



Socio-technical transitions and users

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Post-war mobility in USA: impact vs. transitions studies



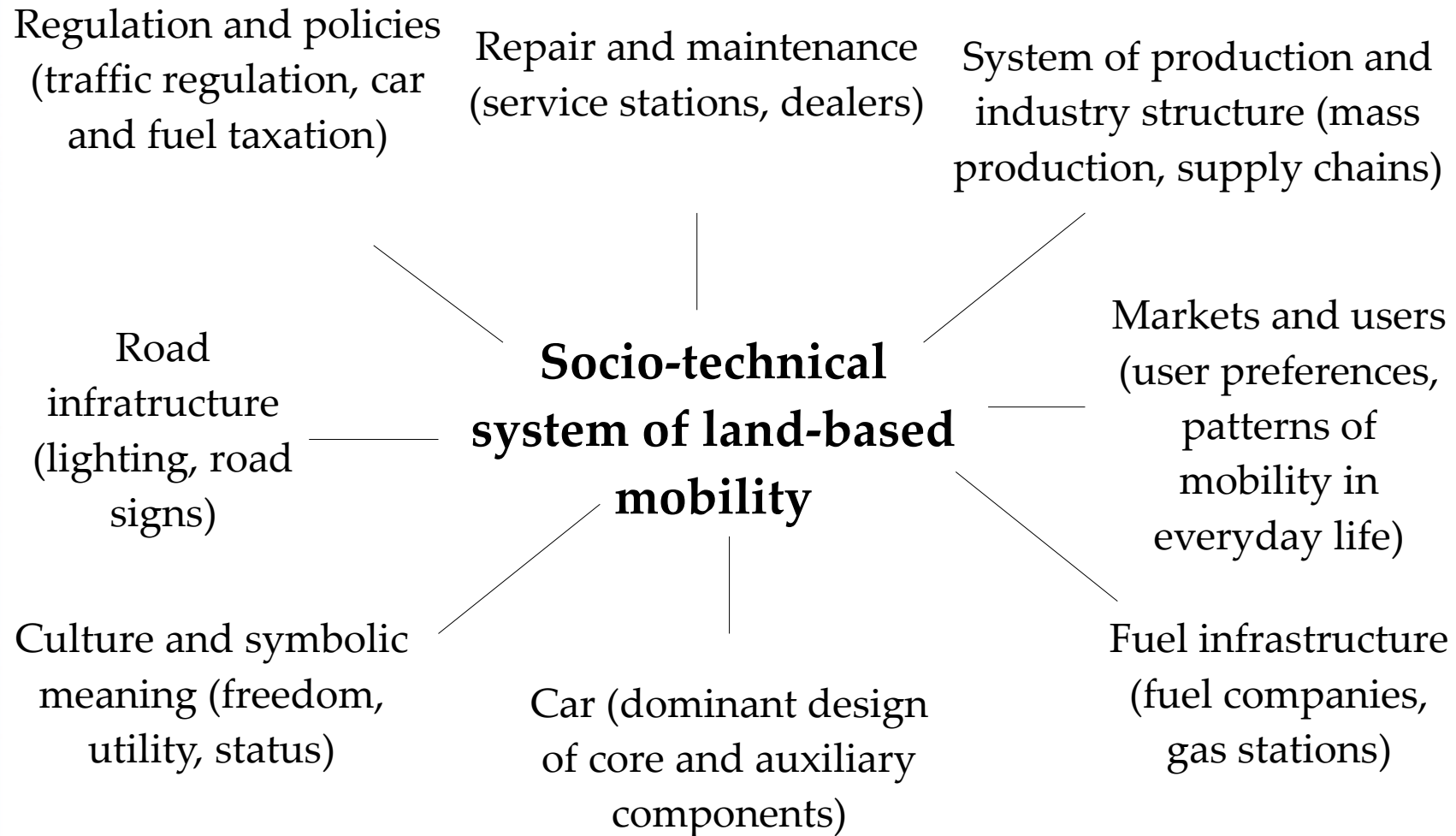
- **Impact studies:** what is the best choice of transport for urban/rural areas, short/long distance?
- **Transitions studies:** how did the context, in which car is *the most* rational choice for urban/rural, short/long distance transport, emerge?

Santa Monica highway, Los Angeles, 1965

Source: The National Museum of American History

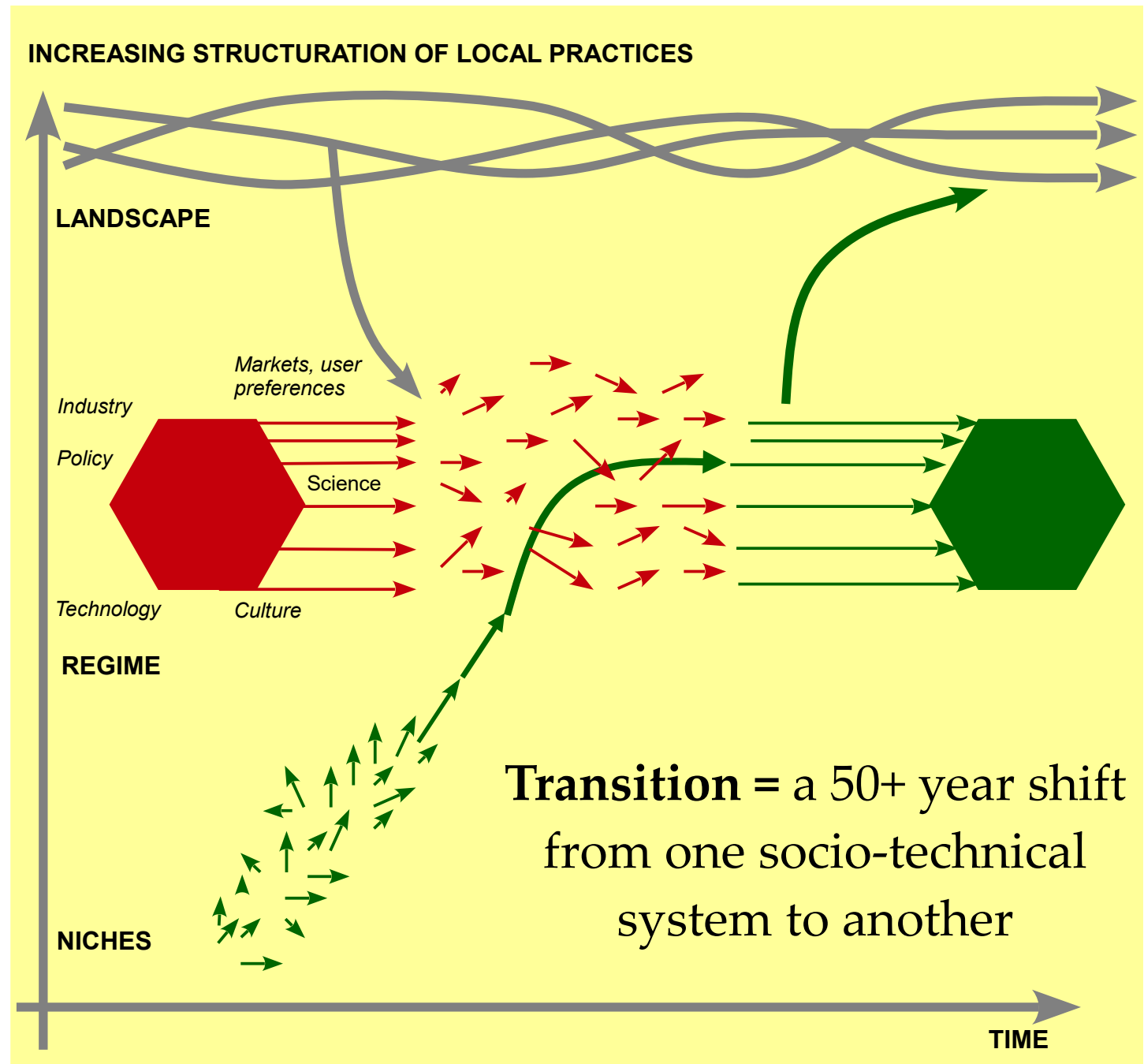
What needed to be in place first?

A socio-technical view



Source: Geels (2005)

Transition as a multi-level process



Source:
Geels &
Schot (2007)

A typology of user roles in transitions

- **User-producers** invent, experiment and tinker with radical technologies, creating new technical and organizational solutions, articulating new user preferences and enabling new routines to emerge
- **User-legitimizers** shape the values and worldview of niche actors, providing meaning, purpose and rationale for their activities by narratives and visions
- **User-intermediaries** create spaces for the appropriation, shaping and alignment of the various elements of emerging socio-technical systems
- **User-citizens** engage in regime-shift politics, lobbying for a particular niche and against the regime or other niches
- **User-consumers** not only buy products but also embed them in their daily practices, thereby defining their lifestyles

Source: Schot, Kanger & Verbong (2016)

Users and transition dynamics

- How much difference can users actually make in shaping the outcomes of transitions? A lot!
 - **Automobile transition, USA (1890s-1960s):** speed governors planned in Cincinnati (1923) -> organization of car manufacturers, dealers and car clubs -> car-based mobility system completely dominant in the postwar era
 - **Internet transition, USA (1960s-present):** user-producers encode counter-culture values to the basic design of the internet -> first generation of users socialized with these values -> major current problems for business and policy-makers to „tame“ the internet

