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Living a maximum of 30 minutes from work: the hypothesis of a "coherent city"



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Living a maximum of 30 minutes from work: the hypothesis of a "coherent city"

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"Coherent" cities are described in functional, rather than morphological, terms: Emre Korsu, Marie-Hélène Massot and I define them as cities where nobody lives too far from its work. In our study of the Paris Region, we require that each household has at least one working adult who can commute to work in 30 minutes or less on the fastest form of transportation, be it in public transportation or by car. What we are seeking to test is how cities, with their current network of office buildings and housing, can provide this possibility to everyone and under what circumstances. The battle has not been won. Today, a third of workers in the Ile-de-France spend more than 30 minutes in overcrowded trains or congested freeways, which is what motivated us to undertake this work.

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****1. Build new housing for a quarter of relocated households****

Through a massive housing swap, we succeed at relocating three-quarters of working households into existing housing that is "suitable" to the size of their families. That means that we have to think about building new housing for one-quarter of relocated households. What's missing, especially in surrounding suburbs, are first large apartments for private rental, then for public housing and finally for ownership. This need is significant - but not enormous - and could be met through three years of housing construction that is carefully selected to be in the right areas of the region.

****2. Relocate three-quarters of individuals into less comfortable living situations****

If we consider the average real estate prices per neighborhood, those who relocate into existing housing will be required to move into areas where real estate is a bit more expensive on average. In exchange, their transportation conditions will improve. But in each area, the price per square meter varies in function of the quality

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In conclusion, today's rules, tax laws, and even common transportation fees for the Ile-de-France encourage people to become immobile residents, all while the economy is demanding a higher level of mobility on the job market. Combined, this leads to overcrowding in trains and on highways despite a 10% unemployment rate. This expensive solution does not make anyone happy.

In summary we can build coherent cities progressively, by adding much needed coherence to public policies step-by-step. It is not a revolution, but there is work to be done!

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What measures should be taken to reduce the distance between work and home to a maximum of 30 minutes? What changes should be made? What challenges to overcome? Jean-Pierre Orfeuill, specialist in urban mobility, talks to us about the conclusions of his study which aims to transform the Paris region into a "coherent city."

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