

Anticipating the Change: Visions and Perspectives towards a Post-Car World

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Abstract : Different indicators, such as modal shares in mobility practices or car ownership, may suggest that the century of car dominance - at least in Europe and North America - is already behind us. If the emergence of the car had radical spatial and social consequences, what would be the implications of its gradual disappearance - which could be expected in the context of ecological consciousness, economic and energetic constraints as a result of both urban policies as well as lifestyle choices? To what extent shall urban experts account for this limited but visible transition from car-dominated systems towards alternative models of mobility in which the individual-motorized mobility (car) is not central; what models of urbanity could be imagined to support such a transformation? We have examined a selection of projects at different scales and within different contexts - new planned cities, dense urban areas or territories of dispersion - whose visions involve a significant shift from the current car system. We have been looking into their tools, strategies and different measures of car reduction, as well as their varied approaches to public space as an inevitable corollary to this change. The car's dominance was formerly questioned by advocates of public space, rather than through interests in ecological urban design or other urban planning concerns. In the 60s already a universal longing for the qualities of traditional urban space led to a critique of the proliferation of fast roads, and thus the car's colonization of everyday life. Reclamation of public space as the city's quintessential social territory reappears today in contemporary discourses and reinforces the shift-provoking trends towards a new urbanity freed from car dominance. In a hypothetical process of the progressive phasing-out of the car, we shall expect fundamental transformations in spatial practices of the city, accompanied by the physical configuration of its public spaces. What will be the main characteristics of the new emerging spaces of sociability and where shall we encounter them? This contribution is an ongoing research within the framework of Post-Car World, an interdisciplinary project that explores the future of mobility through the role of the car.

Keywords : mobility, urbanity, future visions, public space

Conference Title : ICBAU 2015 : International Conference on Building, Architecture and Urbanism

Conference Location : Paris, France

Conference Dates : April 27-28, 2015