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The Car-Society and Beyond.

Par Jacques Lévy. Le 1 December 2015

This Traversal marks the official opening of a scientific partnership between *EspacesTemps.net* and the PostCarWorld interdisciplinary research project, funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation (2014-2016).

As one can notice by browsing the contents of the already-published articles in this series, some papers were released before the start of the project, sometimes by authors that are now members of this research group. This simply shows that, for a social sciences journal that takes inhabited space and urbanity seriously, it makes sense to pay attention to mobility. However, this thematic convergence is not sufficient to explain why this journal and project should combine their momentums.

As its primary objective, the PostCarWorld team has proposed to simulate a post-car world mobility system. To do so, scholars involved in the project first strive to analyse, through qualitative as well as quantitative surveys, the possible changes in the mobility demand pattern, as they consider a post-car society as the outcome of a deliberate, enlightened and positive political choice, and not as the mere impact of outer forces or constraints. On the supply side, nobody today would challenge the conclusion that numerous disciplinary or interdisciplinary studies have reached: mobility networks and the overall inhabited space are intimately connected. If we

envisioned a dynamic that profoundly modified offer, supply, and its equilibrium, then, necessarily, major switches in attitudes, practices and ways of life would occur. In short, a beyond-car society would be *another* society than the one we live in. As a car-world can be seen as a "*fait social total*" (a "full social fact"), as in Marcel Mauss's idea, the overcoming of this situation would be a dramatic swing, a full social event, something like a revolution.

Given the devotion that billions of people worldwide give to their car in a socio-political environment that is often described as conservative and reluctant to sweep-up reforms, is this scientific simulation nothing but an abstract exercise or the sad revenge of a few frustrated activists? Not at all, in fact, and for a good reason: the issue of a beyond-car society is clearly present in various dimensions of current social life, for instance in the spectacular renewal of transit-oriented urbanism, in the growing "uncoolisation" of the car civilisation amongst younger generations in Japan, Europe and North America, and, obviously, in the inclusion of mobility topics in the public debate on natural environments and sustainable development. If we consider a beyond-car-society or other major societal issues, we can observe that tiny problem-solving changes, weak signals of emerging inflexions, or slow paradigm switches are typical of the complex invention of possible futures in a society of multiple actors.

This is why this series, which will be progressively enriched by PostCarWorld's research outputs, is both about post-car worlds and, more generally, about social change.

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