



HAL
open science

From dispossession to objects' reuse: trajectories and practices in the context of clothing

Eva Cerio, Alain Debenedetti

► **To cite this version:**

Eva Cerio, Alain Debenedetti. From dispossession to objects' reuse: trajectories and practices in the context of clothing. Interpretive Consumer Research Conference, 2019, Lyon, France. hal-02135221

HAL Id: hal-02135221

<https://hal.science/hal-02135221>

Submitted on 20 Jun 2019

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

FROM DISPOSSESSION TO OBJECTS' REUSE: TRAJECTORIES AND PRACTICES IN THE CONTEXT OF CLOTHING

Eva Cerio

Université Paris-Est, IRG (EA 2354)

Eva.cerio@u-pem.fr

Alain Debenedetti

Université Paris-Est, IRG (EA 2354)

Alain.debenedetti@u-pem.fr

Introduction

Sustainability is a key societal challenge, and many institutions point the damages done by overconsumption and the need to reduce and better manage waste. In France, ADEME (the public agency for environment) calls for new ways of consuming and has defined the concept of “second life of objects” (SVO in French). This term refers to the practices that allow an object to be used again by keeping or not its shape and use: objects, once produced, can be successively used and possessed by many consumers in their lives. SVO includes practices of *reuse* (the shape and the use do not change), *repair* and *redistribution* –consumers transform the use of the object– but it differs from *recycling* –the object is destroyed and only its raw materials are used. If giving an object a second life can be done in every step of consumption – acquisition, use and disposal– this research focuses on the third step, when consumers dispossess an object, by selling it, giving it or bartering it. This research aims at understanding consumers’ representations of dispossession and their associated practices in the context of objects’ reuse.

The dynamics of dispossession in the context of objects’ reuse

If practices of gift-giving, sales or barter are not new –flea markets have existed since the 16th century– several phenomena have influenced their redevelopment: an ecological awareness of hyper consumption’s negative effects, various economic crises, which have impacted consumers’ purchasing power, trades opening allowed by Internet and the progressive detachment concerning possession (Botsman & Roger, 2011). The renewed interest for this set of practices calls for a deeper understanding of this phenomenon, in line with research on second hand markets (e.g. Belk, Sherry & Wallendorf, 1988; Denegri-Knott & Molesworth, 2009), practices of bartering (Dalli & Fortezza, 2016) or gift-giving (Bergadaà, 2006).

Research shows that giving an object a second life is explained by ecological, economic, social and hedonic elements: consumers reuse their objects to preserve the environment or to meet financial needs (Ertz, Durif & Arcand, 2017). By doing this, consumers search for practicality, self-expression or socialization and their practices are influenced by objects’ value (a more valuable object is less reused) or by sociodemographic characteristics such as age or financial resources (Van de Walle, Hébel & Siounandan, 2012).

If reuse behaviors have been predicted (Guiot & Roux, 2010) and symbolic meanings of these practices emphasized (Belk et al., 1988), research mainly focuses on specific practices and on consumers who retrieve and appropriate previous owned goods –showing how these objects raise paradoxical feelings (e.g. Roux, 2010). The counterpart of appropriation –the ways

consumers dispossess objects to allow them to be reused– has been overlooked, which is problematic given the importance of this issue from an ecological, social, or market perspective. This research is intended to fill this gap, by exploring the dynamics of dispossession and go beyond the role of possession in the self-construction (e.g. Belk, 1988; Wallendorf & Arnould, 1988).

When consumers choose to dispose an object, they can commit themselves to disinvestment rituals to help them breaking away from their objects and purifying them. This is related to dispossession that is defined as a psychological and emotional process in which a consumer gives up his material and symbolic links with an object (Roster, 2001; Young & Wallendorf, 1989). These rituals are essential to allow the object to pass from a domestic and personal space to another and depends on the object's, individual and communal characteristics (Albinsson & Perera, 2009). Prior works on dispossession in the context of transmission (Price et al., 2000) or sales (Lastovicka & Fernandez, 2005) show that dispossession is a means to defining oneself and constructing one's identity, which can help "*rejecting a past-self (what is not anymore or has never been "me"), claiming a present self (a "me" I think to be or I want to be) and constructing a future self (a "me" I want to become)*" (Lemaitre & De Barnier, 2015, p. 14).

Using Practice Theory to study the process of dispossession

Prior research on dispossession and reuse have mainly focused on discursive analysis. As dispossession in the context of reuse is an observable and ordinary performance of consumption and spatiotemporal contexts, using a practice-based approach seem relevant (Schatzki, 1996). Practice Theory, initially defined by Reckwitz (2002) and Schatzki (1996) is inspired by Bourdieu (1979) and Giddens (1986) but differs from their approach: Bourdieu (1979) introduces practices in his social action theory and *habitus* concept with the objective of understanding how practices evolve, are reproduced and contribute to social order. For Giddens (1986), practices are continually recreated by social actors and are stabilized in social structures.

In consumer studies, Practice Theory gets out from consumption behavior's analysis that sees in consumption a means to symbolically communicate with society (Warde, 2005). Practices are seen as a space of social representations and an organized manifestation of human actions (Schatzki, 2002). A practice is made of doings and sayings, routinized behavior resulting from individual performances and made of corporal and mental activities, rules, knowledge, things, technologies, temporal and social structures (Reckwitz, 2002). Practices are "*forms of social realizations linked to material arrangements*" (Roques & Roux, 2018, p.39).

From an empirical point of view, Practice Theory considers the different dimensions that characterizes practice, beyond the purely individual aspect and the discourses. These dimensions (cf. Table 1) have raised debates. Schatzki (2002) identifies practical understandings (know-how, routines), rules (prescriptions, instructions on ways of doings) and teleo-affective structures (goals, emotions, meanings, which can also be considered as engagement for Warde, 2005) but does not consider the material culture –even though, objects and technologies are essential to understand practices (Reckwitz, 2002; Warde, 2005). For analytic purposes, different frames have been used to examine consumption's practices. Magaudda (2011), Shove and Pantzar (2005) or Arsel and Bean (2013) opt for an *object-doings-meanings* approach respectively in the contexts of recorded music listening, Nordic walking or home design. Woermann and Rokka (2015) use a concurrent frame to examine the concept of timeflow in the context of freeskiing and paintball –material set-up, bodily routines and skills, teleoaffective structures, rules and cultural understandings.

In these works, temporality and space are central: practices are spatially and temporally situated. For example, Evans (2012), in his study of household’s food waste practices, identifies that professional and personal schedule constraints influence waste production. Gregson, Metcalfe and Crewe (2007), by exploring conduits of ordinary objects’ divestment, suggest that divestment is a spatialized practice and that objects have trajectories: how or where placing objects constitute narratives of consumers and their social relationships.

Table 1. Dimensions of practice theory

Schatzki, 2002	Reckwitz, 2002	Warde, 2005	Shove and Pantzar, 2005 ; Magaudda, 2011 ; Arsel and Bean, 2013	Woermann & Rokka, 2015
Practical understanding	Body	Understandings	Doings	Bodily routines and skills
	Mind			
	Agent			
	Process			
Rules	Knowledge	Procedures		Rules
Teleoaffective structures	Discourse/ Language	Engagement	Meanings	Teleoaffective structures
				Cultural understandings
	Things	Items of consumption	Objects	Material set-up

Suggested field and methodology

We think that working on clothes as a fieldwork would be appropriate, as clothes are everyday life mundane objects that are likely (1) to have different status for the consumer and (2) to cover different practices of dispossession. In addition, depending on the context, the object is likely to have different trajectories within the owner’s home. It can be associated to different knowledge and expertise (for example, how to sell it, how to manage the relationship within the family/couple following the decision to dispossess from it etc.), goals (making money, generously helping someone etc.), emotions (relief, anxiety etc.), rules (for example, rituals of divestment) or meanings etc.

In terms of methodology, given the dynamic aspect of the research, a longitudinal multi-sited ethnography of consumers’ ways to get separated from objects to be reused seems relevant as it would enable to cover a wide range of contexts. Data collection could therefore combine introspection, logbooks filled by consumers, interviews, observations and photos/videos to grasp the complexity of this practice.

In sum, this paper opens a new landscape of research on the ways people dispossess their objects to give them a second life. It also allows us to discuss people/objects’ relationships in the context of durability and to introduce practice theory in the understanding of objects’ reuse.

References

- Albinsson, P. A., & Perera, B. Y. (2009). From trash to treasure and beyond: the meaning of voluntary disposition. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(6), 340-353.
- Arsel, Z. & Bean, J. (2013). Taste Regimes and Market-Mediated Practice. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 39(5), 899-917.
- Belk, R. W, Sherry, J. F., & Wallendorf, M. (1988). A Naturalistic Inquiry into Buyer and Seller Behavior at a Swap Meet. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 449-470.
- Belk, R. W. (1988). Possessions and the Extended Self. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 15(2), 139-168.
- Bergadaà, M. (2006). Le don d'objets : dimensions centrales et profils de donateurs aux œuvres de bienfaisance. *Recherche et Applications en Marketing*, 21(1), 19-39.
- Botsman, R. et Rogers, R. (2011). *What's Mine Is Yours*. London, HarperCollins Business.
- Bourdieu, P. (1979). *La Distinction : Critique sociale du jugement* (Editions de Minuit). Paris.
- Dalli, D., & Fortezza, F. (2016). From ownership to sharing. Motivations, behaviors and Value at zerorelativo.com. In *Rediscovering the Essentiality of Marketing. Developments in Marketing Science: Proceedings of the Academy of Marketing Science* (Springer, p. 103-109). Cham.
- Denegri-Knott, J., & Molesworth, M. (2009). 'I'll sell this and I'll buy them that': eBay and the management of possessions as stock. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 8(6), 305-315.
- Ertz, M., Durif, F., & Arcand, M. (2017). Life after death? Study of second life practices. *Journal of Consumer Marketing*, 34(2), 107-118.
- Evans, D. (2012). Beyond the Throwaway Society: Ordinary Domestic Practice and a Sociological Approach to Household Food Waste. *Sociology*, 46(1), 41-56.
- Giddens, A. (1986). *The Constitution of Society: Outline of the Theory of Structuration* (New Ed edition). Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Polity Press.
- Gregson, N., Metcalfe, A., & Crewe, L. (2007). Moving things along: the conduits and practices of divestment in consumption. *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, 32(2), 187-200.
- Guiot, D., & Roux, D. (2010). A Second-hand Shoppers' Motivation Scale: Antecedents, Consequences, and Implications for Retailers. *Journal of Retailing*, 86(4), 355-371.
- Lastovicka, J. L., & Fernandez, K. V. (2005). Three Paths to Disposition: The Movement of Meaningful Possessions to Strangers. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31(4), 813-823.
- Lemaitre, N., & De Barnier, V. (2015). Quand le consommateur devient commerçant : motivations, production d'expérience et perspectives. *Décisions Marketing*, 78, 11-28.
- Magaudda, P. (2011). When materiality 'bites back': Digital music consumption practices in the age of dematerialization. *Journal of Consumer Culture*.
- Price, L. L., Arnould, E. J., & Curasi, C. F. (2000). Older Consumers' Disposition of Special Possessions. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 27(2), 179-201.
- Reckwitz, A. (2002). Toward a Theory of Social Practices: A Development in Culturalist Theorizing. *European Journal of Social Theory*, 5(2), 243-263.
- Roques, P., & Roux, D. (2018). Consommation d'énergie et théorie des pratiques : vers des pistes d'action pour la transition énergétique. *Décisions Marketing*, 90, 35-54.
- Roster, C. A. (2001). Letting Go: the Process and Meaning of Dispossession in the Lives of Consumers. *NA - Advances in Consumer Research*, 28, 425-430.
- Roux, D. (2010). Identity and Self-Territory in Second Hand Clothing Transfers. *ACR North American Advances*, NA-37.
- Schatzki, T. R. (1996). *Social Practices: A Wittgensteinian Approach to Human Activity and the Social*. Cambridge University Press.

- Schatzki, T. R. (2002). *The Site of the Social: A Philosophical Account of the Constitution of Social Life and Change*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.
- Shove, E., & Pantzar, M. (2005). Consumers, Producers and Practices: Understanding the invention and reinvention of Nordic walking. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(1), 43-64.
- Van de Walle, I., Hébel, P., & Siounandan, N. (2012). *Les secondes vies des objets : les pratiques d'acquisition et délaissement des produits de consommation*, Cahier de Recherche n°290. Credoc.
- Wallendorf, M., & Arnould, E. J. (1988). "My Favorite Things": A Cross-Cultural Inquiry into Object Attachment, Possessiveness, and Social Linkage. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 14(4), 531-547.
- Warde, A. (2005). Consumption and Theories of Practice. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 5(2), 131-153.
- Woermann, N., & Rokka, J. (2015). Timeflow: How Consumption Practices Shape Consumers' Temporal Experiences. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 41(6), 1486-1508.
- Young, M., & Wallendorf, M. (1989). « Ashes to Ashes, Dust to Dust »: Conceptualizing Consumer Disposition of Possessions. In *Proceedings of the American Marketing Association Winter Educator's Conference* (American Marketing Association, p. 33-39). Chicago: Terry L. Childers, Richard P. Bagozzi, and J. Paul Peter.