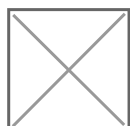




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Living environments and leisure mobility: challenging the compact city



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Mots clés

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[Sébastien Munafò \(Géographe\)](#)

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Intervenants

Sébastien Munafò (Géographe)

Marc Pearce (Mobile Lives Forum) (Chargé de projet au Forum Vies Mobiles)

Texte

Introduction, by Vincent Kaufmann

Urban sprawl is often criticized because of the important energy and resource expenditure associated with it, as well as the pollution produced during the long daily commutes of peri-urban inhabitants. However, the virtuous nature of dense, compact cities (from a mobility standpoint) is also challenged by the idea that such density fosters in residents the need to escape for weekends or during vacations, by plane or car, thereby creating externalities identical to those associated with the daily commute practices observed in peri-urban areas.

 J.-P. Orfeuill and D. Soleyret's hypothesis of compensatory travel – also known as the “barbecue effect” – refers to the fact that, on weekends, peri-urban residents are able to have barbecues in their gardens, while many urban dwellers seek to escape their living environment, traveling long distances by plane, train or car to get closer to nature.

 In his doctoral thesis, S. Munafò analyzed leisure mobility in Switzerland, cross-comparing contextual, quantitative and qualitative analyses. His work shows that the travel habits of inner city dwellers and those of peri-urban residents do not greatly differ when we consider travel over an entire year (i.e. including weekends and holidays), and not just daily mobility. He also noted that truly compensatory leisure mobility was rare: though inner city residents do travel farther and more frequently for leisure purposes, this travel is not necessarily driven by the desire to escape from their dense urban environment. Weekends spent visiting other cities are an example of this.

 Sébastien Munafò concluded from these observations that families choose a living environment that suits their lifestyles and therefore do not feel the need to escape from them. He also concluded that specific characteristics of living environments give rise to certain lifestyles rather than others. This also applies to public transport: the better the quality of the service, the less likely people are to use their cars or nearby airports, which incites longer-distance leisure travel.

 However, if there is no clear relationship between dense living environments and occasional leisure mobility – considering that dense cities do not generate less travel on an annual basis – the soundness of the compact city is therefore put into question. This question is crucial insofar as energy

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overconsumption and pollution are two of the principle arguments against urban sprawl. This is a key issue for regional development.

 In the following debate, Sébastien Munafò will defend the idea that the compact city remains an indispensable model, especially in terms of the wealth of amenities it offers; whereas Marc Pearce of the Mobile Lives Forum will defend the argument that it is imperative to consider the many lifestyles in presence in city areas such as Geneva or Zurich and the diversity of living environments they require.

 To go further

 ORFEUIL, J.-P., SOLEYRET, D. (2002). Quelles interactions entre les marchés de la mobilité à courte et longue distance ? Recherche Transport Sécurité n°76. Inrets.

MUNAFÒ, S. (2015). Cadres de vie, modes de vie et mobilités de loisirs : les vertus de la ville compacte remises en cause ? EPFL, Lausanne, 2015.

Chapô

Should we advocate for the compact city? Geographer Sébastien Munafò defends the indispensability of this model, particularly for its environmental qualities and the urbanity it fosters. Marc Pearce of the Mobile Lives Forum, on the other hand, feels it is crucial to consider, instead, many lifestyles in presence in city areas such as Geneva or Zurich and the diversity of living environments they require.

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