



Some remarks on the features submitted as part of the IVM student journalist competition

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What the articles submitted by student journalists from Brazil, the USA, Colombia, Denmark, Belgium and France have in common is the focus on mobility problems in relatively large cities, even though Lausanne and San Paulo are not really on the same scale.

However, Lausanne can be considered as part of the Lake Geneva metropolis, in which, as in the other agglomerations where the students did their research, the distances travelled are often long, the methods of transport diverse, and the problems multiple.

The students' entries quite rightly did not attempt a comprehensive analysis of any of these cities. As they were asked, they set out to look for experiments and innovations. This explains why they showed little interest in large-scale travel practices, major infrastructures and in the policies practised by local or national government. They essentially focused on innovations issuing from civil society, associations of all kinds, small economic units, local structures and activists for particular transport methods. They did not ignore the potential contributions of new technologies, but most of them at least did not assign any special importance to them as a driving force.

None of the studies revealed any out-and-out innovation. Probably the most original method of transport studied was the helicopters of San Paulo (400 of them, used by the superrich who are also victims of congestion), which directly assist only a small number of people, but impose their noise on millions... But even the moped-taxis, on which the winning team produced an excellent report, are not entirely an innovation, since they have been around in certain countries for a very long time. Nonetheless, their emergence in San Paulo is an innovation and a very interesting one.

As a general rule, it was the more spontaneous solutions, created by all sorts of actors to solve problems that cannot be resolved by the major transport methods, which particularly attracted the attention of the student journalists. They therefore concentrated above all on those excluded from metropolitan transport: the poor with little mobility, children, the disabled, old people. They looked at solutions that can probably not be generalised, which

themselves often create significant problems, but which can contribute to making urban mobility a genuine right. Provided that the public authorities recognise them, support them, protect them. Thus, the Danish team showed that without significant public input, barge transport would not be viable, although its users found it very convenient.

Likewise, the systems organised by parents to accompany their children to school on foot or by bicycle, run up against the problem of parental availability and probably require government support of one form or another in certain districts. Specific transport solutions for disabled people are also absolutely necessary in many cases, but mobility for this population quite clearly also requires systems that pool resources and should perhaps be less specialised.

Finally, the student features show us the creativity that exists in this sphere, the commitment to working with the people concerned in order to find solutions, to working directly with the users of the city and of city transport. They emphasise the need not simply to respond to the mass of transport requirements by mass transport, and the importance of a variety and multiplicity of solutions. However, they also emphasise that even small streams can contribute to great rivers, and that it is worth ensuring that these streams join up.

These features could help raise awareness in government and amongst the actors of civil society of the challenges of urban mobility today, of the difficulties that some people face in getting around, and of the advantage of paying attention to the initiatives that emerge here and there.