Artisanal Transport and Urban Mobility: Spaces and Present Issues

Thursday, 10 March 2016
Université Paris Diderot

Context and Main Topics

Millions of urban dwellers around the world rely on non-centralized or partially centralized forms of transport for their everyday mobility (Cervero, 1997, Godard, 2002). Such forms, often labelled “informal”, appeared in urban areas of the developing world to meet an increasing demand for mobility which public transport policies could not serve due to a lack of financial and institutional resources (Cervero, Golub, 2011: 489). The concept of “artisanal transport” allows us to overtake the stigmatizing and inadequate category of “informal transport”. It insists on the sparse structure of vehicle ownership and the high degree of autonomy and responsibility of the drivers and field staff in general (Godard, 2008: 1-2).

Compared to the centralized and planned forms of transport, artisanal transport is little discussed by the social sciences. However, it represents a major component of the transports systems in developing cities. Beyond negative discourses which assimilate them to a manifestation of backwardness, studies have underlined their main advantages, particularly weak costs for public authorities and their great flexibility in terms of space and time (Goldblum, 2001: 19, Ferro, Breuil, Allaire, 2015: 13). In several cities, they make up the single offer of collective transport. In other major metropolises of the developing world, artisanal transports cohabit with new centralized systems. Moreover, the dramatic pace of private motorization raises the problem of the adaptation of artisanal transport to this new context. In the same time, the rise of collaborative economy and the trend to liberalization lead to the emergence of transport systems which could be regarded as “artisanals” in industrial and post-industrial cities.

The aim of this study day is to bring together graduate students (Master or PhD candidates) and experienced researchers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds in social sciences and transports studies (anthropology, economy, geography, urban studies, history, sociology,….) to discuss the dynamics of
artisanal transport in various contexts. We welcome any presentation proposal dealing with artisanal transport which comprises both collective (buses, minibuses, collective taxis) and individual modes (motorbikes taxis, motorized or non-motorized tricycles). The proposals can take up one or several themes mentioned in the below list (which is not exhaustive).

1. **Coping with the Complexity of Artisanal Transport Systems: Theoretical and Methodological Issues**
   - How to deal with the various processes that underpin the running of artisanal transport networks? How to analyze the diversity of actors, interactions and scales involved? To what extent does this diversity sustain the mobility of populations?
   - How to construct and delineate artisanal transport as a research object, considering supply as well as demand? Do any other concepts suit better to certain types of urban areas, or to particular national or regional contexts?
   - What data (whether quantitative or qualitative) should be used in a study of artisanal transport? How to access or gather these data in the field? What theoretical frameworks are most appropriate to analyse them?

2. **Innovation within Artisanal Transport: Adaptation, Demand, Spaces**
   - In the absence of a centralized transport supply, how do artisanal transport systems organize themselves, between innovation and adaptation? In what types of places and spaces do artisanal transport tend to develop primarily? What role does it play in urban mobilities in relation to other available transport solutions?
   - How does artisanal transport respond to the transformations of urban space (metropolization, the rearrangement of urban functions, urban sprawl)? How does it resist (or not) internal crises within the sector and the competition with new centralized public transport systems? What is the relevance of the notions of crisis and resilience for understanding such dynamics?
   - How do innovations appear and spread within the sector?

3. **Organizational Dynamics and the Interplay of Artisanal Transport Actors**
   - What types of actors interact in the everyday operation of artisanal transport?
   - Artisanal transport systems are built by internal and external competition. What role do conflictuality, whether open or latent, play in their self-regulation?
   - How do public authorities position themselves in relation to artisanal transport, which initially appeared and operated outside their control? By what means do they seek to regulate and/or control the sector?
   - How are management and operating models evolving? Is there a trend toward the incorporation of the sector, which could eventually lead to its centralization (Rimmer, 1986, Godard, 1987)? Do some cities conversely witness a scattering of ownership and/or management? To what extend and how do political and economic contexts, whether local or national, influence these evolutions?

**Submission Guidelines**
Each proposal can be submitted in either English or French. It should take the form of a one-page abstract (approximately 550-600 words) which mentions a research question and the main points that will be discussed throughout the presentation.
Please send your proposal to Léa Wester (lea.wester@laposte.net) and Rémi Desmoulière (remi.desmouliere@inalco.fr) not later than January 10, 2016.

Scientific Committee
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References


