1. Projects

How to develop territories to promote more localized lifestyles?

Ongoing research
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While the democratization of rapid carbon-based mobility has transformed our lifestyles and territorial organization, it has also increased the pace of life and caused environmental problems. As a result, reducing the use of carbon-emitting travel must become a priority. By pursuing a forecast-oriented process, exploring a context in which carbon-emitting trips are significantly restricted, the goal of the workshop is to propose a policy of land and urban planning that would enable people to lead more localized lifestyles.

Research participants

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The scale, speed and frequency of our trips have increased sharply in recent decades. Boosted by the rise of new technologies, the democratization of rapid mobility has transformed our lifestyles (60km/day on average for French people), increased the pace of our activities (as we are able to access more activities in a given limited timeframe) and modified the organization of the territory. While in some respects speed can be a vector of freedom, it also raises important societal issues: health problems (pollution, sedentary lifestyles), fatigue, inequalities (social, gender-based) and of course, climate change: the transport sector is the largest emitter of greenhouse gases in France, accounting for 30% of the total output. Research by the Mobile Lives Forum suggests that we should cease relying on rapid carbon-based mobility as the adjustment variable in how we organize and deploy our activities throughout the territory. In trying to reduce the carbon footprint of transport, public authorities continue to focus on technological improvements (electric vehicles, etc.) and, to a lesser extent, on modal shifts (cycling, public transport, etc.). But we should also prioritize the avoidance of carbon-based travel itself, as well as reducing the distances we need to travel to carry out our daily activities. Indeed, in order to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, we need to reduce all kilometers travelled by car by 40 to 60%. At
the same time, the Forum’s research reveals that over 80% of French people aspire to leading slower-paced and more localized lifestyles.

In order to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, which is the target set by the National Low Carbon Strategy, the Mobile Lives Forum has imagined in its book *Pour en finir avec la vitesse* [An end to speed] a series of measures to significantly limit carbon-emitting travel (personal carbon credits, speed reduction, etc.). By assuming this context of less intense and more sustainable mobilities, the goal of the workshop is to propose a land and urban planning policy that promotes more localized lifestyles, in a forecasting work aimed at fostering the development of alternative proposals to the current model, and intended for decision-makers.

A workshop in two stages

The first challenge of the workshop will be to work on the notion of proximity, firstly according to different types of living environments (metropolitan, medium-sized city, sparsely populated area, peri-urban, rural...), secondly to the diversity of aspirations and needs, and finally to the availability of services and equipment, by assuming from the outset that we are in a context where carbon-emitting mobility is restricted (personal carbon credits). The challenge is to give people the opportunity to avoid carbon-based travel as much as possible and reduce car dependence in their daily lives.

The first phase of the workshop will also involve both a critical summary of planning policies and tools, with regards to how they contribute to reducing carbon-emitting travel (distances, frequencies, speed, modes), and promoting localized lifestyles. The tools and approaches used to pursue the goals of proximity (in particular concerning density), accessibility, and transit-oriented development, will be analyzed to identify the importance they place on limiting travel and what their contributions and shortcomings are. The values and discourses about mobility in relation to these approaches will also be examined. Citizen-led initiatives and bottom-up approaches will also be included in this critical reading, such as ZADs (Zone à Défendre, meaning Zone to Defend, i.e. militant or protest-based occupations of land). The students will also produce an overview of initiatives implemented in other countries and other contexts in terms of proximity.

The second, more forecast-oriented part of the workshop will focus on discussing the conditions for implementing a planning policy that promotes greater proximity in the urban area of Nantes. This will first require assessing the territory in terms of services, equipment and accessibility, as well as assessing the implemented land policies with regards to the goal of proximity. It will then involve recommending a planning policy that promotes proximity, in conjunction with measures aimed at restricting mobility over time. Students will reflect on the different components to take into account (the location of shops, cultural and leisure facilities, businesses, housing, administrative and social services, hospitals, parks, etc. but also how work is organized, etc.) and the actors involved (national and local public authorities, actors in economic and cultural activities, etc.). This reflective activity will be deployed at different scales, with a focus on one or more particular fields within the territory under analysis. Students will examine the levers and tools (financial, legal, technical, political, etc.) that could be activated - whether or not they currently exist – in order to propose concrete measures forming a proximity policy that can be submitted to the relevant public actors.

Methodology

The methodology of the workshop will mainly combine a bibliographic analysis and a survey by way of interviews with various actors (planning experts, public actors, companies, etc.) at different scales. In the forecasting part, focus groups with local actors and residents may be conducted.

Results are expected in the spring of 2022.

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

Associated Thematics:

Lifestyles
  - Proximity

Policies
  - Ecological transition
  - Cities & Territories

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