

1. Projects



Lifestyles and desired mobilities: laying the foundations for tomorrow

Finished research
Begin: March 2018
End: March 2018

What would the lifestyles and mobility of tomorrow look like in France if they were to be realized according to people's utopian dreams? What changes would have to be made in terms of collective rhythms, transportation services, territorial organization and employment to make them possible? It's hard to embrace the lifestyle of one's dreams, and yet some people manage to. But how, and at what price? What does their experience teach us about the obstacles to overcome so that others may follow in their footsteps? The goal of the survey was to sketch out desirable futures by speaking with French citizens.

Research participants

- Juliette Maulat
- Louise Laigroz
- Mathilde Guellaën
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- Sophie Garcia

I. The research

What if we were to take citizens' aspirations for the future seriously? Since 2015, the Mobile Lives Forum has been closely examining aspirations in order to rethink the mobility systems of tomorrow. In 2016, it organized an exploratory forecasting workshop with citizens who had made atypical lifestyle choices. It also conducted a major quantitative survey on aspirations in terms of lifestyles and mobility for the future. The latter revealed two widely shared aspirations:

- the desire to slow down the pace of life;
- the desire to reduce daily commute times, either by favoring proximity or by developing easier and/or more rapid access to places reached via transportation.

Beyond these two structuring aspirations, a number of ideal lifestyles - which were varied in terms of modes of transportation, pace of life and connectivity – emerged. Based on this the researchers developed a typology of five profiles.

The Forum wanted **to deepen its understanding of these ideal lifestyles** and further the study of possible **transitions to desired and sustainable mobility** by launching a qualitative survey in France.

The survey aimed to collect the richest possible description of these lifestyles in terms of mobility through a series of semi-structured interviews. How can we organize activities (work, outings, shopping, etc.) in space and time in an ideal way? What modes of transportation and telecommunications would this organization require? What does slowing down, reducing commute times and living locally really mean? How can we take environmental issues into account? On what values are these aspirations based?

The survey also considered what it would take to make these lifestyles possible for a significant portion of the population. Interviewees were offered a back casting exercise during the second part of the interview to help them to express their feelings about the societal conditions they thought would be necessary in order to realize their ideal.

The survey was conducted by a group of four students from the Masters 2 program in Planning and Urban Development at Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne University: Sophie Garcia, Mathilde Guellaën, Louise Laigroz and Elia Vanson-Magalhães Da Silva, under the direction of Juliette Maulat.

A scientific committee, comprised of Xavier Brisbois (psycho-sociologist), Boris Descarrega (socio-economist), Vincent Kaufmann (sociologist), Alexandre Rigal (sociologist) and Lolita Rubens (psycho-sociologist) followed the project alongside the Mobile Lives Forum.

II. Key research findings

The qualitative survey allowed the Mobile Lives Forum to deepen its understanding of the aspirations formulated during the quantitative survey, and in particular to clarify the meaning of “slowing down” and “living locally.” However, care must be taken in interpreting the results: while the survey allowed us to question various socio-demographic profiles and geographical situations, graduates of higher education institutions were strongly overrepresented among the respondents (to the detriment of non-graduates). Thus, in general, academic qualifications are a key variable in terms of behavior and attitudes.

The interviews revealed strong links between the ideal pace of life, the ideal organization of activities in the territory and ideal daily modes of transportation. We can distinguish two main **systems of aspirations in terms of mobility** , which can be broken down into several variations:

- Some people focus on **finding the "right limits" in terms of the environment, individual well-being and fairness** . In their ideal, activities would center around a limited perimeter surrounding the home, allowing for the use of active modes (walking, cycling, etc.) for daily commuting and in short times (20 min. max.). Commuting is seen as a waste of time and as something that should be limited so far as possible. In this model, working time would also be reduced, thus making it possible to better control the pace of life, to adapt to natural rhythms (biological cycles, seasons, etc.) and to do less if one wishes. These changes in rhythms of life and everyday living spaces would allow for investment in the local, associative and political life. The use of ICT would be limited to favor face-to-face interactions and to allow individuals to disconnect when they wish.

- Others want to maximize the possibilities in the name of freedom and diversity. Ideally, activities would be scattered in space, but easily accessible from the home by car or public transportation, except for daily shopping, which could be reached on foot. Commuting is seen as a time to relax, a break between distinct spheres of daily life. It allows people to frequent a variety of places and people during the course of their day. Nonetheless, it should not be too time consuming. This reflects an ideal of time proximity between the places frequented in daily life. The ideal pace of life is quite intense, but it is the individual who determines this. ICT use would be "intelligent," i.e. limited to administrative procedures, specific searches and exchanges.

While, in both cases, proximity (geographically in the first case, and in terms of time in the second) is considered an ideal, holidays are an exception, as the latter are seen as a break from everyday life — a chance for a change of scenery.

Overall, **respondents were quite satisfied with their current lifestyles and mobility**. Their ideal lifestyle was, generally speaking, close to their current way of life, though some respondents expressed the desire to take certain practices further, e.g. to completely give up car use, reduce daily travel time or telecommute more easily. Young people who aspired to a slow lifestyle were the only ones whose ideal lifestyle radically differed from their current way of life.

Yet, **for most respondents, the gap between the societal ideal and the current reality was considerable**. They felt the obstacles impeding change were both collective (the economic system, territorial organization, etc.) and individual (habits, mentalities, etc.). More specifically, respondents felt that:

- structural and collective elements (the place of work in society, the political system, economic system, etc.) were of major importance, and that individuals have little control over this. Systemic change was therefore needed to move towards their ideal of society.
- habits, selfishness and individualism were also major obstacles to change. Awareness and individual action were essential for achieving their ideal of society.

These two observations may seem contradictory but can be interpreted in the following way: respondents believe that only collective action by the majority of citizens can make a difference. So far as individual practices fit into the current mobility system, respondents interpret them as supporting the system (what psycho-sociologists call an "attribution bias"). They therefore think that other citizens do not want to change the system, and that collective action is impossible unless a change of mentality occurs. As such, they emphasized the role that both systems and individuals play in maintaining the status quo. However, additional investigations would be necessary to confirm this interpretation.

A summary done by the students presents the results of the survey more fully (in French):



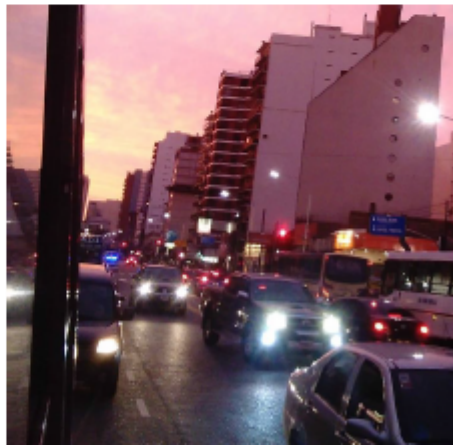
UNIVERSITÉ PARIS 1
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ENQUETE ASPIRATIONS MODES DE VIE ET MOBILITE

Synthèse

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2017



The Mobile Lives Forum also drew some **major conclusions** from the survey (in French). Firstly, it developed a table summarizing the content of the interviews for each of the profile types identified in the quantitative survey. It also summarized respondents' aspirations expressed in terms of pace of life, daily travel distances and holidays, as well as the process that led respondents to adopt a desired lifestyle.

Quelques enseignements de la recherche
Modes de vie et mobilité désirés : quel horizon pour demain ?

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I. La recherche

L'enquête quantitative menée par le Forum Vies Mobiles en 2015 sur les aspirations en termes de mode de vie et de mobilité a donné lieu à la création de cinq profils-type :

- **les auto-addicts** (25% de l'échantillon français) : très attachés à l'automobile individuelle, ils souhaitent des investissements dans les infrastructures routières et sont très réticents au recours quotidien aux modes actifs (marche, vélo...).
- **les adeptes du réseau** (21% de l'échantillon français) : ils souhaitent le développement des transports collectifs, plutôt que le recours aux modes actifs et ceci au détriment de l'automobilité. Ils sont assez favorables au développement des technologies numériques.
- **les marcheurs connectés** (22% de l'échantillon français) : Assez réticents à utiliser les transports collectifs, ils rejettent l'automobile dont ils aimeraient voir la place réduite. Ils aspirent à une vie en proximité, faisant la part belle aux modes actifs. Ils ont une appétence marquée pour le télétravail et l'horizon d'une société très connectée.
- **les décélérateurs optimistes** (9% de l'échantillon français) : ils aspirent à une vie en proximité, plus lente, qui se traduirait par une certaine déconnexion, une réduction de la place du travail dans leur vie et une augmentation du temps passé avec leurs proches.
- **les satisfaits** (23% de l'échantillon français) : plutôt satisfaits des mobilités et des rythmes de vie actuels, ils sont relativement attachés à l'automobile et semblent bénéficier de conditions plus favorables que la moyenne (moindre distance au lieu de travail...).

Le Forum Vies Mobiles a souhaité approfondir la compréhension des modes de vie idéaux en lançant une enquête qualitative sur le territoire français, confiée à un groupe d'étudiantes du Master 2 Aménagement et Urbanisme de l'Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, sous la direction de Juliette Maulat.

III. To find out more



ENQUETE ASPIRATIONS

MODES DE VIE ET MOBILITE

Rapport

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Avril 2017





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ENQUETE ASPIRATIONS

MODES DE VIE ET MOBILITE

Fiches de présentation des enquêtés

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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

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

Associated Thematics :

Lifestyles

- Aspirations
 - Diversity of lifestyles
 - Proximity
 - Rhythms of everyday life
-

To cite this publication :

Juliette Maulat et Louise Laigroz (07 March 2018), « Lifestyles and desired mobilities: laying the foundations for tomorrow », Préparer la transition mobilité. Consulté le 24 November 2024, URL: <https://forumviesmobiles.org/en/project/3509/lifestyles-and-desired-mobilities-laying-foundations-tomorrow>

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Other publications



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Jean-Yves Boulin



Mobility

Agathe Lefoulon, Mobile Lives Forum



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Laurent Cailly, Marie Huyghe, Nicolas Oppenheim



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