

## 1. Projects



# Vélib', 10 years later: an assessment

Finished research

Begin: June 2018

End: June 2018

Ten years after its launch, Vélib', the public bicycle sharing service in the Paris region, arrived at a major turning point. In January 2018, the operator JC Decaux was replaced by Smoove, a Montpellier start-up. The Mobile Lives Forum set out to make a first assessment of the Velib': ten years later, how has the Velib' changed mobility and the lifestyles of people living in the Paris region? Is the Vélib' a sustainable and effective mobility program?

Research participants

- Student workshop of the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris – 1st year Master –
- Student workshop of the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris – 2nd year Master –
- Manon Eskenazi
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- Marcus Zepf

## I. The research

Vélib', a bicycle sharing service in the Paris region, attracted the interest of the Mobile Lives Forum as a public program that embodies the renewed interest in cycling starting in the 1990s following several decades of decline. Launched in Paris on July 15, 2007, and then in surrounding areas starting in 2009, the Vélib' was created to support the transition towards more sustainable forms of mobility.

To test this hypothesis, the Mobile Lives Forum commissioned research from two student groups at the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris as a part of professional workshops.

The research first aimed to evaluate the impact of the Vélib' as a sustainable public mobility program.

How was the Vélib' designed to be a sustainable mobility program, and has it delivered on this goal?

The Paris city government presented the Vélib' as a sustainable mobility program, announcing the return of the bicycle to Paris at the expense of cars. Existing literature on public bicycle sharing services questions its true environmental impact. On a national scale, bike share users are often accustomed to walking and public transportation, yet rarely do they stop using their cars. If these findings were also found to be true for the Vélib',

they would call into question its effectiveness as a sustainable mobility program. However, can the Vélib' contribute to other objectives such as urban marketing, for example?

The study was conducted by first-year students of the Master in Urban Planning. Through a documentary analysis and expert interviews - notably with key contributors to the program's launch - the study examined the creation of the Vélib' and its objectives as a public program. It then used these findings to evaluate the real impact of the Vélib', 10 years after its launch.

The second area of research, led by second-year students of the Master in Urban Planning with a specialism in Transportation and Mobility, focuses on how the Vélib' has impacted the lifestyles and transportation practices of people living in the Paris region.

- Ten years after its launch, how has the Vélib' transformed mobility in Paris and its surrounding suburbs? The survey sampled regular and occasional Vélib' users. It paints a portrait of these people, how they use the service, how it impacts their lifestyle or transportation practices and why they use it. The survey also sampled non-users:
- People using personal bicycles: the interviews tested the hypothesis that using the Vélib' leads to an increased use of bicycles in general, and also provides an understanding of why people choose to use their own bicycle rather than a Vélib'.
- Users of other forms of transportation: the interviews identified current barriers that prevent people from using the Vélib' as well as opportunities to develop the service.

This study was launched in October 2017 and ended in April 2018.

## II. Main findings

### 1. Vélib', a sustainable and effective public mobility program? (Workshop with first-year Master students)

Vélib' is part of a large program undertaken by the Paris city government (administration of Jean Tibéri) to promote the bicycle at the expense of cars, starting in the 1990s. According to the Paris city government, the Vélib' could reduce the number of cars on the road and transform Paris into a pioneering city for sustainable mobility practices.

However, 10 years after its launch, the service's ability to replace cars with bicycles has proven to be very disappointing. Former car drivers represent a minority (less than 5%) of Vélib' users. Most Vélib' users previously traveled by public transportation or on foot to complete the trips they now make using Vélib'.

However, Vélib' has led to an increased sharing of the road (removing parking spaces in order to install Vélib' stations). It has also increased the visibility of bicycles in the public sphere.

Another secondary result is that Vélib' frees up space on public transportation during commuting hours, a time when it is particularly packed. It has positively impacted overcrowding on public transportation in the Paris region.

Moreover, people make use of the Vélib' service. It is the most heavily-used public bike sharing service in France (nearly 7 sessions per day and per bicycle).

However, Vélib' was supposed to be cost-free for the Paris city government - it was even supposed to generate 3 million euros per year. In reality, its annual cost is 33 million euros (or 17 euros for each Parisian aged 14 years and older, the lower age limit for using the service). If this cost were to be spread across the 300,000 users of the service, it would increase the subscription to 149 euros per year (versus 39 euros in 2018).

## **2. Vélib', a practical service for residents of the Paris region (workshop with second-year Master students)**

Cycling – be it on the Vélib' or a personal bicycle – changes people's relationship to space: places that previously seemed far away become more accessible, and this can change how often people visit different neighborhoods.

Moreover, people use bicycles for both utilitarian and hedonistic reasons:

- It allows them to save time on certain trips and to gain autonomy (regarding hours and itineraries), notably in comparison to public transportation, which becomes less attractive; the bicycle also allows them to integrate exercise into their daily commute.
- Furthermore, it is also a source of pleasure: the feeling of freedom and well-being, the search for solitude, exposure to the sun and wind, the opportunity to rediscover the city...

Most people's lives are not profoundly changed by the regular or occasional use of the Vélib': it is sometimes used as an alternative to public transportation or walking (it rarely replaces trips made by car or on two-wheeled motor vehicles). Vélib' users tend to be more intermodal and multimodal bike owners, reflecting the flexibility of the public bike sharing system. They choose their form of transportation based on the weather, their plans, their clothing, the availability of a Vélib'...

On the other hand, personal bicycle owners systematically prefer traveling by bike. They tend to adapt their lifestyles to the constraints of being a cyclist. For example, the places they frequent are within biking distance and have places to park their bicycle. In other words, cycling structures their lifestyle.

Public bike sharing services and personally-owned bicycles offer different advantages, which explain why some people in the Paris region use both.

Vélib' offers users the opportunity to discover and test cycling before making it part of a routine, and occasionally even buying their own bicycle. On the other hand, personal bicycle owners sometimes revert back to the Vélib' for practical reasons (difficulty of parking their bicycle, no need for bicycle maintenance, lower cost...)

However, this service does not meet the needs of everyone in all situations (standardized bicycles, not knowing if a bicycle will be available...). It does not solve certain problems that are inherent to cycling such as road safety concerns. Public bike sharing systems like the Vélib' are useful; however, they cannot be the only program to support cycling: additional actions are required to develop the practice of cycling.

**Video made by master 2 students**



### III. To find out more (only available in French)

Power Point - Vélib', politique de mobilité durable ?



Rapport - Vélib', politique de mobilité durable ?

Analyser une politique de mobilité durable :  
Le cas du Vélib'



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Synthèse - le "vélibeur", un cycliste pas comme les autres ?

LE « VÉLIBEUR », UN CYCLISTE PAS COMME LES AUTRES ?

La commande adressée par le Forum Vies Mobiles à l'École d'Urbanisme de Paris portait sur les usages et les pratiques du Vélib' et du vélo personnel à Paris et dans les Hauts-de-Seine et les communes limitrophes de la métropole parisienne. Le Vélib' est une offre de mobilité qui a connu un succès remarquable et qui a été analysée de près par les pouvoirs publics. Cette analyse a permis de définir les conditions de son développement et de proposer des pistes d'amélioration. Le Vélib' est un service de mobilité qui a été conçu pour répondre à des besoins spécifiques de déplacement à Paris et dans les Hauts-de-Seine et les communes limitrophes de la métropole parisienne.

Ainsi, un état de fait nous a permis d'établir qu'il était intéressant d'étudier le phénomène du Vélib' en tant que service (VLS) afin de comprendre sa capacité à être élargi aux mobilités dans la métropole parisienne et contribuer à structurer la pratique cycliste.

Pour ce faire, nous avons choisi une méthodologie selon deux approches :

- Une enquête quantitative, fondée sur un questionnaire en ligne (ODI (Open Data Institute)).
- Une enquête qualitative, avec 34 entretiens menés sur des profils diversifiés et des observations en situation.

Le croisement de ces approches nous a permis d'établir des schémas et des tendances dans les modes de usage et de usage du Vélib' et du vélo personnel.

Le Vélib' et le vélo personnel : quelles différences ?

Un regard à l'usage différencié

Note : Une même couleur indique un certain nombre de différences entre le vélo personnel et le Vélib'. Le Vélib' bien sûr, payant une fois de plus chaque, ainsi qu'habituellement dans les autres pays, a son propre système de paiement.

Les usages qui en sont faits diffèrent aussi avec une nuance plus importante pour les vélos et une tendance plus marquée à l'utilisation partagée que pour le vélo personnel. Les effets de complémentarité sont également plus importants pour les utilisateurs du Vélib'. Enfin, les représentations différentes qui en sont faites font du Vélib' un mode de déplacement.

Le partage entre Vélib' et vélo

Le Vélib' est devenu un mode de déplacement alternatif à la pratique cycliste selon le type de vélo. Vélib' a permis de structurer la pratique cycliste.

Tableau comparatif des avantages et des inconvénients du nouveau service Vélib' et du vélo personnel pour les utilisateurs

|               | Vélib'                                 | Vélo personnel                         |
|---------------|--|--|
| Rapidité      | Plus rapide que le transport en commun | Plus rapide que le transport en commun |
| Coût          | Très faible                            | Faible                                 |
| Disponibilité | Peu disponible                         | Toujours disponible                    |
| Type de vélo  | Un seul type de vélo                   | Croisé ou VTC                          |
| Stationnement | Contraintes de stationnement marquées  | Contraintes de stationnement           |
| Régulation    | Peu régulée                            | Régulée                                |
| Intermodalité | Faible intermodalité                   | Haute intermodalité                    |
| Porte-à-porte | Contraintes de stationnement           | Permet le porte-à-porte                |



Rapport - le "vélibeur", un cycliste pas comme les autres ?



## Mobility

For the Mobile Lives Forum, mobility is understood as the process of how individuals travel across distances in order to deploy through time and space the activities that make up their lifestyles. These travel practices are embedded in socio-technical systems, produced by transport and communication industries and techniques, and by normative discourses on these practices, with considerable social, environmental and spatial impacts.

En savoir plus x

## Lifestyle

A lifestyle is a composition of daily activities and experiences that give sense and meaning to the life of a person or a group in time and space.

En savoir plus x

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Associated Thematics :

### Lifestyles

- Alternative mobilities
- Change in practices

### Policies

- Paris and Île-de-France
- Ecological transition
- Cycling & Walking
- Cities & Territories

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