

**The slowness I cherish:
An attempt at sociological and political self-analysis**

**A lentidão que estimo:
Uma autoanálise sociológica e política**

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Abstract

Providing short accounts of personal experiences of slow travelling, the paper analyses the dimensions that, in the eyes of the author, lend these practices a genuine consistency and value. 'Slow travel', however, is not just a personal aspiration; it is also promoted as a fully-fledged policy, under the name of 'slow tourism'. Yet, does the policy's slowness reflect the same type of experiences as those that bring so much personal satisfaction to the author? The paper answers this question through a detailed self-analysis of the conditions for personal enjoyment of slow travel experiences; it demonstrates that 'un-embeddedness', unusual body sensations and techniques, visual anticipation, and symbolic isolation are its main ingredients. These dimensions are then compared with the policy principles of 'slow tourism', arguing that these two forms of slowness share nothing in common but their name, because they prove to be based on radically distinct enjoyment structures.

Keywords: inland navigation; hill-walking; body techniques; symbolic distinction; intermediaries; touristic enjoyment.

Resumo

A partir de narrativas breves de experiências pessoais de *slow travel*, este artigo analisa as dimensões que, aos olhos do autor, se atribuem a estas práticas: consistência e um valor genuíno. *Slow travel*, todavia, não é apenas uma aspiração pessoal; surge também como o critério de pleno valor, sob o nome de *slow tourism*. No entanto, será que este critério de lentidão reflete o tipo de experiências que traz tanta satisfação pessoal ao autor? Este artigo responde a esta pergunta a partir da autoanálise detalhada das condições de satisfação pessoal através de experiências de *slow travel*, e demonstra que a "não imersão", as sensações corporais incomuns e técnicas, a antecipação visual e o isolamento simbólico são os seus principais ingredientes. Estas dimensões serão, depois, comparadas com os princípios de *slow tourism*, argumentando que as duas formas de viajar nada têm em comum, para além do nome, porque estão baseadas em estruturas de apreciação radicalmente distintas.

Palavras-chave: navegação interna; escalada; técnicas corporais; distinção simbólica; intermediários; prazer turístico.



1. Introduction: Praises for slowness

Thursday 8 August. This morning we left the small town of Josselin, snuggled between the majestic castle that dominates the landscape and the canal that flows gently from Nantes to Brest. Navigation is easy-going; all is so calm in this magnificent Breton countryside. We float along peacefully, with the day punctuated by a joyful flurry of activity each time we pass through a lock. We find no commercial barges along this canal, dug at the time of Napoleon, because they have become too large. The only other traffic is tourists like us, coming together when we're moored near a village or waiting to pass a lock. Here all the locks are manual, like they've been for the past two centuries. Around midday, we stop near Saint-Laurent, and reach the small hamlet by bicycle. We stop at the locality's sole bar-tabac across the street from a charming old church graced with ancient salt-eroded statues and order the plat-du-jour, sharing the dining room with a group of three workers on their lunch break. After navigating a few more hours, we decide to stop in the middle of nature, in a delightful country setting. We can't wait to take a dip in the canal and enjoy a good splash full of laughter. When the evening comes we sit around the fire our children have prepared. Never have roasted marshmallows tasted so delicious!

Monday 6 July. We start off at 8:30 on a sunny morning, in the middle of the Mont Avic Natural Park in Italy's Aosta Valley. We are leaving the beautiful mountain range that surrounds the Barbustel hiking refuge and ascending towards three enchanting lakes that dot our trail. The fourth, the "Gran Lac", at an altitude of 2485 m, is much farther than we imagined and we decide to take a short refreshing break in the middle of a mountain cirque, flanked by some patches of snow. The whole valley stretches out below our eyes. We continue at an easy pace to the Mézove Pass, and then descend carefully through a patch of loose stone until we reach Margheron Lake. There we stop for the picnic lunch the Barbustel guardian prepared for us; the locally produced ham and cheese have a particularly delicious aroma in the mountain air. We greet three other hikers who cross our path; they are heading towards the far side of the lake to do some fishing. We resume our trail, a slow ascent towards the Etsely Pass, at 2812 m. The lack of wind is a pleasant surprise, the silence is absolute and we are able to take full advantage of this exceptional balcony offering a view of two parallel valleys on either side of us. What joy! We then trot down a path leading to the tranquil haven that is the Val Clavalité, where automobile traffic is prohibited. In a euphoric mood, 8 hours after we left Barbustel, we reach the 'Egidio Borroz' bivouac, a small building recently built of local stones and wood, with no tap water or electricity. After a quick supper of soup, tea and noodles, we spend the evening outside, the whole family together, seated on a bench and enjoying a stupendous sunset. There are no other visitors, so we have it all to ourselves - the bivouac and the mountain.

These short accounts provide an idea of my emotions during two experiences of slow travelling that occurred during recent family holidays. In the following pages I will propose an analysis intending to update the dimensions and social logics that, in my eyes, lend these practices a genuine consistency and value. The "Good Use of Slowness" (Sansot, 2000), however, is not just a personal aspiration. It is now being promoted as the lever for more eco-friendly forms of tourism, ones that are more respectful of the populations visited and more sustainable economically. In other words, it is promoted as a fully-fledged philosophy, under the name of *slow tourism*

(Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010; Dickinson, 2015). Yet, does the policy's slowness reflect the same type of experiences as those that bring me so much personal satisfaction? This is what I would like to explore in this paper, proposing a detailed analysis of the conditions for my own slow travel experiences and the enjoyment I derived. I will undertake a self-analysis of sorts, modestly and freely drawing on the analyses proposed by Pierre Bourdieu (2004), Torsten Hägerstrand (1996), Mike Crang (2011) or Antoine de Baecque (2014), who each in their own way speak of the relations between social and geographic space that took shape in their own personal biographies. This self-analysis will be a backdrop to my overall reflection, which will be divided into four sections: the first part presents the conditions that transform my tourism practice into a parenthesis in relation to daily life; in a second section I will discuss the ingredients that turn these instances of slowness into gratifying experiences from the symbolic point of view; then in the third section I will attempt to evaluate the differences between my slow tourism practices and the ideals of *slow tourism*. Lastly in my conclusion I shall attempt to characterise the two types of slowness based on their respective enjoyment structure.

2. Slow movement as a pleasant parenthesis: Becoming *un-embedded* and *re-embedded*

A closer look shows that to ensure the practical and emotional success of my slow travels I must become *un-embedded*, or extract myself from various aspects of my daily life (obviously in a limited manner for a multitude of ties remain in place). This also entails an equal and concomitant *re-embedding* in the new situations that emerge. There is thus always a back and forth between detachment from certain situations (those of everyday life) and re-attachment to others (those linked to tourism). The way this comes about conditions the outcome of my slow travel. But what exactly are these un-embedding and re-embedding processes?

To begin with, slow travel implies a suspension (always temporary) of social obligations that govern and rhythm my daily life. My routine is overwhelmingly defined by my professional, domestic and school schedule obligations (I have three school-age children). Like most of the population, my busy schedule is compounded by the spatial

dispersion of the activities of family members. My daily trips have to be quick and efficient because they are meaningful when they become means to link up a series of distinct activities, which must all get done. Furthermore, the concrete conditions of the territory where I live generally turn these trips into an experience that is mentally draining, often associated with extenuating haste.

Inversely, slow movement undertaken outside the obligations and pressures of daily life, becomes something to be 'appreciated' in itself. In this situation, the movement is what organises the day (or a longer period) and the other activities are governed by its accomplishment. During the week I spent on the canals in Brittany, piloting the boat was considered to be the main activity. Other practices (even those considered essential, like shopping) had to be scheduled around it. The same can be said for the organisation of our hiking in the Alps: walking gives shape to the whole temporal parenthesis of the trip. For example, lodgings are chosen based on the distance we can travel on foot. We can thus see that the speed (or slowness) of a trip must not be understood in absolute terms. Appreciating slowness is relative, insofar as it is linked to the reciprocal subordination of the various activities I am involved in, seen from the perspective of a whole day at least. If not, the traffic jams I spend so much time in would have to be added to the list of enjoyable slow travels. But nothing is farther from the truth; in its emotional facet traffic jam slowness is the extreme opposite of slow tourism travel.

It is equally true that inverting the hierarchical relation between social activities does not depend solely on suspending professional and family obligations. Free time is merely a 'window of opportunity' (or a circumscribed time frame) to practice slow movement. A second condition is that the slow movement must occur outside the context of daily life, in another time-space, that of tourism, travelling or at least 'holiday time' (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 4). My river tourism experience was not only the first time I had navigated, but also my first discovery of Brittany, a region I had never visited before. On the other hand, although the Aosta Valley is my preferred destination for hiking in the Alps, I can visit it at the most only once or twice a year because of my professional obligations in Brussels. In other words, the pleasure of slow movement is closely tied with the fact that it takes place in a place I do not already know or else seldom visit. Moving slowly, for me, is thus a special way to

appreciate territories that are somewhat 'exotic', a characteristic of the tourist's approach (Remy, 1994; Urry and Larsen, 2011).

Of course, the appreciable, even admirable, character of the territories travelled across is largely constructed beforehand, when preparing the trip. A component of all movement is a space of anticipation, as Urry and Larsen (2011: 4) have pointed out. In my case, the space of anticipation for my slow travels is quite extended! I spend hours on end consulting specialised guides and web sites in search of information on places to see and defining alternative itineraries, but I do this mainly to soak in the images of these areas. I am not just preparing the logistics of a trip; I am also getting myself in condition to appreciate the 'high points' I will encounter and already entering in my memory the landmarks that I will admire. My visual anticipations are then transformed into emotions (and often photos!) once I find myself standing before the scene or monument. Transformed into delight when the reality conforms with my expectations (which was the case when our boat reached the Josselin castle, an unforgettable sight, even though it was undeniably anticipated), or else in frustration when reality does not measure up to the sight foreseen (in particular this was the case at one point in the Alps where I expected to feast on the panorama the Oropa Sanctuary on the Piedmont side of the Alps; yet the promise of all those images consulted in my anticipation space was dashed by a thick fog). All this illustrates a certain postulate, both practical and projective, that underlies my slow movement practices: there are environments that lend themselves to the pleasures and marvels of slowness and these environments will not (and cannot) be those of daily life. In other words, slow movement, to be appreciated, cannot occur anywhere or anytime. It must be more or less radically detached from the space of daily life. Space is therefore not a neutral area; it is an archipelago of territories with distinct qualities, precisely defined by the use I make of them and the "values and meanings" I attach to them (Crang, 2011: 211).

But where exactly is the focal point of the pleasure I feel in these 'un-embedded' places and instants? My body is what moves. A body that travels over an unknown territory, in an unaccustomed manner, thus a body that is un-embedded from its usual environment and re-embedded in one that is unfamiliar. And suddenly, the body relates to the immediate environment in a different mode than it does in daily life, both in its sensations and in the actions it must accomplish efficiently. When it comes

to sensations, there is a considerable contrast between the way the body relates to daily movement and that of slow travel. When moving around in my daily life, I try to forget my body's relation to the surroundings. Through a series of practices I virtually quarantine my body from the environment: listening to music, reading, using a mobile device, turning on the car air-conditioning, lowering the train window shade and so on. Inversely, during my leisure-time slow movements, all my senses are mobilised and many sensations become the object of explicit and occasionally extended attention. Light, odours, thirst or hunger or tactile sensations from the wind or a breeze, heat or coolness express themselves differently. This is especially true with hiking; the body manifests its pleasure or pain when arms, legs and muscles exert themselves. The slower moving body is the receptacle of all these sensations (Edensor, 2000: 82). And we should not forget the gaze: unlike the insipid or invisible landscape of daily trips, the scenery stretching along the path of slow movement always offers a decor that is surprising in its beauty or strangeness, worthy of admiration. I enjoy being totally immersed in it.

However, while I am moving this way, I must alternate visually between contemplation and ensuring the correct movement (how I place my foot or steer the boat). This double task is often the source of extra attention, instants of indecision and even a few mishaps. Indeed, my body is not only the seat of my sensations; it is also a tool for my movement. In this latter function, it brings satisfaction when it is efficient: slow but regular pace, steady feet and backpack settled comfortably on my shoulders, or else a skilful boat manoeuvre, successful mooring, or even, equally important in these situations, snapping the perfect photo. Nonetheless, the unaccustomed nature of slow movement renders a series of efficient daily 'body techniques' ill-adapted or ineffective. The body must work in different ways, some of which can be more difficult and less comfortable. For example, I remember on the canal boat how hard it was to find a comfortable position during long sessions at the helm; and I never really managed to find one that was perfectly satisfying. And my insatiable photographer urge when I am in the mountains has led me to deploy various technical strategies in the aim to reconcile the act of walking with that of picture taking. So far none has really measured up; either they disrupt the hiking rhythm or the photos taken are of a disappointing quality.

Enjoying slow movement thus relies on an ‘art of using the human body’ (Mauss, 2006), a body that is both the seat of sensations sought and a tool for unaccustomed efficiencies. It is an ‘art’ that derives its importance and taste (occasionally bitter!) from the opposition with my body’s uses outside this happy parenthesis, holiday time.

Nevertheless, because of its extraordinary nature, slow movement entails the mobilisation not only of certain unusual body techniques, but also of tools and devices needed to deal with a series of elements found in the situation and potentially problematic in accomplishing the activity itself. Movement, even slow, through an unknown territory requires the ability to orient oneself, acquired through the use, among others, of maps, GPS (although I never use these devices and stick to maps on paper!) or else signposts found along the way itself, the perfect example of this is the cairn (Chollier, 2009). The person who moves slowly must also be able to use one’s ‘instrumental techniques’ (Mauss, 2006), in other words to equip oneself with things rarely needed in daily life, but which are of aid in the body’s unaccustomed uses: hat, hiking boots and stick, backpack, sleeping bag, gloves and life jacket, to name only a few examples from my own experiences.

Illustration 1: The excitement and pleasure of experiencing new ‘body as instrument’ techniques. My daughter Zoé, equipped with gloves and a lifejacket, handles the boat’s mooring rope while passing a lock along the Nantes-Brest canal.



Source: Photograph by the author.

Then there are objects that one leaves at home because they are incompatible with slow movement practices. All hikers know the Number One rule to keep the backpack as light as possible. This means doing without many daily tools or reducing their size (toothbrush, towel for example). As for inland navigation, the boat rental agency advises their customers to unpack their bags as soon as they get on the boat and to leave the empty suitcases at the boat office so as to not take up limited space on board. Lastly, slow travel calls for different logistics than those of daily life, in terms of supplies, lodging and health. This means having a grasp on the infrastructure in a territory while following unusual metrics (in my case slow walking pace or navigation), knowing that I am myself un-embedded from a series of efficient tools and infrastructures - in particular the road-automobile-driver which offers a radically different kind of mobility. As a result, slow travel paradoxically requires particular attention to time management. As the terrain is unfamiliar and passing through it could give rise to problems, it is crucial for me to assemble information beforehand on the length of the movements foreseen: their success implies a slowness that cannot be improvised, at the risk of losing the control I have of the areas crossed. My space of anticipation for these trips is thus largely spent consulting more or less institutionalised information sources (web sites, specialised works, official guides) on the metrics of this slowness because this knowledge should enable a successful embedding in the terrain. As can be seen, my 'capacity' to travel slowly is, in the situations under question, largely distributed in, and thus dependent on, a series of supports and devices I am not really used to. Yet, the extra-ordinary nature of these 'intermediaries' is precisely what gives them their charm and transforms their use into emotionally intense experiences.

3. Slow tourism as an exceptional experience: The symbolic ingredients of enjoyment

The personal happiness I have just described is not based solely on material conditions, but also on symbolic ones, which give my slow practices a powerful dimension of social expressiveness. I will try to identify them as well.

First of all, what are the standards and values that guide me from within and make me appreciate my slow movement practices? If I examine what makes slow movement a pleasant and successful experience, even while engaged in it, I discern three criteria. The first (and most decisive) factor is the fact that the trip leads to places that are *frequented both seldom and by few*. Solitude, or the exclusive enjoyment of a place, is the situation that gives me the greatest satisfaction. ‘It was magnificent; there was nobody there’ are the words I typically use to recall the two principles on which my enjoyment of slowness depends: scenic beauty and social isolation. There is no greater happiness, in fact, than to follow a trail all day long without encountering anyone, or at best the odd hiker; there is no greater pleasure than to enter a refuge where you meet a handful of people occupying two tables for a meal; there is no greater joy than to moor your boat on an isolated riverbank, with no other people around—in short, there is no better feeling than to get away from the crowd, basking in the privilege of isolation, tranquillity and distance from other tourists who stayed behind, and who I imagine are clustered in the same places due to a lack of courage or taste. And as Dean MacCannell (1999: 107) reminds me, such a feeling “only expresses a long-standing touristic attitude, a pronounced dislike, bordering on hatred, for other tourists.”

The second source of satisfaction is the feeling of having *accomplished* something, and something unusual, at least for me, as well as for ‘others’ because, clearly, no one else is around. This comes from having reached the day’s destination, while having benefitted from a leisurely hike through alpine trails. I feel satisfaction after safely piloting a boat, after making some pleasant stops along the way to visit sleepy villages or quiet little towns or after glimpsing a beautiful part of the countryside. Slow movement is a particular way of doing things and is as distinct from heroic exploits (perceived as badges of a sporting, cultural or tourist elitism or aristocracy) as it is from dull or shapeless activities (which I associate with mind-numbing ease). But whereas my satisfaction comes from opposition to these two extremes, in practice I paradoxically embrace elements of both. Due to its unusual nature, successful slow movement is a kind of ‘minor feat’ (even though, when speaking with friends and family, I always instinctively deny this daring aspect and stress how accessible or even easy the experience was to achieve). Moreover, slow movement implies a certain negation of action as it is carried out, notably by promoting the principle of ‘taking

your time’ or even by including long stretches of inactivity (time spent at a refuge or in a boat suggests an idleness often highlighted by those that hear of my travel accounts, who may ask ‘Don’t the kids get bored?’ or ‘So what do you do at night?’).

Illustrations 2 and 3: Enjoying isolation: unforgettable experiences (left: daybreak on the Nantes-Brest canal, with the whole family still sleeping on the boat; right: a view of Mount Grivola from the Arpisson alpine pasture in the Cogne Valley).

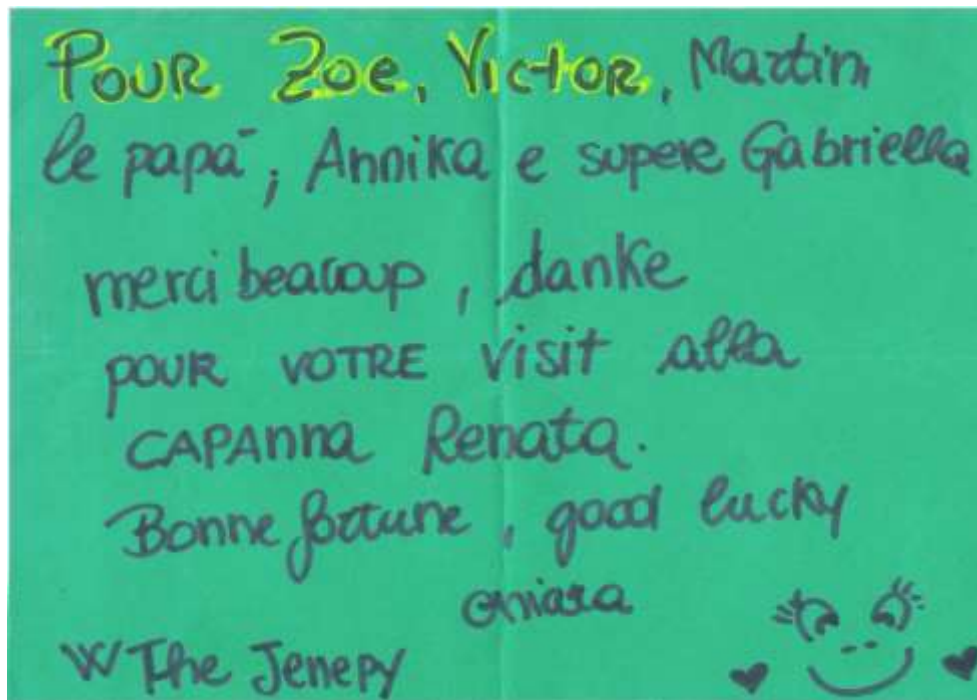


Sources: Photographs by the author.

The third reason that slow movement makes me happy lies in moments shared with locals when their behaviour seems to depart from the role I expect of them, at least in my eyes. It is important to note here that I am not looking for ‘authentic’ encounters, nor would I consider requesting this, even implicitly, of my hosts. I ask for nothing more than a functional reception and formal cordiality: I start from the premise that I am just another customer, an ordinary tourist, and there is no reason that I should be treated any differently (I abhor the contrived amiability reserved for luxury consumer sites as much as the overwhelming geniality of travellers who demand that everyone they encounter instantly become their best friend). Yet in certain, rather rare situations, I am happily surprised: an unexpected gesture, a drink together, special treatment and the feeling suddenly arises that the relationship has

taken on a different flavour, not becoming an open door towards local authenticity, but expressing what is undoubtedly genuine cordiality.

Illustration 4: An unforgettable 'happy surprise': Chiara, the keeper of the *Capanna Renata* refuge (Monte Camino di Oropa, Biella) left us this note on the breakfast table because she had left for her job in the valley before dawn. We had hit it off the day before and spent the evening talking about our lives over a meal of quiche, polenta and fresh salad. Magnificent treatment and a cherished souvenir!



Source: Personal document of the author.

When these three practical expectations are met, my slow travel gives me great satisfaction. This satisfaction is largely linked to my own values and standards, which are fully social because they also belong to individuals subjected to equivalent processes of socialisation. In fact, the family, social and professional circles and tourism promoters are all areas of socialisation that transmit standards and values supporting the development of the pleasure of slow movement, though each in their own way and on different social scales. When I was a child, our family holidays were often spent in the mountains, which introduced me and my sister to the pleasures of hiking; today, after leading my children along paths and canals, they tell me how much they appreciate these experiences that they have never had before. Many of my colleagues say that they enjoy various forms of slow movement, though I find less enjoyment among acquaintances from other social and professional backgrounds, particularly those with less schooling. Finally, public and private organisations that

promote slow movement practices, or at least the ones whose literature I have read, primarily convey an image of getting close to nature, scenery, stillness and an activity that suspends the tensions of daily life to enable the two-sided social process of finding oneself by getting away from the crowd. This is the promise of an advertising brochure for the boat rental company that I personally used, emphasising the ‘unique’ and ‘different’ nature of river tourism:

This year, for your holidays, we invite you to enjoy what makes our form of leisure unique: a different understanding of time. ‘Timelessness’. On board our boats, you will experience time differently and **you will finally take the time** to discover, learn and share with your friends, your family or your partner. (Boldface in the original.)

Illustrations 5 and 6: Slow tourism and its promise of isolation and tranquility. Covers of a boat rental brochure (notice the slogan: ‘taking one’s time’) and a hiking guide for people seeking solitude (‘Hill-Walking for Grizzlies and other solitary animals’) thanks to which I organised a two-day family hike in a very quiet valley.



Source: Author.

In other words, it seems that Marcel Mauss was truly inspired when he called attention to the “social nature of the *habitus*” and to the fact that the appetites and performances it generates “do not just vary with individuals and their imitations, they vary especially between societies, educations, properties and fashions, prestige”

(Mauss, 2006: 80). Returned to the social space that produces and interprets them, preferences always express precedence and disgust always indicates distance.

There is another time when my slow movement practices are integrated into processes of symbolic distinction (Bourdieu, 1986), which is when I talk about them later. A trip rarely ends on the day you return home. Just as I give myself a space of anticipation when preparing for the trip, as explained above, I also give shape to what I could call space of retrospection in which I share my recollections of my experiences with certain audiences, according to wisely chosen methods. Families, friends and colleagues are the primary audiences of my loosely prepared reminiscing. I have printed photo albums as souvenirs for my children, while photos of our boat trip decorate our dining room wall. Other family members generally end up looking at the photos or watching the films of a trip. With friends and colleagues, this retrospection consists of accounts with varied levels of detail or is simply avoided, according to the interest that different people express. In any case, the way I recount these experiences is shaped by relational configurations, adapted to their specific social dynamics and to the roles and issues that each hold.

Therefore, I should admit that every step of my slow movement experience reflects the logics of social differentiation. Whether these are structural and implicit or expressed through explicit personal appreciation, they turn my practices into incarnations of models valued because they are socially situated, i.e. they assume their full meaning through their opposition, with varying clarity of awareness, to (certainly imaginary) counter-models linked to social groups towards which I feel foreign and distant. It now remains to be seen if the criteria by which I confer 'fair worth' to my own practices maintain some affinity with the values of fairness that slow tourism, for its part, associates with slowness.

4. When slow tourism questions my slowness

In their book *Slow Travel and Tourism*, Janet Dickinson and Les Lumsdon (2010: 191) summarise the main principles of this philosophy and how they differ from the approaches of conventional tourism. Even if there are several definitions of the term

and slightly different conceptions of what slow tourism is about (Dickinson, 2015), I use these principles hereafter to take another look at my slow tourism experiences.

The first principle is to pay attention to the trip itself, meaning to the way you travel to the tourist destination. While conventional tourism advocates quick, direct and comfortable travel, resulting in the mass use of the automobile or the airplane and becoming a 'corridor' to cross with no attention paid to the regions traversed, slow tourism turns the act of travelling into a tourist attraction in itself, involving less intense speeds and more circuitous routes that make other modes of transport worthwhile, like trains, boats or bicycles. Here, my personal practices are purely conventional: I travel to my destinations by car or plane so I can spend as much time as possible practicing slow tourism, as the hiatuses I can enjoy are brief (from four days to two weeks) and cannot be extended due to the restraints of my social obligations. Tour operators largely support this approach, including those who try to market slowness, by often providing tourists with information to reach their destinations quickly, whose main feature is their use as 'enclaves' where tourists move in an almost exclusively slow fashion (Wilson & Richards, 2008).

Illustration 7: Travel conceived as a corridor. Taken from the *Captain's Handbook* providing information to undertake my river journey from Redon ('Your destination') and the ways to get there (by automobile, airplane or high-speed train).

F REDON	
<p>GPS: 47°38'42.81"N, 02°05'19.54"W</p> <p>Starting out formalities: departure days from 2 to 6 pm.</p> <p>Boarding: as soon as the boat is ready.</p>	
<p>Access:</p> <p>🚗: From the North: E50 (A81 + N157 + N136), at Rennes, exit no. 8 to D837 direction St Nazaire/Bruz/Redon, then follow D177 direction Redon (65 km), From the South E60 - N165 exit 11.1 St Nazaire/La Baule, then follow D773 and D164 (27 km)</p> <p>🚆: Redon TGV station (1 km)</p>	<p>➔: Rennes-Saint-Jacques (58 km), Nantes Atlantique (73 km)</p> <p>Parking: covered, not guarded: € 46/week</p>

Source: Author.

The environmental impacts of tourism practices should also be taken into consideration: slow tourism advocates activities that minimise carbon emissions and require few resources, thus reduce tourists' ecological footprint. My slow travels largely meet this requirement, either because the one (walking) is presumably only carried out through human power or because the other (inland navigation) consumes a low level of fossil fuels, and also because they both capitalise on the potential of previous networks predating the carbon society (Edensor, 2000; Fallon, 2012) – even if resupplying mountain refuges by helicopter could still be considered harmful from an ecological point of view. But in a larger perspective, the continuous growth and globalization of “excursion tourism”, which generally takes place in the summer (hiking and outdoor recreation activities of every type) and is theoretically “light” in terms of installations and impact, or at least perceived as such”, do nevertheless require the construction of infrastructural elements such as hotels, refuges, new access roads and parking lots, telecommunication networks devices, etc., and do undoubtedly have diffuse and indirect impacts on local socio- and eco-systems (Dérioz and Bachimont, 2009: 2).

The proliferation of sightseeing trips, visits of many attractions and the demand for easy access to certain sites (which entails the construction of heavy infrastructure bringing various forms of harm) are other features of conventional tourism condemned by slow tourism advocates insofar as they are based on a system of damaging intensification of tourist practices. The practice of slow tourism renounces this *de facto* due to its logistics and its material and symbolic affinities with seldom trodden paths. In my case, the only form of time-related pressure comes from my daily itinerary, which in any case may be revised if the circumstances require. However, the boundaries of the calendar that mark my holiday hiatuses preclude any possibility of prolonging my stay extemporaneously. Staying in one place for a while is therefore an act circumscribed in advance, and slow travel appears to me as a way to intensify the relation to this place in the time I allow myself, though surely in a different manner than evoked above.

Finally, the slow tourism philosophy seeks a de-commercialised form of tourism and a de-standardisation of forms of hospitality. While hiking and river navigation require the use of fewer commercial goods and services when undertaken, it is

nevertheless clear that this slow movement leads to the purchase of specific equipment beforehand; in fact, this equipment is generally industrially mass-produced (for sporting and tourist equipment stores), which is far from the ideals that slow tourism espouses. I nonetheless use these stores frequently, mainly because of the price, but also because I am not so sure that the production of high-end equipment is organised according to more ethical principles. Regarding alternative formulas of hospitality (especially in terms of food and accommodation), such offerings are assumed to be available to slow tourists. However, travelling on foot or by boat in sparsely populated territories is often synonymous with less choice, or even no choice at all (this is the case of hikers who determine the legs of their journey based on which refuges they can reach). This does not rule out that the hospitality available may take a less conventional form, in material or human terms.

Ultimately, this comparison between the sociological self-analysis of my practices and an evaluation of them according to the principles of slow tourism clearly shows that these two forms of slowness share little in common but their name, except perhaps for a few shared aspects of form rather than of spirit (for example, the absence of carbon emissions when walking). The exercise thereby shows how slowness may take on essentially immeasurable tastes by rooting itself in such diverse configurations.

5. Conclusion: From the problem of conditions to the problem of attention

The gap that undoubtedly separates my tourist slowness from the policies of slowness promoted by slow tourism opens at least two fields of inquiry, which I would like to state by way of conclusion to this rather peculiar paper.

On the one hand, one could investigate the mutual influence between the configuration of slow travel practices (as I have described them here) and the existence of alternative standards for tourism practices (with regard to the conventional sort). Will individuals who become aware of this philosophy, and view it as morally good, modify their attachments and the ramifications of their current practices to shape new experiences (François-Lecompte and Prim-Allaz, 2011)? In the context of specific tourism practices, what could emerge as levers, or conversely as

hurdles, to such a transformation? To what extent do different areas of socialisation like those cited in my self-analysis (in terms of space of anticipation and retrospection about travel experiences) help to spread slow tourism standards? In other words, what would be the conditions for a structural transformation of tourism practices (Dickinson and Lumsdon, 2010; Hall, Gössling and Scott, 2015)? If I had to answer this personally (considering my own future tourism practices), I would need to describe ingredients and results in a self-analysis different from the one above; it would have to be a sort of behavioural self-forecast necessarily akin to moral introspection. I shall not engage in such an exercise here, not only because it triggers a fault that could undermine my ability to regard myself as a consistent subject (Martucelli, 2002), but especially, and more fundamentally, because I see no heuristic utility in disclosing such a thought experiment to the public. It seems sufficient to say that growing awareness of the slow tourism philosophy – like the sociological self-analysis attempted above, but using other tools – draws back the veil of practical evidence and moral innocence surrounding the products and services provided by the conventional tourism industry, thereby making the exercise of individual and collective reflexivity possible.

On the other hand, the perspective adopted in this article may ask the question – as unusual as it may seem to me – about the status of the many forms of mediation or of the numerous and heterogeneous intermediaries inherent to all tourist practices whether they follow the logics of conventional market tourism or of slow tourism. Tourists enjoy both configurations, but the structural conditions are different. Indeed, what does the slow tourism philosophy offer, if not the enjoyment of tourism by recognising the many intermediaries that necessarily give it shape? Slow tourism is tourism that ideally enjoys each link in the chain by paying attention to it. In contrast, industrialised tourism promises tourists enjoyment by enabling them to ignore, or remain unconcerned with, the behind-the-scene conditions through which their travel is made possible and seamless. What are the working conditions in the multinational companies that sell speedy transport or the cheap equipment necessary for my trip? What are the ecological, heritage and human impacts of the infrastructure built for mass transport and tourism? Are the wastes from my in-flight dinner sorted for recycling? What supply chains does my hotel use? What are the (hidden) costs that make my slowness and isolation possible? And more generally, what do I know about

all that goes on behind the scene of this service that is always 'offered'? The large majority of tourists (myself included) do not care, and are not able, to reply. This is firstly because industrialised tourism turns intermediaries into black-box services, requiring no concern other than their price and added-value for one's trip. Actually, to the extent that these tourist 'services' are areas in which such a system may extract added value, their recipients must remain unaware of the conditions and consequences of their production under pain of compromising their enjoyment as happy-go-lucky tourists (Becker, 2013). On the contrary, enabling travel intermediaries to become matters-of-concern is the policy aim of slow tourism: constructing a tourist who pays attention to them and enjoys paying attention. This reversal can only occur through efforts made in advance to learn more about these intermediaries and the attention they deserve. For example, I could add to the list of guides I consult when preparing my travel the manual published by the World Wildlife Fund *Holiday Footprinting*, in order to include a few other intermediaries in my 'space of anticipation'.¹ Unlike the conventional tourism system, where all the ramifications of tourist practices are transformed into means that can be 'streamlined' by producers and consumers alike according to a logic of maximum cost reduction (meaning profit maximisation), the slow tourism philosophy focuses not on taking advantage of means but on paying and enjoying attention to them; as Carl Honoré puts it, slowness "is about making real and meaningful connections" (2005: 14).

In sum, the comparison between the self-analysis outlined here and the perspective of slow tourism philosophy reveals that these two approaches, even if they do remind us that slowness "appears to be a far from unmediated pleasure" (Edensor, 2000: 83), do not highlight the same kind of intermediaries. If this perspective is correct, one could conclude that my personal slow travel experience, structured by conventional tourism, is a form of attention to slowness, or a certain way of viewing the world, while slow tourism would be the practice of paying attention to the world through slowness, implying the breakdown of the social structures of the conventional holiday resort. With the paradoxical logic that he loved, old Zeno of Elea would surely say that the infinite multitude of intermediaries that separates these two types of slowness makes moving from one to the other impossible.

¹ This document is available on the site of WWF-UK: www.wwf.org.uk/wwf_articles.cfm?unewsid=716.

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