



## **Vélib', 10 years later: an assessment**

**Finished research**

June 2018

Ten years after its launch, Vélib', the public bicycle sharing service in the Paris region, arrived at a major turning point. In January 2018, the operator JC Decaux was replaced by Smoove, a Montpellier start-up. The Mobile Lives Forum set out to make a first assessment of the Velib': ten years later, how has the Velib' changed mobility and the lifestyles of people living in the Paris region? Is the Vélib' a sustainable and effective mobility program?

### **Research participants**

Student workshop of the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris – 1st year Master –  
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## **I. The research**

Vélib', a bicycle sharing service in the Paris region, attracted the interest of the Mobile Lives Forum as a public program that embodies the renewed interest in cycling starting in the 1990s following several decades of decline. Launched in Paris on July 15, 2007, and then in surrounding areas starting in 2009, the Vélib' was created to support the transition towards more sustainable forms of mobility.

To test this hypothesis, the Mobile Lives Forum commissioned research from two student groups at the Ecole d'Urbanisme de Paris as a part of professional workshops.

The research was conducted to evaluate the impact of the Vélib' on the mobility of Parisians.

The research first aimed to evaluate the impact of the Vélib' as a sustainable public mobility program.

How was the Vélib' designed to be a sustainable mobility program, and has it delivered on this goal?

The Paris city government presented the Vélib' as a sustainable mobility program, announcing the return of the bicycle to Paris at the expense of cars. Existing literature on public bicycle sharing services questions its true environmental impact. On a national scale, bike share users are often accustomed to walking and public transportation, yet rarely do they stop using their cars. If these findings were also found to be true for the Vélib', they would call into question its effectiveness as a sustainable mobility program. However, can the Vélib' contribute to other objectives such as urban marketing, for example?

The study was conducted by first-year students of the Master in Urban Planning. Through a documentary analysis and expert interviews - notably with key contributors to the program's launch - the study examined the creation of the Vélib' and its objectives as a public program. It then used these findings to evaluate the real impact of the Vélib', 10 years after its launch.

The second area of research, led by second-year students of the Master in Urban Planning with a specialism in Transportation and Mobility, focuses on how the Vélib' has impacted the lifestyles and transportation practices of people living in the Paris region.

\* Ten years after its launch, how has the Vélib' transformed mobility in Paris and its surrounding suburbs?

The survey sampled regular and occasional Vélib' users. It paints a portrait of these people, how they use the service, how it impacts their lifestyle or transportation practices and why they use it. The survey also sampled non-users:

- People using personal bicycles: the interviews tested the hypothesis that using the Vélib' leads to an increased use of bicycles in general, and also provides an understanding of why people choose to use their own bicycle rather than a Vélib'.
- Users of other forms of transportation: the interviews identified current barriers that prevent people from using the Vélib' as well as opportunities to develop the service.

This study was launched in October 2017 and ended in April 2018.

## **II. Main findings**

### **1. Vélib' a sustainable and effective public mobility program?**

## **1. Vélib', a sustainable and effective public mobility program: (Workshop with first-year Master students)**

Vélib' is part of a large program undertaken by the Paris city government (administration of Jean Tibéri) to promote the bicycle at the expense of cars, starting in the 1990s. According to the Paris city government, the Vélib' could reduce the number of cars on the road and transform Paris into a pioneering city for sustainable mobility practices.

However, 10 years after its launch, the service's ability to replace cars with bicycles has proven to be very disappointing. Former car drivers represent a minority (less than 5%) of Vélib' users. Most Vélib' users previously traveled by public transportation or on foot to complete the trips they now make using Vélib'.

However, Vélib' has led to an increased sharing of the road (removing parking spaces in order to install Vélib' stations). It has also increased the visibility of bicycles in the public sphere.

Another secondary result is that Vélib' frees up space on public transportation during commuting hours, a time when it is particularly packed. It has positively impacted overcrowding on public transportation in the Paris region.

Moreover, people make use of the Vélib' service. It is the most heavily-used public bike sharing service in France (nearly 7 sessions per day and per bicycle).

However, Vélib' was supposed to be cost-free for the Paris city government - it was even supposed to generate 3 million euros per year. In reality, its annual cost is 33 million euros (or 17 euros for each Parisian aged 14 years and older, the lower age limit for using the service). If this cost were to be spread across the 300,000 users of the service, it would increase the subscription to 149 euros per year (versus 39 euros in 2018).

## **2. Vélib', a practical service for residents of the Paris region (workshop with second-year Master students)**

Cycling – be it on the Vélib' or a personal bicycle – changes people's relationship to space: places that previously seemed far away become more accessible, and this can change how often people visit different neighborhoods.

Moreover, people use bicycles for both utilitarian and hedonistic reasons:

It allows them to save time on certain trips and to gain autonomy (regarding hours and itineraries), notably in comparison to public transportation, which becomes less attractive; the bicycle also allows them to integrate exercise into their daily commute.

Furthermore, it is also a source of pleasure: the feeling of freedom and well-being, the search for solitude, exposure to the sun and wind, the opportunity to rediscover the city...

Most people's lives are not profoundly changed by the regular or occasional use of the Vélib': it is sometimes used as an alternative to public transportation or walking (it rarely replaces trips made by car or on two-wheeled motor vehicles). Vélib' users tend to be more intermodal and multimodal bike owners, reflecting the flexibility of the public bike sharing system. They choose their form of transportation based on the weather, their plans, their clothing, the availability of a Vélib'...

On the other hand, personal bicycle owners systematically prefer traveling by bike. They tend to adapt their lifestyles to the constraints of being a cyclist. For example, the places they frequent are within biking distance and have places to park their bicycle. In other words, cycling structures their lifestyle.

Public bike sharing services and personally-owned bicycles offer different advantages, which explain why some people in the Paris region use both.

Vélib' offers users the opportunity to discover and test cycling before making it part of a routine, and occasionally even buying their own bicycle. On the other hand, personal bicycle owners sometimes revert back to the Vélib' for practical reasons (difficulty of parking their bicycle, no need for bicycle maintenance, lower cost...)

However, this service does not meet the needs of everyone in all situations (standardized bicycles, not knowing if a bicycle will be available...). It does not solve certain problems that are inherent to cycling such as road safety concerns. Public bike sharing systems like the Vélib' are useful; however, they cannot be the only program to support cycling: additional actions are required to develop the practice of cycling.

Video made by master 2 students





### III. To find out more (only available in French)

Power Point - Vélib', politique de mobilité durable ?



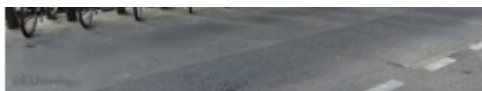
Rapport - Vélib', politique de mobilité durable ?



Analyser une politique de mobilité durable :  
Le cas du Vélib'







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## Synthèse - le "vélibeur", un cycliste pas comme les autres ?

### LE « VÉLIBEUR », UN CYCLISTE PAS COMME LES AUTRES ?

Le commerce adressé par le Forum Vies Mobiles à l'École d'Urbanisme de Paris porte sur les usages et les pratiques du Vélib' et du vélo personnel à Paris et Nord-Ouest. L'objectif est de déterminer aux impacts sur les mobilités et les modes de vie. L'initiation de notre étude vise à une première approche par le mode de vie et sur une analyse des pratiques opérées par une approche qualitative et d'autre part dans le temporel ou, elle s'intéresse à la dynamique de pratique avec le départ de l'usage et l'arrivée d'un deuxième. Cela nous permettra de qualifier le potentiel de développement de Vélib' à Paris et d'interroger les capacités d'adaptation des usagers du dispositif Vélib'.

Ainsi, un état de l'art nous a permis d'établir qu'il était intéressant d'étudier le lien entre les pratiques Vélib' et l'usage du vélo personnel et comment ce lien évolue à travers les mobilités et les modes de vie et contribue à les modifier.

Pour cela, nous avons réalisé une méthodologie selon deux approches :

- Une **enquête quantitative**, basée sur un questionnaire en ligne (100 répondants) ;
- Une **enquête qualitative**, avec 34 entretiens menés sur des profils diversifiés et des observations en situation.

Le croisement de ces approches nous a permis d'établir des schémas et des tendances dans les modes de vie afin de saisir un panorama des effets du Vélib' et de mieux les comprendre.

#### Le Vélib' et le vélo personnel : quelles différences ?

##### Un rapport à l'usage différent

Notre étude met en avant un certain nombre de distinctions entre le vélo personnel et le Vélib'. Le Vélib' bien qu'il ait une forme de vélo classique, s'intéresse différemment dans l'espace qu'un vélo classique et agit différemment.

Les usages qui en sont faits diffèrent aussi avec une multimodalité plus importante pour les vélos et une pratique plus marquée à l'échelle locale que pour le vélo personnel. Les profils de mobilité sont donc différenciés avec un âge moyen moins élevé pour les usagers du Vélib'. Enfin, les représentations différentes qui en sont faites font du Vélib' un vélo particulier.

##### L'arbitrage entre Vélib' et vélo

Le tableau ci-dessous présente un comparatif des besoins motivation à la pratique opérée selon le type de vélo. Vélib' a priori des résultats plus élevés.

Tableau comparatif des enjeux et des motivations du nouveau service Vélib' et du vélo personnel pour les usagers

	Vélib'	Vélo personnel
Rapidité	Plus souvent les transports en commun	Plus souvent les transports en commun
Coût	Très faible	Faible
Disponibilité	Peu ou pas disponible	Toujours disponible
Type de vélo	Un seul type de vélo	Diversité de vélos
Stationnement	Contraintes de stationnement moindres	Contraintes de stationnement
Réalisation	Pas de matériel	Besoin de matériel
Intermodalité	Peu ou pas intermodalité	Limité intermodalité
Porte-à-porte	Contraintes de stationnement	Permet le porte-à-porte

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FORUM VIES MOBILES

## Rapport - le "vélibeur", un cycliste pas comme les autres ?

Atelier "Services, Innovations, Mobilités"

École d'Urbanisme de Paris - Master Transport & Mobilité

### Le Vélib' : usages, pratiques et modes de vie

#### Le "vélibeur", un cycliste pas comme les autres ?

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## Mobility

Broadly, the word mobility can be defined as the intention to move and the

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

## 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

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Keywords : **bike, mobility, users, environnement, lifestyles**

Disciplines : **Social sciences**

Transport mode(s) : **Bicycle**

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

<sup>3</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/lifestyle-1756>

<sup>4</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/bike>

<sup>5</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/mobility>

<sup>6</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/users>

<sup>7</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/environnement>

<sup>8</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/mots-cles/lifestyles>

<sup>9</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/disciplines/sciences-sociales>

<sup>10</sup> <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/modes-transports/bicyclette>