Beautiful New ITS World?
October 2015

This year's ITS (Intelligent Transportation System) World Congress has taken place in Bordeaux and the program was overwhelming with excellent speaker lineups, a diversified exhibition floor, live demos and opportunities to exchange on latest technical evolutions.
However, I had my real wow-effect when heading back to the airport while discussing with the taxi driver.

With 1.24 Mio. road traffic deaths worldwide per year it is a common understanding that automated driving could dramatically decrease this number. Vehicle automation means also less traffic congestion and less pollution in cities. Mobility Concepts will replace individual car ownership. The whole eco-system changes with car manufacturers and fleet owners providing vehicles on demand when needed where needed. So, instead of standing 90% of their time in parking lots fewer vehicles will be used more efficiently. And automation promises us a gain in time picking up our groceries at the store, chauffeuring our children to their activities while we are at work or allowing us to leave our offices earlier as we can work while driving home.

All this sounds like a new beautiful world: less fatalities on roads, less traffic congestion and no search for parking lots, CO2 reduction and a clear gain of time for us in our daily lives.

But while I rave about all these advantages of automated driving the taxi driver objects that he rather sees disadvantages for our society than advantages.
Less cars means less components means less employment. Taxi drivers are not needed anymore; maybe not even truck drivers for transport of goods. Nannies do not need to bring to or to pick up children at school anymore.
Insurance companies will shrink, as they will be confronted to big fleet owners instead of individual car owners.
So, what is the real impact of car automation on our society?

For sure, always when there are technical evolutions or changes like the computer age or production automation skeptics warned of unemployment.

But maybe, when time has come, problems in acceptance of automated vehicles will not raise from the willingness to be chauffeured by an automated car but from a lack of perspective for the future? Maybe, instead of engaging now Philosophers and Psychologists working on the acceptance of society to be driven by robots it would be advisable that these scientists work on models of society illustrating new fields of activity in a future completely changed eco-system?