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The disenclavement of a region: two civil society organisations with competing approaches to mobility justice

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Abstract

This article analyses the controversy around the "disenclavement of the Chablais"[1], a local mobilisation over a motorway project in the frontier zone north of Haute-Savoie, drawing upon the notion of mobility justice proposed by Mimi Sheller. Interviews with competing civil society organisations, both at odds with the regional planning authorities, show the polysemic and malleable nature of this concept. The focus on the backgrounds of the activists highlights the role of indigenous resources and socialisation to mobility in their struggle to impose a territorial vision that is consonant with their lifestyles. To this end, the organisations seek to develop a definition of "enclavement" that will (de)credibilise the local need for a new motorway. An examination of the spatial dimensions of the movement reveals an engagement by and for the local territory founded on a transport infrastructure. All in all, this article sets out the social and spatial conditions under which "fair" mobility can be legitimised.

Keywords: mobility justice, transport infrastructure, spatial mobilisation, daily mobility, frontier zone

1. Translator's note: the word "disenclavement" (and its derivatives) here refers to the act of taking a region out of isolation, in this case by building a motorway link. In French, a region is said to be "enclaved" (*enclavée*) when it is poorly served by transport and its access is difficult or time-consuming, and the term was retained in English because it is important to local mobilisations and debates.

Résumé

Cet article analyse la controverse du « désenclavement du Chablais », une mobilisation locale autour d'un projet autoroutier dans l'espace frontalier au nord de la Haute-Savoie, à l'aide de la notion de justice mobilitaire proposée par Mimi Sheller. Une enquête par entretiens auprès d'associations concurrentes, mais toutes deux en rupture avec les autorités de la planification territoriale, témoigne du caractère polysémique et malléable de ce concept. L'attention portée aux trajectoires des militant·e·s souligne le rôle des ressources d'autochtonie et de la socialisation à la mobilité dans leur lutte pour imposer une vision territoriale conforme à leurs modes de vie. Les associations mènent pour cela un travail de définition de « l'enclavement », dans le but de (dé)crédibiliser le besoin local d'une nouvelle autoroute. L'examen des dimensions spatiales de la mobilisation révèle un engagement par et pour le territoire de vie, à partir d'une infrastructure de transport. Au total, cet article précise les conditions, sociales et spatiales, depuis lesquelles il devient possible de légitimer une « juste » mobilité.

Mots-clés : justice mobilitaire, infrastructure de transport, mobilisation spatiale, mobilité quotidienne, espace frontalier

Mobility justice, competing interpretations

Daily mobility[2] stands at the point where the (dys)functions of our contemporary societies intersect (Bourdin, 2005; Orfeuil and Ripoll, 2015). It is hardly surprising, then, that mobility justice developed in the literature under the influence first of Anglophone sociology (Cresswell, 2006) and then of Mimi Sheller (Sheller, 2018a). The concept of mobility justice encapsulates the issues at stake in the research currents on "transport equity" and "transport justice" (Verlinghieri and Schwanen, 2020), which are themselves concerned with questions of spatial justice (Soja, 2009). In short, it aims to cast light on the interdependence between power relations and the production of unequal forms of mobilities and immobilities, ranging from the scale of individual human bodies to the planet as a whole (Sheller, 2018b).

The value of the notion of mobility justice is that it constitutes a step back from the overly objectifying approaches to individual travel popular in transport geography. It gives greater consideration to the socially constructed dimension of mobility (Massot and Orfeuil, 2005). More specifically, research has shown disparities in the willingness

2. Unless otherwise stated, I use the term "mobility" in this text to refer to "everyday mobility".

of different social classes to assert and legitimise their rights to movement (Wagner, 2010; Rousseau, 2008). Given that mobility is a source of conflicts (Orfeuil and Ripoll, 2019, p. 121-124), there is every reason to believe that it too reflects "different, often contradictory, even conflicting conceptions of what is 'fair' and what is 'unfair'" (Gervais-Lambony and Dufaux, 2009, p. 4).

Yet the literature–in geography and sociology alike–has so far proved coy about using mobility justice to shed light on situations where competing interpretations of a "fair" way of getting around are at play. This is all the more surprising given the growing friction between environmental and social mobility issues in political and institutional discourse (Gallez, 2015, p. 58). To make up for this shortcoming, this article uses a protest movement around a motorway infrastructure project to decipher the opposition between two rival civil society organisations (CSO). For one group, which is opposed to the plan, the struggle is part of the literature on large, unnecessary, top-down projects, insofar as its members want to avoid the accusation that they are pursuing only private interests (Grisoni, 2015; Sébastien, 2013). The other group, which supports the new development, has a trickier path to negotiate, which entails supporting the area's elected representatives while remaining wary of their political agenda. Together, these CSOs challenge the "transcendental vision of the general interest" (Sébastien, 2016), a vision that appears to be becoming ever more fluid in its outlines.

Because this work takes place in geographical space, this article is inspired by the revival of research into the spatial dimension of mobilisation (Auyero, 2005; Hmed, 2020; Dechézelles and Olive, 2019), of which mobility is an essential component. By re-embedding the protest in the materiality of its territory, it seeks to pay attention to perceptions of mobility justice that are based upon and reflect differentiated (socio)spatial resources.

The interminable institutional history of the disenclavement of the Chablais region

> "One thing is sure, if the City of Geneva lodges an appeal, we will take hard-hitting measures to blockade Geneva in strategic places at rush hour and we will be calling on all the people of Chablais to join us, as well as all the elected representatives of Chablais with their blue, white and red scarves on Swiss territory!!!" (association Oui au désenclavement du Chablais, February 2020)

These words, posted on social media sites by the Oui au désenclavement du Chablais Association (Yes to the Disenclavement of Chablais)[3] in February 2020, set the tone for the campaign that has marked the north of Haute-Savoie for 25 years. A few months earlier, on 24 December 2019, Prime Minister Édouard Philippe decreed that the 16.5 km A412 motorway link between the towns of Thonon-les-Bains ("Thonon" in the rest of this article) and Machilly, near Annemasse, was a public interest project (DUP) (see figure 1). The project follows on from two others, which were not implemented, whose DUPs were eventually cancelled: the first in 1995, which was challenged by environmental groups, and the second in 2006, which was abandoned for financial reasons and then expired in 2016. The plan is that this third incarnation will be operated by a private contractor supported by a €100 million balancing subsidy from the *département*, a package that has polarised local debate.

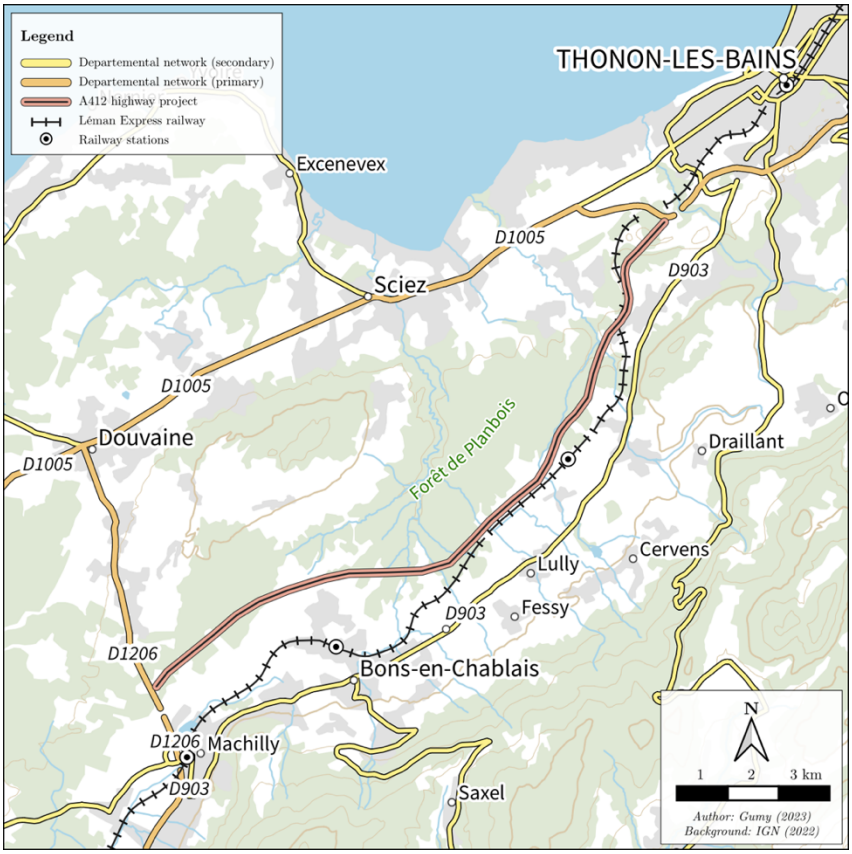

Figure 1: Location map of the A412 and Léman Express projects
Produced by: Alexis Gumy (2023); background map: IGN (2022)

3. Hereinafter referred to as the "Désenclavement Association", to use the expression employed by its members, or simply "Désenclavement".

This new project, which follows the same route as the previous versions and runs past sparsely populated hamlets and forested areas, is embedded in a particularly dynamic region. Between 2013 and 2019, the population in the Geneva and Annemasse catchment area grew by 1.9%, even more than in Haute-Savoie where the rate was already above the national average (1.2%, compared with 0.4% in metropolitan France).[4] This demographic growth is due in particular to the attractiveness of the Swiss job market, which accounted for 34.3% of the working population of the Thonon conurbation in 2018 and 49.8% of that of the Annemasse-les-Voirons conurbation. Although a majority (31.2%) of cross-border workers belong to the so-called intermediate socio-professional categories, their median salaries (€3,310 per month) make the local residential market highly competitive. As well as pushing up the cost of living, cross-border employment contributes to congestion on an ageing road network. The public consultation documents for the A412 forecast daily traffic of around 15,000 vehicles and a heavy goods vehicle rate of 5% on the departmental roads along the route (D903, D1005 and D1206).

On Friday 14 February 2020, the case took on a new twist. Several organisations, including the Association de concertation et de proposition pour l'aménagement et les transports (ACPAT; planning and transport consultation and proposal association), lodged a new appeal against the third DUP for the A412. Other signatories to this appeal were the French political party Europe Écologie-Les Verts and the executive authorities of the border municipalities of Geneva and Carouge on the grounds of an agreement between France and Switzerland (known as "Espoo"). These municipalities argued that the project would compete unfairly with the Léman Express, a new regional cross-border rail network (RER) service inaugurated in December 2019, in which they had invested heavily. The involvement of non-French communities in legal action to oppose a decision by the French government had a powerful symbolic impact at local level.

At a time when the French Conseil d'État had not yet ruled on the appeals against the A412's DUP status,[5] I was able to survey the Désenclavement Association

4. These figures and those that follow are taken from various INSEE publications and, for traffic measurements, from the public consultation file: INSEE, *Haute-Savoie: la plus forte croissance démographique de métropole*, published 11/01/2019, accessed 30/05/2022; INSEE, *Dossier complet, Département de la Haute-Savoie (74)*, published 21/02/2022, accessed 30/05/2022; INSEE, *Travailleurs frontaliers : six profils de " navetteurs " vers la Suisse*, published 17/05/2022, consulted 30/05/2022; INSEE, *Près de la Suisse, un ménage sur deux perçoit un revenu de source étrangère*, published 10/02/2022, consulted 30/05/2022; Direction régionale de l'environnement, de l'aménagement et du logement Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes (DREAL), *Projet de liaison autoroutière concédée entre Machilly and Thonon-les-Bains*, concertation publique, published January 2016, consulted 30/05/2022.
5. This was still true at the time of writing of this article. On 30/12/2021, the Conseil d'État finally dismissed the opponents' case, although there is every reason to believe that the matter is far from over.

("pro-A412") and the ACPAT ("anti-A412")[6] at the height of their respective mobilisations. This article is based on a series of semi-structured interviews conducted with locally engaged residents (N=12) and representatives of the public authorities with a close interest in the case (N=8), supplemented by an analysis of the A412 planning documents.[7] The first section describes the organisations involved, in order to establish the conditions under which their competing claims emerge. The second part reveals how the A412 was used as an instrument to challenge the development of the Chablais region as a whole. Following the appeal lodged by the City of Geneva, the final section looks at the process whereby the arguments used to demonstrate the public (in)utility of the A412 were re-spatialised.

Pro- and anti-disenclavement groups: project of *the* century, project of *another* century

Before looking at the construction and development of the two CSOs' arguments, we need to look at their sociology. Although we introduce them here one after the other, it should not be forgotten that these organisations are engaged in a process of mutual evaluation (Mathieu, 2012), a "couples dynamic" (Sommier, 2020) that is a catalyst for their different conceptions of mobility justice. The composition of their "autochthony resources" and processes of socialisation to mobility are a focus of particular attention.

ACPAT: a variety of profiles for a multiplicity of arguments

ACPAT was founded in 1987 to fight the "Transchablaisienne" project, which was intended to complete the motorway network around Lake Geneva. Following the Swiss authorities' withdrawal from the plan, a shortened project between Annemasse and Thonon was granted public interest status in 1995, before ACPAT helped to bring about its cancellation two years later. As Josiane Favre,[8] manager of a retail chain in the Chablais region, explained, ACPAT took advantage of this success to change its name from Association contre le projet d'autoroute transchablaisienne (Against the

6. Most of the survey work took place during the second wave of COVID-19 (February 2021 to July 2021), so the majority of interviews were conducted by video.
7. This article is part of a doctoral research project midway between urban sociology and engineering sciences, focusing on mobility phenomena in European border areas, using mainly quantitative methods (Gumy, 2023).
8. While all the geographical entities (insofar as they were the actual target of the mobilisation) and the names of the organisations have not been anonymised, all the names of the respondents have been altered. Because both organisations have relatively few members, their socio-economic characteristics have been described cursorily in order to maintain their anonymity.

Transchablaisienne motorway association) to Association de concertation et de proposition pour l'aménagement et les transports. The purpose of this change was to "broaden the appeal" (Sébastien, 2013), in other words to move away from a "really anti-motorway" stance, around which there was not much local unity, to become a source of proposals.

This goal was based on a process of tacit evaluation (Meulemans and Tari, 2021) conducted by the organisation, as can be seen from the amount of grey literature available on its official website. Édith Morin, a Swiss civil servant, draws on her familiarity with natural areas in criticising the public authorities, regretting that "ecological arguments [are] rarely listened to". More than because they share similar positions in the socio-economic hierarchy, ACPAT's members–often lower-middle-class people either working in or retired from jobs in the public sector, commerce or farming–come together primarily to share activities (hiking, hunting, horse-riding, etc.) associated with the Chablais' natural environment. From these activities, they draw resources of autochthony, understood as a "stock of knowledge and [a] sense of authority to act" (Sawicki, 2019) on the A412 project. It is therefore no coincidence that ACPAT claims to have brought together hunting and farming groups as well as local people, none of them famous for their capacity to agree on consensual land use planning.

ACPAT is known for its out-and-out rejection of the A412 project. This is what Édith explains when she describes why she left an organisation that advocated a more qualified "yes, but" position:

> "And I went to a public meeting […] and then I said, 'so in fact, we have no say in anything that happens in this 300 m strip?' 'No, no, no, it's up to the contractor to decide. We'll apply a DUP to this strip and then the contractor will decide where to put it.' I said 'right, so then why did you get us to come here, since there's nothing we can do about it anyway', right, and I'd been a bit aggressive, and so there were some people in the room who came over to me and said 'well, we're going to fight this, absolutely…' because it didn't even occur to me to say 'no', this was the government, there was no way you could say 'no' […]. And so, afterwards, well, I met these people from ACPAT and we agreed: 'well, we weren't going to say "yes", we were absolutely going to say "no"!' And that was something completely different from the previous organisation […]." (Édith Morin, 57, Swiss civil servant)

For Édith, meeting the members of ACPAT "shook up the way she had previously been socialised" (Mathieu, 2012, p. 200) to protest action. During our interview, she told me that she spent her free time building up the case for the appeal, becoming

increasingly more militant as her involvement grew. Many ACPAT activists are also engaged in other environmental movements, Notre-Dame-des-Landes being the most frequent and also the highest profile case. Sébastien Girod, who works in the primary sector, told me that he "picks up ideas" from his encounters with the "No TAV" movement (*Treno ad alta velocità*, Italian for high-speed train), illustrating how ACPAT's range of action gains diversity through "activist migrations" (Grisoni, 2019).

The Désenclavement Association: members with a pro-road history

The wish to draw inspiration from examples of protest movements outside the Chablais is far from shared by the 200 members of Désenclavement, especially the CSO's founding members who are still the most active today.[9] As Patrice Mollard, one of the few members who work in the building and public works sector, explains, the organisation is mainly "a network of acquaintances, a network of friends" who are primarily interested in local issues.

Patrice tells the story of how, the day after the first DUP for the A412 project was cancelled (for which the ACPAT "radicals", as he calls them, were partly responsible), the "Oui au contournement de Thonon, oui au désenclavement du Chablais" (Yes to the Thonon bypass, yes to the disenclavement the Chablais region) Association was set up. It also scored a major victory when the Thonon bypass was approved in 2004, which also led to a change in the association's name. Patrice claims to have played a role as an "accelerant" in this project, which he sees as a demonstration of the promises of traffic reduction associated with the A412: "We wonder how we could live without the Thonon bypass […] which has changed the lives of a whole population."

For the members of Désenclavement, the support for the A412 derives from similar life paths. All of them have advanced professionally (and socially) in the industrial sector and already–or will before they retire–occupy managerial positions or run their own businesses. The career of Gérard Mouchet, a retiree from the agri-food industry, is typical of this trajectory. Born in Haut-Chablais in the late 1940s, he spent his childhood in France's overseas territories because of his father's military career. When he returned, aged 18, he began work as a salesman, then rose through the ranks by serving his bosses well to "end up as an executive nonetheless". Like other members of the organisation, he attributes his career success to his ability to demonstrate

9. As the active members of the Désenclavement Association are exclusively men, I do not use gender-neutral terms when writing about them.

intense (self)mobility, to "having moved around a lot". The notion of a long-term "mobility trajectory" (Cailly et al., 2020) is a way to understand how these activists associate their career advancement with the opportunities offered by the French road system, to the point that they have ingrained attitudes that are reactivated in support of these infrastructures.

Désenclavement is therefore very socially homogeneous. This homogeneity is not limited to the group's composition, but also influences the nature of its activities "leading to the exclusion of applicants who are too different" (Mathieu, 2012, p. 214-215). The activists describe, in a tone that fluctuates between pride and nostalgia, how they have escalated the number of actions that have "made a splash" on the local political and media scene: blockades at Bellegarde train station (1999), the construction of a wall at the Saint-Gingolph border (1999), a stunt in which members suspended themselves above the Thonon bypass (2013), and so on. Christian Grillet, a former industrial sector worker, notes that "it might not happen now", because of increased tension in the "general atmosphere" and greater police vigilance. The interviews reveal "good-humoured" negotiations between the organisation and the police authority, a way for the members to counteract the impoverishment of its range of action.

Lastly, Désenclavement works to raise public awareness by participating in different elections in the Chablais region, including the 2012 parliamentary elections, the 2014 Senate elections and, more recently, the 2021 departmental elections. In this way, they seek to position themselves as guarantors of political debate, ensuring that the A412 project remains on their adversaries' agenda. Moreover, they legitimise the CSO's embeddedness in indigenous life by telling the story of the perseverance of a group of "local" children in leading a relentless battle to ensure that the promises of disenclavement are ultimately kept.

These descriptions risk blinding us to the fact that the organisations, although in competition, share common adversaries: the elected representatives of the Chablais and government officials. Whether accused of using the disenclavement of the region purely as a campaign promise with no follow-through, or presented as an old guard incapable of pursuing the objectives of ecological transition, the authorities find themselves under attack on both flanks. This process is reminiscent of what Marie-Hélène Bacqué and her colleagues (2016) describe as attempts (in this case competing attempts) to exert control over a shared living space, with the aim of promulgating plans and counter-plans for it based on different definitions of "enclavement".

Defining enclavement: the ambiguous role of territorial remoteness

The mobilisation around the A412 can be seen as an attempt to "politicise the local" (Dechézelles and Olive, 2019), a way for activists on both sides to emphasise the effort to certify indigenous capital in order to legitimise their actions (Sawicki, 2019; Dechézelles, 2019). By redefining the isolation of the Chablais in their own terms, ACPAT and Désenclavement reflect different aspirations for a region that are characterised by "fair" mobilities.

Hijacking the myth of the structuring effects of transport for partisan ends

The attempt to understand the battle over the A412 between, on the one hand, an environmental group focused exclusively on modes of transport other than the car and, on the other, a lobby of convinced motorists, calls for certain reservations. Methodologically, the rhetoric of the "transport war" reproduces an essentialising discourse around the car, rather than clarifying why certain forms of automobile use are considered problematic (Reigner, 2013; Demoli and Lannoy, 2019, p. 78). Empirically, what is being said on the ground is in no way an argument for disenclaving the region solely to one or other mode of transport. The confrontation between pro- and anti-A412 groups is therefore not so much about local car dependency or congestion, as about how to mitigate them. This is what Édith suggests in the following extract:

> "I… I… I can't understand how they don't understand. That they want to take their cars, etc., well, that I can understand, that they don't know how to do without a car, it's true that around here it's more complicated. But… the fact that they don't understand that a new road isn't going to solve the problem is mind-boggling." (Édith Morin, 57, Swiss civil servant)

With the aim of challenging the A412 project, ACPAT and Désenclavement are reviving the "myth of the structuring effects" of transport (Offner, 1993) in a competitive, partisan, socially and spatially situated way. In his seminal article, Jean-Marc Offner suggests that all new transport services should be seen as "[a] potential instrument of local players' strategies" (ibid., p. 238). On the premise that an increase in supply automatically leads to "better" urban planning, he shows that this "myth of effect authorises and legitimises the actions of decision-makers" (ibid., p. 241). Although this myth has since been widely contested, it has recently been cited by the author to criticise the tendency of public action to rely on oversimplified selling points when justifying major urban projects (Offner et al., 2014). Faced with inaction by the

local authorities, the members of ACPAT and Désenclavement propose a rereading of this myth in order, respectively, to contest or advocate the need for motorways.

Those in favour of the disenclavement of the region use pragmatic arguments to justify the need for a motorway. Firstly, the motorway would bring guaranteed time savings, which is all the clearer insofar as members often have to contend with traffic congestion in the Chablais region. Secondly, the new infrastructure would benefit the environment by easing local traffic, as vehicles would bypass villages that are currently congested. While these manoeuvres are reminiscent of the "accreditation" operations present in the literature (Traïni, 2005), in this case they are more vindictive as the activists are seeking to replace authorities that are deemed to be failing. For Patrice, Désenclavement is "doing the job" of elected officials, regardless of the fact that the latter are "not always happy with the result".

On the ACPAT side, the activists are dubious about the capacity of a "last-century" project to solve structural traffic problems. To support this view, they make liberal use of terms such as "pull factor" or "automobile magnet", along with references to scientific studies that demonstrate the irremediable saturation of the road/motorway network. From this angle, the members accuse the project engineers of making false promises about traffic reductions on the nearby departmental roads. An extract from an interview with Josiane sheds light on these allegations:

> "The impact study is very well done because it shows that we need the motorway. […] It was a clever idea because in fact the measurements were taken at a time when the link between […] les Eaux-Vives in Switzerland and Annemasse in France was interrupted because the Léman Express was being built. So inevitably, from one day to the next, when the link was interrupted, a whole bunch of people who had been taking the train were shunted back into their cars and onto the roads, which increases traffic. So, if you take a measurement at that point, you're bound to have traffic jams and you're bound to have no one on the train because it's not going anywhere! It was a clever idea, that's all. […] So, I mean that's why the impact study is completely wrong." (Josiane Favre, aged 59, working as a retail chain manager)

This is not an isolated example and testifies to the ability of activists to draw upon their indigenous resources to acquire knowledge that is usually restricted to specialist engineers.[10]

10. During my interviews, introducing myself as a transport engineer, I was often asked to give a personal opinion on the myth of the structuring effects of transport. It seems to me that this reflects a relentless search for arguments likely to tip the balance to one side or the other of the dispute.

Ultimately, these conflicting interactions pave the way for a more general critique of mobility policies in the Chablais, in relation to its "isolated" condition. Borrowing the myth of the structuring effects of transport enables the CSOs to put themselves on a par with the authorities, the objective being to say what is not "right", in the dual sense of being unfair and being incorrect.

Gallic village, hidden treasure: a multi-faceted Chablais

There are two opposing visions of the kind of Chablais region that its residents want. The first, espoused by ACPAT, is summed up by Josiane when she talks about "starting from the principle that we're not isolated, we're remote. It's geographical, that's just the way it is." For her organisation, remoteness is an intrinsic property of the region, one that is both naturalised and treasured. For Sébastien, preserving the local heritage–an "underappreciated treasure" in his view–is essential in view of the threat from the motorway. In his case, the mobilisation against the disenclavement of the region has an "exploratory" dimension (Dechézelles and Olive, 2016), i.e. it offers an opportunity to (re)discover the virtues of the local area and, above all, to help others (re)discover them. In his view, "you can only defend what you know", which is why he organises educational walks with residents to raise their awareness of their local environment, in the hope of stimulating them to engage. Far from representing a conservative approach to the Chablais region, the fact that the region is an enclave is recognised as a "heritage asset" (Sébastien, 2013) and is emphasised in ACPAT's communication. Through its actions, it develops an argument for the enhancement of social or spatial relationships in the local area, in other words a form of mobility justice that is devoid of a productivist perception of the region.

As for Désenclavement, the members all regret the remoteness that the Chablais has inherited from its development on a "Gallic village" model. On the one hand, Didier Magnin, a young retiree from the tertiary sector in Switzerland, deplores the fact that local elections are run on the basis of an "insider" system that their candidates have not been able to overcome, to the extent that development projects are always subject to consultation "with friends of friends" of the elected representatives. On the other hand, the members also regret the Chablais region's place on the departmental map of public investment, with redistribution policies systematically favouring other, more attractive conurbations (in particular Annecy). Didier refers to the rare departmental investments in Thonon as "sweeteners", with the result that the balancing subsidy is seen as an opportunity not to be missed. For Désenclavement, the isolation of the Chablais is the product of territorial stigma, i.e., missed opportunities to make it an

attractive area, free from its dependence on Switzerland. The CSO thus demands that all inhabitants of the Chablais should have the right to travel freely, easily and, above all, by car throughout the *département*.

These factors show how ACPAT and Désenclavement redefine the "enclave" character of the Chablais region around the A412 project. Rather than promoting or attacking car use, the activists placed the emphasis on how the infrastructure is in or out of keeping with their lifestyles and their everyday networks, both roads and social networks. For ACPAT, the A412 would undermine the rural nature of the Chablais, which has so far been valued and preserved; for Désenclavement, it would unleash the region's economic and demographic dynamism. Each organisation wishes to legitimise a competing "appropriation of territorial identity", in other words to associate a collective identity with the contested space, which "presupposes its real, regular and demonstrative practice" (Ripoll and Veschambre, 2005, p. 7). Looking at this mobilisation from the point of view of mobility justice thus highlights the varying legitimacies involved in gaining acceptance for the development of the Chablais region.

The emergence of the Municipality of Geneva–hereinafter referred to as "Geneva"–prompted the activist groups to adopt an original repositioning on the question of the functional scope of the A412 project. The final section of this article reports on the work carried out by the CSOs to bring motorway issues to the forefront at the most local level.

Embedding the motorway in the local: between creating and meeting needs

The mobilisation around the A412 project demonstrates the value of identifying competing struggles within civil society in order to explore attempts to impose a single definition of a public problem on a community. Far from profoundly transforming a 25-year-old debate, the Geneva appeal has clearly taken it into a new dimension for a number of reasons. Firstly, as Patrice reluctantly admits, Geneva's symbolic influence in the Chablais gives the Swiss city the power to influence regional political affairs. At the same time, it brings the issue of territorial sovereignty–what he describes as "Swiss interference"–into the debate. Together, these aspects institutionalise the mobilisation, forcing the CSOs to venture into sometimes sophisticated legal language: what agreement(s) can a Swiss authority, a member of a cross-border cooperation arrangement, cite in order to claim a right of appeal on French territory? Last but not least, this legal process has triggered a renewal of media attention around the project

which, unprecedentedly, extends as far as Switzerland. For these reasons, the mobilisation around the A412 has acquired the status of a local-level controversy, i.e. the local staging of a dispute, including recourse to official or tacit expert opinions, before a third party with responsibility to arbitrate (Tari, 2021, p. 28). In other words, the CSOs are now waiting for an official verdict from the state to establish the "fairest" ways of moving around the Chablais region.

Geneva's argument is that the A412 route is too similar to that of the recently inaugurated Léman Express railway. It takes the form of a moralising discourse–based upon a general rejection of automobile use–that was hitherto dismissed by the ACPAT (and by Désenclavement). By reducing the conflict to a competition between road and rail infrastructure, Geneva has adopted a role close to that of a moral entrepreneur (Mathieu, 2020). By disparaging the practices of people living near the border seeking to access its city centre, it has tipped the debate towards the right of motorway use. In response to the arrival of an unhoped supporter (for one) or an unexpected adversary (for the other), ACPAT and Désenclavement have reverted to a focus on the spatial dimension of the A412.

The reaction among Désenclavement members was unanimous. Patrice illustrates this when he tells me about the end of a conversation with a Swiss journalist:

> "'[…] listen, my friend, the train is one thing, the road is another, and unless you can prove otherwise, the Léman Express serves Geneva. The motorway will not serve Geneva because it does not go to Geneva. So now write an article about that…' We're campaigning to open up the Chablais region, not to open up Geneva. And that's it." (Patrice Mollard, 54, self-employed)

Caught by surprise at Geneva entering the fray well after the public consultation in 2016, the activists criticise it for interfering in a debate that is none of its affair and that raises questions that it does not understand. They criticise "Geneva's imperialism" (Audikana et al., 2016), a view shared by one French elected representative, who declared that "Geneva only thinks of the rest of the region in terms of the relationship between those regions and itself, not in terms of their own existence". However, Geneva's involvement has forced the organisation to come up with a dual argument in order to challenge the Swiss authority's credibility. On the one hand, Patrice accuses it of "not putting its own house in order" by demonstrating familiarity with the Swiss canton's road and motorway projects. On the other hand, the members have taken advantage of the local dimension of the A412 project, previously left to ACPAT, to demonstrate the need to "link the Chablais to the rest of the *département*". They therefore advocate an ambiguous position, linking a transit infrastructure with needs

within the Chablais area (trips to the theatre, the doctor's surgery, etc.), which also entails delegitimising cross-border round trips to Geneva. Now shifting their focus to the local level, they distinguish themselves from their ACPAT opponents by designating which populations are entitled to greater accessibility, in this case inhabitants of Chablais who do not work in Switzerland. For Désenclavement, Geneva's entry into the debate is therefore part of a process of (re)spatialising the A412's functional scope in order to justify its public utility.

For its part, ACPAT welcomes the involvement of Geneva in a completely different way. What may be observed is a mechanism of certification (Neveu, 2019) by substitution, i.e. an environmentalist discourse that is inaudible in the Chablais but promulgated by a powerful local authority on the other side of the border. Some activists, like Édith and Sébastien, say they are looking forward to "escalating [the issue of the A412 project] to the level of the Swiss Confederation" in the hope of establishing the legitimacy of their arguments. The CSO is therefore exploiting Geneva's support as part of a strategy of piling up appeals against the French government which, as Sébastien points out, "has no other example [...] where there is such a diversity of appellants".

From a situation where two CSOs were engaged in local confrontation on separate playing fields, Geneva's entry into the arena has led to a contraction of the conflict to generate controversy at local level. Désenclavement had to adjust its rhetoric to defend the relevance of a motorway project on a local scale, a scene hitherto left to ACPAT. For its part, the latter has used the fallout from Geneva as an opportunity to have their message taken up by official public bodies, something that may have been lacking until now. In the final analysis, Geneva has encouraged the activists to take up similar issues, with the consequence that competitive positions on "fair" mobility–which are at the heart of a battle that has now lasted 25 years–have hardened.

Promoting various mobility justice

In a summary of her work on mobility justice, Mimi Sheller considers the nature of the ingredients (material, social, ideal) needed to "sustain fairer mobility" (Sheller, 2018b). There is no doubt that certain transport infrastructures, certain ways of designing them, are more inclusive of all populations, regardless of gender, social class or place of residence. However, the idea that there is *one and only one* fair, socially and environmentally equitable form of mobility, unanimously celebrated by civil society and that local authorities are called upon to respond to, seems more debatable.

The mobilisation around a motorway project in the French Chablais region illustrates a situation where local CSOs develop competing conceptions of mobility justice, corresponding to their respective indigenous resources. Placing the focus on the spatial dimensions of this opposition highlights the uneven attempts to impose a corresponding territorial model, which will become official with the inauguration/abandonment of the infrastructure. This role as "spatialisation contractor" (Dechézelles and Olive, 2019, p. 23) is the product of two interdependent mechanisms. On the one hand, activists (de)value isolation, in some cases invoking the virtues of a proximity under threat and in others the first signs of a territory in decline. On the other hand, in the process of convincing people of the (in)utility of a motorway in the vicinity, they (de)legitimise certain journeys on the grounds of destination, raising the question of the individual right to movement. These mechanisms are a reminder of the extent to which CSOs engage in and on behalf of the space they inhabit, whether for purposes of preservation or development. Above all, they highlight the fact that mobility becomes problematic when it *depends on* and *reveals* individual trajectories or relationships with the territory, rather than because it is a target of opposition.

Ultimately, the instruments of the sociology of social movements and mobility justice theory would benefit from closer links. The variety of the former opens the way to a less univocal conception of the latter, in which civil society struggles serve to impose–with unequal legitimacies–competing values of mobility. In turn, approaching activist movements from the perspective of mobility justice lays the groundwork for unexpected outcomes that can blur the opposition between pro- and anti-car positions. In this article, this meeting takes place on two levels. Firstly, at the level of partisan exploitation of the myth of structuring effects, to show how CSOs develop and deliver tacit knowledge about the territory that can compete with those responsible for planning it. Next, on the notion of controversy in the local sphere, to highlight the expectation of activists that the right uses–i.e., their own uses–of a shared living space will be certified. It also implies that, once the winners have been declared, they will celebrate the legitimacy of living in the Chablais region rather than the fate of a transport infrastructure.

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