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EDITORIAL

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Navigating the future of transport infrastructure and governance

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Abstract

The transformation of mobility and transport infrastructure is emerging as one of the defining societal challenges of the twenty-first century. This editorial introduces the Special Issue on "Sustainable Mobility Transitions: (New) Pathways of Future Energy Systems" from a social science perspective, bringing together interdisciplinary insights on the political, institutional, and communicative dimensions of transport transition. Drawing on case studies from Germany and international contexts, the contributions of this Special Issue critically examine how governance structures—particularly parliamentary oversight and public participation—shape infrastructure planning and mobility policy. The discussion situates transport behavior within broader socio-technical systems and highlights the entrenched dominance of automobility, spatial legacies of car-centered urban planning, and the habitual routines that sustain private car use. At the same time, we identify new pathways for transformation, including innovations in sustainable and multimodal transport, participatory governance tools, and experimental urban interventions. The authors argue that overcoming the inertia of automobility requires not only technological and legal reforms but also compelling narratives, inclusive planning processes, and adaptive regulatory frameworks. In conclusion, the editorial underscores the importance for a renewed commitment to democratic legitimacy, institutional learning, and spatial justice in the governance of mobility and transport infrastructure.

Introduction

Transport policy is, not least, car policy. The triumph of the automobile was no historical accident—there were good reasons for it. It is the result of a consistent policy closely tied to the model of mass motorization. For decades, car ownership was a symbol of economic success and a promise of individual advancement. More than that, (auto)mobility has genuinely expanded individual freedom of movement and has become central to the individualistic lifestyle in modern societies [1, 2].

From the perspective of the sociology of technology, the habitual dimension of mass motorization is striking. Routines are the most important mechanism for carrying out everyday actions without having to reassess each decision. They relieve uncertainty and reduce the pressure of decision-making; they operate as background programs [3]. Driving, as a daily practice, has significant individual relief effects. Regular and habitual use of the car reduces existential uncertainty while simultaneously expanding one's range of action.

In addition to routines and the long-standing narrative of the private car as a prerequisite for and symbol of a successful life, there are other reasons why people continue to use cars. Not least among these is a widespread and structurally distorted perception of the car's true costs [4, 5]. Drivers tend to consider only out-of-pocket expenses—such as fuel and parking—while neglecting depreciation, insurance, taxes, and repair costs, which are incurred less frequently and are therefore less visible.

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Finally, transport behavior is shaped by a spatial and urban structure whose principles date back to the mid-twentieth century, some even to the 1930s. The reform project outlined in the Athens Charter—the separation of living, working, and leisure spaces—could only be implemented by introducing a new function: transportation. However, the planning of traffic infrastructure was subject to a momentous misconception. Traffic was understood in purely functionalist terms [6]. Each mode of transport was to be given its own routes, tailored to its technical characteristics and speed. The goal was maximum flow and minimal disruption. Traffic jams, already widely discussed in the press during the 1920s, were seen as major obstacles to the realization of the functionally organized modern city. Disruptive or unforeseen elements were to be eliminated from transit areas, and sufficient space was to be reserved for stationary traffic.

Until the 1950s, long-distance travel was dominated by the railway, and short-distance by the bicycle. Private motorized transport mainly involved two-wheelers and small vehicles. Nevertheless, cities were rebuilt following the ideal of the "car-friendly city." At the same time, legal frameworks evolved in an automobile-friendly direction. Since then, traffic law has been shaped by the principle of the "public use of roads," cementing the dominance of the automobile.

The now popular rhetorical figure of a transformation from a "car-friendly" to a "people-friendly" city often remains abstract, as do many of the transport policy demands related to the traffic transition. Clearly, there is a need for convincing visualizations of what a city with fewer cars and car-free streets could actually look like. Visual representations can help illustrate that alternatives are possible. Fundamentally, this is about a new understanding of public space [7].

The transformation of mobility is one of the defining challenges of our time. The growing demand for sustainable and efficient transport systems intersects with complex political, economic, and environmental considerations. Transport infrastructure is not only the backbone of economic growth, but also a focal point of societal debate. As congestion, emissions, and public dissatisfaction with transport projects increase, one central question arises: How can we govern transport infrastructure in a way that balances efficiency, sustainability, and democratic participation?

This Special Issue brings together interdisciplinary perspectives on transport infrastructure governance, with a particular focus on the role of parliaments, public participation, and the evolving challenges of transport planning. Drawing inspiration from recent research, especially in the German context, the contributions explore the extent to which legislative bodies can shape transport policy and infrastructure projects amid competing interests and structural constraints.

The role of parliamentary and public participation in transport infrastructure planning

One of the core discussions in this issue centers on the evolving role of parliaments in transport infrastructure planning. Traditionally, these large-scale projects were largely dominated by executive bodies and private corporations, such as railway or highway agencies. However, in the case of Germany, recent procedural innovations have introduced a new dimension of parliamentary scrutiny, particularly in railway planning. The German Parliament, for instance, now actively engages in reviewing and modifying rail infrastructure projects based on public input. By leveraging its budgetary authority, the parliament influences project modifications, ensuring that concerns such as noise pollution or urban integration are addressed. This shift in governance suggests a potential democratization of transport planning, though questions remain about its long-term efficacy and consistency.

An analysis of parliamentary involvement in transport planning highlights both successes and challenges. While lawmakers now have the opportunity to steer infrastructure development in a more transparent and publicly accountable manner, they also face significant constraints. Information asymmetries between government agencies and parliamentarians often lead to decision-making that is reactive rather than proactive. Furthermore, political cycles and shifting priorities mean that long-term transport strategies may lack continuity, undermining the efficiency of policy implementation.

Another key issue is the influence of lobbying by various stakeholders, including the automotive and logistics industries, environmental groups, and municipal authorities. The interplay between economic interests and public welfare raises concerns about whether parliamentary scrutiny can truly serve the broader population. Despite these challenges, the German example provides valuable insights into how legislative oversight mechanisms can be refined to enhance governance effectiveness.

Public involvement in transport infrastructure decision-making is essential for fostering trust and ensuring that projects align with societal needs. Citizen engagement takes various forms, from formal public hearings and referendums to digital platforms that allow communities to provide input remotely.

Forms of public engagement include traditional public hearings: These meetings enable stakeholders to voice concerns directly before legislative committees. Digital engagement platforms also allow low-threshold forms of citizen participation. Cities like Amsterdam and Barcelona, for example, have developed online portals where

citizens can comment on proposed transport plans. A more extensive format of citizen participation is the so-called participatory budgeting: Some municipalities reserve a portion of their transport budgets for public input, allowing residents to vote on project priorities.

A deeper exploration of public participation reveals a nuanced picture. While democratic engagement in transport planning is theoretically desirable, its practical implementation is fraught with difficulties. One major challenge is ensuring representativeness in consultation processes. Often, vocal minority groups with specific interests dominate discussions, while marginalized communities—including lower-income and rural populations—are underrepresented. Furthermore, the technical complexity of transport projects means that laypeople may struggle to fully grasp the implications of planning decisions, limiting their ability to contribute meaningfully.

To address these challenges, new models of public engagement are emerging. Digital tools, such as interactive planning platforms and AI-driven simulations, facilitate more inclusive decision-making. These innovations allow for greater transparency and provide citizens with accessible ways to understand the trade-offs involved in transport planning. Furthermore, case studies from various cities demonstrate how participatory budgeting initiatives can empower communities to directly influence transport investment priorities.

Sustainable mobility and policy innovations

Innovations in transport affect road traffic as well as rail and air traffic, water transportation, and data traffic. In contemporary societies, however, road transportation plays the dominant role. The car is deeply ingrained in the mental structures of early motorized societies; for a long time, it was removed from the political discourse as an unquestioned matter of course. In the meantime, however, the car is in danger of being swallowed up by its own success.

Two technological trends have been affecting transport and the automobile in particular for some time now: electrification and digitalization. The electrification of drive systems has gained momentum, while digitalization is enabling attractive mobility services beyond the private car. However, a new convincing narrative is still lacking.

What we see is that the shift towards sustainability is transforming transport policies worldwide. Cities and nations are adopting greener mobility solutions, integrating digital innovations, and prioritizing climate-conscious investments. Key areas of sustainable mobility include the electrification of public transport, with governments investing in electric buses, streetcars, and trains to reduce emissions. Shared mobility solutions are emerging simultaneously; car-sharing, bike-sharing, and ride-hailing services are reshaping urban mobility patterns. Finally, smart transport systems—including AI-powered traffic management, real-time public transit tracking, and demand-responsive transit solutions—make transport networks more efficient.

A closer look at sustainable mobility initiatives reveals both promising trends and persistent obstacles. Cities worldwide are experimenting with low-emission zones, congestion pricing, and expanded public transit networks. The transition to electric and hydrogen-powered transport is gaining momentum, with governments providing subsidies and incentives to accelerate adoption. However, the shift toward sustainability is not without friction. Resistance from established industries, concerns about affordability, and the uneven distribution of benefits across social groups remain significant issues.

One notable area of focus is multimodal transport integration (see [8, 9]). By seamlessly connecting various modes of transport—such as cycling, walking, public transit, and car-sharing—urban mobility becomes more efficient and environmentally friendly. Examples from cities like Copenhagen, Amsterdam, and Singapore demonstrate how integrated transport networks can enhance convenience and reduce dependency on private cars. Nevertheless, the scalability of such models depends on factors like urban density, funding availability, and public acceptance.

In addition to the growing number of intermodal sharing services, particularly favored by digital youth in cities, the "classic alternatives" to the car are also gaining attention. Cycling and walking are experiencing a renaissance in many places. In Germany, this is more often the case in leisure contexts, while in other countries, such as the Netherlands, bicycles are becoming increasingly important for everyday transportation. In all cities in Europe and North America that top relevant quality-of-life rankings, cycling plays a major role. This is why many especially large cities, such as Vienna, Paris, and London, and not just pioneers Copenhagen and Amsterdam, are investing heavily in cycling infrastructure: cycle paths, parking facilities, cycle highways, etc. The British capital has mobilized significant investments for new cycle paths and the expansion of public bike services, while simultaneously creating traffic-calmed neighborhoods on a large scale (see [10]). This development is likely to continue. Experiences from the Netherlands and Copenhagen confirm that more and safer cycle paths encourage even those who were previously apprehensive to cycle [11].

It is important to reach many everyday destinations without relying on the car. For example, pedestrian traffic benefits greatly when urban space is less blocked by cars—provided that car lanes and parking lanes are

actually reduced. As with cycling, there is also a positive feedback loop for pedestrian traffic where the conditions for so-called "active mobility" improve. In addition, increasing health awareness benefits active mobility: Walking, running, and cycling are becoming components of urban lifestyles (see [12]). Under the umbrella term of "tactical urbanism," concepts are being implemented in some cities and metropolitan areas worldwide which, in addition to improving quality of life, primarily aim to improve the safety and attractiveness of walking and cycling. The "superblocks" in Barcelona are one such example and have attracted considerable attention far beyond the Catalan capital (see [13]).

Recommendations for future research and policy development

The history of transport shows that a political program and an overarching goal were the driving forces behind the consistent implementation of traffic laws, taxes, and infrastructure requirements that made the "dream of the private car" come true (cf. [14]). The new goal of the transport transition—with its elements of electrification, intermodality, and the strengthening of public transport as well as walking and cycling—should be pursued with the same dedication and consistency. However, the latter is currently not given to a sufficient extent, and the necessary post-automobile narrative is still lacking. For political actors, the risks of changing the transport policy status quo are often perceived as greater than the benefits of more sustainable transport practices in the future. Especially since the alternatives to the conventional—and, in terms of user routines, despite all restrictions, also "tried and tested"—private cars are unwieldy and disparate. For example, there is little willingness to fundamentally reform transport law in favor of de-privileging the private car and internalizing its external costs (see [5]). This also applies to pricing models such as congestion charges, which could significantly redistribute public space in cities and create more room for other uses beyond the private car.

Against this backdrop, one way out of the dilemma could be to implement overdue changes on a trial basis and for a limited period. In the event of failure or unintended negative consequences, it would then be possible to revert to the starting point. Not all transport experiments are successful—some are not accepted, others are abandoned too early or struggle due to counterproductive framework conditions. Much can also be learned from the failure of experiments, such as incorrectly located park-and-ride facilities. From a transport and innovation policy perspective, however, it is particularly interesting to observe what happens when an experiment succeeds. Other regions, companies, or districts might want to replicate the experience. They could copy the experiment and its associated conditions, since nothing is as successful as success. A dynamic of imitation could arise from successful experiments. In this way, an experimental regulatory practice could take root. For example, if parking space management in city centers with "realistic prices" leads people to stop holding onto cars "in stock," some consequences are foreseeable: The number of private vehicle owners would decrease, rental cars and car-sharing would be used more, and there would be more space available for soil unsealing and other uses of public space. It is also expected that social practices that have already been established and adapted would be reflected in changes in jurisdiction.

A guide to change should be based on perceptible advantages of the new system, such as an overall better flow of traffic or a higher quality of urban life compared to the status quo ante. Advantages remain abstract as long as they cannot be experienced concretely. Regarding the automobile, this means that new forms of use and utilization—without private ownership—are more likely to emerge if they can be used reliably and habitually. Real-life experiments could show how to make this possible. Conversely, however, it cannot be expected that everything will work perfectly in experimental spaces. Even well conceptualized and intended measures can fail. The stubbornness of people, especially in traffic behavior, cannot be predicted. What works well in one city does not necessarily work elsewhere. A new practice must emerge that can evolve, unfold, change, and be stabilized as part of action routines. This is precisely what experimental spaces are needed for. They could be a viable way out of the constraints imposed by regulatory and habitual path dependencies.

Conclusions

The governance of transport infrastructure is at a crossroads; the transformation is not a linear process [15]. The findings presented in this Special Issue illustrate the complex interplay between political oversight, public participation, and policy innovation. While parliamentary engagement in transport planning represents a step toward democratization, ensuring that such oversight is effective and consistent remains a challenge. Similarly, while public participation can enhance legitimacy, it requires carefully designed mechanisms to balance efficiency with inclusivity.

As we move forward, a key takeaway from this collection is the need for adaptive governance structures that can integrate diverse stakeholder interests while steering transport systems toward sustainability. By fostering collaboration between policymakers, transport planners, and the public, we can build transport infrastructures

that not only meet technical and economic requirements but also serve broader societal goals.

Overall, besides strong technical and mental path dependencies and other persistent tendencies such as car-oriented settlement and transport infrastructures, some trends can be observed that have the potential to enable and promote a transport transition.

First of all, the transport sector as a whole is under increasing pressure to contribute to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Climate protection targets can only be achieved if emissions in the transport sector are significantly reduced. A turnaround in propulsion technology alone is not enough; the transport system as a whole must become more efficient. Hopes for greater efficiency, both in transport and environmental policy, are primarily associated with intermodal mobility services—i.e., the integration and linking of different means of transport into coordinated services that can present real alternatives to the private car.

The optimistic assumption that path dependencies can be reduced is supported by empirical observations summarized under the term "traffic evaporation." This phenomenon refers to a decrease in traffic when usage conditions become more difficult. If it becomes (too) difficult not only to move one's own car but also to find a parking space, the willingness to use the vehicle generally decreases [10, 16]. Traffic evaporation is essentially the mirror image of the phenomenon of "induced traffic," i.e., increased traffic when conditions improve, which has prevailed for a long time.

The car is deeply ingrained in the mental structures of motorized Western societies and, as an unquestioned given, was absent from political discourse for a long time. The post-war ideal of a happy private life was symbolized by owning one's own car. But that era is long gone. Not only have the side effects of over-motorization diminished or even overshadowed the benefits of the car, it has also lost its symbolic and emotional special status for a growing part of the population. What was once a love affair has long since become an everyday relationship. High levels of car dependency are increasingly seen as a lack of choice or even an additional poverty risk (see [17]).

Nevertheless, motorization continues. Looking at the ever-increasing number of cars, a real turnaround seems hard to imagine. Mental blocks still occur quickly. Generations have been socialized by cars for decades, and the threat of job losses is used as a veto argument in nearly every transport policy debate. The constraints of settlement and supply structures designed with the car in mind do exist. It is therefore difficult to envision a reality other than full and over-motorization (cf. [18]). Added to this are deeply rooted routines in everyday car use, self-created dependencies, and, last but not least, a structurally distorted perception of costs.

We find ourselves caught between disruption and persistence. Large infrastructure systems—including transport and cars—are characterized by a high degree of stability due to their size and complexity. They form a network of interdependent paths, exhibiting significant path dependency (see also [19]). The car is part of a diverse, multiply networked, and spatially deeply layered system including material infrastructures such as freeways, roads, and traffic regulation systems—from traffic lights to entire spatial structures designed for the car. These include suburban single-family housing estates, commercial zones and shopping centers developed on greenfield sites, and entire conurbations with large catchment areas. In recent decades, these settlement and supply structures have coincided with the decline of small-scale local provision of daily necessities like grocery stores, pharmacies, and doctors. They represent distance-intensive spatial patterns, built up and stabilized over many years by corresponding incentives.

There are additional stabilizers: economic interests of companies, employees, and their unions focused on the private car, as well as social expectations and norms that further cement the structural and legal foundations. According to Kingsley Dennis and John Urry, a fundamental change in the transport system can only happen if new technical options are available, promoted by powerful market players, and if political pressure increases to regulate mass transport consequences, while cultural preferences shift towards alternatives to the car [20].

On the other hand, essential prerequisites for a transport turnaround exist. There are technical alternatives in propulsion technology as well as new sharing offers and digital platforms. Furthermore, there is rising pressure to tighten pollutant limits, alongside a broad realization that CO2 savings necessary to protect the global climate can only be achieved by accelerating the transition of the transport sector. This momentum has been fueled notably by new global players such as China, the world's largest automobile market.

However, a transport turnaround must be embedded in a socio-political reform movement, supported by a spatial planning strategy geared towards decentralization (see overview in Table 1).

Summary of contributions in the special issue

This Special Issue brings together a diverse set of contributions that critically examine the governance, planning, implementation, and public perception of sustainable mobility and transport infrastructure transitions. Focusing on the German context while drawing on international perspectives, the articles explore

Table 1 Overview research dimensions for transforming urban mobility

FOCUS AREA	OBJECTIVE	MEASURES / EXAMPLES
Car-free / Low-car Zones	Reduce car dominance in public spaces	Superblocks (Barcelona), traffic calming, lane reductions
Public Transport	Provide efficient and accessible mobility options	Expansion of bus/rail networks, increased service frequency, affordable ticketing
Cycling Infrastructure	Promote safe and comfortable alternatives to car use	Bike lanes, cycling streets, parking facilities, public bike-sharing systems
Walking & Local Mobility	Strengthen active and healthy mobility	Wider sidewalks, barrier-free crossings, 30 km/h (20 mph) speed zones
Digital Mobility Services	Connect and optimize transport options	Mobility-as-a-Service (MaaS), real-time data, intermodal platforms
Regulatory Innovation	Create a legal framework for sustainable mobility policy	Reform of traffic laws, parking space management, CO_2-based taxation
Participation & Governance	Ensure democratic legitimacy and public acceptance	Citizen engagement, digital participation, participatory budgeting

institutional frameworks, political dynamics, policy instruments, and the role of experts and lay actors. Below, each article is summarized in greater detail to highlight its main arguments, key findings, and contributions to the broader discourse on transport transformation.

A transition to battery electric vehicles without V2G: an outcome explained by a strong electricity regime and a weak automobility regime? (Jørgen Aarhaug).

This article investigates why Vehicle-to-Grid (V2G) technologies have not been adopted in Norway despite the country's global leadership in electric vehicle (EV) adoption. Drawing on 36 expert interviews and employing the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP), Aarhaug argues that the strength of Norway's electricity regime—characterized by a robust and flexible grid—combined with a relatively weak automobility regime, explains the lack of urgency for V2G. Although V2G holds theoretical potential to balance grid loads and accelerate decarbonization, the Norwegian case suggests that its absence does not hinder the large-scale diffusion of battery electric vehicles (BEVs). These findings challenge dominant assumptions in transition literature and emphasize the need for context-sensitive strategies.

Framing the mobility transition: public communication of industry, science, media, and politics in Germany (C. E. Drexler, B. Verse, A. Hauslbauer, J. Lopez, and S. Haider).

This article examines how established actors from Germany's automotive regime—namely industry, science, politics, and media—framed the concept of the "mobility transition" (*Verkehrs-/Mobilitätswende*) in their public communications during 2020. Using qualitative content analysis of 325 documents and combining the Multi-Level Perspective (MLP) with framing theory, the authors analyze how problems, causes, solutions, and value judgments were articulated. While most actors rhetorically support the mobility transition, their framing differs significantly: progressive parties and scientists advocate for structural change and modal shift, whereas industry and conservative voices emphasize technological innovation within the existing automobility regime. The study reveals a lack of shared understanding across sectors, contributing to the ongoing implementation gap. It concludes that fragmented discourses impede coordinated action and that greater alignment in public framing is essential for achieving a sustainable transport transformation.

Can parliament govern the transport transition? How the German Bundestag scrutinizes rail projects (Felix Julian Koch, Jenny Rademann, and Simon Fink).

This paper examines the evolving role of the German Bundestag in overseeing large-scale rail infrastructure projects. Using principal-agent theory, the authors analyze how parliamentary oversight has changed with the introduction of a formal review process that incorporates public participation. They find that the German

parliament has increasingly used its budgetary authority to enforce modifications—especially when demands are voiced through established participatory mechanisms. Although it remains unclear whether this leads to broader public acceptance, the study demonstrates that legislative bodies can exert meaningful influence in transport planning under specific institutional conditions.

From ambition to implementation: institutionalisation as a key challenge for a sustainable mobility transition in Germany (Max Reichenbach and Torsten Fleischer).

This contribution addresses institutionalisation challenges of emerging technologies in public transport by examining two case studies: urban ropeways and automated driving. Based on expert workshops, policy document analysis, and stakeholder observation, the authors find that public transport professionals are generally open to technological innovation but are constrained by regulatory rigidity, planning traditions, and fragmented responsibilities. They argue that successful transformation requires aligning technological trajectories with institutional change and redefining the roles of local actors. Technological innovation must be embedded within broader discussions on sustainability, public value, and governance reform.

The Integrated Policy Package Assessment approach: elaborating ex ante knowledge in the field of urban mobility (Dirk Scheer, Marion Dreyer, Maike Schmidt, Lisa Schmieder, and Annika Arnold).

This methodological contribution introduces the IPPA framework, which assesses the effectiveness of urban mobility policies ex ante through a four-step process: design, assessment, evaluation, and discourse. Using a case study on urban passenger transport, the authors demonstrate how policy packages—combining intermodal strategies and alternative drive technologies—can be systematically evaluated via impact matrices across technological, social, and environmental dimensions. The framework also incorporates stakeholder feedback loops to ensure relevance and legitimacy. The article highlights IPPA's utility in managing complexity and guiding evidence-based decision-making in mobility governance.

"It's just politics": an exploration of people's frames of the politics of mobility in Germany and their consequences (Marco Sonnberger, Matthias Leger, and Jörg Radtke).

This article explores how citizens frame the politics of mobility in Germany and how these frames influence support or resistance to sustainability-oriented transport policies. Based on interviews and focus groups conducted in the Stuttgart region, the authors identify two dominant frames: "politics-as-actor," which views politics as a monolithic and often distrusted force, and "politics-as-staged-process," which portrays mobility politics as performative and interest-driven. These frames affect public perceptions of legitimacy and influence behavioral responses to policy changes. The study calls for more transparent and inclusive governance approaches to build public trust and facilitate mobility transitions.

Two steps forward, one step back? Party competition, cooperative federalism, and transport policy reforms in Germany (Antonios Souris, Christian Stecker, and Arne Jungjohann).

This paper analyzes the failure of a major reform of Germany's road traffic regulations in 2020, which aimed to reallocate public space in favor of non-motorized transport. Using a process-tracing approach, the authors show how cooperative federalism and partisan politics in the Bundesrat (Federal Council) hampered the reform's implementation. Although the proposal initially received federal cabinet support, it ultimately failed due to resistance from three Länder governments. The study reveals the ambivalent nature of federal structures: while they can incorporate local expertise, they also enable political gridlock. The authors conclude that sustainable transport policy requires not only technical solutions but also institutional innovation and consensus-building.

Modelling policy scenarios: refocusing the model-policy logic for the case of German passenger transport (Johannes Thema).

The author proposes a novel approach to scenario modeling that directly links policy instruments to model parameters, using the case of German passenger transport. Unlike traditional narrative-based modeling, this method quantifies the effects of specific demand-side policies, such as vehicle ownership reduction and mode-shift incentives. Using an open-source database and modeling framework, the study simulates individual and combined policy impacts for 2035. Results indicate significant reductions in passenger kilometers, private car use, and greenhouse gas emissions, even without relying on electrification. Thema concludes that stronger emphasis should be placed on demand-side measures and behavioral interventions in transport policy modeling.

"Boulevard of broken dreams: public audit, mobility infrastructure deficits and the limits of correction in Germany" (Thorsten Winkelmann, Julia Zimmermann, and Erik Vollmann).

This article explores the limits of public audit as a corrective mechanism in German transport infrastructure

provision. Drawing on a systematic analysis of audit reports concerning large-scale infrastructure projects, the authors identify three patterns in governmental responses: compliance, resistance, and partial acknowledgment without action. Despite the formal oversight role of audit offices, significant shortcomings remain in project management, cost control, and responsiveness to recommendations. The paper underscores that even in well-institutionalized democracies, transparency and accountability mechanisms often fall short of fostering sustainable infrastructure development. The authors advocate for structural reforms that strengthen institutional learning and align infrastructure governance with sustainability goals.

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Competing interests
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