have emerged in France and Belgium: Covoit'Stop[9] in Belgium (2008), RézoPouce[10] in the Midi-Pyrénées region (2010), EcoStop[11] in Floirac-33 (2012), Stop Covoiturage[12] in the Saône Valley (2013), the network organized by Brest Métropole Océane (2013), etc. While this practice does not appear to be widespread in other countries, it does exist in Russia: M. FERNANDEZ[13] for instance, refers to "urban hitchhiking," which allowed people to get around for free in post-Soviet Russian cities.

The goal of local hitchhiking is to open up territories that otherwise are car-dependent, and in particular to enable people with little or no mobility to increase their daily perimeter. The idea is to take advantage of the trips made each day by numerous drivers (often "solo drivers") towards poles of attraction (business areas, supermarkets, schools, etc.) or strategic destinations in terms of mobility (train stations, trolley or bus stops, etc.). Certain networks thus operate exclusively based on specific "lines" connecting two villages, or serve a pole of attraction (like the network created by Brest Métropole Océane[14]).

Local hitchhiking is "one solution among others, and is a part of multi-modal culture," [15], in addition to other existing modes (carpooling, public transportation services, etc.). It can especially facilitate traveling "that last mile," to reach a train/bus station or a workplace (like the network created by Nantes Métropole[16] and its "stop points" along the way to the airport). In sparsely populated areas, an efficient local hitchhiking network can replace public transportation services, which are often marginally profitable. Developing the practice is inexpensive both in terms of infrastructure (which simply entails setting up a few stops) and operations, for the structure or community that creates it.

The cost to users is determined by each community: as local hitchhiking is an occasional practice for short distances, it tends to be free, like classic hitchhiking. Of the twenty communities surveyed[17], five required a contribution to the cost of the trip (around 0.05€/km); two (including VAP, which has numerous branches in France and Belgium) required only a membership fee; the others required no fee.

Development potential of local hitchhiking

In order to develop, local hitchhiking must gain greater visibility by publicizing its concept. Effectively, today it is still largely unknown to inhabitants, elected officials and other actors in areas where it is practiced, even though many drivers give rides to "young people they know from the village."[18]. Hence, communication regarding the formalization of hitchhiking and its organization in the form of communities comprised of hitchhikers and drivers (focusing on the safety aspect of the practice) would be helpful.
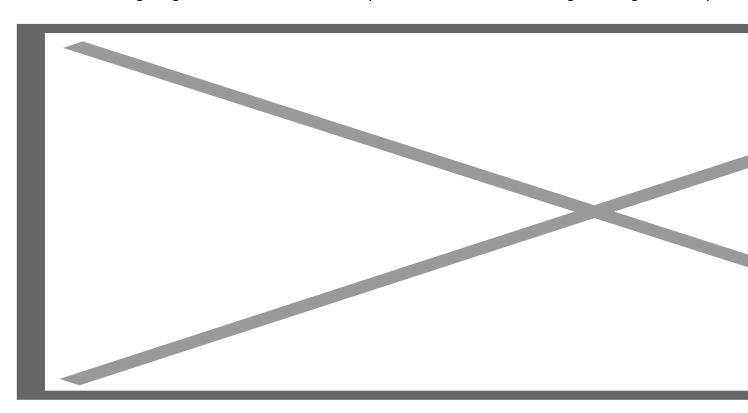
The kits distributed by the communities play an important role in their visibility, especially the stickers drivers put on their cars, which serve as advertisement for the network wherever the car travels. The hitchhiking "stops," where the network's logos are affixed, are also vectors of visibility.

Local hitchhiking: an opening for other altermobilities?

Being sure to find a car and arrive on time is the main problem for hitchhikers. To increase the chances of getting a ride, Smartphone applications like Covivo[19], were created to propose "carpooling in real time."[20] However, this dynamic carpooling concept is only adapted to roads with sufficient vehicle traffic.

For daily trips, local hitchhiking can also act as a precondition for regular carpooling. Finding carpoolers is not always possible on existing carpooling sites, where only a small portion of the trips made is actually indicated. The result is that a lot of interested people give up. Local hitchhiking can lead to finding one or several regular carpoolers: if a hitchhiker regularly travels the same route at the same time of day, he or she is likely to be picked up by the same driver(s). After a few trips, this "informal" local hitchhiking can become regular carpooling.

Two examples: Covoit'Stop and RézoPouce, the main participatory hitchhiking networks

Passenger profiles

Passengers are essentially "captives," meaning people without cars who have no real alternative in terms of individual travel. These people are described as being "under local house arrest," (Le Breton, Dupuis) and have limited motility for financial, physical, cultural, linguistic or cognitive reasons:

- the majority are young people between 16 and 25, especially high school students (53% of Covoit'Stop passengers, for instance) without cars;

- they are also people with unstable fuel and financial situations and people with reduced mobility;

- women (70% of RézoPouce passengers), mainly aged 30-60, also comprise a major category.

Some elderly people would like to practice local hitchhiking, but the various tests done by RézoPouce show that the system is not suited to their practices or needs.

"Flexible managers" - (as identified by RézoPouce, executives who can schedule working hours around other obligations and thus take the "risk" of getting around by hitchhiking) - comprise yet another category.

Driver profiles

Drivers are essentially aged 25 to 64 (91% in Covoit'Stop fall under this category), and are most notably characterized by their sensitivity to environmental issues.

- Of the 700 RézoPouce drivers, 60% are women, who describe themselves as "caring" and who signed up to "protect" young hitchhikers.

- Among male drivers, mostly workers, many worked in construction and shared a culture of carpooling.

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Notes

<u>1</u> An informal practice is a practice that is not regulated.

2 WECHNER B. (1996)

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3 VINCENT S. (2013)

4 MARTINEZ F. (2013)

5 MARTINEZ F. (2013)

6 On parle également d'autostop participatif, ou d'autostop organisé.

7 Depending on the community, this kit includes a membership card, pieces of cardboard for hitchhikers and a sticker that drivers can put on their windshield.

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8 *https://www.autosbus.org/sites/default/files/Bruxelles_131220.pdf*

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9 www.covoitstop.be/

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10 www.rezopouce.fr/

<div class="logo logo-mobile"> <a href="https://fr.forumviesmobiles.org/"><img src="https://fc

11 www.ville-floirac33.fr (onglet Agenda 21 – L'Agenda 21 en actions)

12 www.territoire-saone-mont-dor.fr (onglet Se Déplacer en Val de Saône)

13 FERNANDEZ M. (2013)

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14 www.cotebrest.fr/2013/07/02/l%E2%80%99auto-stoppeur-a-ses-stations/

<u>15</u>FNE Midi-Pyrénées (2012)

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16m.lesechos.fr/redirect_article.php?id=0202257363012

17 Recensement réalisé dans le cadre de l'écriture de cet article.

18 HUYGHE M. et al (2013)

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19www.covoiturage-dynamique.eu/

[20]Drivers and passengers enter their destination into the application: the application then sends a proposed itinerary to the nearest driver, who has 20 seconds to accept or refuse to take the passenger.

Activer

Désactivé

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Désactivé

Auteur lié

Marie Huyghe (Planner)

Thématique

Alternative mobilities

Cars / motorcycles

Cars

Concepts