

# **From basket to shopping bag: Retailers' role in the transformation of consumer mobility in Sweden, 1941-1970**

**Johan Hagberg**

*School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg, Gothenburg, Sweden*

**Daniel Normark**

*School of Business, Economics and Law, University of Gothenburg &*

*Science Studies Unit, Karolinska Institutet, Stockholm, Sweden*

Author accepted manuscript. Accepted for publication in Journal of Historical Research in Marketing 11 April 2015.

Reference: Hagberg, J. and Normark, D. (2015), "From basket to shopping bag: Retailers' role in the transformation of consumer mobility in Sweden, 1941-1970", Journal of Historical Research in Marketing, Vol. 7 No. 4, pp. 452-475. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JHRM-06-2014-0016>

## **Acknowledgments:**

This research is part of the project Consumer Logistics, financed by The Swedish Research Council Formas

# **From basket to shopping bag: Retailers' role in the transformation of consumer mobility in Sweden, 1941-1970**

## **Introduction**

Recently, there has been growing interest in the mobility of consumption, which comprises both large-scale and more mundane movements in consumers' everyday lives (Brembeck *et al.*, 2015; Hansson, 2015). This paper focuses on the evolution of consumer mobility with an emphasis on the ordinary activity of transporting products from their point of purchase to their point of use and consumption. This activity comprises a field called consumer logistics (Granzin and Bahn, 1989).

Studying the evolution of consumer logistics should improve our understanding of consumer mobility and its facilitation. Consumer mobility has changed significantly since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, and the small changes in ordinary, mundane customs that made this mobility possible have been less emphasized. More specifically, we focus on the transformation of consumer logistics in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century in Sweden at the intersection of changing retailing and shopping practices. This intersection has recently been highlighted as an important theme in historical marketing research (e.g., Stobart, 2010; Alexander *et al.*, 2009). Thus, the purpose of this paper is to examine the gradual transformation of consumer logistics in mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century Sweden in connection with the introduction of self-service retailing.

In the next section, we describe previous work on the history of self-service retailing, followed by a section that discusses the actor-network theory approach employed in the paper. The subsequent section addresses our methodology, and the next four sections present our empirical material. In the final section, we discuss how the empirically identified changes enabled the transformation of consumer mobility.

## **The history of self-service retailing**

In marketing history, a vast and significant literature has focused on retailing changes. Retailing history has emerged as a field that draws on many different disciplines and theoretical and methodological approaches (A. Alexander, 2010; N. Alexander, 2010; Deutsch, 2010). Among other topics, this work has attended to the emergence and development of new retailing forms. One retailing change of considerable interest is the

historical development of supermarkets and self-service, which has been studied extensively over the years (see, e.g., Boothman, 2011; Alexander *et al.*, 2009; Cochoy, 2009; Tolbert, 2009; Scarpellini, 2005; du Gay, 2004; Reardon *et al.*, 2004; Shaw *et al.*, 2004; Bowlby, 2001; Goldman, 1975; Appel, 1972; Bailey *et al.*, 2010). This topic has also been important in historical studies of Swedish retailing (e.g., Sandgren, 2009; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007; Kylebäck, 2004; Kjellberg, 2001), which is the setting of this paper.

This literature has shown, among other things, that although the transition to self-service proved to have considerable effects, those effects were not obvious at the time of introduction. Self-service required considerable adaptations and changes during the transitions. Rather than utilizing a uniform retailing format, self-service looked different in different places, with various local adaptations and loosely connected technologies (du Gay, 2004). As Appel (1972) notes, “The supermarket did not suddenly appear one day in its present form. It was the culmination of a number of evolutionary and revolutionary changes in retailing” (1972, p. 40). Many retailers introduced various mixtures of formats such as the open display, which appeared between the manual service and self-service formats (see, e.g., Cochoy, 2010b; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007). Many stores with counter service were transformed into self-service to various extents by adapting to the particular conditions of the store facilities, customer base, or budgetary constraints. This flexibility was particularly relevant because many retailers at the time were small businesses with limited resources. According to Deutsch (2010), there has generally been less work focusing on these smaller businesses (however, see Cochoy, 2010a; Spellman, 2009; Witkowski, 2009). Thus, many of these retailers reacted and adapted to the changes in various ways, and these partial adaptations and modifications are of particular interest for understanding the retailing transformations at that time.[1]

There has also been increasing interest in consumer involvement in retail innovations (see, e.g., Alexander *et al.*, 2009; Alexander *et al.*, 2008). Among other findings, studies show that consumers selectively adopted supermarkets (A. Alexander, 2010; Alexander *et al.*, 2008). Stobart (2010) proposes paying careful attention to the relationship between changes in retailing and consumption because they have too often been separated conceptually and empirically. Alexander *et al.* (2009) claims that more attention should be paid to the role of consumers and their contribution to retailing innovations, which motivated their study of consumer reactions to the shift from counter

service to self-service. Alexander *et al.* (2008) study self-service at the intersection of changing practices in retailing and consumption and highlight the selective adoption of self-service. Bailey *et al.* (2010) shows how the variation of adoption is dependent on the dynamic life-course of shoppers. du Gay (2004) explores the development of self-service in British retailing and the relationships among techniques, devices, shopping practices, and the constitutions of the people involved, such as the store staff and consumers. With respect to the “self” in self-service, he maintains that it is “both limited in distribution—you don’t have it all the time, it is not your essence—and technically constituted—it exists in relationship to a particular technological regime: the self-service shop” (du Gay, 2004, p. 152). The literature itself emphasizes the need to pay attention to the changes taking place at the intersection of retailing and shopping.

As a major change in retail forms during the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the emergence of self-service has been covered extensively in retailing studies. In many ways, self-service demanded major changes in retailing, e.g., in terms of store equipment, staff activities, and the act of shopping. One less-studied aspect of self-service is the interlinked transformation of consumer logistics. There are also few studies on the relationship between the transformation of consumer mobility and retailing practices (notable exceptions include Longstreth, 2010; 1999; 1997) although as noted, they have important connections. The interlinked transformation of self-service retailing and changes in consumer logistics is an area from which much can be learned.

### **Actor-network theory**

Previous research highlights the transformation of self-service as being decentered and interlinked with multiple actors, including clerks, customers, and devices. Thus, this transformation can be considered a “composite and multiplex phenomenon[on]” (Normark, 2006, p. 21), which draws us to actor-network theory (Latour, 2005) as a way to understand these retailing changes. Actor-network theory’s aim is to trace the convergent combination of the human and non-human elements *associated* with each other in an actor network (Callon, 1986a; 1986b). The approach questions the diffusion model, in which changes are accounted for by initial inertia (Latour, 1986), and instead it argues that change may be created through circulations and translations (Latour, 1999) in which tools, objects, and devices play an important role (Latour, 1992). Thus, historical

changes are accounted for through the chain of associations and translations, including the actors involved in the transformation, rather than by identifying a point of ignition. Actor-network theory moves away from individualistic notions of behavior. Thus, what acts is not so much the human itself, but rather an assemblage or cluster (Cochoy, 2008; Michael, 2000; Latour, 1999). These assemblages are temporary constellations that may be relatively durable and specifically adapted to a particular form of exchange (Hagberg, 2010). The approach therefore pays close attention to how these assemblages form and break down in practice (Normark, 2012). Actor-network theory has been used previously in retailing history as a framework for exploring complex associations in retailing (Cochoy, 2010b; Grandclément, 2010; Cochoy, 2009; Kjellberg, 2007; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007; Kjellberg, 2001). Thus, retailing history, which is decentered and interdependent with multiple actors, suits this approach particularly well. Actor-network theory makes it possible to better achieve the aim of this study, i.e., understanding the transformations of consumer logistics in mid-20th-century Sweden in connection with the introduction of self-service retailing.

## **Methodology**

Utterly ordinary practices, such as how purchases are carried home from the store, have a tendency to be omitted from memory (Ingold, 2004), which produces several methodological challenges. First, consumer logistics is a routine practice (what Piette, 2008, describes as a minor mode activity) that we tend to ignore even while it is occurring. How, then, can we find historical traces of such phenomena? Second, once the practice changes, its traces deteriorate—like pathways that dissolve into the forest when the path is no longer trodden (cf. Simmel, 1997). A historical investigation is therefore challenging because we do not have traditional historical traces (e.g., letters, documents, reports, sketches) to which to return. Third, the practice of carrying things home is entwined and accountable only as a supplement to several other practices, e.g., shopping, commuting, rationing, eating, and storing (Degen *et al.*, 2010). It is therefore difficult to distinguish consumer logistics from other activities. Finally, logistics as a scientific endeavor has created a teleology—a logic of rationality, if you will—that does not fit well with the logic of everyday practice[2]. Thus, we deliberately avoided justifying the historical traces found in accordance with rational explanations.

Following the traces (as methodologically suggested by Latour, 1986) of consumer logistics proved to be challenging but not impossible. We could not find documents and correspondence that revealed a deliberate change in consumer logistics—or any recollection that focused on the activity at all. For example, we studied the query lists created and stored at the Nordiska Museet from 1928 onwards to document “ordinary life” in rural Sweden. Even in these, the activity of carrying goods from the store was omitted—leaving only a few accounts, e.g., a question about carrying things on one’s head. Either consumer logistics were not a part of ordinary life or they were unintentionally omitted from the representation of “ordinary life”. We assumed the latter, which was confirmed by images of grocery stores in the same collection showing detailed images of ordinary practice—although they were not the focus of attention in the pictures (for an elaboration on the advantage of photographs such as postcard images and their coincidental ability to capture mundane behavior, see Cochoy *et al.*, 2014). The images of rural grocery stores in Sweden revealed major transformations in the mode of transport taking place in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, at which time a growing population of bicycles replaced the predominant presence of horses. Thus, it became apparent that an “archaeology of present times” (Cochoy, 2009) was possible using photographs as our layers of dust (on the practice of archaeology, see Goodwin, 1994).

We therefore decided to focus on the historical media and the many images that could potentially capture the phenomena that we wanted to study. The paper is based on an analysis of the magazine *ICA-Tidningen* published by ICA, one of Sweden’s major retailers, from 1941-1970. The use of magazines as “truth spots” (Gieryn, 2006) for retailing history is not new (see, e.g., Cochoy, 2010b, for a historical study on shopping carts through the magazine *Progressive Grocer*). *ICA-Tidningen* has also been a source for other studies of the introduction of self-service in Swedish retailing (Sandgren, 2009; Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007). The performative role of *ICA-Tidningen* within Sweden’s distribution sector at that time is also important because it was constructed similarly to etiquette manuals and comparable literature used in the social sciences as research material (see, e.g., Goffman, 1963).

It is important to note that although the magazine is related to a particular organization, ICA, the magazine accounts for changes in both national and international retailing, consumption, and society in general. Even if the transformations that the

magazine accounts for are not restricted to this particular organization, members of the organization constitute its primary readership. This constraint sets particular conditions for the type of perspective adopted. We have used the lens of the magazine to study these transformations, but it does provide a particular perspective, namely, that of its readership at the specific time and place that the magazine was published. The images and texts in the magazine therefore act as spokesmen (Latour, 1987) for the retailers' perspective regarding the transformation of consumer mobility and as mediators (Latour, 2005) of the process as it was enacted.

Thus, the sources that we used were created during the period under investigation (Fullerton, 2011). Using material describing these events at the time, rather than retrospective accounts, helped us to "write history forwards" (Nilsson, 1981) and use the accounts of actors for whom the outcome of the process was unknown (Kjellberg and Helgesson, 2007). This means, as Nicholas Alexander (2010) said, that we "consider retail management issues in the context of the period under consideration rather than the contemporary" (2010, p. 352).

For the purposes of the project, *ICA-Tidningen* proved to be a valuable source. At the time, the cooperative movement was pioneering the transition to self-service in Sweden. However, for ICA, as an association of independent retailers, the magazine became an important site of negotiation. It was important for the magazine not only to present the reasons for transitioning to self-service but also to address the various objections that arose and to present solutions for those retailers that did not fully convert to self-service. The stories in the magazine were rich and detailed, especially when they did not deliberately focus on consumer logistics. Accounts of breakdowns, for example, provided descriptions of how logistics were expected to work for two reasons. First, these accounts highlight that the workings of technologies, systems, and infrastructures have a tendency to be taken for granted unless they break down (e.g., Star and Bowker, 2002; Latour and Hermant, 1998; Bijker and Law, 1992; Latour, 1992). Second, adopting a methodological pluralism (Hård, 2001), such examples provide realistic accounts even though it is difficult, if not impossible, to verify whether the event actually occurred. Thus, we treated the stories in the magazine almost as ethnographic accounts and analyzed them as such (for an elaboration of the similarities and differences between ethnographic accounts and historical notations, see Hård, 2001). In the following, we will analyze these stories as

such and therefore use a terminology developed in ethnographic and ethnomethodological texts (Laurier, 2004; Goffman, 1971; Garfinkel, 1967).

While reading the magazine, we identified images and articles that we considered relevant to the research question addressing the gradual transformation of consumer mobility in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. All of the articles and images of relevance were collected using descriptive keywords (e.g., errand boy, housewife, weighing, packing, carrying, shopping bag). The collected material was then shared and cross-read by the two authors and analyzed both thematically and chronologically; this analysis was then followed by the writing the paper collaboratively.

### **Consumer logistics in 1950**

To understand consumer logistics and how they were performed, we will start with one of the rare examples of the magazine explicitly writing about this practice. The account brings to the forefront an understanding of how consumer logistics were “supposed to happen”, consider that the story, an angry letter from a customer, was a tale about a breakdown. The housewife in the account participated in reconfiguring consumer logistics by making a purchase 5 kilometers (km) from her home because she could use a bicycle and was not confined to walking (1950(2), p. 17)[3]:

Insert Figure 1 here

This is an illustrative example that reveals the small steps within retailing practices that transformed not only the store but also shopping and mobility more generally. This story also provides an example of how different sequential practices, including consumer logistics, were interrelated.

The first two sentences (lines 1-3) set the scene. We are made aware of the difference between a regular (local) store and one that is out of the ordinary: new stores imply new routines. The woman decided to phone in an order, which highlights the similarities between *ordering* on the phone and ordering at the counter in 1950. The third sentence



(lines 3-4) clarifies and accounts for the decision to visit a new store by framing the shopping sequence as part of her mobility. She was on the move and knew that she was going to pass the store in question. Knowing the route that she planned to take enabled her to order her Saturday bill (referring to the shopping sequence as “my Saturday bill”—in contrast to, e.g., “my weekly bill”—indicates a frequency of grocery shopping). In addition, the subsequent sentence also revealed that one aspect of her *ordering* sequence was an explicit request related to how the commodities should be packaged.

Lines 4-16 and 18-23 all refer (in different ways) to the negotiation and the breakdown of the packing and container technologies used for consumer logistics. First, the woman specifically asked the clerk to pack the order in a cardboard box. When she arrived at the store, she discovered that the groceries were not packed according to her instructions. Instead, the items were placed into a “thin paper bag with paper handles” (line 6). The customer challenged this decision and reminded the clerk of her previous request (line 7). However, cardboard boxes were not part of the ordinary assortment in the store; their presence depended on the logistics of products arriving at the store and whether the store kept the packing boxes. The clerk responded that they were out of boxes (line 8). In addition, he stated that the paper bag was “just as good” and thus became a spokesperson for it.

However, the customer was not convinced that a paper bag was equivalent to a cardboard box. In line 9, she noted that the paper bag had to hold for her five-km trip, acquiring a guarantee from the clerk. The response by the clerk is also intriguing—he reluctantly provided an additional paper bag around the first bag while saying that “we better *spend* an extra bag on you then” (line 10). This additional bag, free of charge, became morally expensive through the “talk-in-interaction”, at least according to the customer (line 11). The offer of the extra bag was conditioned with a remark that made the customer appear to be wasteful—staging the negotiation between the clerk and the housewife in relation to the other customers present. This remark could be seen as intrusive, given the rationing during and after WWII. However, the customer was still not convinced, and she targeted what she presumed to be the weakest link of the paper bag—its paper handles (line 13). She then provided yet another alternative for *containing* the commodities, the “old-fashioned” method of wrapping paper around the goods and containing them with (cotton) strings (line 14). The paper bag was still not an option for

the customer. The clerk, however, relied on the durability of the bag and on the moldings of the handles. Instead of changing container-technology, he argued for the strength of the paper bag (echoing the commercials during that time, e.g., (1953(2), p. 33)). As a spokesperson for the bag, he defended its stability—but he also delegated the store’s trust to the bag’s stability. By now, the interaction between the clerk and the customer had exceeded the expected time of the shopping practice, leading the other customers who were waiting to begin directing their attention to the interaction (the mutual agreement of civil inattention was beginning to crack[4]). There was collective pressure to finish the negotiation (lines 17-18). Unfortunately, the moldings on the bag were neither strong nor stable enough to hold together the trust the clerk established between himself and the customer, and with the paper bag broken, trust in the store was also torn (lines 19-21).

The account shows that the choice of how to transport goods was not an individual choice that was up to the customer but instead was negotiated with the clerk in a setting in which other shoppers were present—i.e., a collective achievement. Furthermore, the use of the container technology was explicitly tied to the mode of transport—a bicycle limits the type of container technology that can be used and conversely, different shopping practices affect the mode of transport that can be used. This initial example highlights the complex relationships between the stores and both the modes of transport and the container technologies employed, which were in great flux at the time due to interrelated changes to each of them. It is to these developments that we now turn.

## **The transformation of retailing practices**

Descriptions of self-service stores were introduced in *ICA-Tidningen* in the early 1940s, focusing on their development in the US. There was a trend, and not just in retailing, to look at and emulate American practices[5]. For example, in 1943, the article “Store of the future?” suggested that even if US self-service stores were not appropriate for Swedish retailers to emulate, many useful tips could be gleaned by studying American retail (1943(7), pp. 6-7). Another article (1943(1), p. 20) argued that the “mentality” of the Swedish population made self-service stores rather unattractive. There were also important differences noted concerning the use of cars. In 1950, one could read that Sweden had one car for every 25 inhabitants, whereas the US had was one car for every

5 inhabitants (1950(1), p. 3). This relatively low incidence of cars in Sweden would, according to the magazine, prevent housewives from going shopping at distant, larger stores. Thus, self-service stores were introduced hesitantly and with caution. In the late 1940s, the number of articles focusing on self-service increased rapidly, and many reported on their development in the US, providing concrete examples.

### *Counter service*

In the 1940s, the grocery stores in Sweden consisted of a large counter dividing the store into two spaces. The customer side allowed a clear view of shelves packed with groceries, but no access to them. The clerk operated on the other side, bringing the goods from the shelves (and the storage behind them) to the counter as the customer requested them. Thus, the counter not only divided the room but also delegated different tasks to those in front of and behind the counter, in addition to prohibiting the customer from touching (taking/stealing) the groceries. During the exchange process, the clerk moved around, while the consumer remained relatively immobile. For example, one article exhorted retailers to let the customer sit on a chair while waiting, which they would appreciate: “The work of housewives forces them to stand so much, that they, in fact, need to sit down while being served” (1944(4), p. 22). An article from 1948 ((10), p. 8) illustrates the time spent on mobility within the store. The article recounted an investigation into how much time could be saved if the goods were situated in proper storage locations behind the counter, and it contained an illustration of how many times the clerk moved from the counter to the storage area and back again. In the following decades, some of these questions about mobility within the store would be transferred to the customers, who would then do the moving.

### *Pre-packing*

Even though pre-packaged goods became an essential part of self-service, they preceded the introduction of self-service (see, e.g., Twede, 2012) and were introduced when Swedish stores still had traditional counter service. Manufacturers and the packaging industry played important roles in this transformation. Although many products arrived

to the store pre-packed, the transformation of *the groceries* was also gradual. For example, instead of weighing at the counter, the magazine suggested (1944(9), p. 34) that clerks could *pre-weigh* in standardized measures not only to improve the efficiency of expediting orders but also to avoid pressure from the customer in a weighing negotiation. In the latter part of the 1940s, a number of articles focused on how to *pre-pack* goods in the store. *ICA-Tidningen* stipulated that pre-weighed products were up to seven times faster to serve to the customer and therefore it was important to “work for a general shift towards packaged goods” (1947(10), p. 4). The primary inspiration in this case also came from the US. One article (1947(10), pp. 8-9) showed examples of how string bags, wrap-around labels, window bags, and cardboard trays were used to package the goods. These examples primarily showed how to pack individual items. In 1948 (1948(1), pp. 22-23), the magazine stated that packaged goods were becoming increasingly common and new types of material (sheet metal, glass, cardboard, and paper) were replacing old types of cornets and bags. Pre-packaging was considered to save labor costs, provide opportunities for upselling, and reduce losses. Thus, the synchronous and collaborative negotiation of *weighing* and *packing* was transformed into a sequential activity in which to an increasing extent, the clerks weighed, packed, and placed the items on the shelves for the customer to consider later[6].

### *Self-service*

The introduction of self-service in Sweden largely involved the *transformation of stores* from traditional counter service to self-service. This transformation was not a large jump from one clear-cut form to another but instead was a gradual shift among various forms of retail. Although a frequent theme in the magazine, it was not until 1963 (1963(5), pp. 37-39) that the magazine estimated that self-service stores accounted for more than 50% of the total sales in ICA stores, and the number of self-service stores in ICA had increased by the highest number ever (from 2,081 to 2,538) during the previous year.

In 1950 (1950(10)), the magazine presented a special issue, “Handbook of Self-Service”, which is a nice illustration of this gradual transformation. One important aspect of the issue was how to transform ordinary stores to self-service at a relatively low cost. According to the magazine, the differences between a self-service and a counter-service

store included the following: 1) the layout of the store, especially the location of shelves; 2) the division of labor between the customer and the clerk; and 3) the tangibility of the goods to the customer.

In the self-service stores, the customer could access the groceries straight from the shelves. The goods were then transported by the consumer to a checkout counter, located as a point of passage between the merchandise and the exit, and the costs were calculated before leaving. The task for the clerk, then, was to calculate and charge the customer the proper amount. In addition to the *workings* of the counter and the store layout, the tasks of both the customer and the clerk changed. This altered delegation of labor also introduced “new” technologies that assisted customer mobility within the store, such as in-store baskets and shopping carts[7], along with technologies for the clerks, such as trolleys and wheeled pallets (1969(6), p. 59). However, the transformation was not just inside the stores.

### *Home delivery*

In the 1940s, a substantial portion of store sales was generated through orders placed over the phone and followed by home delivery (1943(9), pp. 24-35) or pickup by the customer at the store (1946(3), pp. 18-20). Home delivery was also commonly offered to customers visiting the store who were unable to carry all of their purchases to their homes. In the traditional “counter-store”, errand boys were therefore common and consequently were often included in the magazine with specific articles directed to their tasks. Errand boys provided the service of transporting the groceries to customers’ homes. In addition to delivering goods, the errand boys met the customers in real-life situations (1941(6), p. 8), thereby providing a link between the store and the housewife’s home[8].

The early self-service stores offered home delivery along the same lines as the counter-service stores. In 1950, a survey of 24 self-service stores showed that 68% provided home delivery, whereas 23% did not, and the remaining 9% offered it to a limited extent (1950(10), p. 39). The magazine even reported that the share of home delivery as a percentage of sales in ICA stores increased from 12.1% in 1950 to 13.5% in 1953 (1953(10), p. 66; 1954(9), pp. 36-37). With the proliferation of other means of

transportation, many retailers began to introduce means of home delivery in addition to bicycles, including cars (e.g., 1947(11), p. 9), scooters (e.g., 1953(7-8), p. 1), coaches, and milk trucks (1953(10), p. 66). However, due to the rapid expansion of higher education among the young and because errand running was considered a labor-intensive and troublesome profession, it became increasingly difficult to recruit errand boys (1949(9), pp. 4-6).

With self-service, home delivery was no longer self-evident (1950(11), p. 8), and it was increasingly asked whether home delivery would be a necessity for modern retailing or would become a relic of the past. The magazine wrote (1950(10), p. 38) the following: "Home delivery is also a service, which becomes more apparent with self-service. When the customer picked out their goods and brought them to the counter, it became natural that they should also take the goods with them. There is also something about this in the word self-service". The article admitted that it was sometimes necessary to offer home delivery for children and the elderly, but it was also important for the retailer to introduce a delivery fee and to concentrate the deliveries during a particular time of day. However, another important point was to encourage the customer to visit the store because "She is in direct contact with the goods, can choose whatever she wishes, and she buys more" (1950(10), p. 38). The article summarized that it was "better for all parties if the customer comes to the store" (1949(9), pp. 4-6). The primary reasons were that the customer could see what was available in the store (thereby lowering the risk of complaints), product news, and price changes, which would lead to her buying *more*.

In addition, home-delivery fees were introduced to avoid "unnecessary" deliveries and costs. In 1963, the magazine reported that home-delivery fees were increasingly common (1963(6), p. 25). Recommendations to discontinue phone orders and home delivery became increasingly common: "The self-service system is based on the customers collecting their own goods. Therefore, the phone order must be considered an encumbrance for this system. The most rational thing to do, therefore, would be to completely end phone orders" (1964(2), p. 38)[9].

### **The transformation of shopping practices**

In 1949, an article in the magazine had the title "The self-service store—the dream of the modern housewife" (1949(1), p. 3). According to the article, "conservative estimates"

were that approximately 1.5 million housewives lined up for approximately 3 million hours per week, and self-service could not only save them considerable time in favor of work in the home or in the labor market but also provide them with the opportunity to shop at their own pace.

One article (1951(1), pp. 4-5), based on two surveys of housewives in 1945 and 1946, argued that the distance to the store was the most important aspect when buying groceries such as bread and milk, which 83% of housewives bought at the nearest store. For meat and fish, proximity was the second-most-important consideration after the assortment of goods. However, the article found a difference between those employed and those working at home concerning items such as meat, fish, and vegetables: the employed chose the closest store for their purchases to a much lesser extent. The article concluded that "In general, one could say that the walking distance to a milk and bread store in a relatively densely built-up area should not exceed 200 meters" (1951(1), p. 5).

The introduction of self-service stores was paralleled by an expansion of infrastructure and a shift in modes of transport. The expansion of the different means of transporting goods was observable among consumers (e.g., 1948(10), p. 35). The bicycle had become a mundane feature in the urban landscape and even in the countryside, bicycle racks became an obligatory feature outside of stores. As noted in the magazine, in the early 1950s, car use was still moderate. Accordingly, "the majority of Swedish housewives cannot shop in giant stores in remote locations, and most of our stores will therefore only serve a local area and have a size adapted to that" (1950(1), p. 3). Soon, however, the use of cars among both consumers and retailers became a common feature, and the magazine was concerned about what this would mean for retailing. One issue addressed whether stores should offer gas to their customers (1951(7-8), pp. 4-5). Another emerging issue was where consumers should park their cars while making a store visit (1954(10), p. 64), which called for parking lots close to the stores and raised questions about locating stores in more peripheral areas where parking would be easier. Examples were given on how to attract people arriving by car (1960(1), p. 21) and how to help them pack their goods in the car without damaging either the goods or the car (1958(6), p. 39). A prophetic article stated, "Motoring developments are likely to imply that the housewife buys larger quantities of goods from the store and less frequently. It

will also involve increasing demand for parking lots near the store” (1956(6), p. 19). Still, within the period studied, walking and biking remained important modes of transport.

In 1951, a housewife wrote to the magazine about changing living conditions and how self-service was an important component of those conditions:

We have changed our living conditions altogether in the last decades... We have had electricity, washing machines, garbage chutes, cheap vitamin-rich canned goods, everything to simplify our housework and make it more enjoyable. But have the possibilities for simplifying our purchases increased? Has anything been done to make it easier and more enjoyable for us to do the shopping? This question could be answered with both yes and no. The store picture has changed. White tiles, stainless steel, glass, and cabinets shine towards you wherever you open a store door. But the dispatch of goods has been the same for many hundreds of years. It is really just that the counter has become more elegant. But, there are exceptions—the self-service stores. It is only that they are too few. (1951(9), p. 4)

However, a later article quoted a woman from another magazine who described the housewife as the “the number one beast of burden in the highly industrialized society” (1955(1), p. 13) and continued, “The enormous quantity of goods that arrived at the stores by boats, trains, and trucks, the housewives carried with their hands, in bags, baskets, etc.”, which in turn made her call for more home delivery services from retailers.

In another article, a housewife discussed the notion of being a regular customer (1955(10), pp. 26-27). She referred to her childhood, when it would have been “unthinkable” to go to a store other than the regular one. However, times had changed:

Bonds to a particular store are not usual anymore. Our mobile life gives us housewives natural opportunities to tumble in here and there. Where could one find the housewife today who doesn’t move—and doesn’t find opportunities to compare ‘their store’ with other stores? (1955(10), p. 26)

An article in 1956 (1956(3), p. 36) included the headline “The housewife—your happy employee”. The article referred to a one-week study of 100 housewives. The average time spent by the participants on shopping during the week was 3 ¾ hours, which was said to be slightly shorter compared to a similar study conducted in the 1930s. On average, they visited a store 14 times per week, whereas the rest of the family visited the store 16 times



per week. When housewives visited a store, they carried their purchases home themselves 81% of the time, with a family member transporting the goods home as the second-most-common means of transport. The study also explored whether it was quicker to purchase from a supermarket (the Swedish term for these stores indicates that it is a faster form of buying). The study compared how much time it took to buy a kilogram of a particular good in a supermarket compared to a store with counter service. The results were that it took slightly more time to buy in a supermarket, and the magazine's probable explanation was that stores were more scattered and thus, it took a longer time to reach them.

The introduction of supermarkets was also followed by a discussion of the problems with queues at the checkout counters (e.g., 1957(6), p. 58). New counter designs—such as conveyor belts—that could speed up the checkout process were described (1958(3), p. 26). The magazine also contained tips on shortening wait times, e.g., by packing the goods for customers while they were taking out their wallets (1958(6), p. 7).

An article in 1961 addressed the rapid expansion of cars in Sweden (1961(10), pp. 58-61). There were 500,000 private cars in 1955, and approximately 1.6 million private cars by 1965. According to the article, Sweden was approaching the US with respect to the number of cars per inhabitant, but compared to their US counterparts, Swedish retailers were taken by surprise by this development. This shift also created new conditions for the distances to the stores:

The old rule that the customer in more dense areas does not move more than 400 meters to buy groceries is today not always valid. Improved communications, packages with increased durability, and refrigerators in almost every household give the customer much more freedom in choice of store. (1961(10), p. 60)

The article was illustrated with two stores, one within a 400-meter walking distance that served 400 households and another within a 2-km driving (car) distance that served 10,000 households. In 1966, the magazine referred to a study of Swedish households that showed that more than half of the households in Sweden had a store within 500 meters. In major cities, approximately 80% of households had stores within 500 meters, whereas the share was 62% in larger cities and 40% in rural areas (1966(9), p. 23). The increased presence of modes of transport additional to walking enabled longer distances between

stores, but the longer distances to the stores mutually affected the increased use of these other modes of transport.

In 1967, the magazine referred to a study of 3,000 consumers about how they traveled to the store (1967(1), p. 21). In urban areas, 58% walked, 20% used bicycles, 13% used automobiles, and 3% used other means of transport. In rural areas, 36% walked to the store, 32% used bicycles, 19% used automobiles, and 8% used other means of transport. However, in addition to differences among areas, there were also differences in the modes of transport used depending on whether it was the consumer's primary or secondary store. An earlier article in the magazine recounted a study that interviewed 1,123 Swedish housewives about their shopping behavior (1962(10), pp. 62-65). Of these housewives, 29% said they shopped in one store, 42% in two stores, and 29% in three or more stores. According to the study, the closer the women lived to the store, the more frequently they bought. Eighty-one percent walked to their primary store and 61% walked to their secondary store; 5% went by car to their primary store (11% to their secondary store), 12% rode a bicycle or took a bus to their primary store, and 18% traveled likewise to their secondary store; 2% had their primary store deliver the products to their home, while 10% had them delivered from their secondary store. As this study showed, the majority of consumers walked to the store, but other means of transport were becoming increasingly important when it came to shopping in places other than the primary store. Longer distances and less-frequent purchases were interdependent with the use of different modes of transport and the presence of different types of carrying technologies.

### **The transformation of carrying technologies**

Returning to the changes taking place inside the store, we will focus on the roles and practices of the clerk- and customer assemblage that interacted explicitly both in consumer logistics and in the technologies they used. In the 1940s, it was compulsory for the clerk to package the goods for the customer because the clerk was more accustomed to this activity and thus faster. It was self-evident that the customer also appreciated this service: "It is not only the wrapping of the package that should be done with care, but the stowing in her bag, basket, or the shopping bag that she may receive should also be done properly" (1945(10), p. 37).

For wrapping, the clerk used paper racks by the counter. Wrapping paper and paper bags were recurring topics in the magazine throughout the 1940s, focusing on their moderate use and skilful folding techniques (1942(4), p. 22). The paper could be used either to wrap individual items or to wrap several items into one package (1948(5), p. 29). The magazine had how-to instructions for creating the package, for example, the order in which to place the items and how to handle goods that had sharp edges or that were particularly fragile. At times, the rack was supplemented with a collection of differently sized bags that sped up the task of adjusting to the form and shape of the purchased goods. Finally, paper or cotton string was used to contain the items inside the paper. In the latter part of the 1940s, paper rationing in Sweden led to several inventive alternatives that urged clerks to “Help to save paper” (1947(5), p. 31). Boxes and baskets made of fiber pulp and plywood were presented as alternatives to paper for packing (1948(2), p. 28). Paper rationing also triggered supplier campaigns to require retailers to return cartons for recycling (1948(7-8), p. 34), e.g., tobacco suppliers introduced compensation for returned cartons (1948(7-8), p. 36).

During paper rationing, the magazine suggested that retailers encourage their customers to bring their own baskets with them or to reuse the paper bags given to them by the retailers (1946(10), p. 11). Simultaneously, attempts were made to require housewives to buy string bags, which would reduce the consumption of paper bags and wrapping materials for the stores (1947(4), p. 41). When the string bags were empty, they could be placed in the housewife’s purse for later use. However, saving paper was more in the interest of the retailers (saving expenses) than the consumer: there were no extra costs imposed on consumers when more paper was used (1947(5), pp. 8-9).

However, the importance of the paper rack diminished. Traditional service meant that one clerk was involved in both charging and packaging the goods (both individual items and the collection of goods). The proliferation of check-out counters in self-service stores often involved one clerk charging the goods and another packing the different items in a basket or bag. For example, in one article (1968(1), pp. 38-40), two clerks describe their work as working by the counter (“kassan”, in Swedish) and the bag (“kassen”). A new practice and division of labor began to emerge.

The following picture, which appeared on the front page of the magazine in 1966, illustrates not only the transition between counter service and self-service but also the transition between the personal bag and the shopping bag (1966(2), p. 1):

Insert Figure 2 here

An article from 1950 describes the counter as the heart of the self-service store, and the description of the cashier's tasks demonstrates that many tasks were performed by the staff, not the consumer. These included retrieving the goods from the customers' carts, weighing fruits and vegetables that were not pre-packaged or price-marked, entering all of the items into the cash register, handling the payment, packing the items into the customers' shopping bag or bags, and inspecting private bags to prevent theft (1950(10), pp. 36-37). It was stated however, that the best solution would be to have the customers only use store carts or baskets while shopping (1950(10), pp. 36-37).

Whereas new objects such as shopping carts and shopping baskets were introduced in the store with self-service, other items were not as welcome. In a special issue focusing on self-service (1950(10), p. 10), one important recommendation was for retailers to place hooks at the entrance so that customers could store their private bags while shopping. Another article showed an example of a store sign that said "For everyone's comfort: hang your personal bags and baskets on the railing" (1954(10), p. 42).

The magazine contained information about how to help consumers transport their goods and how to prevent the goods from breaking. One example was to provide trolleys to customers to simplify their shopping and to allow them to transport more goods from the store (1953(2), p. 15); another example was to offer string to secure shopping-bag handles to bicycle handlebars (1955(3), p. 42). In 1960, one article contained various ways to help consumers, such as helping them to pack their basket and bags in the car and providing cartons for bicycles that could be attached with string, plastic to protect goods transported by bicycle, and strings as an extra handle on packages that would be carried by hand (1960(10), p. 53).

Among the various options introduced by retailers, shopping bags became the most important. In the early 1950s, shopping bags began to appear more often in the magazine, some with the ICA logo printed them. The increased presence of shopping bags in the magazine was also accompanied by articles about shopping bags, such as how store staff should pack the shopping bags to prevent them or the products from being damaged during transport (1954(10), pp. 36-37). Another article showed how broken shopping bags could be repaired using tape (1954(11), p. 44).

In 1962, the magazine wrote the following about the increasing use of shopping bags:

It is required to have a lot of shopping bags in our stores. A lot. Perhaps too many and perhaps in many cases, unnecessarily. But the customer needs the right to this service. Preferably, we should offer her the shopping bag before she asks, which probably is usually the case. (1962(4), p. 39)

It was estimated that ICA stores used approximately 25 million shopping bags per year, and the use of these shopping bags involved large costs. The magazine provided examples for saving money, e.g., giving refunds to consumers who returned the bags. However, the article also emphasized the importance of providing high-quality shopping bags to avoid losing customers. The article also asked whether the bags without handles that were common in the US would also become common in Sweden, because bags without handles were cheaper to produce. It speculated that the more often customers used cars, the more possible it would be to use this type of bag because “To carry the goods out to the car, the customer doesn’t need handles” (1962(4), p. 40).

In 1964, ICA introduced a national campaign in which the ICA logotype was introduced in all of its stores. The logo was on the paper shopping bags and in turn, the shopping bag with the ICA logo became the central symbol of the campaign and was reproduced in advertisements and on posters and signs. It was estimated that consumers would see the ICA brand on shopping bags approximately 400,000 times every week (1964(1), p. 37). This proliferation of shopping bags was described as very favorable:

The advantages with shopping bags are almost self-evident: During rush hours, the lines at the checkouts would certainly be very troublesome if you did not have shopping bags. Perhaps in some cases, you would be forced to hire extra staff for wrapping. With bags, it is, of course, much faster. Moreover, the shopping bag

promotes impulse purchases, as the customer is not forced to constantly consider what fits in her own bag. In addition, the shopping bag provides an excellent advertising medium. (1964(3), p. 39)

Thus, the entire ICA brand hinged on the new techniques of molding the handles on paper bags—the entire company (or the trust in its durability) was held together by this glue. The handles were important elements in the nascent competition among shopping-bag producers. For example, three different advertisements for paper bags in the same issue of the magazine promoted the quality of the handles as their primary argument (1968(1), p. 8, p. 11, p. 12). Similarly, a plastic bag advertisement in the same issue promoted its durability (p. 56). Four years later, shopping bags had become vital:

We cannot do without shopping bags. Paper and string? Takes too long. Cardboard? Too bulky. Errand boy? There are hardly any today. Own basket? As expensive as 200 shopping bags. Shopping trolley? Has limited use. Plus, we have garbage. Shopping bags are excellent garbage bags. But above all, they are excellent advertising media. Twenty years ago, a shopping bag cost 10 öre—it still does today! (1968(9), p. 65).

With the expanded use of bags in the stores, housewives and other customers who appear in the images were presented carrying shopping bags instead of baskets, and customer-provided container technology gradually disappeared from the scene. Shopping bags had become an essential element in retailing and shopping practices, and they enabled new forms of consumer mobility.

Insert Figure 3 here

## **Concluding discussion**

The transformation of consumer mobility in Sweden over a few decades beginning in the middle of the 20th century was the result of interrelated changes in retailing and shopping practices that were enabled by the introduction of novel devices for carrying

goods. The renegotiation of the shopping place, the practices associated with the self-service format, and the change in the participating assemblages highlight the interdependency between retailing and shopping practices in consumer mobility transformations. These transformations involved transitions in the store, in consumers' behavior, and in how items were transported, i.e., the modes of transport and container-type technologies. Retail stores were transformed with the addition of many new entities, whereas others disappeared. In many ways, self-service entailed a major change in retailing, e.g., in terms of store equipment, staff activities, and the act of shopping. However, this transformation was gradual, with small alterations over a long period. During these transformations, new consumer assemblages appeared. The pedestrian housewife with a basket frequently visiting the nearby store was gradually replaced by a new assemblage that introduced other family members, cars, and shopping bags. Although the introduction of self-service meant that many new types of objects appeared in the shops, e.g., shopping carts, shopping baskets, and gondolas, other objects vanished. What had once been common, almost obligatory objects in the shop, such as personal baskets, now became foreign objects to be kept outside. Simultaneously, these changes implied major changes in consumer logistics, i.e., how consumers moved items from stores to their homes.

These interrelated changes contributed to transforming consumer mobility in several ways. First, they transformed consumers' *in-store mobility* so that the consumer could inspect the (packaged) goods, and mobility was enhanced with devices such as shopping carts (Grandclément, 2010; Cochoy, 2009). These changes enabled the consumer to move greater distances in the store and subsequently, larger stores with larger assortments provided consumers with an increased range of products from which to choose. This transformation included a shift from retailer mobility in the store, collecting things from the shelves or from storage for the customer waiting at the counter, to a moving consumer inside the store bringing the goods to a waiting clerk at the checkout counter.

Second, these changes transformed consumers' *carrying capacities* by introducing novel means of transportation, which together with shopping bags enabled the changing capacities for carrying more goods, traveling longer distances, and thus visiting the store less frequently. Several changes took place outside of the store, with the gradual replacement of walking with the benefits of riding bicycles and to an increasing extent,

driving cars. It is tempting to assume that the frequency of car usage in the US sped up the implementation of self-service. However, the relationship was reversed in Sweden, and the implementation of Swedish self-service took not only pedestrians and bicyclists but also drivers into account. The important question of shopping-bag handles further underscores the consideration of pedestrian customers by retailers in Sweden at the time. With the introduction of bicycle racks outside of stores, parking places, help loading cars, and so forth, retailers contributed to customers' ability and propensity to use other means of transport. Simultaneously, changes among the retailers in reducing home delivery service sometimes left consumers with no choice but to carry their purchases themselves.

Third, the changes that transformed consumer mobility enabled them to devote themselves to more *impulse buying* behaviors. Because it was less necessary, and sometimes even undesirable, to bring containers into the store for carrying purchases home, visits to the store could be performed without advanced planning. Furthermore, this change enabled consumers to purchase more while in the store without needing to consider how much would fit in their private bags, because the store-provided containers could be adapted to the situation.

Fourth, these changes made it possible for consumers to travel longer distances and to visit stores other than those nearest to them, which facilitated consumer mobility in terms of the *propensity to switch* between different stores. With self-service, the personal relationship between the retailer clerk and the consumer became less apparent, and whereas once it had been almost inconceivable to purchase items from another store, doing so became easier. The increasing number of housewives finding employment in proximity to a store meant that stores were no longer always selected based on the home but could also be selected in relation to other places. With the introduction of bicycle racks, parking lots, advertising, etc., retailers increasingly sought to attract consumers from further away.

Fifth, and related to the previous point, transformed consumer mobility paradoxically enabled an increased mobility for retailers in terms of their reach. Retailer mobility inside the store, with the clerk moving from the counter around the store and storage area, and outside the store, in the form of home delivery by errand boys, gradually disappeared, and the actual movement of goods increasingly dependent on the actual movement of the



consumers themselves. However, due to the introduction of advertising media—and shopping bags in particular—the ability to reach consumers from further away was enhanced. Thus, the changes transformed consumer mobility by transforming them into *mobile advertising media*, with the movement of shopping bags to further distances enabling the retailers to have larger catchment areas.

Sixth, the gradual shift was not a one-sided process governed by retailers but included mutual adaptations between retailers and consumers. As our initial account in Figure 1 shows, the practice was the result of a negotiation between staff and customers about the container technologies used, and the routes taken were the result of that interactional practice. Similarly, customers were given responsibility for consumer mobility and consumer logistics because of these negotiations, as retailing deliveries were gradually phased out.

Overall, these changes contributed to a significant transformation in consumer mobility. As suggested previously (Stobart, 2010; Alexander *et al.*, 2009) and as our historical analysis further underscores, to address such transformations, it is important to pay attention not only to retailing and consumption but also to their interrelationship. This study has demonstrated how analyzing a retailer's magazine over a time period based on actor-network theory can contribute to explore these interrelationships and transformations, but from a particular perspective—which in this case, is the readership at the specific time and place when the magazine was published. The primary use of a single source for contemporary material may be subject to criticism (Fullerton, 2011), but it also means that events over time are approached through a particular lens with a specific point of view (Cochoy, 2013). Actor-network theory allows the researcher to follow gradual transformations in retailing and shopping practices associated with the simultaneous transformation of consumer mobility. The theoretical approach enables the historian to trace how self-service was realized. Here, the magazine was a mediator that afforded the ability to follow those traces/translations. Actor-network theory has the potential not only to highlight changing practices beyond the visions and ambitions expressed in minutes and board meetings but also to trace how these visions are integrated into the everyday life of the stores. We believe that actor-network theory provides a fruitful approach to further explore transformations in the interface of retailing and consumption. It is particularly well suited for exploring transformations of

mundane-but-complex phenomena such as consumer logistics, which could be fruitfully explored in other national and historical contexts by drawing further upon the approach demonstrated in this paper.

## Notes

1. What constituted a self-service or counter-service store within the timeframe therefore shifted and statistical accounts should be seen as part of the performative argumentation at that time. This said self-service stores emerged within ICA during the study period. At the end of this period (1969), self-service stores constituted a majority of the stores with 62% of the number of stores and 86% of the sales (1970(4), p. 24), compared with 18% of the stores and 33% of the sales in 1960 (1961(10), p. 51).
2. If there is any analytically viable logic of rationality, see Garfinkel's (1967) argument about judgmental dopes in comparison. For a critique of the dialectical logic in many studies, see Bruno Latour's work (2010; 1988; 1987), in which he presents sociologics as an alternative that studies how strength and weaknesses are created, instead of a binary right or wrong.
3. All transcripts have been translated by the authors. The dates in the findings sections refer to specific images and articles from the magazine *ICA-Tidningen* (year of publication(issue), p. page).
4. See Goffman (1963).
5. Educational trips to America were common during this period, not only in retail but also in practically every other field (see Lagerkvist, 2005). In retailing, and for the magazine in particular, this interest in American developments resulted in cooperation with the US retail magazine *Progressive Grocer* in 1948 (1948(2), p. 33). In 1949, editor Sven Lindblad went to the US for a six-month study tour, which included visits to *Progressive Grocer*, retailing associations, shopping centers, and individual stores across the country.
6. The shift to self-service resulted in a standardization process for the goods. For an elaboration, see Bowker and Star (1999). In relation to retailing and its consequences, in particular, see Hagberg and Normark (2013).

7. See, e.g., Grandclément (2010) and Cochoy (2009). The change in the division of labor resulted in another role in the negotiation between clerk and customer—this interaction was now limited to monitoring the possessional transition of goods and money (calculation, cf. Callon, 1998), whereas qualitative negotiations were displaced to the interaction between the groceries and customers at the shelves (Cochoy, 2008). Thus, it became more important for the products to speak for themselves, and product-consumer communication became increasingly mediated through packaging (Cochoy, 2007).
8. The description of the errand boy in the magazine is in many ways a projection of the ambitions (moral/educational) within the ICA company rather than a real recollection of the realities confronted by errand boys, as testimonies by errand boys show. Aspects of class, divisions of labor, and customer-servant interactions are much more complex, which highlights the limitations of the method used in this paper. However, the analysis here is not explicitly about class or gender issues, which would require other investigative methodologies.
9. Clarence Saunders, the Piggly Wiggly founder who first patented the “self-serving store” in 1917, removed all forms of delivery service from the stores and even banned telephones (Tolbert, 2009).

## References

- Alexander, A. (2010), “Past, present and future directions in the study of the history of retailing”, *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 356-62.
- Alexander, A., Nell, D., Bailey, A.R. and Shaw, G. (2009), “The co-creation of a retail innovation: shoppers and the early supermarket in Britain”, *Enterprise and Society*, Vol. 10 No. 3, pp. 529-58.
- Alexander, A., Phillips, S. and Shaw, G. (2008), “Retail innovation and shopping practices: consumers’ reactions to self-service retailing”, *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 40, pp. 2204-22.

- Alexander, N. (2010), "Retail history in the management context: prototype, prologue or prequel?", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 350-55.
- Appel, D. (1972), "The supermarket: early development of an institutional innovation", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 48 No. 1, pp. 39-53.
- Bailey, A. R., Shaw, G., Alexander, A., and Nell, D. (2010), "Consumer behaviour and the life course: shopper reactions to self-service grocery shops and supermarkets in England c. 1947-75", *Environment and Planning A*, Vol. 42 No. 6, pp. 1496-1512.
- Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (1992), "General introduction", in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (Eds.), *Shaping Technology, Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 1-14.
- Boothman, B.E.C. (2011), "Mammoth market: the transformation of food retailing in Canada, 1946-1965", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 3, pp. 279-301.
- Bowker, G.C. and Star, S.L. (1999), *Sorting Things Out: Classification and Its Consequences*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Bowlby, R. (2001), *Carried Away; the Invention of Modern Shopping*, Columbia University Press, New York, NY.
- Brembeck, H., Cochoy, F. and Moisander, J. (2015), "Moving consumption", *Consumption Markets & Culture*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 1-9.
- Callon, M. (1986a), "Some elements of a sociology of translation: Domestication of the scallops and the fishermen of St. Brieuc's bay", in Law, J. (Ed.), *Power, Action and Belief. A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK, pp. 196-229.
- Callon, M. (1986b), "The sociology of an actor-network: the case of the electric vehicle", in Callon, M., Law, J. and Rip, A. (Eds.), *Mapping the Dynamics of Science and Technology*, Macmillan, London, UK, pp. 19-34.

- Callon, M. (1998), *The Laws of the Markets*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK.
- Cochoy, F. (2007), "A sociology of market-things: on tending the garden of choices in mass retailing", in Callon, M., Millo, Y. and Muniesa, F. (Eds.), *Market Devices*, Blackwell Publishers, Oxford, UK, pp. 109-29.
- Cochoy, F. (2008), "Calculation, qualculation, calqulation: shopping cart arithmetic, equipped cognition and the clustered consumer", *Marketing Theory*, Vol. 8 No. 1, pp. 15-44.
- Cochoy, F. (2009), "Driving a shopping cart from STS to business, and the other way round: on the introduction of shopping carts in American grocery stores (1936-1959)", *Organization*, Vol. 16 No. 1, pp. 31-55.
- Cochoy, F. (2010a), "How To Build Displays That Sell", *Journal of Cultural Economy*, Vol. 3 No. 2, pp. 299-315.
- Cochoy, F. (2010b), "Reconnecting marketing to 'market-things': how grocery equipment drove modern consumption (Progressive Grocer, 1929-1959)", in Araujo, L., Finch, J. and Kjellberg, H. (Eds.), *Reconnecting Marketing to Markets*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, pp. 29-49.
- Cochoy, F. (2013), "La focalisation « médiale » : pour un regard post-constructiviste sur les outils de communication", *Études de Communication*, Vol. 40, pp. 77-92.
- Cochoy, F., Hagberg, J. and Canu, R. (2014), "The forgotten role of pedestrian transportation in urban life: Insights from a visual comparative archaeology (Gothenburg and Toulouse, 1875-2011)", *Urban Studies*, Published online before print, doi: 10.1177/0042098014544760.
- Degen, M., Rose, G. and Basdas, B. (2010), "Bodies and everyday practices in designed urban environments", *Science Studies*, Vol. 23 No. 2, pp. 60-76.
- Deutsch, T. (2010), "Exploring new insights into retail history", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 1, pp. 130-38.

- du Gay, P. (2004), "Self-service: retail, shopping and personhood", *Consumption, Markets and Culture*, Vol. 7 No. 2, pp. 149-63.
- Fullerton, R.A. (2011), "Historical methodology: the perspective of a professionally trained historian turned marketer", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 3 No. 4, pp. 436-48.
- Garfinkel, H. (1967), *Studies in Ethnomethodology*, Prentice-Hall, Inc., Englewood Cliffs, NJ.
- Gieryn, T.F. (2006), "City as truth-spot", *Social Studies of Science*, Vol. 36 No. 1, pp. 5-38.
- Goffman, E. (1963), *Behaviour in Public Places: Notes on the Social Organization of Gatherings*, Free Press, New York, NY.
- Goffman, E. (1971), *Relations in Public: Microstudies of the Public Order*, Basic Books, New York, NY.
- Goldman, A. (1975), "Stages in the development of the supermarket", *Journal of Retailing*, Vol. 51 No. 4, pp. 49-64.
- Goodwin, C. (1994), "Professional vision", *American Anthropologist*, Vol. 96 No. 3, pp. 606-33.
- Grandclément, C. (2010), "Wheeling one's groceries around the store: the invention of the shopping cart, 1936-1953", in Belasco, W. and Horowitz, R. (Eds.), *Food Chains : From Farmyard to Shopping Cart*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA, pp. 233-51.
- Granzin, K.L. and Bahn, K.D. (1989), "Consumer logistics: conceptualization, pertinent issues and a proposed program for research", *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*, Vol. 17 No. 1, pp. 91-101.
- Hagberg, J. (2010), "Exchanging agencies: the case of NetOnNet", in Araujo, L., Finch, J. and Kjellberg, H. (Eds.), *Reconnecting Marketing to Markets*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK, pp. 50-73.

- Hagberg, J. and Normark, D. (2013), "Fyrkantifieringen av handeln", *Kulturella perspektiv – Svensk etnologisk tidsskrift*, Vol. 22 No. 3-4, pp. 19-26.
- Hansson, N. (2015), "'Mobility-things' and consumption: conceptualizing differently mobile families on the move with recent purchases in urban space", *Consumption Markets & Culture*, Vol. 18 No. 1, pp. 72-91.
- Hård, M. (2001), "Construction, reconstruction, or deconstruction: how to write engineering history", in Glimell, H. and Juhlin, O. (Eds.), *The Social Production of Technology: On Everyday Life with Things*, BAS Publisher, Gothenburg, Sweden, pp. 207-26.
- Ingold, T. (2004), "Culture on the ground: the world perceived through the feet", *Journal of Material Culture*, Vol. 9 No. 3, pp. 315-40.
- Kjellberg, H. (2001), *Organising Distribution : Hakonbolaget and the Efforts to Rationalise Food Distribution, 1940-1960*, Economic Research Institute, Stockholm School of Economics, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Kjellberg, H. (2007), "The death of a salesman? Reconfiguring economic exchange in Swedish post-war food distribution", *The Sociological Review*, Vol. 55, pp. 65-91.
- Kjellberg, H. and Helgesson, C.-F. (2007), "The mode of exchange and shaping of markets: distributor influence in the Swedish post-war food industry", *Industrial Marketing Management*, Vol. 36 No. 7, pp. 861-78.
- Kylebäck, H. (2004), *Varuhandeln i Sverige under 1900-talet*, BAS, Göteborg, Sweden.
- Lagerkvist, A. (2005), *Amerikafantasier: kön, medier och visualitet i svenska reseskildringar från USA 1945-63*, Stockholms universitet, Stockholm, Sweden.
- Latour, B. (1986), "The powers of association", in Law, J. (Ed.), *Power, Action and Belief. A New Sociology of Knowledge?*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, UK, pp. 264-80.
- Latour, B. (1987), *Science in Action: How to Follow Scientists and Engineers Through Society*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

- Latour, B. (1988), *The Pasteurization of France*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Latour, B. (1992), "Where are the missing masses? The sociology of mundane artifacts", in Bijker, W.E. and Law, J. (Eds.), *Shaping Technology, Building Society: Studies in Sociotechnical Change*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 225-58.
- Latour, B. (1999), "Circulating reference: sampling the soil in the Amazon forest", in *Pandora's Hope: Essays on the Reality of Science Studies*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA, pp. 24-79.
- Latour, B. (2005), *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, UK.
- Latour, B. (2010), "An attempt at a 'Compositionist Manifesto'", *New Literary History*, Vol. 41 No. 3, pp. 471-90.
- Latour, B. and Hermant, E. (1998), *Paris ville invisible*, La Découverte, Paris, France.
- Laurier, E. (2004), "The spectacular showing: Houdini and the wonder of ethnomethodology", *Human Studies*, Vol. 27 No. 4, pp. 377-99.
- Longstreth, R. (1997), *City Center to Regional Mall: Architecture, the Automobile, and Retailing in Los Angeles, 1920-1950*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Longstreth, R. (1999), *The Drive-in, the Supermarket, and the Transformation of Commercial Space in Los Angeles*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.
- Longstreth, R. (2010), *The American Department Store Transformed*. Yale University Press, New Haven, CT.
- Michael, M. (2000), *Reconnecting Culture, Technology and Nature: From Society to Heterogeneity*, Routledge, London, UK.
- Nilsson, G.B. (1981), *Banker i Brytningstid, A O Wallenberg i Svensk Bankpolitik 1850-1856*, Institutet för Ekonomisk Historisk forskning vid Handelshögskolan, Stockholm, Sweden.



- Normark, D. (2006), "Enacting mobility: studies into the nature of road-related social interaction", PhD thesis, STS, Göteborg University, Gothenburg, Sweden.
- Normark, D. (2012), "Sutured and sundered: The order-productive cohort of carsons, mophonkers and other consumer-assemblages visiting a petrol station", in Hagberg, J., Holmberg, U., Sundström, M. and Walter, L. (Eds.). *Nordic Retail Research: Emerging Diversity*, BAS, Gothenburg, Sweden, pp. 269-85.
- Piette, A. (2008), "L'anthropologie existentielle: présence, coprésence et leurs détails", *Antrocom*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 131-38.
- Reardon, T., Timmer, P. and Berdeque, J. (2004), "The rapid rise of supermarkets in developing countries: induced organizational, institutional, and technological change in agrifood systems", *Electronic Journal of Agricultural and Development Economics*, Vol. 1 No. 2, pp. 168-83.
- Sandgren, F. (2009), "From 'peculiar stores' to 'a new way of thinking': discussions on self-service in Swedish trade journals, 1935-1955", *Business History*, Vol. 51 No. 5, pp. 734-53.
- Scarpellini, E. (2005), "Shopping American-style: the arrival of the supermarket in postwar Italy", *Enterprise and Society*, Vol. 5 No. 4, pp. 625-68.
- Shaw, G., Curth, L. and Alexander, A. (2004), "Selling self-service and the supermarket: the Americanisation of food retailing in Britain 1945-1960", *Business History*, Vol. 46 No. 4, pp. 568-80.
- Simmel, G. (1997), *Simmel on Culture: Selected Writings*, Frisby, D. and Featherstone, M. (Eds.), Sage Publications Ltd., London, UK.
- Spellman, S. (2009), *Cornering the Market: Independent Grocers and Innovation in American Small Business, 1860-1940*, Carnegie Mellon University, Pittsburgh, PA.
- Star, S.L. and Bowker, G.C. (2002), "How to infrastructure", in Lievrouw, L.A. and Livingstone, S. (Eds.), *Handbook of New Media*, Sage Publications Ltd., London, UK, pp. 151-62.

- Stobart, J. (2010), "A history of shopping: the missing link between retail and consumer revolutions", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 2 No. 3, pp. 342-49.
- Tolbert, L. (2009), "The aristocracy of the market basket: Self-service food shopping in the new South", in Belasco, W. and Horowitz, R. (Eds.), *Food Chains: From Farmyard to Shopping Cart*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Philadelphia, PA.
- Twede, D. (2012), "The birth of modern packaging: Cartons, cans and bottles", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 4 No. 2, pp. 245-72.
- Witkowski, T.H. (2009), "General book store in Chicago, 1938-1947: linking neighborhood to nation", *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing*, Vol. 1 No. 1, pp. 93-121.

1 Recently I called a grocery store on the outskirts of the city and ordered a few groceries  
2 that I intended to pick up later that day. It was not my regular store, where the following event  
3 probably wouldn't happen to me. But since I was passing that store anyway, it seemed reasonable  
4 for me to try ordering my Saturday bill there one time. I requested a cardboard box to place the groceries  
5 in, since I was going to take them on my bike. Among other things, I ordered 7 kg of sugar and a couple  
6 of other heavy goods. But when I arrived, everything was placed in a thin paper bag with paper handles.  
7 "I asked for a cardboard box to put the groceries in", I gently remarked to the clerk  
8 "Yes, I heard, but we are out of cardboard boxes and this is just as good anyway"  
9 "Well, only if the paper bag will hold. I have 5 kilometres to my home"  
10 "I guess we better spend an extra bag on you then"  
11 he responded, heavily emphasising the word *spend*  
12 and put another paper bag around the other.  
13 "Well, thanks, but I'm afraid that the handles will not hold,  
14 Wouldn't it be better with a wrapped paper package", I gathered courage to say.  
15 "I'll tell you madam, I have the same distance to my home and I have transported heavier goods than this  
16 in a paper bag without any bag ever breaking" was the young man's chilly response.  
17 "Alright, I'll give it a go then" I said feeling relieved over getting out of that store  
18 where the other customers, approximately ten, had started to glare at me.  
19 Two handles broke a couple of kilometres from the city – and the paper bag smashed into the road.  
20 My first thought was the sugar, and I barely dared to look down. But the bag was intact.  
21 Carrying the bag with both hands, I then had to walk the remainder of the way home.  
22 The next time I will phone my regular clerk,  
23 he will probably have a cardboard box or good old wrapping paper to give me.

Figure 1. Account of a breakdown in consumer logistics.



Figure 2. Transitioning between counter service and self-service and between private bags and shopping bags. Photo: ICA-Tidningen (1966(2):1), The ICA archive at the Centre for Business History.



Figure 3: Two images with housewives, one in 1941 and the other in 1964. In the 1940s, almost all images with housewives included a basket, but these gradually disappeared, and with the introduction of the logo on paper bags, the basket became a relic of the past. Photos: ICA Tidningen (1941(7):1) and (1964(1):62), The ICA archive at the Centre for Business History.