

## Long development of automatisisation of automobility

*Kalle Toiskallio, Dr.Soc.Sci, FinEst Centre for Smart Cities, Tallinn University of Technology*

As Mathew B. Crawford indicates in his monograph *Why we drive* (2020), automated vehicles are *not* radical novelties offered to consumers but the general automatisisation has been developing and spreading gradually already a very long time. The experience of driving itself has gradually changed from dirty, smelly, dangerous and insecure sport to comfortable, even dull way of being on the move that is supported by several automated in-car and internet-connected systems. On top of the driving experience, also many systemic support elements of the whole “sub-system of everyday life” of automobility within a consumer society (Lefebvre 1990, 100-101) have made a user of a car more distant from his or her mean of personal motorised mobility. Especially this refers to the technical maintenance of cars, and regulation by the public administration of private and commercial cars. We already have over century’s history of reducing the physical, mechanical, i.e., *direct* control to our cars. This applies at least to the Europe and USA, where the average age of cars is less than 13 years (ACEA 2024, S&P Global Mobility 2024).

Typically, car is not anymore *repaired* during its life-cycle but new parts and larger modules are merely *changed*, preferably already before anything is broken. This needs special parts and devices that normal car driver cannot own. Thus, the owner cannot repair the car by him/herself but buy a service that follows a maintenance programme and takes the actual control of car’s maintenance.

An early example from the early 1900s is the *electric starting* that rapidly removed the routine use of the *crank start*. *Automatic transmission* since 1940s and *power steering* since 1950s in mass-produced passenger cars

represent the same continuum, not to mention the plethora of amenities such as *automatic windshield wipers with interval options, power windows, automatic air condition and automatic seat belts* that make *the being* in the car easier and more comfortable. More recent standard examples are the support systems that help drivers to keep their vehicles on lane and controlled on slippery roads.

Similarly, an average car-owner cannot anymore repair the car but bring it to the professional repair shop. Even the professional repair staff cannot anymore really *repair* the actual malfunctioning (affordable) part but simply insert larger, car-model-specific (very expensive) modules. Same goes with changing seasonal tyres in urban conditions. Instead of using simply car jack and cross wrench, the proper behaviour in cities is to buy a tyre hotel service.

Finally, thinking of the traffic control systems, automated surveillance technologies recognise the speed and license plates of vehicles, suitable for many kinds of commercial and public control interests.

Leaving the marginal old-car-hobbyist aside, quite safely we can say that all this increasing automatisations in automobility during more than hundred years, has been generally taken as a positive development for individual car-users, car industry and public authorities. In other words, we have prepared for the great automated vehicles and automatically controlled transport in general for a long time already.

## Sources

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