



Decarbonizing mobility: what policies in France?

Ongoing research

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In keeping with the Living in the Mobility Transition international research study, which explored travel decarbonization policies in 14 countries, this study focuses on France. How are public authorities and other actors taking up the goal of reducing travel-related CO2 emissions? How does this translate into public policy? The Mobilités Réseaux Territoires Environnement lab team is conducting this investigation.

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Though the need to reduce them was reaffirmed at COP21 in 2015, greenhouse gas emissions continue to rise in the transportation sector.

This study, conducted by a team from the Mobilités Réseaux Territoires Environnement lab, coordinated by Jean-Baptiste Frétiigny, is an extension of the Living in the Mobility Transition project, which was conducted in 14 countries ¹. The project aims to answer this question: how are the actors involved in creating public policies seizing upon the decarbonization of mobility in France? And more specifically, what is mobility's role in decarbonization policies? Conversely, what role do decarbonization issues play in mobility policies?

Compared to the 14 countries already studied, France appears unique. First, France seems to be a pioneer in terms of low-carbon mobility in some ways. In addition to organizing and hosting the COP21, its technological innovation (agro-fuels, electric cars, etc.) and social innovation (bike and car sharing, carpooling, transport on demand, etc.) are also noteworthy. Another national specificity is the considerable tax revenues linked to the car (and notably petrol) as well as the economic and political influence of car manufacturers and their subcontractors, which is closer to the situation in Germany than in Britain or the Netherlands studied previously. Equally unique is the influence of the nuclear industry in French climate policies. Another point of interest is the close relationship between French public policies and those at the European Union level.

The research will focus on the period of gradual affirmation of the transition category in the political arena, initiated by the 2007 Grenelle laws. For specific issues, it will also cover the period from 1970 to 2000, to better understand the historical background of current policies.

The project is based on three key hypotheses:

Incorporating decarbonization as a goal in public policies could be part of a fundamental, albeit partial and largely unfinished shift in mobility-related policies. However, the importance of decarbonizing mobilities in public policies is, in many respects, a blind spot in public action, particularly when it comes to linking this goal with other potentially contradictory ones.

The mobility transition cannot occur without policies based on individuals' practices and aspirations to guarantee their effectiveness.

The change in the mobility transition is largely driven by non-dominant actors in the field of public policies.

These hypotheses will be tested through four areas of analysis:

What representations of French lifestyles are at play in public policies? The challenge lies in analyzing the representations actors draw upon with regard to individuals' current and future lifestyles and mobility.

What do the policy instruments linked to the mobility transition reveal? This area focuses on the use of categories, data, indicators, maps and iconography in the actions carried out. It assumes that these instruments help to reveal implicit tradeoffs, decision-making processes, the prioritization of objectives and the relationships between actors and preferred forms of governance.

What coherency should exist among policies related to the mobility transition? The project will first examine the emergence and uses of the concept of transition as a

category of action in the area of mobility. The next step will be understanding how the goal of reducing emissions overlaps with other goals, such as fighting traffic. To what extent does this overlap reflect conjunctions or contradictions between different objectives and territorial scales?

What power relationships do policies related to the mobility transition create? First, the project will examine the issues of spatial and social justice and territorial equity raised by these initiatives. An investigation of the controversies surrounding the mobility carbon footprint will then help to reveal divergences of imaginaries, interests and ideologies. Finally, particular attention will be paid to the territorial and political scales involved in these initiatives, in a country where political scales overlap in a complex way.

The analysis will be based on the production and combination of two types of data:

A corpus of professional, legal and political literature and a press review in order to identify initiatives and gather actors' remarks;

- 20 to 30 interviews with key players in initiatives related to the mobility transition. National, regional and local actors will be met through four case studies, allowing for further analysis.

Because of its multidisciplinary nature, the team will be able to use sociological and ethnographic methods for analyzing interviews, geographical techniques for analyzing the fields of study, political science methods for analyzing actors' relationships, etc.

The results of the research are expected in fall 2019.

Notes

1 South Africa, Brazil, Canada, Chile, South Korea, The United Arab Emirates, Kazakhstan, New Zealand, Norway, The Netherlands, Portugal, The United Kingdom, Singapore and Turkey.

Mobility

Broadly, the word mobility can be defined as the intention to move and the realization of this movement in geographical space, implying a social change.

More

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.

More

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.

More

¹ <mailto:anne.fuzier@sncf.fr>

² <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/mobility-450>

³ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/car-sharing-2137>

⁴ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/lifestyle-1756>