

1. Projects



Transportation policy and mobility(ies) in Los Angeles

Finished research

Ten years after *On the move*, which investigated the issue in terms of the struggle between transportation authorities and an association of users, three French geography students question the meaning of Los Angeles' transportation policies. Discover the results of the project and the controversy between Jean Leveugle and Lucile Waquet on the modal choice at stake.

Research participants

Researchers

- Jean Leveugle
- Lucile Waquet
- Nicolas Toraille
- Guillaume Poiret

In *On the Move* (2006), Tim Cresswell analyzes the struggle between the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority (MTA or METRO), the main transportation authority, and the Bus Riders Union, an association for the defense of bus users representing the disadvantaged, in the late 1990s. The BRU sued the MTA, arguing that the city's public transportation organization favored well-to-do populations in that it poured all its resources into subway lines, to the detriment of the bus network. Tim Cresswell shows that this was, in fact, a struggle of representations, defining which modes of transit were considered legitimate and prioritized based on preferential service.

For Tim Cresswell, the BRU points to the inequalities generated by the development of one form of mobility at the expense of another. While some neighborhoods

(predominantly white suburban ones) have seen their type of mobility favored by the MTA, the vast majority of poor, non-white residents in downtown neighborhoods saw the quality of theirs deteriorate. It would seem there is a kind of spatial mismatch between the residential areas of poor populations and employment areas; hence, it stands to reason that, in order to access their jobs and other urban resources, workers need quality public transportation services. Tim Cresswell concluded that the BRU had promoted a mobility policy founded on the idea that different people who frequent different places have divergent needs and constraints in terms of mobility. This understanding of mobility highlights the fact that mobility is not an abstraction and that it has social content.

The work of the ENS students is a continuation of this reference work in the field of mobility. Now, nearly ten years later, has the situation changed? Can Tim Cresswell's hypotheses be confirmed, disproven or supplemented? What motivates public transportation policy in Los Angeles today? And what does it mean from a social, economic and environmental point of view?

The study, supervised by Guillaume Poiret in partnership with Cynthia Ghorra-Gobin, was launched in February 2013 and was based/, among other things, on a trip to Los Angeles in early April, and ended in September.

This project is part of the Mobile Lives Forum's second research project, Acting: Spaces' receptiveness and access: What mobility transition policies should we develop?

It is developed in the following ways on our website:

- a summary presents the key findings of the research : [Transportation and Mobility Policies in Los Angeles](#)
- a two-week field journal gives a day-by-day report on the progress of the research : [Calendrier de travail](#)
- a controversy reveals two very different visions of what a mobility policy in Los Angeles could be : [What Metropolitan Transport for Los Angeles?](#)

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

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