

## Replace, Retake, Remake – Perspectives on Urban Mobility after the Car

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Three recent news articles spanned an image of how transformation to a post-growth society might look and feel like on the communal level. The first was from the [Worldbank](#) (yes, the Worldbank...), focusing on sustainable transportation as a means to battle climate change. Secondly, an article on the increasing [restrictions to car use in developing economies](#). There, national and communal governments engage on what is called “vehicle demand management”, partly for decreasing air pollution in heavily urbanized areas but also for reducing congestions. Finally, those radicals from the [Harvard Business Review](#) embraced the beauty of ridesharing in US cities.

The majority of people living today are doing this in cities – and this number will continue to rise up to 70% of the World’s population until 2050. In order to provide a liveable urban environment, with clean air as well as easy and safe transportation, cities around the globe will put harsh measures on individual car use. This is done out of totally non-ideological reasons: the cities are suffocating and have no space available for massive transportation infrastructures. Low-carbon transportation is not only low-carbon, it is also light on the infrastructure foot. A bus substitutes for 60 cars, a tram for over 100, a train for over 400. The necessity of big, spacious transportation infrastructures is reduced by switching towards public transportation and alternative means of using the car as in carsharing.

Carsharing is especially on the rise in recent years. In Germany the numbers exploded from 2009 onwards with the introduction of so-called freefloating services like Car2go or DriveNow, both being also available in North America and also igniting a [boom in carsharing numbers](#). Ridesharing, as advocated in the HBR piece, is part of the wider unfolding carsharing environment. In the broadest sense, carsharing means to share cars with another. It can be your own car, e.g. with [Snappcar](#), or a collectively owned car as in many early carsharing associations, or a company-owned car you have access to like in most upscaled carsharing services today. Ridesharing is on the borders of carsharing, in the US the most notable service is Lfyt, in Germany it is Fliinc. As can be seen from these few remarks, the carsharing market itself is diverse and heterogeneous, it entails grassroots community initiatives, OEM, technology start-ups, and players from the public transport sector e.g. in Germany the national rail operator Deutsche Bahn.

Connecting the dots between these three articles I mentioned, it is clear that transportation is up for a big transformation in the next couple of years. Tightening legislation in up until now booming car markets in emerging countries on the one hand, alternative mobility services rising from the sharing economy paradigm on the other hand will change the way we are mobile dramatically. This is already starting and gaining ground in cities around the planet, but it is not likely to stop there. Especially the automotive industry will not just get a makeover, it will change its face completely within the next 10 to 15 years. If the current OEM will continue to play a significant role is unclear. Pushing cars out of city centers, out of cities in general, and setting up new mobility service supply chains will reduce the demand for cars. With carsharing e.g. there is a replacement effect of around 1:8, meaning that one carsharing car – be it a rideshare or other – will replace up to 8 self-owned cars. We conducted a research on that detailed in the paper “[Ecological Allowance of Enterprise](#)”, examining the effects on both ecological impact of cars as well as value added in the automotive sector. There is still a business case lying in automobility, but not necessarily in producing automobiles.

Cars will be replaced in cities, both by legislation but also by the massive introduction and diffusion of alternative sharing models. These new businesses, providing IT for mobility access and information on so-called intermodality (e.g. [Moovel](#) in Germany), and – yes! – also cars for carsharing, maybe electric cars as part of a smart urban power grid (Hello, Tesla!), will grow significantly. But all the others clinging to an old mode of individual transportation will inexorably decline and cease to exist. Substituting the car in the city with something else like shared automobility will mean the full inclusion of the car as part of public transportation. Directly following from that will be a great [re-seizuring of our city streets as public spaces](#), signifying a new era of urban life. Personally, I cannot wait to see it unfold massively in parallel and on a global scale. The time of the car as a predominant mean of individual transportation is up and nothing will prevent this from happening.

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