

Paper 1: Saving Money - Breaking Profit? Ride-Sharing Practices in Inter-City Transport

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Special Session: Saving practices in the City - considering degrowth in low-budget urbanity.

This contribution examines how the infrastructure and ticketing of inter-city railway transport leads to entrepreneurial practices of ride-sharing and asks if this twofold practice (it allows saving money and gaining money) also contains the potential of articulating economic visions of degrowth.

The background for these new forms of transportation-entrepreneurialism is the ongoing process of de-regulation in the national and European transport markets since the 1990s. It has led to new forms and a greater variety of connectivity between cities for example through low-cost carriers (see with respect to Berlin Färber 2011a, 2011b; Färber/Vetter 2011). Today a productive conflict is to be found in the breaking of the rail monopoly for inter-city transport and the resulting cheap bus connections. And also the quite well established online hitchhiking websites (OHWs) offer, besides car rides, rail and bus tickets. These social network media provide new impulses in the classical area of car sharing.

At first sight sharing in the field of mobility might be interpreted as being ethically motivated and therefore contributing to degrowth in the sense of a "new frugality".

A closer look at these practices indicates that besides the motivation of saving resources it is as much motivated by saving or even gaining money. Are these motivations mutually exclusive? If not what are the intersections between these motivations and how far do they lead?

Ride-sharing formats for rail, which are currently at the centre of this study, are a good example to illustrate this divergent potential of sharing: Since a couple of years so called „weekend tickets“ and „regional tickets“ allow groups of people (max. 5 person) to take a ride together between cities and within a region (often a Land or a Länderverbund). This type of ticket is shared in a variety of forms, on behalf of providers of tickets as on behalf of co-riders: besides a simple ride from A to B for max. 39 €, the same ticket may be shared at the same day from the same group for a ride from B to A. As the owner of the ticket you may also ask different persons to share your ride from A to B and from B to A. Or you may act as a semi-professional but illegal provider of multiple shared rides within the region during one day. While others save money you earn money. Individual profit and entrepreneurial profit are closely intertwined and organised through social network media. They are crucial for implementing the potential of saving and gaining money in sharing the ticket and, as I would argue for articulating ethically motivations such as new frugality. Therefore I argue that the intersection between the different motivations for sharing mobility is articulated mainly in the social network media. By the means of these devices quantitative aspects of saving are interwoven with qualitative aspects of saving. Thus sharing mobility may be understood as

a calculative practice (see Cochoy 2008) that saves money and possibly breaks profit.

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