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## The future of cars: triumph or decline?



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Texte

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### **Introduction, by Vincent Kaufmann**

<br /> For some analysts the car as we know it has begun an inexorable decline, largely due to the problems it has created. This requires public authorities to make massive investments in alternative transportation systems focused on public and active transportation in all its forms, including innovative solutions. To support this argument, they point to increasingly unmanageable traffic congestion, and to the fact

that cars no longer embody the freedom they once evoked among younger generations. As such, fewer and fewer young urbanites aged 18 to 20 are getting their driver's licenses. Several factors explain this, including driver guilt, improvements in alternative transportation systems in urban areas, developments in long-distance communications, the internet as well as online games, and the high cost of driver's licenses. With regard to transport modes, bikes could potentially replace the automobile in urban areas because they are efficient, affordable and subject to less constraints than cars, such as parking. <br /><br /> Conversely, other researchers consider that, given these observations, we are on the threshold of a new rise of automobiles, and that in the future public transportation, walking and cycling as we know them are likely to experience a major decline. <br /><br /> In this case, public authorities will invest in infrastructure to accompany the changes in car use and simultaneously abandon certain high-cost public transportation services. In support of this vision, these researches insist that the quality of car mobility remains and will remain unparalleled, be it for transporting baggage and objects, its efficiency, its comfort, or the door-to-door service it provides and the autonomy it offers. Moreover, they point to the car's capacity to evolve, including the diversification of its uses (e.g. different forms of car sharing), as well as the potentially massive and rapid transition to electric - and quite likely autonomous - vehicles in the near future. Cars and driving as we know it today will be radically transformed. Autonomous driving is fundamental in this respect because it will free drivers, allowing them to make use of their time. In achieving this, the autonomous car will become a serious competitor to trains and public transportation in general. <br /><br /> To discuss these issues, we are pleased to welcome Francis Papon, a researcher with the IFSTTAR and specialist of active forms of transportation, and Mathieu Flonneau, transportation historian, automobile specialist and car aficionado in the noblest sense of the term.

Chapô

Over the last decade, the future of cars has been at the heart of controversy that has been the subject of numerous prospective studies. This controversy is not about the need for an energy transition - whose advent is no longer a subject of debate - but more about the role of cars in the future. Should the use of cars be called into question? What policies should be implemented? What should the role of cars be?

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