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# Who is the nag, who is the drag? Comparing the visions for the future of mobility of policymakers and the population in Munich

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This work addresses the following topic(s) from the Call for Contributions:  
(Please check at least one box)

- Placemaking to integrate urban spaces and mobility
- Promoting sustainable mobility choices in metropolitan regions
- Governing responsible mobility innovations
- Shaping the transition towards mobility justice
- System analysis, design, and evaluation
- other: \_\_\_\_\_

## Extended Abstract

### Problem statement

Mobility is the only sector in which greenhouse gas emissions are still increasing despite considerable decarbonisation efforts (EEA, 2019). One main reason for this is the prevalence of policies focusing on improving the car-centric status quo instead of pushing for systemic transformations (EEA, 2019; Marsden & Docherty, 2013). Policymakers are reluctant to push for transformative and restrictive measures because they expect them to be unpopular (Marsden & Docherty, 2013), to result in community opposition hindering their implementation (Aasen & Sælen, 2022; Wild et al., 2018), and/or to require compromises that reduce their radicality (Hrelja et al., 2013). However, mobility practices are not as immutable as such fears assume. They change over people's life course and in response to changes in the external environment (Marsden & Docherty, 2013; Meinherz & Binder, 2020). In addition, people with complex mobility patterns are notably unsatisfied with their car-based mobility and desire structural changes that would allow them to shift to alternative means of transport (Legrain et al., 2015; Meinherz & Fritz, 2021).

### Research objectives

We shed light on the conundrum that mobility policy and transition strategies ground in the assumption that people are averse to change, whereas at the same time, this assumption relegates people to a purely passive role, neglecting the many ways in which people constantly adapt and change their mobility practices (Bergman et al., 2017). We analyse which visions underpin policy discourses and mobility strategies in Munich and compare them to the visions for the future of mobility of the population. Thereby, we also respond to the observation that though the assumed change aversion of residents is named as a reason for focusing on status-quo oriented policies, little attention is being paid to residents' situated knowledge about the future (Ebbeson, 2022).

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## Methodological approach

We focused on the city of Munich and investigated policymakers' and residents' visions with a mixed-methods approach. On the one hand, we analysed municipal policy and strategy documents and parliamentary motions and responses regarding the former through a qualitative content analysis. We analysed the *Mobilitätsstrategie 2035*, the *Vision Zero*, *Modellstadt 2030*, and the *Radentscheid*. In all documents, we identified visions for the future of mobility, visions for transition and transformation, the role of residents, and which actors are identified as holding agency and responsibility for the mobility transition.

On the other hand, we conducted an online survey in the spring of 2023 that specifically targeted residents of three different central neighbourhoods, but was open to other Munich residents as well. Residents were asked to describe their vision for the future of mobility in Munich, and which changes in their neighbourhood they were willing to accept for different kinds of interventions supporting mobility transitions. In total,  $N = 1,722$  people took part in the survey. Most people in the sample had a drivers' licence and were without mobility impairments. Two thirds indicated that they walked, one third that they cycled, and one tenth that they drove (almost) daily. One fourth was content with their current mobility pattern. The free text answers on visions for the future of mobility were categorized according to mentions of infrastructure and mobility offerings, of changes in the frequency of using certain modes of transport, regarding policy and the (social) environment. Additionally, we will conduct multivariate analyses to show correlations and dependencies between residents' visions for future mobility in Munich and their attitudes about the climate catastrophe, about technology or the willingness to abandon one's private car.

## (Expected) results

Our preliminary findings indicate that in policy documents, the future of mobility was described in exclusively positive terms. Similarly, most residents described the future of mobility positively, though there were also residents who were both unsatisfied with the status quo and pessimistic regarding the city's capacity to engage in a mobility transition. Policy documents stressed the need for a mobility transition, but motivated it with population and economic growth, rather than with the dangers inherent to the climate catastrophe. Residents also barely mentioned the latter. This shows that both actors obscure the fact that change is inevitable, and can either be intentional through decarbonisation strategies, or will happen uncoordinatedly as the effects of the climate catastrophe hit (Marsden & Docherty, 2013).

Both in policymakers' and residents' vision for the future of mobility, individual cars played a subordinate role compared to active mobility and public transportation. In policy documents, technocentric visions around shared and automated mobility played an important part, whereas residents barely mentioned technological solutions. Mirroring existing literature, policy documents largely refrained from explicitly mentioning restrictions, insisting instead that residents would abandon driving on their own account if cycling and public transport infrastructure were improved. Nonetheless, policy documents as well as residents' visions emphasised the need to reallocate road space, which can be read as a restrictive measure. Policy documents assumed that such interventions would be supported unanimously by residents because they would improve their quality of life.

Both policymakers' and residents' visions were sufficiently vague and general for them to be largely shared. However, we argue that they may fail to induce the desired transformation because they are not "clear enough to be able to provide the necessary guidance for the transition process" (Schippel & Arnold, 2020, p. 13). Local resistances may emerge not because residents do not share the vision of a mobility transition, but because the conflictuality and details of local steps of implementation are not anticipated and managed. Therefore, we conclude that the reason for standstill is not residents' aversity to change, but instead a lack of visions for transformation that are detailed enough to be workable. In addition, municipal policymakers tended to deflect responsibility for the transition by pointing to regional and federal actors.

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