

1. Projects



Atypical Lifestyle Choices: an exploratory workshop

Finished research

The Mobile Lives Forum highlights the necessity to (re)think the role of mobility in our societies in order to imagine lifestyles that are more desirable and sustainable. Researchers, activists and citizens who have chosen to lead atypical lifestyles in France, Switzerland, or Belgium participated in a workshop to discuss the doors these mobile lifestyles open for the future. Discover interviews with these lifestyle pioneers, as well as the findings of the prospective reflection that followed. Food for thought to imagine how mobility in the future will differ from that of today.

Research participants

- Elia Vanson-Magalhães Da Silva

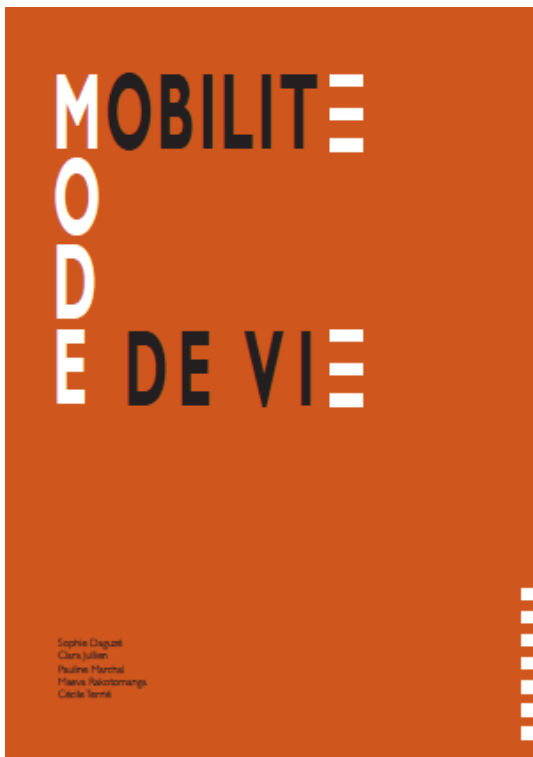
I. Mobile lifestyle stories

In order to enrich the reflection on the future of mobile lifestyles, the Mobile Lives Forum organized an exploratory workshop on atypical lifestyles. Held in Morges, Switzerland over a period of three days in March 2016, the workshop brought together approximately twenty people¹ researchers, activists, and citizens. The floor was first given to citizens who have made significant life choices in terms of mobility, with the goal of understanding how their lifestyles are organized in space and time, the aspirations they fulfill, and how they could be adopted on a larger scale in the future.

Discover accounts from people who have made deliberate choices about their lifestyles and the role mobility plays in them. While some lifestyles are considered as a form of activism, others have simply been built day-by-day over time. Each has found solutions to align their current lifestyle with their aspirations - be it living locally, having regular contact with nature, travelling year-round...

[fvm:mosaique]

To go further, take a look at the findings of a study on little known, atypical or emerging desired lifestyles, conducted during a professional research project with the Master of Land Use Planning and Urbanism at the Université Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne (in French).



II. A look at the future of desired lifestyles

The workshop then focused on the doors these lifestyles could open for mobility in the future. Could they be adopted on a larger scale in the future? Could the underlying values and practices resonate with a wider population? Could they help create a more sustainable society? This reflection was based on a study of recent lifestyle evolutions and trends and how they could affect the future of mobility in 2050 (France, Switzerland, Belgium), conducted by Futuribles for the Mobile Lives Forum (in French).



Etat des lieux des dynamiques d'évolution des
modes de vie et perspectives à l'horizon 2050

France, Suisse, Belgique

Mars 2016

Part 1: the classification of mobile lifestyles into three families

In order to facilitate discussions about the future, the different lifestyles were grouped into three families:

- **Family 1: “local living enthusiasts”**: their life takes place locally and they are not very mobile, preferring active forms of transportation (bicycling, walking, kayaking...). They are often highly dependent on the use of information and communication technologies (telecommuting). Taking time for themselves and/or for their loved ones is essential to their well-being. They vacation in the regions where they live, in their country, or in bordering countries.
- **Family 2. “Multi-modal travelers”**: mobility is essential for them, be it for day-to-day activities or during vacation. They juggle with the different possibilities offered by each form of transportation. Hence, they require a reliable connection to transportation networks. They often seek to reduce their ecological footprint by as much as possible, favoring low emission transportation (public transport, car sharing, active forms of transportation).
- **Family 3: “multi-residential nomads”**: they are highly mobile, on a European and even global scale. They organize their travels around drop-in points (personal housing, friend or family homes...). These are usually people who live alone or couples without children, and share a common desire to break with certain social norms and manage their own schedules.

Part 2: scenarios for spreading lifestyles

A 2050 projection was made for each lifestyle family: if these were to become mainstream lifestyles, how would they change the organization of society and territories?

- **Lifestyle 1 (“local living enthusiasts”)** could result in several scenarios. There are two main possibilities:
 - a) Relocating activities to the scale of autonomous, perhaps even self-sufficient, communities. People have highly stable living situations, and are highly involved in their local community. A particular emphasis is placed on geographic particularities (climate, location, agricultural products...). People travel very little in their day-to-day lives, and most goods are produced locally with minimal transport. If people go on vacation, they generally stay in their region.
 - b) A strong division of neighbourhoods, and even cities and towns, based on age and lifestyles: student neighbourhoods, senior neighbourhoods, single working neighbourhoods, family neighbourhoods... Over the period of their lives, people move frequently from one neighbourhood to the next, based on changes in their situation, aspirations, or place of work. They occasionally travel within the metropolis in order to access activities that aren't available in their area, which requires an infrastructure for transportation on a metropolitan scale. This urban model is quite similar to the “horizontal metropolis” (Paolo Viganò): a sprawling model of urbanisation based on equal access to services across a territory. Instead of a territorial hierarchy, there is a network of small centres connected by public transport. There is a relatively high level of circulation of objects: people consume many products from outside of their area.

Both scenarios could create challenges for social cohesion: risks of isolation and of an increase in territorial and social inequalities, the rejection of other lifestyles (in defense of ecology notably).

- **Lifestyle 2 (“facilitated and green mobility”)** could correspond to several scenarios :
 - a) The society of “business as usual”: continued pursuit of how to make travel more fluid through reliable, regular, comfortable, well-coordinated and rapid transport. The availability of driverless cars makes it easy to organize carpooling and car sharing services. Intermodal transportation is facilitated by information and trip planning platforms, as well as single subscriptions that cover multiple transportation services (bikes and shared cars, public transport,...). The rhythm of life accelerates. Mobility is a necessity, notably in the professional sphere. Society is segmented between the mobile and non-mobile, and the latter are considered to be second-class citizens.
 - b) The society of a right to mobility: people continue to move, but differently. The rhythm of life and of travel are more of a concerted choice than today. People work a bit less and manage their time more autonomously. Telecommuting is far more developed than today. These evolutions spread out peak transportation hours and consequently, reduce congestion on the roads and overcrowding in public transport. Transport systems are efficient, rapid, and comfortable. During trips, people can sit, sleep, work, talk...

In either case, an actor or network of well-coordinated actors - public or private- manage the entire transportation system. Informal carpooling is used for short distances, such as in residential areas or for work. Lifestyles are different in cities (planes, public transportation, carpooling, car sharing, walking, bicycling) than in less dense areas (on demand transportation, electric cars, bicycles). This seems like an unlikely solution for isolated rural areas.

For both scenarios, challenges were identified regarding urban congestion and cost. Large investments are needed to create and maintain the infrastructures and services this lifestyle requires. If financed collectively, this would represent a large portion of public finances; if financed by users, this could raise concerns about equal access to rapid and comfortable services.

- The widespread adoption of **lifestyle 3 (“nomadism”)** was quickly determined to be unlikely: multi-residential nomadic lifestyles are made possible by sedentary individuals. In the future, this could concern a fringe of the population or rather all individuals at certain moments of their lives (during the early years of adulthood for example).

In the scenario where this becomes a more widespread lifestyle, long distance transportation infrastructures would be maintained, and even developed. Law would evolve (visa systems, access to the administration) and the status of “international nomad” would be created and integrated into democratic decision-making processes, a system for tax payment... Services to support nomadic lifestyles would develop. Storage solutions (clothing, mail, material...) and temporary housing solutions would be offered to nomads in exchange for services provided for buildings, subdivisions or neighborhoods. There would be a continued development of the Internet and digitalization of business activities (distance learning, telecommuting...).

Challenges were identified regarding the fight against climate change (the high carbon footprint generated by the widespread use of rapid transportation: planes, cars, high-speed trains) and equal access to the skills required to live a mobile life, so that this does not become a lifestyle for the privileged minority.

Step 3: reflection on how different lifestyles can live together

The last phase examined the synergies and tensions between the different families of lifestyles. It became evident that each model has its limits: the capacity of each model to be adopted across the general population or territories, social or environmental risks (increase in social inequalities, inability to combat climate change...) etc. **However, these limits can be overcome by focusing on how these lifestyles complement each other.**

The three families of lifestyles can be considered as three, interconnected ways of life:

- The infrastructures of the model “facilitated and green mobility” are also used for local lifestyles (occasional use of rapid transportation, national or regional travel...) and for nomadic lifestyles (travelling from one living space to another).
- The existence of nomads facilitates the circulation of idea and of objects on a global scale. This benefits those living locally in particular.
- Nomads require the existence of other lifestyles in order to be comfortably install in the areas they spend time, and also to have stable landing bases.

Moreover, a diverse ecosystem of lifestyles could offer resilience in the event of ecological and economic crisis. Each lifestyle is vulnerable to certain shocks and resistant to others. The vulnerabilities of one lifestyle are not the same as those of another, and in the event of a shock this could help to avoid a general meltdown. If there was a crisis in one sector, a diverse ecosystem of lifestyles could help to prevent the crisis from affecting other sectors of the economy, society, or territories. Moreover, one of the existing lifestyles could also provide solutions.

Although these lifestyles are complimentary, **they also create tension** regarding the allocation of space and economic resources, economic and judicial systems, and the rhythm of society. These tensions highlight the need for collective decision making:

- Sharing of space and roads: what type of territorial planning should be put in place? What forms of transportation should be given priority, and in what spaces?
- Financial planning: which infrastructures should be financed, and on what scale? Which technological and social innovations should be supported?
- Rhythm of society: how can the rhythm of these three lifestyles be synchronized? For example, how should public transportation and public services (school, administration...) be organized?

For the workshop participants, ideally people could easily transition, depending on the period of their lives, from one lifestyle to another. It is important to avoid separating these lifestyles by territory, in order to prevent the creation of lifestyle classes that lead to power struggles and confrontation. In order to make it possible for these lifestyles to coexist, it is necessary to create open urban models that allow for various lifestyles to take form in the same space.

This exploratory workshop confirmed the Mobile Lives Forum's desire to better understand current lifestyles and aspirations in order to envision the mobility systems of tomorrow. This is just the first step of a process that will be enriched and consolidated. The Mobile Lives Forum will continue to explore aspirations for mobile lifestyles in future research projects..

Notes

1 We thank all participants:

Aurélie, Aline, Dorothée, Eric, Jean-Christophe, Kim, Thomas, Sonia, representatives of atypical lifestyles; Cécile Desaunay, Futurist (Futuribles); Javier Caletrio, Rodolphe Dodier, Vincent Kaufmann, Catherine Morency, Luca Pattaroni, researchers specialized in lifestyles and/or mobility; Clara Jullien, Maeva Rakotomanga, Cécile Terrié, students in the Master of Management and Urbanism at the Université Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne.

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

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

Car sharing

Car sharing is the pooling of one or several vehicles for different trips at different times. Three types of car sharing exist: commercial car sharing, peer-to-peer car sharing and "informal" sharing between individuals.

En savoir plus x

Associated Thematics :

Lifestyles

- Aspirations
- Living environments
- Change in practices
- Diversity of lifestyles
- Futures
- Housing
- Leisure & tourism
- Digital technologies
- Proximity
- Rhythms of everyday life
- Work

To cite this publication :

Elia Vanson-Magalhães Da Silva (02 February 2017), « Atypical Lifestyle Choices: an exploratory workshop », Préparer la transition mobilité. Consulté le 08 February 2023, URL:



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