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Lockdown



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Short definition

The lockdown measures implemented throughout 2020 in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, while varying from one country to the next, implied a major restriction on people's freedom of movement for a given period. Presented as a solution to the spread of the virus, the lockdown impacted local, interregional and international travel. By transforming the spatial and temporal dimensions of people's lifestyles, the lockdown accelerated a whole series of pre-existing trends, such as the rise of teleworking and teleshopping and the increase in walking and cycling, while also interrupting of long-distance mobility. The ambivalent experiences of the lockdown pave the way for a possible transformation of lifestyles in the future.

Long definition

Lockdown measures were imposed in many countries around the world in 2020, to varying degrees. In the toughest cases, such as in China, entire neighborhoods and cities were completely quarantined. In other countries, such as Spain, France or Italy, lockdowns implied shutting down non-essential businesses and facilities in conjunction with severe travel restrictions, with fines for non-compliance^[1]. Meanwhile, Germany and many northern European countries often implemented softer strategies, limiting public gatherings by closing select shops and facilities for limited periods of time, and by calling on people's sense of individual responsibility.

Overall, though, the lockdown had a massive impact on people's daily lives. Being confined to home often caused much discomfort and anxiety, as shown by the French

survey by Lise Bourdeau Lepage.^[^2] It also increased housing, social and gender inequalities.^[^3] On the other hand, the restricted scope of travel, both spatially and temporally, was a source of well-being and allowed part of the population to experience changes in lifestyles, as shown by the survey conducted by the Mobile Lives Forum on the impact of the lockdown on the mobility and lifestyles of French people.^[^4] By concentrating most of daily life at home, the lockdown redistributed activities within the domestic space, requiring numerous rearrangements, and modified the temporal succession of activities by eliminating transition phases such as travel and waiting periods. Throughout many European countries, travel was massively replaced by telecommunications for work, shopping, leisure or even healthcare, accelerating pre-existing trends. The lockdown also halted a large part of all movements, especially commutes and leisure travel. People living in countries under lockdown thereby experienced a return to more spatial proximity in their daily lives, with their activities deployed in and around their homes. We also observed changes in modal practices, a drastic drop in the use of public transport and airplanes, and conversely a greater use of walking and cycling, which had already been on the rise in recent years. Additionally, long-distance mobility suddenly came to a halt.

These ambivalent experiences of the lockdown pave the way for possible transformations in lifestyles. But such transformations require a change in collective rules and the support of ambitious public policies, not only in the field of transport but in all areas that affect mobility: land use planning, work, leisure, tourism, family, healthcare, etc.

Going further

Overall, the lockdown had a massive impact on mobility and this paper offers an outline of its main features in Europe. Before detailing its different effects, it's worth remembering that the coronavirus spread very quickly across the world via long-distance trips, mainly performed by plane and by people carrying the virus.^[^5] In this sense, its rapid diffusion can be directly attributed to the high mobilities of the globalized capitalist system we live in and the lifestyles associated with it.

Before exploring the means to transform the social norms associated with mobility and lifestyles, we need to identify which evolutions in mobility are worth keeping.

How was mobility impacted during lockdown and more generally during the pandemic?

The lockdown's consequences on mobility in France and Europe have now been widely documented in research. We will focus here on four consequences in particular.

The substitution of travel by telecommunications. Teleworking, teleshopping, online entertainment, telemedicine and remote teaching have developed considerably since the start of the pandemic, and then following periods of lockdown and reopening. Indeed, in Europe during the 2020 spring lockdown, the rate of teleworking tripled,^[^6] online non-food purchases increased from 30% to 70% (depending on sources and calculation method), telemedicine increased by 500% in France,^[^7] while university education went 100% online in most countries. The international survey by the Mobil'Homme agency, carried out among 14,886 people living in Switzerland, France, Belgium, Germany, Austria, Luxembourg and Spain, showed in this regard that teleworking mainly concerned workers in the tertiary sector, and especially those holding executive positions.^[^8] The same study also shows that the extent of teleworking depended on how strong the travel restrictions and control methods were in the different countries studied (see the Further Information section of this article). As such, in the spring of 2020, one in two workers teleworked (partially or totally) in France, Luxembourg and Switzerland - countries that imposed strict lockdown measures - while only one in three workers did so in Germany, where lockdown measures were less strict. As Christian Licoppe points out, teleworking follows the injunction to maintain the continuity of professional activities. This injunction is presented as a given, which suggests that teleworking is part of a society governed by control and surveillance.^[^9]

The disappearance of a large part of travel. While the decrease in mobility translated into an increase in telecommunications, many trips simply disappeared. This is especially true for home-to-work commutes and leisure travel. As such, in France, according to the survey conducted by the Mobile Lives Forum during the spring 2020 lockdown,^[^10] 40% of the working population had to stop working and most trips for leisure and social activities dramatically fell, while shopping trips were maintained but carried out nearby and on a daily rather than weekly basis.

A return to more spatial proximity in everyday life. During the pandemic, people spent more time carrying out activities at home (baking, cooking) or in its immediate surroundings.^[^11] This, however, did not lead to an increase in neighbors helping each other. As the research of Anne Lambert et al. reveals: “Just like in normal times, four in ten French people say they lent a helping hand in their neighborhood, and 29% say they benefitted from such a favor.”^[^12] The international survey by the Mobil'Homme agency^[^13] showed that the proportion of people who went out for leisure purposes within their residential neighborhood increased in all the countries studied, except in Spain (where going out for leisure was banned). In Switzerland, for example, 32% of the population declared doing activities near their home every day during the spring 2020 lockdown, compared to only 23% before the lockdown.

Changes in modal practices. Walking and cycling increased, while flying almost disappeared, the use of public transport declined, and the modal share of cars increased in daily mobility (for figures on Île-de-France, see the IAU study “Tableau de bord de la mobilité en Île-de-France” [The dashboard of mobility in Île-de-France]^[^14]). Based again on data from the international survey carried out by the Mobil'Homme agency, it appears that in terms of public transport, while its use declined in the seven countries studied, this decrease varied greatly in scope and temporality. Indeed, among people who continued to travel to work during the spring 2020 lockdown and who used public transport before the crisis to get to work, a majority continued to use public transport in Austria, Switzerland, Spain, and Germany. Conversely, in Belgium and especially in France and Luxembourg, public transport was largely abandoned.^[^15] This is connected to significant reductions in the volume of services (only 10% to 30% of public transport services were maintained in French cities during the spring lockdown; 30% in Île-de-France). Also during the spring lockdown, cycling increased sharply, without yet reaching significant modal shares; thus, cycling in France increased by 200%, but still accounted for less than 10% of total daily trips. It's worth noting that walking also increased during the spring lockdown, used for up to 40% of all trips in many urban areas.

After the spring lockdown, the return to public transport occurred differently among European countries. While it was fairly quick and straightforward in Germany and Switzerland, it remained more modest in Belgium and France.^[^16] It's also worth pointing out that for daily long-distance trips, the resumption of practices was uniformly very slow, including for trips by car. Finally, with regard to modal practices,

if we think in terms of traffic volume, the increase in the modal share of cars during the lockdown periods did not translate into an increase in road traffic. Quite the contrary: because many trips ceased to be performed during the lockdowns, the intensity of car traffic turned out to be lower than during the pre-pandemic period.[¹⁷]

Aside from the growth in the modal share of cars and the drastic reduction in the use of public transport and planes, it should be noted that all these trends were already happening before the Covid-19 pandemic: the crisis only amplified and accelerated their evolution.

What will happen to mobility and lifestyles after the pandemic?

Life under lockdown did allow for some positive experiences, especially in terms of slowing down the pace and intensity of life, as we just noted.[¹⁸] Insofar as these experiences are in line with the direction of the mobility transition, it's important to ask how we can continue these trends in the future. Greg Marsden's research opens up important avenues in this regard.[¹⁹] As a specialist in governance, he notes that in order to perpetuate the positive aspects of lockdown, both in terms of slowing down the pace of life and having more sustainable practices, it's more effective to modify collective rules than to focus on what each person could do individually. This stems from the observation that our societies have gradually imposed an injunction to mobility, in the form of a social norm. As he remarks: "In each of our studies, we have seen an increasing awareness of the necessity to challenge our representations of the need to travel, to have a variety of places to shop or to commute to work. These views aren't the result of individual choices, but rather of negotiations between different actors in society - business and government - on what is expected or considered normal for a particular activity."[²⁰] It's therefore a matter of leveraging the disruption caused by the pandemic to prompt a political shift in favor of new lifestyles and new mobility practices, favoring proximity, soft mobilities or even public rail or road transport in lieu of planes. This disruptive vision stands in clear opposition to actors who want the post-pandemic era to return to mass plane and car mobility, and are calling for significant financial support for these sectors. Individual aspirations, and their translation into new lifestyles, cannot transform everything. They need to be supported by an ambitious public policy that promotes them, including transport policies of course, but also other sectors directly affected by mobility: land-use planning, work, leisure, tourism, family and healthcare.[²¹]

While it's always difficult to forecast social changes, a number of signals suggest that beyond the lockdown, there will be medium-term mobility transformations, provided they are supported by ambitious policies aimed at transforming social norms surrounding mobility and lifestyles. This is particularly the case for the growth of teleworking, the reduction in long-distance commuting and business trips, the reshaping of tourism and leisure mobility towards greater proximity, residential mobility, as well as the systematic consideration of the health risk factor in trips of all kinds.

- **Teleworking.** While some experienced lockdown negatively in terms of mental health and widening inequalities, in other respects, it was sometimes appreciated. Slowing down the pace of life, rediscovering the benefits of proximity and teleworking were a positive experience for many people. The survey carried out by the Mobile Lives Forum during the spring 2020 lockdown clearly shows this.^[22] One telling figure in this study is that among the employees who teleworked from home during the spring lockdown, more than half (53%) appreciated the experience. As Christian Licoppe points out, teleworking is not just an alternative to working in presence, but a resource that makes it possible to combine presence and telepresence differently over time and depending on the needs of the activities at hand.^[23] According to him, the rise of teleworking is an opportunity to ignite a political discussion about work-related interactions, as well as the right to tele-presence and how employees are monitored. It prompts for transforming legal standards related to work in order to support the mobility transition.^[24]

- **Tourism.** In terms of tourism, the health crisis encouraged people to abandon distant tourist destinations in favor of local and proximity tourism.^[25] This trend is likely to continue in the medium term, in connection with the persistent fear of new health crises. In the long term - i.e. beyond 5 years and more - many experts predict a rebound in international tourism, due in particular to a strongly engrained habit of spending holidays in far-flung destinations.^[26] However, it's likely that, due to the economic crisis, international long-distance tourism won't return to its pre-pandemic levels. This will especially be true if arbitrations in tourism policies actively encourage leisure-based mobility to become more local and less reliant on air travel.^[27]

- **Residential mobility.** Among the consequences of the pandemic on the future of mobility, let's also note a desire for residential migration. It's clearly a centripetal dynamic and, in France, it mainly concerns people who want to move away from Île-

de-France. People living in high density metropolitan regions have had a much harder time coping with their living environments since the lockdown, and this is reflected throughout Europe where the housing market is especially dynamic in small towns, peri-urban areas and rural regions. Once again, this is something that is clearly evidenced in the study carried out by the Mobile Lives Forum, as well as in the studies by the think tank La fabrique de la cité on medium-sized towns.[²⁸]

The various transformations of mobility mentioned above will probably have effects on the modal share of people's travel habits, but also on the spatial scope of mobility, on the movement of goods and on urban logistics systems. Cycling and especially walking are likely to increase in the future as a means of transport in everyday life. It's also likely that long-distance commuting will shrink along with the development of teleworking. It can also be assumed that long-distance business trips won't return to their pre-pandemic levels; the same may be true for long-distance tourism. If these changes prove to be true, the result will be a reduction in car traffic. The growth of teleshopping will probably result in an increasing importance of home delivery logistics systems.

It's important to properly account for these possible changes in order to plan future mobility services accordingly: the future of mobility doesn't need to merely be a continuation of past trends, provided that ambitious policies support these changes with a clear objective to promote new social norms in terms of desirable lifestyles.

Further information

In addition to the preceding developments, three topics deserve to be discussed with regards to the lockdown.

The centrality of work in the lockdown measures. In all the lockdowns implemented around the world, work as a motive for travel always occupied a special place. It was usually the first authorized and unrestricted motive for travel, considered in many countries to be an "essential activity" or relating to the "basic needs" of the population. This naturally points to the persistent centrality of work as a vector of social integration and brings to light unprecedented tensions between professional and private life. In many countries, including France, the right to practice one's profession, and even the injunction to continue working, was actually upheld while other essential activities for social and cultural life were banned: family

celebrations, recreational outings (limited to one hour), all kinds of team and even individual sports, cultural activities. Such decisions were often met with resistance and controversies: don't such measures favour the economy to the detriment of social and cultural life? Why should business and market relations be the only ones deemed to be essential activities and services?

The issue of permissions and movement control during lockdown. While almost all countries around the world experienced episodes of lockdown at some point throughout 2020, their extent and control methods varied greatly.

Regarding the scale of the measures, let's first point out that authoritarian regimes were at polar opposites: China set up a total lockdown of certain regions, cities and neighborhoods by physically preventing all movements – in some cases, going as far as locking residents in their building to prevent them from leaving. In contrast, Brazil under Jair Bolsonaro minimized the pandemic, calling it “a mild flu,” and took no specific nationwide lockdown measures. In Western democracies, in addition to social distancing guidelines (wearing a mask, maintaining an interpersonal distance of 1.50 to 2m, using hand sanitizers), lockdown measures were also variable. In the strictest cases, countries banned movements for a whole set of reasons, with a restrictive list of authorized trips limited in space and time (in Spain, France and Italy), in conjunction with enforcing telework, closing many businesses and limiting group gatherings to 5, 10 or 50 people. In the least severe countries, the lockdown measures consisted in recommending telework and restricting travel, while limiting group gatherings to between 50 and 1,000 people depending on the type of activity. Germany, as well as the Scandinavian countries, clearly organized their lockdowns in this way. The main exception in Europe was Sweden, that didn't implement a lockdown strictly speaking, but only issued recommendations.

Regarding the methods for enforcing these measures in relation to travel, two main trends emerged. The first was to call upon the citizen's sense of individual responsibility in the face of the pandemic and collective risks. In this spirit, each person was encouraged to scrupulously comply with the health recommendations - i.e. social distancing - but also with the enacted health rules. Germany, Switzerland and the Scandinavian countries clearly followed this pattern. The second was to force individuals who must travel to carry a travel permit, with offenders being heavily fined. France and Spain represent this paternalistic approach to enforcing their lockdown measures.

Ecological awareness and lockdown. Life under lockdown, by enabling people to experience slower and more localized lives, led many people to rethink their lifestyles. Research carried out by the Mobile Lives Forum shows that, for several years already, many people have aspired to such changes.[^29] The experience of the lockdown in 2020 will therefore likely trigger life choices in this direction.[^30]

More generally, the pandemic is widely considered to be linked to the consequences of economic globalization. Indeed, its main vector of diffusion was long-distance mobility, in particular air travel, and the lockdown showed the limits of an economic model where industrial production is largely dependent on China. Many voices are currently rising to demand ambitious and rapid ecological transition policies in the wake of the pandemic, as well as the relocation of production activities to Europe and the promotion of local distribution channels.[^31]

<!-- Notes -->

[^1]: This article mainly deals with the first lockdown that took place in the spring of 2020, which was both the most restrictive and the most global. It is also the only one that can be analyzed with enough hindsight at the time of writing this article. [^2]:

Bourdeau-Lepage L. (2020). "Le confinement et ses effets sur le quotidien : Premiers résultats bruts des 1re et 2e semaines de confinement en France" [Lockdown and its effects on everyday life: initial raw results of the 1st and 2nd weeks of lockdown in France.] <https://halshs.archives-ouvertes.fr/halshs-02650456/document>

[^3]: On this subject, see the note from the French Ministry of Economy <https://www.tresor.economie.gouv.fr/Articles/2020/08/06/inegalites-de-conditions-de-vie-face-au-confinement> and the Citizen Corona Science survey conducted at EPFL <https://actu.epfl.ch/news/premieres-tendances-apres-la-cloture-de-l-enquete/> [^4]:

<https://en.forumviesmobiles.org/project/2020/04/23/survey-impacts-lockdown-french-peoples-mobility-and-lifestyles-13297> [^5]: The virus spread very quickly across the world through long-distance mobility such as business travel and international tourism (and initially, intercontinental travel especially). Planes were therefore the initial vector for the spread of Covid-19, even though contamination within aircrafts is rare thanks to the complex system of air circulation and renewal within the cockpits.

Regarding the international spread of Covid-19, see article in Le Monde of February 28, 2020: https://www.lemonde.fr/planete/article/2020/02/28/covid-19-les-foyers-proliferent-out-of-china_6031163_3244.html [^6]: Source:

<https://www.oodrive.com/fr/blog/productivite/covid19-teletravail-europe-et-france/>

[^7]: Source: [https://www.lepoint.fr/sante/face-au-coronavirus-le-boom-des-](https://www.lepoint.fr/sante/face-au-coronavirus-le-boom-des-teleconsultations-02-04-2020-2369810_40.php)

[teleconsultations-02-04-2020-2369810_40.php](https://www.lepoint.fr/sante/face-au-coronavirus-le-boom-des-teleconsultations-02-04-2020-2369810_40.php) [^8]: Dubois Y. et al. (2020). "Effets

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Activer

Activé

Niveau de profondeur

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Désactivé

Auteur lié

Vincent Kaufmann (Sociologue)

Thématique

Alternative mobilities

Aspirations

Change in practices

Diversity of lifestyles

Futures

Digital technologies

Proximity

Crises

Work