Negotiating change through reconfiguring everyday practices

The modernization of the deposit-refund system in Laval, Québec

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Abstract

The global transition toward a circular economy relies on transforming consumption patterns into sustainable habits. These efforts are increasingly enacted through changes in local systems that shape everyday practices. While the deposit-refund system (DRS) is promoted as an effective tool, particularly due to its financial incentive, it emphasizes an individual-centred approach to drive social change rather than accounting for the routines into which such a system is integrated. In line with this, previous research has mainly focused on effectiveness, consumer attitudes, values and participation drivers, overlooking the habits that organize daily life. Therefore, there is a need to understand how change reconfigures everyday practices during transitional periods.

This thesis addresses this gap by examining the case of the ongoing modernization of the deposit-refund system in Laval, Québec, where a deposit amount increase, new infrastructures and technologies and the expansion of eligible containers are being introduced in an established system due to stagnating return rates. This study aims to explore how changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval are negotiated and integrated into practices and how these changes are interpreted and made sense of by residents in their everyday lives.

Change is analyzed in this thesis using Social Practice Theory, focusing on materials, competences and meanings as the interconnected elements that constitute a practice, complemented by Symbolic Interactionism to examine how meanings and identities are constructed and negotiated during social interactions. Using a qualitative case study approach, data were collected through semi-structured interviews with 14 residents of Laval and supported by limited observations at return sites and in domestic settings.

The findings show that participation in the deposit-refund system is shaped by how materials, competences and meanings are reconfigured as practitioners engage with the system. This process highlights the interdependence of these components and how they are inseparable within the practice as they constitute one another. Notably, new return infrastructures and technologies altered the physical performance of the practice, redistributed time and effort, and modified spatial organization in homes as well as access to return sites. Competences were developed through learning by doing and knowledge sharing in interactions, and meanings around environmental responsibility and modernization were negotiated as participants engaged with the practice. Furthermore, residents developed their sense of self through social expectations. Although interviewees often framed their involvement as a matter of individual responsibility, the study demonstrates that participation depends on how new and existing practice elements are linked rather than on personal attitudes and behaviours alone.

Therefore, this study suggests understanding change and sustainability transitions as processes of reconfiguring practices. For policymakers and communication professionals, this highlights the importance of considering how materials, competences and meanings are jointly shaped in everyday life, rather than simply attempting to influence individual choices.

Keywords: deposit-refund system, social practice theory, symbolic interactionism, recycling, sustainable consumption, change, sustainability

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Abbreviations

Abbreviation	Description
ABC	Attitude, Behaviour, Choice
DRS	Deposit-Refund System
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
PET	Polyethylene Terephthalate

1. Introduction

Increasing levels of consumption have led to a substantial rise in the production of materials and the generation of associated waste. Beverage containers account for an important proportion of packaging waste (Ráti & Maró 2026), with an estimated two trillion beverage containers produced and purchased globally every year (World Economic Forum 2019). However, a significant share of these containers is not recovered for recycling. A global study reports a recycling rate of 42% for glass bottles, 47% for plastic (PET) bottles and 75% for aluminium cans (International Aluminium 2025). Plastic pollution, including beverage containers, has become widespread in marine environments (Baxter et al. 2022). Furthermore, the disposal of packaging in landfills and the production of new containers contribute to greenhouse gas emissions and climate change, highlighting the importance of recycling as a mitigation strategy (Eneh & Oluigbo 2012). These concerns are reflected in global targets, such as the United Nations' Sustainable Goal 12, which calls for responsible consumption and production (United Nations n.d.).

To achieve such goals, efforts geared toward improved sustainable consumption, circularity and recyclability have become prominent. In order to increase recovery and recycling of beverage containers, the deposit-refund system has emerged as an effective policy instrument, on account of its adaptability and financial incentive, supporting circular economy objectives (Zhou et al. 2020). A deposit-refund system (DRS), also known as a deposit return scheme, is defined as "a way of incentivizing the return of drink containers for recycling – by charging a deposit when a drink is purchased, and refunding it when the container is brought back for recycling" (TOMRA 2026).

Deposit-refund systems have been implemented worldwide, with extensive adoption in Europe, and in other jurisdictions, including parts of the United States, Australia and Canada (Reloop 2024). While these programs are framed as successful governance strategies in countries linked with high recovery rates, such as Germany and Norway (Vuk & Gáthy 2025), the existence of an economic incentive does not automatically guarantee behavioural change. It may even weaken the association between recycling and pro-environmental values, making the system feel imposed rather than motivating and thereby discouraging continued participation (Roca i Puigvert et al. 2020).

The reliance on incentives is consistent with Shove's (2010) critique of what she characterizes as the "ABC" framework (Attitude, Behaviour, Choice) in climate change policy, which assumes that providing the right knowledge and

compensation will lead individuals to change their behaviours and make more sustainable choices. In contrast, Shove argues for a shift away from this individualistic focus toward social theories of practice and transition, where social change is understood through the evolution of practices, thereby making practices the central subject of study. This challenges the ABC model by emphasizing that behaviour is shaped through routine practices, in which infrastructures, governments, social norms and institutions constitute and structure everyday life and what becomes normal and possible to do, instead of functioning as external drivers or barriers (Shove 2010). Looking at everyday practices is therefore beneficial because it allows for an understanding of the context and conditions under which a policy intervention, such as the deposit-refund system, is integrated into ordinary routines, rather than considering participation as the result of a cause-and-effect response to information or incentives.

Furthermore, a notable challenge is change resistance, which persists in society despite the awareness of sustainable practices to adopt. Harich (2010) argues that environmental efforts often emphasize "proper coupling" of incentives to problems instead of addressing the systemic resistance that reproduces unsustainable everyday practices. This suggests that sustainability transitions require more than motivating individuals and depend on how such changes align with the practical and established routines of everyday life.

By examining the ongoing transformation of the deposit-refund system in the province of Québec in Canada, this study seeks to understand how these changes are negotiated within everyday life and shifting social practices.

1.1 Background

The deposit-refund system for beverage containers was introduced in Québec back in 1984, with containers returned at retailers, such as grocery stores (TOMRA 2025). Four decades later, a reform process is ongoing to address stagnating recovery rates, which stood at 73% (Masson 2023). The Government of Québec frames this initiative as a modernization of the deposit-refund system, aiming to increase the recovery rate of containers to 90% by 2032 and contribute to climate action (Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs n.d.). In this thesis, "modernization" is treated as an emic term to reflect the language employed in official communication to describe the changes.

The Québec Beverage Container Recycling Association (QBCRA) was appointed by the government (RECYQ-QUÉBEC) as the Designated Management Body (DMB) for the implementation and administration of the modernized deposit-refund system under the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) framework,

representing beverage producers. The system is operated under the official brand Consignaction, which oversees the recovery and recycling of redeemable beverage containers (Consignaction 2023a).

The changes established as part of the modernization of the deposit-refund system include expanding the range of eligible containers that can be returned, increasing the deposit amount and introducing new dedicated return-sites called Consignaction and Consignaction+, where users can optionally receive refunds electronically via a mobile application (Consignaction 2023b).

Two out of three planned stages have been implemented since the modernization began (Consignaction 2023b; Ministère de l'Environnement, de la Lutte contre les changements climatiques, de la Faune et des Parcs n.d.):

- Phase 1 (November 1, 2023): deposit amount standardized and increased from 5 cents to 10 cents for all beverage containers, except certain already redeemable large glass bottles, which remain at 25 cents. Extension to all aluminium beverage containers from 100ml to 2L. Already redeemable aluminium, beer and soft drink containers remain part of the system.

- Phase 2 (March 1, 2025): Deposit-refund extended to all plastic ready-to-drink beverage containers from 100ml to 2L.

- Phase 3 (March 1, 2027): Deposit-refund to be extended to all glass and multi-layer carton ready-to-drink beverage containers from 100ml to 2L.

Following these changes, the deposit-refund system thereby transitioned from a purely return-to-retail model to a hybrid system, combining returns at retailers and consignment depots (Reloop 2024; Millette & Morawski 2025).

1.2 Research problem

Studies on deposit-refund systems have largely concentrated on economic modelling, operation mechanisms, system design and assessment of effectiveness (Zhou et al. 2020), with a recent review emphasizing the cost-benefit efficiency and market viability of these systems (Sidorczuk-Pietraszko et al. 2025). In addition, existing literature examines the role of the monetary incentive in the deposit-refund system (Du Rietz 2023; Radke et al. 2025) and explores system design (Calabrese et al. 2026) and consumer perceptions (Konstantoglou et al. 2023; Timofei et al. 2025) in contexts where DRS is not yet implemented. Recognizing the key role that citizens play in enacting circularity through the deposit-refund system, Oke et al. (2020) highlight the need for enhanced

knowledge of consumers' perceptions and emotions, as indicated in other research (Roca i Puigvert et al. 2020; Zhou et al. 2020).

Fundamentally, circularity entails a shift from a linear economy where resources are extracted, produced, consumed and disposed of toward a system that prioritizes the recirculation of materials to prevent waste (Lieder & Rashid 2016 see Rödl et al. 2022). While there are an extensive number of definitions for circular economy, it can be considered a 'floating signifier' where the concept is flexible and allows the co-construction of a shared vision among diverse actors (Rödl et al. 2022). In the context of the deposit-refund system, this principle is realized through a closed-loop journey, where the recovered beverage containers are transformed into new packaging (Consignaction 2023b).

Recent research has also focused on factors that enable or hinder participation in deposit-refund systems. For instance, Ile et al. (2025) find that burdens such as time, accessibility, transportation and problems at return sites can negatively impact trust in the system's advantages, which may in turn affect continued participation in recycling practices. In contrast, adaptability to evolving markets is crucial to improve customers' convenience and involvement, as demonstrated by strategies such as the introduction of a mobile app in Norway or the expansion of eligible containers implemented in Finland (Lakhan 2024). Furthermore, Picuno et al. (2025) claim that the effectiveness of deposit-refund systems for plastic bottles depends on the interconnection between three central components, namely the number of return points, the deposit value and the public's knowledge and engagement.

Drawing on consumption value theory, Kremel (2024) argues that young adults' participation behaviour in the deposit-refund system in Sweden hinges on values, and that convenience is a crucial factor in recycling habits. The study highlights the importance of individual behaviour in enabling circularity, and Kremel shows how values interact with one another to encourage or impede participation. The epistemic value, which refers to the "capacity to arouse curiosity, provide novelty and/or satisfy a desire for knowledge" (Sheth et al. 1991), was found to have no significant impact, likely due to the habitual nature of returning containers and the system being well established (Kremel 2024). While this study identifies individual factors that support or constrain behaviour, it overlooks how these habits are embedded in the social practice of returning beverage containers. Conversely, the value of a systemic perspective lies in its ability to capture the dynamic interrelatedness of the elements that constitute a practice, which linear models of cause and effect often treat as separate and independent factors.

Another significant dimension is the limited attention on how emotional responses, intentions and habits shape routinized practices in the deposit-refund system, despite their recognized influence on sustainable behaviours (Ráti & Maró 2026). In the context of the new DRS system in Hungary, Ráti and Maró (2026) demonstrate that, in addition to rational assessments, participation in pro-environmental practices is strongly rooted in emotional reactions and habits, which are key to sustained commitment within the circular economy. However, this approach also prioritizes individual willingness to act rather than examining participation in the deposit-refund system as a social practice.

Therefore, existing research on the deposit system has primarily focused on effectiveness, consumer attitudes, values and participation drivers, offering limited insights into the everyday practices of residents, particularly in transitional periods, where infrastructures, routines and meanings are simultaneously being reconfigured. This study addresses this gap by examining how such transformations are experienced and negotiated in everyday life.

Sustainability initiatives such as deposit-refund systems do not operate solely through technical design or financial incentives. Often introduced as a top-down policy intervention from the government (Mylan et al. 2016 see Du Rietz 2023), this echoes the pragmatic role of environmental communication described by Pezzullo and Cox (2018), which is primarily directed toward instrumental functions. This also reflects broader discussions in environmental communication on the limits of one-way communication campaigns in achieving social change (Brulle 2010).

These measures ultimately rely on how they are understood and enacted by citizens in their everyday lives. This highlights the importance of a systemic perspective for understanding change as part of social practices. Rather than relying on individual attitudes or responses as primary explanations, change is embedded in practices that people actively carry out and reproduce in daily routines.

The case of Québec provides a unique context to explore, as the deposit-refund system established over forty years ago is undergoing a modernization to increase return rates and support sustainability goals. Unlike many studies that focus on newly implemented systems, this case represents a mature system in transformation, offering an opportunity to examine how established practices are disrupted and renegotiated. Motivated by environmental reasons, the changes introduced to the deposit-refund system alter the conditions for sustainable consumption and position citizens as active contributors to climate action and closed-loop recycling.

Considering that deposit-refund systems are intended to structure recycling practices (Zhou et al. 2020), it is therefore relevant to examine how social practices are adjusted or emerge through system changes. These processes are also communicative, as individuals interpret, negotiate and make sense of policy interventions in their everyday lives.

This thesis contributes to the field of environmental communication by examining how sustainability initiatives are mediated through meaning-making processes that shape how systems are understood, experienced and enacted in practices. It aligns with the constitutive perspective of environmental communication proposed by Pezzullo and Cox (2018), which emphasizes how meanings, values, beliefs and relationships are formed through verbal and nonverbal exchanges.

This study explores how the recent changes to the deposit-refund system for beverage containers are incorporated into everyday practices and interpreted by participants in the city of Laval, Québec.

1.3 Aim and research questions

The purpose of this case study is to explore how changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval, Québec, are negotiated and integrated into practices and how these changes are interpreted and made sense of by residents in their everyday lives.

To address this aim, the study is guided by one central question and two associated subquestions.

Central research question:

1. How are everyday practices shaped by changes in local systems during a sustainability transition, and how are these changes negotiated, integrated and understood in everyday life?

Subquestions:

1. How are changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval negotiated and integrated into everyday practices?

2. How do practitioners in Laval interpret and make sense of the changes to the deposit-refund system in their everyday lives?

1.4 Outline of the thesis

This thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the study by presenting the background of the deposit-refund system in Québec, the research problem informed by existing literature, the aim of the thesis and the research questions. Chapter 2 provides the theoretical framework, drawing on Social Practice Theory and Symbolic Interactionism. Chapter 3 describes the research design, including data collection methods, data analysis and ethical considerations. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study. Chapter 5 discusses the results in connection with the theoretical framework, existing studies and research questions. Finally, Chapter 6 concludes the thesis by summarizing the main findings.

2. Theoretical framework

To address the research questions, this thesis draws on Social Practice Theory as the primary analytical framework, complemented by Symbolic Interactionism.

While the literature discussed in the previous section focuses primarily on individual attitudes or factors, Social Practice Theory allows for an understanding of the practice as a whole. This framework is used to analyze how the different elements of a practice, namely *materials*, *competences* and *meanings,* are reconfigured as citizens engage with the changes to the deposit-refund system (Shove et al. 2012). Symbolic Interactionism deepens the analysis by examining how citizens navigate the modernized system through interpretative processes, focusing on how they construct their identities and negotiate meanings.

The two theoretical perspectives used in this thesis are presented in the following sections.

2.1 Social Practice Theory

Social Practice Theory shifts the analytical focus from individuals' attitudes, behaviours and choices to the practice itself and the elements it comprises (Hargreaves 2011). Reckwitz (2002:249) defines a practice as a "routinized type of behaviour which consists of several elements, interconnected to one another: forms of bodily activities, forms of mental activities, 'things' and their use, a background knowledge in the form of understanding, know-how, states of emotion and motivational knowledge".

Drawing from Reckwitz, Shove et al. (2012) propose a framework where a practice is comprised of three interrelated components: *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*. The *materials* consist of "objects, infrastructures, tools, hardware and the body itself" (Shove et al. 2012:23) involved in the practice. *Competences* refer to the "skill, know-how and technique" (Shove et al. 2012:14) to perform the practice. This element encompasses "multiple forms of understanding and practical knowledgeability" (Shove et al. 2012:23), making a distinction between the necessary skills for an individual to perform and the social capacity to assess a performance. As Warde (2005) argues, this involves shared *competences* where the performance of a practice is anchored in collective understandings that make it recognizable and appropriate. *Meanings* denote "the social and symbolic significance of participation at any one moment" (Shove et al. 2012:23), which are understood as an inherent part of the practice rather than something external or guiding it.

According to Shove et al. (2012), people as practitioners combine *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* when performing a practice, and the three components mutually shape each other. The authors further highlight that this approach aims to be a middle ground between agency and structure, by understanding stability and transformation as the outcome of shifting connections between the practice elements. For instance, the theory of social practice has been applied in the context of sustainability in an urban area (Bäckman 2024) and pro-environmental change in the workplace (Hargreaves 2011).

Therefore, practices evolve when new and existing components become linked, and this framework enables an exploration of how the *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* associated with returning beverage containers are reconfigured in the citizens' everyday routines as they engage with the changes to the deposit-refund system in Québec.

2.2 Symbolic Interactionism

Symbolic interactionism offers a complementary approach that emphasizes identity development and intersubjective meaning-making through interactions with others. According to Carter and Fuller (2016), a key focus of this perspective is how individuals employ language and symbols in social interactions to understand and deal with their reality.

The core principles of symbolic interactionism were formulated by Blumer (1969 see Joas & Knöbl 2009), who argues that individuals act based on the meaning they attribute to things, that these meanings are shaped by social interactions and meanings are continuously processed, created or modified through interpretative processes.

A fundamental aspect of symbolic interactionism is the understanding of identity as socially constructed through interactions, where language plays a central role, both with others and via internalized dialogue (Inglis & Thorpe 2019). Drawing on Mead, Inglis and Thorpe (2019) explain that the self consists of two interconnected components that continuously develop during social interactions: the "I" refers to the distinctive and creative way individuals engage with and experience reality, while the "Me" represents the internalized social values, norms and expectations of others. Mead's idea of the "generalized other" is defined as "the complex of social attitudes, normative regulations and ways of seeing the world internalized by the individual" (Inglis & Thorpe 2019:82), which shapes the "Me" by incorporating the perspective of the social group. Together, these elements reflect the dynamic and reflexive nature of identity, where individuals

constantly interpret, respond to and negotiate socially defined expectations in interactions.

In the context of environmental behaviour, symbolic interactionism offers an analytical lens for understanding how practices such as recycling carry social, cultural and symbolic meanings. Markle (2014) highlights an individualization of responsibility and contribution in the face of environmental issues, where people employ different narratives or stories to justify, explain or think about their actions. In addition, Markle (2014) argues that the social and cultural context narrows the range of strategies that can be employed to implement change, often restricting environmental action at the individual level instead of encouraging collective engagement.

In this thesis, attention is directed toward how individuals interpret and articulate their reality. Meanings are shaped and negotiated through interactions, and people rely on language to reflect on, justify and make sense of their actions, experiences, sense of self and anticipated roles. Therefore, in the context of this thesis, the residents' oral accounts are relevant for understanding how they describe their practices, the meanings they attach to them and how they navigate their identity in relation to social expectations.

Applying the symbolic interactionism perspective to the deposit-refund system in Québec allows this study to explore how citizens construct their identities around returning beverage containers and interpret the changes being implemented. This lens also enables an investigation of how individuals explain their actions and perceive their role in contributing to sustainability, and how these interpretations shape their sense of self and guide their practices.

2.3 Integrating Social Practice Theory and Symbolic Interactionism

Social Practice Theory provides a framework to analyze practices and how they are configured through *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*. However, it places less emphasis on how meanings and identities are actively constructed and negotiated by individuals in social interactions. Symbolic Interactionism complements this by focusing on the interpretative processes through which people make sense of their experiences, navigate their identities and articulate their actions. From this perspective, language serves to illustrate the practice when citizens describe and make sense of the system outside of the performance of the returning beverage containers. Together, these perspectives enable an analysis that captures both the configuration of the practice and the communicative processes through which changes are understood, connected to the sense of self and enacted

in the context of the deposit-refund system in Québec.

As this study relies primarily on qualitative interview data, the participants' language-mediated accounts of their experiences are treated as a meaningful representation of the practice. Although some contend that it might be difficult for participants to express themselves regarding everyday routines, interviews provide a space for reflection on these practices (Hitchings 2012; Bäckman 2024). Therefore, it can be used as a suitable method to explore how residents understand and engage with the practice of the deposit-refund system.

Within this integrated framework, negotiating change is understood as an active and dynamic process of interpreting, adapting and responding to shifts in everyday life. In Symbolic Interactionism, this process is essential to the continuous negotiation of meaning and identity that occurs through social interactions. On the other hand, Social Practice Theory emphasizes how these negotiations unfold through the reconfigurations of *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*, particularly when established routines are confronted with new elements in the practice. Ultimately, negotiating change serves as the meeting point between the two theoretical frameworks, considering both the subjective interpretation of meaning and identity and the reorganization of practice elements.

3. Research design

Qualitative research is a suitable and relevant approach for this study as it focuses on understanding social phenomena through participants' perspectives. It is typically small-scale, and generalization of findings is not the primary objective (Robson & McCartan 2016).

This research is grounded in a constructivist philosophical worldview, which is often associated with the qualitative research approach. The aim is to explore individuals' subjective understandings within specific experiences and contexts, where meanings are shaped by social interactions, as well as historical and cultural norms (Creswell & Creswell 2018).

The case study is an appropriate qualitative design strategy as it allows for a comprehensive investigation of a particular process or activity (Creswell & Creswell 2018). The emphasis is on examining the phenomenon within its real-world setting, drawing on empirical evidence collected by the researcher (Yin 2009 see Robson & McCartan 2016). This study reflects what Bryman (2012) describes as an exemplifying case, in which the everyday habit of participating in the reformed deposit-refund system provides a context for exploring broader processes of change in practices during sustainability transitions (Yin 2009 see Bryman 2012). Accordingly, this research focuses on a specific city and the insights of a limited number of residents. Although these practical constraints and the restricted timeframe to conduct the research are acknowledged as limitations, this study contributes valuable findings that can be adapted to new local contexts. This localized perspective helps reveal the broader possibilities and conditions for making sustainability transitions.

3.1 Data collection

3.1.1 Semi-structured interviews

The qualitative data collection method used in this thesis is the semi-structured interview. Since the research questions focus on how changes to the deposit-refund system are negotiated, integrated and understood within everyday practices, interviews are suited to explore the participants' accounts of what they do, think and feel in relation to these changes (Robson & McCartan 2016).

Bryman (2012) describes semi-structured interviews as a valuable way to collect comprehensive and in-depth answers from participants, focusing on their understanding and framing of particular matters or events. The author further notes that this method provides flexibility, enabling the researcher to guide the

discussion while allowing participants to highlight what is important and meaningful to them.

Drawing from Robson & McCartan (2016), an interview guide (Appendix 1) was developed with a list of questions to provide a general sequence and ensure that all key topics were covered, while allowing adaptation and reordering based on the participants' answers. Although the questions were organized around *materials*, *meanings* or *competences*, these were not treated as discrete analytical categories but rather as interconnected elements of practice, with participants' responses potentially overlapping multiple components.

This study employed a purposive sampling strategy, in which the research site and participants were strategically selected to align with the aim of the thesis and the research questions (Bryman 2012). The city of Laval was chosen as the research setting as it provides a concrete context to explore the ongoing modernization of the deposit-refund system in Québec and how residents respond to these changes. The decision was also pragmatic in terms of accessibility and data collection logistics.

Participants were required to be adult residents of Laval, and the study primarily includes users of the deposit-refund system. The sample also comprises two participants who did not currently use the system but engaged in household recycling, and one participant who lives just outside the city but has used return sites in Laval.

I employed two strategies to recruit interviewees. First, I targeted social media platforms by posting an interview request in a Facebook group for Consignaction users and on the city of Laval subreddit on Reddit, which yielded three participants. Second, I used snowball sampling (Bryman 2012) by contacting people in my personal network in Laval, who then referred the interview request to other people they knew. The remaining 11 participants were recruited through these referrals.

The data collection took place during a month-long stay in Laval, where I conducted 12 interviews with a total of 14 participants. Two of the interviews included two participants each. Most interviews were held face-to-face, except for two that were conducted via Zoom. All interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent. Eleven interviews were conducted in French, which is the native language of both the researcher and the participants, and one interview was held in English. The interviews ranged in duration from 20 minutes to one hour, with an average length of 34 minutes.

3.1.2 Participant observations

In addition to interviews, I conducted limited observations as a complement to the data collection. This method provided a direct experience of the practice and functioning of the system, which is useful to better understand the residents' experiences and descriptions. Some interviewees showed me the space in their homes where they store their beverage containers. I also visited three Consignaction return points, one Consignaction+ return point on two separate occasions, and two grocery stores, taking descriptive notes. These visits are aligned with the role of "marginal participant", in which I was a passive but accepted presence in the setting (Robson & McCartan 2016). The observations mainly provided contextual insights and played a minor supportive role in the analysis.

3.2 Data analysis

I used a thematic coding approach to analyze the data, based on the steps suggested by Robson and McCartan (2016). First, I transcribed the interviews, starting with the AI transcription tool Vibe. Then, I carefully reviewed the transcripts while listening to the audio recording, making any necessary corrections and formatting adjustments to ensure accuracy. I also read the transcripts multiple times to become familiar with the data. All interviews were analyzed in their original language, and only the statements selected for citation in the Results section were translated by me from French to English.

Second, I generated initial codes directly in the transcript documents. The coding was guided by the theoretical framework of Social Practice Theory, focusing on *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* as interrelated elements of the practice (Shove et al. 2012), while remaining attentive to what Creswell and Creswell (2018:270) refer to as "surprising codes and codes of unusual or of conceptual interest". Relevant passages of the data were highlighted and assigned to one of the practice elements. In addition, attention was given to participants' narratives, language and interpretive accounts, informed by Symbolic Interactionism.

Third, I organized the coded data for each interview using Excel, where extracts were grouped according to *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*. Within this structure, I identified recurring patterns and emerging themes.

Fourth, I reorganized the data by grouping codes and related extracts into themes related to each element of the practice (*materials*, *competences* and *meanings*). This enabled comparison between the different interviews and the refinement of the themes. Then, I explored the relationships and interactions between the themes

within each respective element, as well as the interconnections between elements across the practice as a whole.

Finally, I interpreted the themes in relation to each other, to the theoretical framework and to existing literature, in order to understand how the changes to the deposit-refund system are embedded in everyday practices and how they are made sense of by the participants.

3.3 Ethics and reflexivity

Informed consent was obtained from all participants by using a consent form. The form clearly states that participation is voluntary and that participants may withdraw at any time. It also specifies that all collected data will be protected and that the participants' anonymity and confidentiality will be ensured (Robson & McCartan 2016).

Pseudonyms are used in this thesis to protect the participants' identities, and no socio-demographic details were collected. The AI transcription tool Vibe was used locally on my computer, ensuring that corresponding audio files were not stored on the cloud, thereby protecting the participants' privacy.

In terms of reflexivity, Creswell and Creswell (2018) advise being transparent and clear about our past experiences in relation to the research, participants and setting, and how they may influence our interpretations. As this study is situated in a context that is familiar to me, I acknowledge that my prior knowledge and personal experiences may have shaped both the research process and the interpretation of the findings. To address this, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018), I wrote reflective notes throughout the process to ensure adequate reflexivity about my experience and to assess how my perspectives may impact my interpretations. This ongoing reflection contributes to strengthening the credibility and rigour of the research.

In addition, my academic background in environmental communication may have shaped how participants perceived me, potentially framing their responses in relation to assumed expectations. To mitigate this, participants were reminded at the beginning of each interview that there were no right or wrong answers and they were encouraged to respond openly based on their own experiences and points of view (Robson & McCartan 2016).

4. Results

This section presents findings on the practice of engaging with the deposit-refund system in Laval, structured thematically according to the three elements of Social Practice Theory: *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* (Shove et al. 2012). This framework provides the analytical basis for organizing the results. However, due to the interconnected nature of the three components, the categorization is not discrete, and findings may relate to more than one element. Accordingly, overlaps between sections should be expected. The findings draw on qualitative interview data, with selected participant quotes used to illustrate key themes.

4.1 Materials

This section focuses on the material elements of the practice, referring to the physical objects, the practitioner's body, infrastructures and technologies that are used to engage with the deposit-refund system.

4.1.1 Return infrastructure and technology

Following the recent modernization, the deposit-refund system operates as a hybrid system, introducing new infrastructures that coexist with existing material arrangements. These different return options offer distinct material configurations that shape how the practice is performed.

Grocery stores remain a primary site for returning beverage containers and are equipped with Single-Unit Return machines that require users to manually insert containers one by one. A voucher is then issued, which can be redeemed in cash or deducted from the grocery bill. Interviewees 2, 3 and 8 indicated that the modernization had no impact on their use of grocery stores as a return point, as their consumption of redeemable containers was relatively low. However, Interviewees 4, 5, 9 and 10 described material constraints associated with these machines, including breakdowns, rejected containers and waiting times when they are full. While such disruptions did not occur frequently, they added time and effort to the return process, illustrating how material conditions structure participation by introducing friction into the performance of the practice.

In contrast, the Consignaction depots are designed solely for container return and offer different technological configurations. These sites were described by some participants as particularly suitable for returning larger quantities of containers. At the time of the study, Laval had four Consignaction return sites, offering both Single-Unit Return machines and Express Return, as well as one recently opened

Consignaction+ site that provides, in addition to the aforementioned services, a Bulk Return option for high-volume processing of unsorted containers.

The Express service allows citizens to drop off a bag of unsorted containers, which will be counted later by facility employees, and requires the Consignaction mobile application to issue the refund by electronic transfer. This configuration reduced manual handling and time requirement, as illustrated by Interviewee 11: "I don't have to insert my items one by one, and I don't have to wait in line to access the machine. Every time I go, I drop off my bag, and I'm in the centre for no more than a minute. For me, that's what makes all the difference". This illustrates how the Express arrangement restructures the return process, altering both bodily involvement and time spent performing the practice, thereby lowering the threshold for participation. Similarly, Interviewee 12, who alternated between Express Return and Single-Unit Return, commented that waiting times at the latter often influenced the decision to choose Express instead. In addition, the same participant identified Consignaction's opening hours as a temporal constraint, requiring returns to align with the facility's schedule. Interviewee 14 also reported limited machine availability for Single-Unit Return, leading to extended waiting time.

The Bulk Return service further modified the material arrangement of the practice by enabling users to deposit multiple containers simultaneously into the machine's large opening. Interviewee 1 emphasized the machine's ease of use and speed, while Interviewee 6 stated that "by opening up locations with Bulk Return, it goes really well, you empty your bag [of containers in the machine]. You don't waste any time". However, this technology is only available at a single location in Laval, limiting accessibility. As Interviewee 14 put it: "[I use] Single-Unit Return because it's what is available here close to my house…But I would like to empty my bag, and that it is done automatically". This points to a redistribution of time and effort, shifting manual handling from users to the machine. Talking about the issue of wait time caused by people using Single-Unit Return machines, Interviewee 14 also noted that it could be solved by the Bulk Return option: "If you empty your bag, the person doesn't have to do anything anymore, it's the machine that does the work. So you can't blame the person". Accordingly, this type of technology reconfigures the role of the participant in the practice, as delays are no longer attributed to the user's handling but to the machine's automated process.

Across both Single-Unit Return and Bulk Return configurations at Consignaction locations, users can choose between two refund alternatives. They can use the mobile application for electronic payment or scan their voucher to redeem the money directly at the on-site payment machine. These options reflect the

integration of physical and digital infrastructures within the system. A few participants indicated that they had concerns about fraud if they were to use the app. Interviewee 13 stated that: “I want my little paper that I go and I redeem my money. Versus going onto an app. I’m still wary of giving my personal information because then you would get a bank deposit”. This suggests a preference for an immediate and tangible form of reimbursement, highlighting how physical interfaces mediate trust and engagement with the practice.

Differences were also experienced by participants in terms of the material conditions of the return sites. Consignaction depots were often described as clean, modern and well-maintained environments that provide hand washing stations, whereas grocery store machines were associated with dirt, stickiness and limited maintenance. My observations corroborated these descriptions, and broken machines were encountered at grocery stores, which also displayed posters advertising the nearby Consignaction sites as an alternative return site. This indicates that the state of facilities and machines shapes how these infrastructures are experienced by users, potentially influencing the appeal of Consignaction depots and discouraging the use of grocery store machines.

However, not all participants were currently using the deposit-refund infrastructure. Interviewees 7 and 13 reported that they were not participating in the system at the time of the study due to their low consumption of redeemable beverage containers, although they had done so in the past. Both participants continued to engage with household recycling practices.

Overall, these results indicate that beverage container consumption shapes how participants engage with return infrastructures, as volumes align with different material configurations and associated effort levels. Lower volumes are typically accommodated at grocery stores, while higher volumes are associated with Consignaction return sites. Variations in technological features, material conditions and spatial availability further influence the time required and level of physical involvement needed to perform the practice, as well as the appeal of a specific type of infrastructure.

4.1.2 Domestic organization and spatial accessibility

Participation in the deposit-refund system is shaped by material organization in the home, including the equipment required to perform the practice and the spatial distribution of return infrastructures.

The home constitutes a key material site for the practice. For lower volumes, the participants reported storing empty beverage containers in plastic or reusable shopping bags in the kitchen, while higher volumes were stored in the yard,

basement or garage in large plastic bags. In some cases, interviewees commented that they purchased or repurposed a trash bin to collect containers, thereby adapting their domestic arrangements.

The majority of interviewees indicated that they waited until they had accumulated one or two full bags of containers at home before returning them, while Interviewee 1 waited until having approximately five bags. Some participants noted that storing containers requires significant space in the home, particularly due to large plastic beverage containers that are now redeemable. As Interviewee 11 put it: “It’s a pretty big bag; it takes up a lot of space. As soon as I close it, I return it to free up some space in my room”. This emphasizes the material constraints that the practice creates in the home, as space needs to be allocated to storing these containers, further embedding the practice within the domestic spatial arrangement.

The location of return sites also influenced accessibility, as participants tend to rely on nearby options, with grocery stores used where Consignaction depots are less available. Interviewee 14 highlighted the limited and uneven distribution when they said: “It seems like there aren’t many [Consignaction] locations in Laval…We would need at least one in every neighbourhood, in each part of Laval”. This points to the constraint of available infrastructures, which shapes the choices that citizens have, as there are currently five Consignaction return points in four neighbourhoods of Laval out of a total of fourteen neighbourhoods. Most interviewees also described car use as necessary to transport and reach the return sites. This indicates that access to a vehicle becomes an additional material requirement for participation, influencing who can comfortably and easily perform the practice.

Moreover, the visibility of infrastructures shaped awareness and discovery of new Consignaction return sites, which occurred incidentally as opposed to formal communication. As Interviewee 5 explained, “we had heard they were opening [Consignaction return sites], and then I happened to drive by [one]. Especially since it’s not a place I pass by often”. This experience was echoed by Interviewee 12, who noted that “it’s not really communicated. I saw it being built close to our house”. These accounts suggest that physical exposure to infrastructure contributes to informal knowledge acquisition, highlighting how *materials* and *competences* are interconnected as part of the practice.

4.2 Competences

This section examines the understandings, knowledge and skills that shape how participants navigate and incorporate the deposit-refund system into their practices.

4.2.1 Information and system understanding

Participants' accounts revealed variations in knowledge within the practice, as familiarity with the changes introduced to the deposit-refund system differed among the interviewees. Some considered themselves well-informed and described adequate communication regarding the modernization, while others reported a gap in awareness. This suggests that access to and engagement with information shape how competences are formed and mobilized within the practice, guiding how it is performed and adapted under changing conditions. For instance, Interviewee 10 emphasized that media exposure contributed to acquiring information about the deposit-refund:

> "Well, for us, we watch the news a lot, we stay informed, so we heard about it on TV, on the radio, social media and all that. But someone who doesn't watch the news, who doesn't stay informed, they won't know. They will learn from someone who talks to them about it".

This underscores that achieving uniform knowledge across the population is partly contingent on media consumption habits, which determine how information is accessed, assimilated and acted upon in practice. Similarly, Interviewee 8 pointed to the need for proactive engagement in seeking information:

> "I saw some articles at the beginning, when the law was passed…I'm someone who generally looks for information, who stays informed. But nothing has really come on my radar since. I have to go and find the information myself, and I need to have the interest to do so…It's messaging that would need to be constantly repeated…It's really for people who are used to the deposit-return that it [the communication] will make the biggest difference, rather than people like me who, despite good intentions, aren't aware of what's going on".

This suggests that communication about the system is not sufficiently sustained and relies on practitioners' initiative to acquire knowledge when information does not reach them directly. In turn, this highlights how *competences* are not automatically acquired but emerge through ongoing interaction with information as it circulates within the practice.

In contrast, Interviewee 9 framed others' lack of awareness as arising from attitudes rather than information gaps: "I feel like there is quite a bit of a 'don't care' attitude. You can't be that uninformed".

Therefore, this introduces a tension between how information is made available through communication channels and how it is taken up in practice, with limited awareness interpreted by Interviewee 9 as a reflection of personal interest or motivation, rather than an outcome of how knowledge circulates and is sustained

within the practice. Together, these accounts suggest that *competences* in relation to the deposit-refund system are shaped by both the accessibility of information and the ways in which people engage with it.

In addition, a number of participants reported that a key point of concern and uncertainty is determining which containers are eligible for return. The modernization introduced a wider range of redeemable beverage containers, and interviewees described assessing eligibility as confusing, unclear and sometimes difficult to navigate. While some participants recognized the grocery bill is a useful material tool, since it indicates which containers carry a deposit charge, the process of identifying eligible containers still requires ongoing interpretation by participants. Therefore, recognizing redeemable containers becomes a central competence that is developed through performing the practice rather than before it.

4.2.2 Learning strategies and knowledge sharing

To address gaps in skills or know-how, the findings show that *competences* are developed through engagement with the practice rather than acquired beforehand, indicating that participation itself is an act through which knowledge and skills are produced. Several participants described relying on a trial-and-error strategy or asking the employees on site for assistance when returning their containers. When a beverage container is not accepted in the machine, customers can put it in a bin that is provided next to the machines, then validate with the employee if the container is redeemable or not. If the container is eligible, it can get refunded, and if not, it can be recycled on site. The comments below illustrate this process:

> "I don't really question it. If I don't know, I put it [the container] in the bag anyway. At worst, they will tell us that it's not refundable, like drinkable yogurt". (Interviewee 1)

> "I bring them anyway [the containers], and there are little bins next to the machines, so when I get fed up, I put them in there…. The employee can tell me if it's refundable or not. Next time, I'll know". (Interviewee 12)

Therefore, uncertainty is not a barrier to developing knowledge but constitutes a key moment where learning occurs. Some participants also described consulting various media sources to gain the required knowledge and adjust their practice. As Interviewee 3 explained: "We adapt. If we don't understand something right away, we look it up."

This reveals that learning occurs through doing, as *competences* are developed in response to uncertainty encountered during the return process. *Competences* are therefore continuously produced and refined through performing the practice.

Beyond individual learning, a few participants also played an active role in circulating knowledge about the deposit-refund system in their social network, acting as intermediaries. Interviewee 11 described how they advocate for the system and encourage others to participate:

> "I do a bit of promotion for this new system that people don't really know about yet. It has gotten to the point that I get to work in the morning, and there are bottles on my desk. People give me their redeemable containers because they know I collect them…The habit has set in."

The same participant emphasized that trust played a role when telling others about the new return sites:

> "Usually, people who try it end up adopting it. The Consignaction return sites, I think people are a bit reluctant to change their habits. But when it comes from me, someone they know… it gives them the little push they need, and they end up using it." (Interviewee 11)

Similarly, Interviewee 12 explained that they actively try to educate their kids about the deposit-refund system, and act as a spokesperson with their friends:

> "I try to educate them so they, as adults, develop that habit too…I have friends who don't care at all. I try to teach them, to educate them. Put them in a bag, give it to me instead…I really try to have this discussion, but it's not always easy. I think there is a lot of education that needs to be done."

While personal relationships acted as a channel for sharing knowledge and information, everyday interactions with strangers at the return sites also created opportunities to exchange knowledge. Interviewee 11 described how customers waiting in line for Single-Unit Return at Consignaction sometimes ask them why Express Return is so quick, prompting an explanation of how this option works. As they put it: "I try to spread the good news when I go", highlighting how such encounters facilitate knowledge sharing, while also suggesting that many users default to familiar practices, such as the Single-Unit machine, due to limited awareness of alternative return options.

These accounts indicate that *competences* are not only individually held but are collectively maintained and co-constructed through social interactions, highlighting how knowledge circulates within the practice.

4.2.3 Integration into everyday routines

For most participants, returning beverage containers is combined with other practices, particularly grocery shopping or running other errands. For instance, Interviewee 3 explained that "when we go grocery shopping, if it's full [the bag

with redeemable containers], we bring it. Since we are already making the trip, it's like a two-for-one".

This illustrates how returning containers is incorporated into other routine activities rather than performed as a separate task, thereby reducing the effort required to participate and facilitating its regular performance. Therefore, this implies that the practice persists through its integration with other routines.

Furthermore, the overwhelming majority of participants described the return practice as a habitual or automatic behaviour, suggesting that it is deeply embedded in their daily routine and requires little conscious effort to enact. For example, Interviewee 2 stated that "It's natural. It's a habit. Like going to the grocery store", suggesting how the behaviour is routinized and normalized.

The automaticity of sorting redeemable containers is further reflected by Interviewee 8's observation that "it's automatic, to the point that I find it weird if I see someone putting it in the trash or recycling", highlighting the perception of the practice as expected behaviour.

Similarly, Interviewee 4 emphasized the longevity of the practice, commenting that "it's a habit, we have been doing it for a long time", which points to its durability over time.

These comments show that returning containers has become an automatic part of the participants' routine, yet the introduction of new procedures, infrastructures and eligible items requires ongoing learning and adaptation to the new reality, modifying how the practice is performed.

4.3 Meanings

This section explores the meanings associated with the deposit-refund system for the participants, including motivations, feelings, perceptions and social values related to the practice.

4.3.1 Motivations

A dominant meaning attached to the practice of returning beverage containers is an environmental responsibility, often framed in terms of consideration toward nature and future generations. A common perspective among the interviewees took the form of environmental stewardship, where efforts toward sustainability were seen as a moral obligation shared by individuals and society. Interviewee 7 reflected on the personal engagement required by citizens:

> "We have one planet to take care of, and I'm part of that. Recycling alone won't save the world; there are plenty of things to do, but it's one of them, and we need to take it seriously."

While acknowledging that recycling is only one part of broader environmental strategies, which include the deposit-refund system, this account attributes moral significance to sustained engagement. The notion that there is only "one planet" adds symbolic weight to everyday actions, positioning the practice as meaningful beyond immediate outcomes and alludes to a sense of urgency.

Furthermore, governmental involvement was seen as a central factor in enabling the citizens' commitment:

> "One day, I won't be here anymore, but I don't want to leave the planet in bad shape…I think Québec should step up as a leader…be a trailblazer, promote environmental values and be greener than others…and make the deposit-return system more accessible for citizens, instead of keeping them constrained by something that's still in its early stages." (Interviewee 12)

This suggests that motivations are not purely individual but embedded in expectations toward governing bodies, where environmental responsibility is thereby co-constructed by both citizens and institutions. Similarly, Interviewee 10 framed small-scale actions as part of coordinated social efforts to minimize the impact on future generations and nature:

> "I'm conscious of keeping my environment clean, for myself and out of respect for others…Every small daily action feels like a small step toward that; it's not huge, because it's part of the work for all of society…When you see the trash in rivers, you think of the fish. It's also for our future, our grandchildren, it's about keeping a healthier, more beautiful and cleaner planet."

This comment emphasizes a moral narrative that connects individual behaviour to collective responsibility for future outcomes. Moreover, it is worth noting that several participants identified the connection between beverage containers and water pollution as a significant source of concern.

The intergenerational aspect of the practice was also highlighted by some participants. For instance, Interviewee 13 said:

> "It's a really good thing for the environment, but also for us too, to take responsibility, and if your kids see you doing it, then you're just passing it through generation and generation. It becomes the norm."

While this highlights the value underlying the practice, where environmental challenges are seen as becoming the main driver of the practice for younger

generations, this also points to *competences* through the reproduction of the practice.

Turning now to the financial incentive aspect of the deposit-refund system, the majority of participants indicated that it mostly played a secondary role in encouraging participation. The deposit was often framed as a logical reason to return containers since the money is otherwise lost. As Interviewee 2 put it: “If you pay [the deposit] and don’t bring it back, you are throwing it in the garbage”. This reveals that the economic component functions as a practical justification for most interviewees, whereas the environmental aspect remains the dominant reason behind the practice.

In addition to environmental, moral and economic considerations, participants also described the emotional dimension of the practice, including feelings of satisfaction and reward associated with doing their part in contributing to recycling and circularity. Some interviewees also highlighted the role of family, where the returned money is gifted to children or grandchildren. Furthermore, technological features such as Bulk Return introduced a gamification component to returning containers, as explained by Interviewee 1: “With the kids, it’s fun to see how many cans go through. And we try to guess the number and see who was closest”. This illustrates that enjoyment and emotional response further contribute to sustaining the practice.

Moreover, *meanings* were shown to have shifted following the modernization of the deposit-refund system, particularly for participants who previously relied on household recycling instead of returning containers. The improved infrastructure associated with Consignaction return sites reduced perceived effort to perform the practice, making participation worthwhile and convenient. Additionally, Interviewee 5 alluded to a change in the environmental value of the practice: “The routine has not really changed; instead of putting them in the recycling, we put them in another bin…It’s better for the environment to bring them back”. This refers to the narrative that returning the containers through the deposit-refund system is more environmentally effective than conventional recycling. As such, these accounts suggest that *meanings* are not fixed but evolve in relation to changes in the *material* arrangements and associated *competences*, highlighting the interdependence between the different elements of the practice.

4.3.2 Social norms and stigma

The modernization of the deposit-refund system contributed to a shift in the perception and social meaning of the practice. Returning containers was often

associated with poverty, which could discourage participation. As Interviewee 4 explained, this connection has weakened over time:

> "I knew people who felt ashamed to bring them back to the grocery store, like a poor person getting 5 cents for a can…Now, I think it's rare that anyone would feel embarrassed to return their containers."

This transformation suggests a process of normalization of the return practice. However, the stigma around the deposit-refund system is still present, as reported by Interviewee 8:

> "I think the biggest difference [from the deposit increase] will be for people who were already using the system, especially homeless people or those who used it as a side income…I think most people see [the system] as a good thing. But some don't see the point in participating. Because it's too much trouble, or they turn up their nose at it. There are still connotations with poverty."

This highlights how lingering associations with poverty and homelessness, combined with the perceived effort required to participate, continue to act as barriers for some individuals. Thus, while the practice of returning containers is widely viewed as positive, it is not embraced by all residents.

At the same time, increased social acceptance of the practice has also expanded what some participants perceive as appropriate behaviour. Collecting eligible containers has extended beyond the home, with residents describing how they collected discarded containers in public spaces. As explained by Interviewee 1:

> "What has changed is that we probably do it more. For example, when I bring a can to work, before, I would leave it there or in the recycling bin. Now I take it home…When we see cans on the ground, in the park or wherever, we bring them home."

Therefore, this points to the development of new *competences* motivated by a transformation of the *meaning* around the practice, where participants don't feel any shame because of evolving social norms. As Interviewee 6 stated: "If I see [containers] on the ground, I pick them up and return them...Some people don't care". This reveals a distinction between what is seen as responsible and irresponsible behaviour, where the problem lies with the attitude of those who discard their containers.

Furthermore, participants described how social norms regulate the practice through expectations and judgment. For example, Interviewee 13 stated that: "It's taboo to put it in the garbage. If you saw someone doing it, you'd have a reaction yourself, wondering why they were putting it in the garbage". This indicates that returning containers is considered socially acceptable and non-participation is negatively perceived by others. In line with this, Interviewee 9 framed

participation as a matter of logic and respect for others, questioning why individuals would discard their empty containers in nature instead of bringing them back with them, since they had no issue carrying them when full.

The previous section shows a shift in social norms, with the practice of returning beverage containers increasingly viewed as normal and approved behaviour for the interviewees. Nonetheless, some stigma remains, and participants noted that there are still residents who do not engage with the practice, despite its *meaning* as a socially responsible and appropriate action that signals consideration for others.

4.3.3 Individual responsibility and modernization

A central *meaning* associated with the deposit-refund system among most participants is the notion of individual responsibility. Engagement with the practice was consistently framed as a matter of individual agency. As Interviewee 6 stated, "you can't force everybody to do it, so it's a personal choice", while Interviewee 5 added that "there would be stronger reactions if they made it mandatory. I don't know how it would be managed". These comments illustrate that the system is acknowledged as a voluntary practice that must be adopted by citizens rather than externally imposed, with engagement depending on the value and significance that people attribute to it. This also reveals that making participation mandatory is perceived as complex to implement and potentially problematic.

In addition, participants described the *meanings* they associate with the term modernization, which has been used to frame the changes to the deposit-refund system. For Interviewee 8, modernization was considered a sign that "we are moving forward". Several participants referred to the modernization in terms of innovation and optimization of the system, as the comments below illustrate:

> "It means novelty…It's not only in grocery stores anymore with Single Unit Return. You have electronic deposits too." (Interviewee 1)

> "For me, modernization is like an update. We are adjusting our practices to fit today's reality…The fact that we use technology, and the design of the centers is very sleek. It shows that it's a practice of the future that we are putting in place." (Interviewee 11)

> "I see modernization as a faster, more efficient system. Better adapted to today's needs." (Interviewee 14)

These excerpts indicate that the diversification of return infrastructure and the introduction of technology contribute not only to functional improvements but

also to positioning the system as forward-looking and aligned with contemporary social expectations.

However, Interviewee 13 pointed to potential opposition to change:

> "Modernization's fine. I could see some people having resistance toward it because it's a change again. We don't like change. Especially as we get older. But I'm okay with it still."

This highlights that acceptance of the modernization hinges on how individuals interpret change, particularly in relation to familiarity and routine. To address this, some participants emphasized the importance of having multiple return and refund options. As Interviewee 7 explained:

> "It's good to have a center, but keeping the system flexible is useful. A mix of both [grocery store and Consignaction]…The biggest problem is people's laziness. Many want to do the right thing, but if it's too complicated, they won't take the time and they won't bother."

This suggests that flexibility and convenience are central to how people make sense of the system and that value is attributed to how it can fit the needs of diverse citizens. Therefore, modernization is not only understood as technological advancements but also as how the system accommodates everyday practices.

4.3.4 System perceptions and broader waste management context

Concerns were expressed by several participants regarding what happens to the beverage containers once they are returned. As Interviewee 4 argued:

> "We don't really know how they manage it. It would be nice to know a bit more about what they do with everything we bring in. There isn't much information on that. What happens afterwards? Where does it go? We don't want it to end up in a landfill just because they don't know what to do with it. We wouldn't return anything otherwise."

This points to mistrust and doubt in the system, introducing uncertainty about the *meaning* and significance of performing the practice. Despite rumours circulating regarding the broader waste management system, the engagement is described by the interviewees as not compromised if these allegations are not confirmed.

A few participants also raised concerns regarding water consumption linked to the practice, since Consignaction recommended rinsing the beverage containers before returning them. Interviewee 9 expressed criticism toward what they perceived as a contradiction:

> "Something I find annoying is the hypocrisy…We're wasting thousands of gallons of water just to save a can that is worth a tenth of a cent. Something isn't working here."

Finally, a surprising finding was that the majority of interviewees discussed the upcoming changes to trash and recycling pickups in Laval, which are moving from weekly to biweekly. Some participants expressed worry, while others felt that the change would not affect them. In one case, Interviewee 8 attributed the sense of panic that they had seen on social media to problems of overconsumption for those individuals. This highlights that the deposit-refund system is not perceived in isolation but as part of the broader practice of waste management.

5. Discussion

This study set out to explore how changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval are negotiated and integrated into everyday practices and how practitioners make sense of these changes. In the Results section, the findings were presented according to the three elements that constitute a social practice: *materials, competences* and *meanings* (Shove et al. 2012). Building on this, the discussion examines how old and new components interact to reconfigure the practice of returning beverage containers in the context of the modernization of the deposit-refund system and how the changes are interpreted and given meaning by the participants in this study.

As mentioned in the Theoretical framework section, the interrelated elements of a practice co-constitute one another, with connections forming or dissolving as the practice transforms (Shove et al. 2012). In the case of the modernization of the deposit-refund system in Laval, this perspective allows us to see the relationship between the practice elements instead of understanding participation solely as the result of individual choices. Approaching the data through this lens reveals how the established practice of the deposit-refund system is not static but dynamically reshaped through the integration of novel elements and the creation of new links with existing components.

In terms of *materials*, the findings show that the introduction of Consignaction return sites incorporated new infrastructure and technology into existing grocery store returns, which altered the experience of returning beverage containers for residents. The new mobile app, return machines, and the wider range of eligible containers align with the adaptability strategies described by Lakhan (2024) to enhance practicality and engagement. While the epistemic value played a limited role in the static and balanced system in Sweden (Kremel 2024), the Québec case integrated novel material elements as part of the ongoing changes that reorganized participation. The epistemic value of the system emerged through the reconfiguration of the practice itself, as the novelty of Consignaction depots and their associated return options and technological features disrupted established routines and modified how residents engaged with returning beverage containers.

The introduction of these new material elements also changed the *competences* involved in the practice. Shove et al. (2012) argue that changes in material arrangements redistribute *competences* within practices by shifting know-how from users to technological and infrastructural components, thereby reconfiguring the relationship between *materials* and *competences*. This is exemplified in the Bulk and Express Return options, where user *competences* were transferred to

machines or facility employees, reducing the bodily and temporal demands of the practice.

However, as the results show, these new options were not necessarily integrated into the existing practices of residents with a lower volume of beverage containers, who continued to visit grocery stores for their returns despite the availability of alternatives. In addition, the expansion of eligible containers led to increased storage requirements within the home, prompting some residents to reorganize their domestic space and thereby anchoring the practice through these material shifts. The spatial accessibility of infrastructures also played a role in shaping the practice, as access to 'viable practice space' varies between residents and conditions the possibilities of participation (Shove et al. 2012). Therefore, available space in the home and nearby infrastructures jointly shaped residents' engagement with the system, determining how it is enacted and integrated into everyday routines. However, these processes are not uniform, as variations in access, trust and engagement lead to different ways of performing the practice.

The *competences* element highlights how skills and understandings are continuously updated and reproduced as the practice evolves. Shove et al. (2012) argue that media and other forms of communication shape the circulation of *meanings*, with reach, exposure and interpretation varying across contexts and audiences, and this insight can apply to *competences*. Knowledge about the changes to the deposit-refund system and eligible containers is not automatically acquired simply by being available in the media, and practitioners need to actively engage with such information as part of the practice. Furthermore, in line with Shove et al. (2012), the findings reveal that learning through doing, sharing and carrying the practice transformed both the practitioners and the practice itself. For instance, when participants engaged directly with the *materials* while returning their beverage containers, they drew on various strategies, such as trial-and-error when inserting containers in the machines, asking employees for information at the return sites, and exchanging knowledge during social interactions. Through these processes, *competences* were developed and adjusted while performing the practice, rather than being fully established beforehand.

The connection between practices is also highlighted in the Results section, as returning containers was often performed in conjunction with grocery shopping or running errands, and perceived as part of the broader practice of waste management. This reflects what Shove et al. (2012) describe as a bundle of practices, where activities are linked through shared spatial arrangements and temporal coordination. In this case, the co-location of return machines in grocery stores, together with the alignment of the deposit-return as part of broader shopping trips, facilitated the integration of the practice into everyday life. The

participants' description of taking part in the deposit-refund system as automatic points to the routinized nature of the practice, which should not be understood as the final stage of normalization but as "ongoing accomplishments in which similar elements are repeatedly linked together in similar ways" (Shove et al. 2012:24). The stability of the practice is therefore contingent on the continued connection of elements, showing how the practice remains dynamic.

Turning now to *meanings*, Shove et al. (2012) argue that this element should not be treated as external motivation for action but as a constitutive part of the practice. Furthermore, forms of association are dynamic, resulting in *meanings* extending and changing as the practice evolves. In the context of the modernization of the deposit-refund system, the findings indicate that a dominant *meaning* related to the deposit-refund system is environmental responsibility. Rather than functioning as an individual driver for returning beverage containers, the *meaning* emerged through participation in the practice, as the ongoing association between sustainability and the deposit-refund system contributed to making environmental responsibility visible, reinforced and embedded in how the practice was understood and carried out.

The findings also suggest that different *meanings* can merge, with sustainability becoming associated with modernization through the introduction of new technological features and infrastructural changes in the deposit-refund system. These results corroborate Bäckman (2024:114), who claims that "certain materials are ingrained in meanings of sustainability to the extent that they become symbols for sustainability in everyday life". From this perspective, *materials* contribute to shaping and maintaining particular understandings of what constitutes (un)sustainable practices. Building on this, the results indicate that *meanings* are formed and reinforced in practice through the ways *materials* are used and interpreted. This was evident not only in the implemented changes to the system but also in the beverage containers themselves, which together reproduce a vision of sustainability linked to modernization through *meanings* of innovation, optimization and novelty.

At the same time, some *meanings* have changed over time, particularly the association between poverty and returning beverage containers. This suggests a partial erosion of the stigma around the practice as it becomes more normalized. In turn, this can be understood in relation to the status of participants, as engagement with specific practices contributes to how individuals are positioned within broader social and cultural hierarchies (Shove et al. 2012). Participating in the deposit-refund system reproduces certain meanings and orders of what is perceived as expected and socially acceptable behaviour concerning environmental responsibility.

In addition, system perceptions point to doubt in the system, which is similar to the findings by Ile et al. (2025) where challenges experienced by users can impact trust and engagement in the practice. In Laval, interviewees expressed mistrust in the system despite embracing its goals, due to a perceived lack of transparency. This is also evident in connection with the mobile app, where concerns about data sharing and fraud were raised. This suggests that trust constitutes an important dimension of the *meanings* attached to the practice, shaping how participants engage with different system elements. The availability of multiple return and refund options can be understood as a way to accommodate different levels of trust, familiarity and comfort with technology, thereby incorporating flexibility in the system.

Through the lens of symbolic interactionism, the participants' accounts reveal how they construct meanings and identities in relation to the changes to the deposit-refund system. For instance, when an interviewee framed lack of awareness as a matter of a "don't care" attitude rather than a knowledge gap, this suggests that the participant is interpreting others' behaviour as grounded in internalized social norms and expectations of appropriate conduct, consistent with Mead's notion of the "generalized other" (Inglis & Thorpe 2019). In doing so, the interviewee presented themself as a competent user of the system, and from this perspective drew a distinction between themself and others, who are portrayed as failing to meet these expectations despite appropriate action being possible. Being uninformed is thereby positioned as incompatible with engagement in the practice of returning beverage containers. This is also reflected in how a participant distinguished between responsible and irresponsible behaviour, where discarding containers in public spaces is attributed to a lack of care.

The role of identity is also evident in the ways participants described knowledge sharing, where participation in the practice became meaningful for their sense of self. Some residents perceived themselves as competent participants and were recognized and treated as such by others, thereby enabling the exchange of information and contributing to the co-construction of meaning in interaction.

This dynamic is further demonstrated in how participants describe the shifting stigma associated with returning beverage containers. Feelings of embarrassment expressed in earlier experiences point to how individuals act in relation to anticipated perceptions of others, consistent with the symbolic interactionist understanding of the social self. The association of the practice with negative social judgment is weakened, suggesting a change in social expectations, where returning beverage containers is increasingly understood as normal and acceptable.

Furthermore, the participants' perception of the practice of returning beverage containers as an individual responsibility resonates with Markle's (2014) study on recycling narratives. The emphasis on personal choice also reflects the ABC framework, which links behaviour to individual attitudes and choices (Shove 2010). However, while interviewees characterized their engagement as a matter of individual responsibility, their practice was in fact shaped by the interconnection of the three practice elements, suggesting that the deposit-refund system cannot be understood solely through attitudes. In addition, this is reflected in participants' views on the role of the government in the deposit-refund system, indicating that environmental responsibility is jointly constructed between citizens and institutions.

Taken together, the findings of this study support the idea that transformations in local systems shape practices through the reconfiguration of the interconnected elements that constitute them, rather than through influencing individual behaviours. The Laval case exemplifies how systemic changes and everyday routines are interwoven in a dynamic interplay, where shifting relations between *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* alter the performance of the practice and its social interpretation. This highlights that such changes involve far more than providing information about the new system or introducing new technological infrastructures, reflecting the limitations of one-way communication strategies in driving social change, as indicated by Brulle (2010). Instead, these practices are embedded in existing domestic routines, social interactions, spatial arrangements and shared expectations that shape how new elements are integrated into everyday life. These findings, while situated within the broader topics of sustainable consumption and waste management, suggest that similar dynamics may be observed in other contexts where change in local systems restructures the performance of practices. Change depends on how new infrastructures, skills and meanings become connected with established practices.

More broadly, these findings underscore the value of a social practice perspective for understanding and informing sustainability-related change. Although participants in the study framed their engagement with the deposit-refund system in terms of individual responsibility, the analysis revealed that their actions are embedded in a wider configuration of practices. This points to a tension between viewing sustainability as a matter of personal choice and understanding it as a result of individuals participating in interconnected practices, where meanings emerge from the practice itself. Therefore, this challenges individual-centred approaches such as the ABC framework, which often focus on convincing people of the urgency to address climate change and reducing constraints that hinder the adoption of environmentally friendly behaviour in order to encourage more sustainable lifestyles (Shove et al. 2012). Rather than focusing on how to

persuade individuals to make better choices, a social practice perspective demands greater attention on understanding how sustainable action is shaped by the relationship between the elements of the practice.

The study suggests that sustainability interventions require a holistic understanding of practices as configurations involving the interplay of *materials*, *competences* and *meanings*. Adopting a practice-oriented approach shifts how change is conceptualized, positioning individuals as carriers of practices and drawing attention to how governments and other institutions structure the options and conditions under which practices are performed, as indicated by Shove et al. (2012). In this study, this is reflected, for instance, in how the availability of multiple return and refund options does not simply expand possibilities but reconfigures the conditions for participation. While these configurations can accommodate different routines, levels of trust and degrees of engagement, their effects depend on how they align with existing practices and how they are interpreted by participants, including how they position themselves and others in relation to the practice. From a symbolic interactionism perspective, this is a social process in which practitioners develop their identity within the practice and negotiate change by evaluating their actions against shared expectations.

For communicators and policymakers designing system changes, this implies looking beyond top-down interventions and considering all the elements that constitute social practices in everyday life. This also entails a shift from an instrumental to a constitutive perspective of environmental communication (Pezzullo & Cox 2018). Additionally, as argued by Brulle (2010), actively engaging citizens in dialogue and decision-making processes regarding such transformations could be beneficial to further enact social change. Ultimately, sustainability transitions can be understood as ongoing processes of practice reconfiguration rather than the result of influencing individual willpower.

Future research could look into the relationships between the practice elements when investigating change in local systems during sustainability transitions. Moreover, further exploration is needed regarding innovation and technologies, and the role they play in changing practices over time. While the modernization of the deposit-refund system is still ongoing, participants experience a tension between maintaining established grocery store returns or reconfiguring their routines around new return sites and technologies, for instance. Further studies could examine the relationship between the conservation of current practices and curiosity toward novelty and innovation.

6. Conclusion

The study examined how the changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval were negotiated and integrated into everyday practices and how practitioners interpreted and engaged with this transformation. Moreover, it aimed to contribute to a broader understanding of how practices are shaped in contexts of local system change.

When analyzing the modernization of the deposit-refund system through the lens of Social Practice Theory and the ongoing interaction between *materials, competences* and *meanings*, it reveals how the system's integration into everyday practices emerges from the reconfiguration of these elements. Within this process, engaging with the various material components is inseparable from how practitioners develop knowledge and skills through the performance of the practice and the meanings they associate with the system. In line with Symbolic Interactionism, the findings show how participants also construct their sense of self based on shared social expectations. Therefore, this is a dynamic and socially embedded process, shaped by both the interplay of practice components and the identity negotiated in interactions. Participation is thus not primarily driven by individual attitudes or incentives but rather by how new and existing elements come together in practices.

The study emphasizes the interdependence of the practice elements in shaping participation in the deposit-refund system. Importantly, these components do not operate in a linear sequence but simultaneously influence and constitute one another within the practice. The changes to the deposit-refund system in Laval jointly reconfigured the *materials* involved in the practice, the development and adjustment of *competences* and the negotiation of *meanings*. This entanglement is evident, for instance, in how new return infrastructures, technologies and the wider range of eligible beverage containers; learning by doing strategies and knowledge sharing; as well as a sense of normalization of environmental responsibility, are bound together in the practice. In this way, *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* are not understood as a chain of causes and effects but as continuously co-constructed and reproduced in practices.

Beyond the empirical case, the study highlights how change and sustainability transitions are better understood through the reconfiguration of everyday practices rather than through influencing individual attitudes and behaviours. This challenges individual-centred approaches to encourage sustainable action in favour of a social practice perspective that accounts for how practitioners negotiate change and manage their sense of self in social interactions. Such a

complementary perspective offers a holistic understanding of change where the interplay between *materials*, *competences* and *meanings* is actively interpreted through shared social expectations and internalized norms. For policy design and communication, this suggests the importance of considering how the three elements are jointly shaped in everyday life when supporting and promoting sustainable practices.

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Popular science summary

Addressing climate change is often seen as a matter of influencing individuals to care more about environmental problems and make better choices in their daily lives. However, this thesis suggests that understanding change is about how new or updated systems around us reorganize multiple aspects of everyday routines. The deposit-refund system, where customers pay a small fee when buying beverage containers and receive the money back when they return the empty containers, is a useful case to investigate. While the habit encourages sustainable consumption, improves recycling and reduces waste, change depends on how the system fits into people's daily lives.

To explore how changes to local systems reshape everyday practices, this thesis looks at the deposit-refund system in the province of Québec in Canada. First introduced in 1984, the system is currently being modernized to achieve higher recycling rates. The changes include increasing the deposit amount and the number of eligible beverage containers, as well as introducing new return sites and technologies, such as a mobile app for refunds and more efficient machines. This research focuses on participation in the deposit-refund system as a social practice, which is defined as a routine behaviour that is shaped by a combination of different elements: materials, competences and meanings.

The findings show that the materials involved in the practice, such as the return machines, space in the home and accessibility of return locations, shape the practical requirements of the routine and define the time and effort needed to participate. Competences and skills are developed through experience, for instance, by learning how to use the system while returning beverage containers or by sharing knowledge with others. The meanings associated with the deposit-refund system, for example, the feeling of doing the right thing for the environment and future generations, are created and reproduced during social interactions. People's identities are also linked to these routines, and how they see themselves and others is guided by shared expectations in society about how citizens should behave.

This thesis demonstrates that the different parts of a practice, the materials, competences and meanings, are interconnected and shape each other. This means that change does not happen simply by providing a financial incentive or information about a new system. For policymakers and communicators, this research highlights that understanding change and supporting sustainability initiatives implies looking at how the transformation integrates into everyday habits.

To conduct this research, I interviewed 14 residents in the city of Laval, Québec, and made some observations in the participants' homes and at return sites. My analysis is grounded in two theoretical frameworks, Social Practice Theory and Symbolic Interactionism, which together provide a useful perspective to understand change during sustainability transition.

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AI Disclaimer

Grammarly was solely used for proofreading, including grammar, spelling and clarity. Proposed changes were reviewed before being applied.

Vibe was used to assist with the transcription of interviews. The transcription tool operates locally on my computer, and all outputs were carefully reviewed and corrected in the transcripts, which also applies to relevant quotes included in the thesis.

Appendix 1

Interview Guide

Follow-up questions and prompts in italics.

Introducing myself and the thesis project.	Introduction
1. At any time, you can interrupt the interview, choose not to answer a question by saying you want to pass or ask for clarification. 2. Some questions might sound silly, unusual or difficult to answer. There are no right or wrong answers. What I am interested in is your personal experiences and your thoughts. Please try to answer as best you can. 3. The interview will be recorded, with your permission, to help with transcription. 4. The information you will provide will only be used in my thesis, which will be published online after its defence. 5. Your name will never be used and will be replaced by a code.	Participant information
• Do you agree to participate in this interview? • Do you give permission to record the interview? • Before we begin, do you have any questions for me?	Consent
• To start, could you tell me about a typical day in your household, for example a weekday. What do you do? What usually happens? • What is important to you about your home and the way your household works? • How are everyday tasks usually organized in your home? o *Cleaning, recycling, grocery*	Warm up

I would like to discuss your daily habits in your home regarding the deposit-refund.
• Tell me about how you organise redeemable containers in your home. Bring me with you through what usually happens throughout the day, step by step.
  o *Starting from product consumption, rinsing, storing*
  o *Where do you store the containers in your home?*
  o *Which objects/products do you need to store the redeemable containers in your home?* (*Plastic bags, bin, space, etc.)*
  o *Who participates in the recovery of the beverage containers in your home?*
	Materials

I would like to discuss your habits for returning the redeemable containers.	Materials/ Competences

• Who is responsible for returning the redeemable containers?
• Which return sites do you usually go to?
  o *Consignaction return site or retailers (grocery store)*
  o *Where are they located in relation to your home?*
  o *Are there any reasons why you pick X over Y?*
  o *How do you feel about having different return site options to return your containers?*
**If they return to Consignaction return site **
  o *Do you use single unit return machines, express return or bulk return?*
  o *Do you take the cash refund coupon or do you use the app?*
  o *Are there any reasons why you pick X over Y?*
• How often do you return your redeemable containers?
• How would you describe your experiences when you return the containers?
• How would you describe your interactions with people when you return your containers?
  o *With employees or other customers?*
• Which mode of transport do you use to get there?
  o *Would it be possible for you to use an alternative mode of transport?*	

• What works well or better for you since the changes were implemented in the deposit-refund system?
• Could you describe what has been a bit more difficult or less adapted to your daily life in your experiences?
  o *Obstacles: long queues, space in the house, broken machines, etc.*
• Have your habits changed since the modernisation of the deposit-refund system? If so, how?
  o *Space in the home*
  o *Volume/amount of containers*
  o *Return site: If changed, why?*
  o *Frequency*
  o *Time/effort*
  o *Accessibility: transport, distance from home*
  o *Do you notice a difference in your consumption related to beverage containers?*
	Materials

• Do you feel like you have access to the information required to take part in the deposit-refund system?
  o *Do you feel like you are missing anything in terms of information or knowledge?*
  o *List of eligible containers on Consignaction website*
  o *Not mandatory anymore to indicate Refund X cents on containers since November 2023*
	Competences

○ *New return centers announcement* • How do you keep yourself informed about changes to the deposit-system? • How long have you used the deposit-refund system? ○ *How did you learn how to do it? (family, friends, school, etc.)* • In your daily life, do you use apps on your phone? • What do you think about the introduction of new technologies in the deposit-refund system, with app and new types of machines? ○ *How does it make you feel?* ○ *What do you think about introducing the app as a refund option?* ○ *If not using the app, interested in giving it a try eventually?*	
• Now that some of the planned changes have been implemented, what do you think about the deposit-refund system now? ○ *How does it compare to before?* ○ *What do you think about:* ▪ *The new Consignaction return sites?* ▪ *The extension to wider range of containers?* ▪ *The deposit amount increasing to 10 cents?* ▪ *How does it fit in your routine?* • How would you describe handling redeemable containers/deposit-refund in your daily life? ○ *Is it something that you need to think about, or is automatic/habit?* • What motivates you to take part in the deposit-refund system and return your redeemable containers? ○ *Are there reasons that you feel are more important than others? Why?* ▪ *If environment is mentioned: how do they define it and what it means to them* ▪ *Social pressure/norms: Do you think somebody would tell you something if you don't participate? Would you feel judged?* • What makes you unmotivated to return your beverage containers? • How do you feel when you return your beverage containers? ○ *Has this feeling changed since the recent changes?* • What does the deposit-return mean to you personally? ○ *If you had to make a TV ad, for the deposit-refund system, what would we see?*	Competences/ Meanings

▪ *Are there specific objects or images that you associate the deposit-refund system with or that represent it?* ▪ *What would be important to show?* • Have you discussed the changes to the deposit system with people around you? (friends, family, neighbors, colleagues) o *Are there particular experiences or opinions that are talked about often?* o *Do you notice diverging points of views?* o *Do people you know take part in the deposit-refund system?* o *Do people you interact with influence the way you take part in the deposit-refund system?* • How do you think the deposit-refund system is perceived in society nowadays? • Has the role of the deposit-refund system in society changed? If so, how? • Do you think that there are certain expectations in society about how to handle recycling and deposit-refund? • How do you view the role of citizens in the deposit-refund system? o *Individual responsibility/personal choice?* o *How does it make you feel?* • How do you view the government or municipality's role in the deposit-refund system? • What is your understanding of how the system works when you return the containers? • What do you think will be the long-term effects of the changes implemented to the deposit-refund system in society? • Do you think certain aspects need to be changed or modified in the deposit-refund system? If so, what?	
• How did you learn that changes would be implemented in the deposit-refund system in Quebec? o *TV, posters, social media, newspaper, from people you know* • What changes did you notice or were you aware of when it started? • What do you know about the reasons why the government decided to implement changes in the deposit-refund system? • In their end of year press release for 2025, Consignaction indicated that 580 millions containers have been returned to return location since the modernization began. What are your first thoughts when hearing about this? • What did you think of the idea of introducing changes to the deposit-system when you heard about it?	Competences

○ *Were the changes clear or confusing?* • Did your understanding of the changes evolve with time?	
• The changes are described as a "modernisation of the deposit-refund system". What does the word "modernisation" mean to you? • Does "modernisation" match your experience of the changes that were introduced?	Meanings
• Could you show me in your home where you perform the daily actions for the recovery of redeemable containers?	Observation
• Is there anything else that we haven't talked about that you would like to bring up or discuss? • Do you have any other questions for me? • Would you be interested in receiving the link to my thesis once it is available online? Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions and participate in my project, it is very much appreciated.	Conclusion

Source: Author, with categories informed by Shove et al. (2012)

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