

THE PROJECT

11/28/2012

Research program themes

UNDERSTANDING TO ACT

The two themes of the research program

The Mobile Lives Forum's research program is in keeping with the perspective of the "mobility turn." Its aim is to study mobility in relation to ways of life and territories.

Gradually over the course of its development, possibilities to travel have become more democratized. In addition, speed is ever more alluring. Thus since the Second World War we tend to move faster and further, and to spend more time doing so on a daily basis. At the same time, new information and communication technologies have profoundly changed our relationship to space and to others by allowing us to be together even when we are apart. Finally, the changing relationship between the individual and society is modifying the conventions governing how we live together, including in public spaces of transportation.

All of this defines the way in which we experience the world and our identities - once locally rooted these have now become multiple and spatially distributed - which may create new new inequalities.

The "mobility turn" touches all aspects of political, economic and social life. On the one hand it raises practical issues such as the chronic congestion of road, rail and airport infrastructures, a variety of environmental issues and problems of energy consumption. On the other hand it also results in problems of social and spatial cohesion, the likes of which have never been seen before, of the cognitive management of information, and a rise in areas of friction and disagreement.

Intercultural tensions, fought both locally and globally, have led to profound changes in political debates. Much has been written in the way of possible solutions to these different

problems, but most propose tackling the consequences of these problems rather than looking at their causes, and nonetheless remain controversial.

Addressing these questions in a relevant way requires new conceptual tools because, with the “mobility turn”, travel - its rationale, its how and the way it changes spaces - can no longer be understood simply through static notions that are disassociated from actors and their logics. Nowadays, a key challenge for research is to develop tools capable of defining and analyzing mobility and its social and spatial implications, with the aim of developing means of action.

In this context, the Forum seeks to identify what - quantitatively and qualitatively speaking - can be considered good mobile lives for both individuals and for society as a whole, and to propose a mobility transition. This means thinking about the changes that must take place to influence [lifestyles](#).

This program can be broken down into two main themes.

THEME 1: UNDERSTANDING

Mobile and immobile lives: how do we experience mobility today?

With increasing possibilities for travel, ways of life have become spatially diversified and have come to depend on the accessibility offered by modes of transportation which are constantly evolving due to the development of alternatives to automobility (new electric models or new uses of ‘traditional’ automobility etc.), in addition to the access offered by developments in information and communications technologies. Nowadays physical and virtual spaces combine to provide physical and/or virtual interfaces. We can identify lifestyles based on access to and use of cars, walking, public transportation, Internet-based mobility.

As such, the Forum addresses three complementary questions:

- How do people organize their lives using physical and virtual [movement](#) in the pursuit of social stability and social mobility? How do the relationships between fast-pace and slow-pace change and stability, and proximity and distance play out? How do people use different transport and information technology? How do new developments in these areas affect this behaviour?

- How do individuals experience physical/virtual movement? How do they use their travel time? What are their feelings, sensibilities and experiences? How do they perceive modes of transportation and travel in general?
- What skills do people use to master their travel practices and the geographical spaces they live/work in? How are these skills acquired?

THEME 2: ACTING

Receptive spaces and access: what sustainable mobility policies should we develop?

At a time of regional fragmentation, under the combined influence of the linking of individual mobilities and globalization, what policies favour sustainable lifestyles? What rights to mobility/ immobility should be proposed? Within this framework the Forum will address the following four questions:

- What access policies should be adopted for various forms of mobility, and at what cost to different geographical areas/social classes? What social/political contract should citizens be offered in these matters? What environmental measures should be deployed?
- What mobility imaginaries should be promoted, and how? Is the design of these likely to change current imaginaries?
- What regulatory tools should be developed? How should we think about the link between transportation and urban development? Can we consider reversing regulation by increasing speeds? How can public spaces be designed to enhance the connectivity of metropolitan centres?
- What is SNCF's place/role in these prospects? What policies would ensure the decongestion overcrowded railway lines?

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](#)

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](#)

Movement

Movement is the crossing of space by people, objects, capital, ideas and other information. It is either oriented, and therefore occurs between an origin and one or more destinations, or it is more akin to the idea of simply wandering, with no real origin or destination.

[More](#)

¹ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/page/research-program-themes>

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

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

⁴ <http://en.forumviesmobiles.org/marks/movement-460>