



Rethinking Public Transport!

*Future and Financing of Sustainable
Mobility beyond Covid-19*

Conference Report 2021

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1. Future and Financing of Sustainable Mobility beyond Covid-19?!

Public transport has been hit hard by the Corona pandemic. During the lockdowns, the number of passengers dropped by as much as 90%. As public transport all over the world is largely financed by ticket revenues, this decline led to enormous revenue losses during the pandemic. Even if passenger numbers have risen again, public transport has been negatively affected by the crisis, not only financially, but also concerning its image.

Financing models of public transport

New financing models for the expansion and operation of public transport were debated even before the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2018, the topic received nationwide attention when the German government proposed to the EU Commission to test free public transport in several major cities. Since then, options such as a public transport levy, citizen ticket, zero fare or, in competition with the latter, 365€ ticket, are being discussed in various political and social circles. These various financing models are control instruments for achieving central climate targets by shifting Motorized Individual Transport (MIT) to public transport.

A holistic approach

In order to encourage people to switch to more sustainable modes of transportation, however, it is not only the price of public transport that needs to be considered, but also its attractiveness. In addition, a change in transportation also requires and implies a cultural change, which is why Einfach Einsteigen regards the topic as a holistic task that goes far beyond the financing structure. This is why ÖffiCON* serves as a forum for the exchange of not only technical solutions, but also social and psychological aspects of the transportation transformation.

For, the extent to which people have access to mobility also determines their possibilities for social participation. Alternative financing models can facilitate and increase access to public transport and thus promote social justice. Likewise, a holistic view of public transport as a part of the transportation transformation must include considerations of economic policy effects. However, due to a lack of concrete projects and concepts, the debate in Germany has so far often not gone into sufficient depth. In contrast, there are many projects in other EU countries whose backgrounds are little known in Germany.

Goals and perspectives

It was the aim of the online conference “ÖffiCON* – Rethinking Public Transport!” to bring together representatives from politics, administration, transport companies, civil society and science not only from German-speaking countries, but on an international level. Fostering exchange between actors from diverse fields and countries, ÖffiCON* strives to facilitate the sharing of ideas and opinions, to encourage networking and thus achieve a transfer of

knowledge. Departing from the existing discourse on new financing methods and the expansion of public transport, concrete projects and best-practice examples were highlighted throughout the conference to provide incentives for re-thinking established structures. While actors from politics and society could thus gain professional insights into central questions and specificities of the public transport system, public transport and the envisaged transformation of transportation were presented to the expert audience as an issue that can neither be approached nor resolved from a merely technical perspective. Rather, the conference pointed out the social and cultural dimensions of both public transport itself and its future development, raising awareness for the fact that the transformation of mobility concerns all members of society.

2. ÖffiCON* — Rethinking Public Transport!

The international online conference “ÖffiCON* — Rethinking Public transport!” took place from March 18th – 21st, 2021. Due to the Corona pandemic, it was held online. The conference offered the over 450 participants a broad program of interactive formats, keynotes, and panel discussions as well as online networking spaces. Over four days, all participants were free to choose from a variety of thematic strands and program formats. The program was largely offered in German and English and interpreted into the respective target languages. The event achieved significant coverage and reach in advance, thanks to extensive publicity work and media cooperation with the taz, FuturZwei, the Tagesspiegel and the trade magazine Internationales Verkehrswesen. High-profile speakers from a range of different countries were present at the event. For upcoming events, we aspire to attract an audience that mirrors the internationality of the keynote speakers.

Broadly supported: A conference with national reach

The following report serves to present the main results of the conference based on its thematic strands. While it points to some highlights of the conference program, the summary places a particular focus on the connections between the different topics and challenges and on the conclusions that can be drawn for the further development of the ÖffiCON* project and the (inter) national debate on the financing and expansion of public transport.



3.1

New Sources of Financing

In 2018, the German Federal Government suggested a model project, aimed at implementing free public transport in five cities. The ensuing discussion has shown that in many German towns, public transport networks have reached the limit of their capacities: the system simply cannot cater to the number of passengers necessary to enable a comprehensive transformation of mobility. The German Federal Government has been closing railway lines, reducing staff, neglecting infrastructure, and delaying investments for too long. Other countries, which had long been dreaming the dream of motorised, individual mobility are facing the same problem. The dream is over. Now we must focus on getting public transport ready for an age of sustainable mobility. The debate about new models of financing has picked up speed, proposing for instance moving away from funding based on ticket revenues towards models of financing based on monthly contributions by citizens and major businesses alike. The Covid-19 crisis has pointed out the deficiencies/weaknesses of financial models based mainly on ticket sales. What are the alternatives? How can other models contribute to solid financing of the expansion, operation, and maintenance of public transport? How can this make transport the central pillar for the transformation of transportation, and how do we get there? Which additional measures are needed?

3.1. New Sources of Financing

In order to convince people to switch from MIT to public transport, the latter must be significantly expanded, and the service significantly improved. However, this will require funds that the public transport system cannot generate in its current constitution and mode of operation. Debates about the future of public transport must thus necessarily draw importance to introducing financing models that enable a transformation of the mobility sector. Such new ways of financing were the first central topic discussed at ÖffiCON* 2021.

The centrepiece of the thematic strand was the panel “The future of public transport and sustainable mobility after COVID-19”. Leading participants were PhD Katrin Dziekan, Head of Environment and Transport at the Federal Environment Agency, Esseline Schieven, Head of Mobility and Public Space for the City of Amsterdam, Phillip Washington, CEO of the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority, and François Bausch, Minister for Mobility in Luxembourg.

The main points of discussion on the panel were the effects of the Corona pandemic on public transport as well as the comparison of the offer and range of innovative concepts for expanding public transport in various metropolitan areas. The participants emphasized that the pandemic had severely damaged the reputation of public transport. Even if the supply structures could be maintained with the help of hygiene measures, they argued that it would still take a long time to reach a stable number of passengers again. The decrease of passengers also decreased the fare revenue. The effect is very substantial although only 40 percent of the public transport budget in Germany comes out of tickets. However, the crisis also opened new opportunities: The impact of the pandemic on traffic in general created incentives to fundamentally rethink how street space in the city should be distributed and used. Washington stressed the development as an opportunity for urban redevelopment which his department in the city of LA wanted to use to follow in the footsteps of cities like Amsterdam and increase modes of mobility such as walking and cycling.

The debate on the reorganization of mobility in the cities was also extended to rural areas, as the speakers criticized local transport services in the country as patchy. To tackle this problem, Schieven reported on plans in her department to better link cities and their metropolitan regions by expanding rail transport. She proposed sharing systems as a means to overcome the problem of the “last mile,” which particularly affects people who live in the outskirts of the city.

Free public transport was another major discussion point of the panel, which agreed that the subsidization of private transport must be abandoned

Challenges of the public transport of the future: “We want to move people, not vehicles”

in favour of financing public transport. Bausch aptly summed up: “We want to move people, not vehicles.”

The question of whether public transport should be made available to citizens free of charge arose in several events and was heatedly discussed. However, many experts prefer alternative models that rely on pay-as-you-go or beneficiary financing to free public transport. Such financing models, they argued, reduce costs for citizens while guaranteeing the necessary financial resources for a comprehensive expansion of local public transport services.



**We want to move
people, not vehicles.**

— François Bausch, Minister for Mobility of Luxembourg

Einfach Einsteigen:
A Bremen concept

One example of how such an alternative financing model can be put into practice is the concept designed by Bremen-based initiative **Einfach Einsteigen**, which envisages financing local public transport through a parity levy: All citizens would pay a fixed amount per month and thereby supply approximately half of the necessary budget. Local companies would also spend part of their turnover on public transport, thus contributing the other roughly 50%. Compared to the current method of financing, this concept proves advantageous since it generates a revenue surplus that could be used for the expansion and improvement of public transport services.

As spokesman Wolfgang Geißler emphasizes, the initiative's approach intends to consider the social concerns of the necessary transition towards sustainable transportation, in addition to ecological aspects: The Einfach Einsteigen model aims to give all citizens access to mobility and thus ensure social justice. For this reason, members of lower-income groups are exempt from paying a levy. In addition to economic aspects, cultural factors also play a role in achieving greater social equality: Einfach Einsteigen hopes that the declining importance of the car as a status object in the course of the transportation transition will bring society closer together.

What are the chances of the model being implemented? The concept has been reviewed by the Bremen Senate and Einfach Einsteigen confirmed being in close exchange with the governing parties in Bremen. In March 2021, the SPD in Bremen presented a similar concept which would, however, unlike the Einfach Einsteigen concept, be financed through real property tax.

While these developments represent important steps towards a financing model which encourages more sustainable public transport in the city, representatives of Einfach Einsteigen advocate that even after a successful implementation of their concept, active commitment needs to continue. For a successful transformation of mobility, many other questions need to be taken into account: How can rural areas be connected to the urban transportation network? How can the service be expanded to benefit people in these regions? The range of content of Einfach Einsteigen goes far beyond the financing concept.

Oliver Mietzsch, political scientist and chairman of the Public Transport Association Leipzig, presented another alternative model based on **beneficiary financing** of public transport infrastructure in cities. According to the idea of financial beneficiaries, mostly local businesses of areas that benefit from the existing public transport service would pay a so-called development contribution. This, in turn, could be invested in the expansion of the existing network. Residents of target areas for future projects of public transport infrastructure could also be demanded to pay a certain amount of development contribution and thus contribute to a general improvement of the service. Mietzsch explained that this concept was becoming increasingly relevant — especially at present, when local transport companies are suffering from a lack of revenue due to collapsing passenger numbers and failing ticket sales. However, similar concepts in other countries, such as Estonia, which are handled via property tax, are not easily applicable to German tax law, he said. In addition, the beneficiary concept would have to be specifically defined in the statutes of the respective federal state, which makes it difficult to implement. Examples of how the concept can be successfully implemented nevertheless exist: The city of Mainz, for instance, adapted parking statutes according to the location of people's homes and their proximity to the main train station. Using the so-called public transport bonus, a reduction of up to 30% in the number of parking spaces required can be achieved and the costs saved can be invested in the planning of future mobility projects.

Leipzig: Financing according to benefits and accessibility

A third approach to financing and optimizing public transport has already become reality in Tallinn: The Estonian capital can look back on eight years of **free** —or municipally financed— **public transport**. Polls prove that about 90% of the inhabitants are satisfied with the offer, even though the rate of actual users is lower. As Allan Allaküla, transport expert and head of the Tallinn EU office, explained, the Estonian government's flagship model is not limited to the capital: In rural areas, too, large parts of the bus network are offered to citizens free of charge. Unfortunately, social support for the project is as of now lower in the country than in the city.

Tallinn: Municipally financed local transport

Despite its innovative transformation, the Estonian public transport system has been hit hard by the pandemic: there has been a massive drop in the number of people using the system, with a simultaneous increase in the

A view into the distance: International examples in the panel discussion

use of private vehicles. Nevertheless, Allaküla maintained that the expansion of services would continue.

The concepts for practically implementing alternative financing models were taken up again in one of the **panel discussions** at ÖffiCON*. High-ranking guests such as Arnaud Passalacqua, professor at the École d'Urbanisme de Paris and responsible for the Fare-free public transport monitor, met with experts Allan Allaküla, Oliver Mietzsch and Mark Wege.

Arnaud Passalacqua began by presenting a number of French cities in which public transport is offered ticket-free. As he explained, in most cities almost half of the financing for public transport stems from the business tax of local companies. Also, France's centralized government structure makes it possible to provide direct state funding for such transport projects. The approach to use business tax to finance public transport is comparable to the concept from Einfach Einsteigen, which also involves a contribution of around 50% from local companies to the transportation budget.

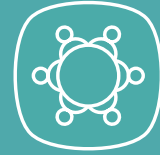
The panel discussion also focused on the impact COVID-19 had on public transportation and on the opportunities it created. Participants emphasized that the crisis would bring new concepts of financing into focus. However, Oliver Mietzsch clarified that for a successful implementation of such alternative models, local transport services need to be attractive and accessible to citizens.

The participants also discussed some specifics of the Tallinn model, which is primarily financed by income tax. They pointed out that the improved mass transit service attracted more people to Tallinn and thus also effectuated an increase in income tax revenues. Thus, expanding the service at the same time strengthened the system's funding base and heightened its stability. However, the concept, like all discussed at the conference, is not easily transferable to other countries —for instance, due to significant differences between Estonia's tax system and those of Germany and France.

Results: No universal solutions and a need for new financing concepts

ÖffiCON* was successful in bringing together and negotiating the various aspects of the current debate on financing concepts for public transport. In the differentiated discussions, it became clear that the implementation of new financing concepts always depends on location-specific conditions. Different countries and regions have different legal, economic, and political conditions, which means that no universally valid solution can be found for an expanded, ticket-free public transport system. At the same time, the debate showed once again that public transport is not free — on the contrary, the necessary expansion of the public transport system creates even more costs, which can hardly be met by the municipalities without new financing concepts. There is therefore a need to generate a widespread understanding that ticket-free local transport concepts can be financed jointly by citizens, companies, and municipalities.

3.2



Public Transport Policy and Implementation

There is little dispute among politicians about the need for a transformation of transportation. Yet, when it comes to establishing what transportation transformation means and how it should be implemented, political consensus soon reaches its limits. Decision making processes are long and complicated, yet the final decisions lack consequence and an integrated approach. Bringing projects on the way which make public transit and multimodal mobility more attractive is easier than imposing measures on the automotive sector by limiting the funds invested in road design and cutting the privileges of car traffic. We need more areas in cities where cars have limited or no access, as well as limited parking spaces and parking fees of appropriate height. Planning processes don't take a lot of time for political reasons alone. How can political processes of decision making and their implementation at the planning level be enhanced to make them quicker and more consequent in nature? Which strategies can contribute to accelerating the transformation of transportation? Where can we find successful examples? How could lively, car-free cities or city centres look like? How can climate friendly mobility become easily accessible and successful in rural areas? How can citizens, businesses, politicians, and administration collaborate more efficiently? Which role can initiatives and associations play in these processes?

3.2. Public Transport Policy and Implementation

The implementation of a good sufficiently expanded and accessible public transport system is largely dependent on political actors. In addition to political will, economic innovations play an important, albeit not uncontroversial, role. On the other hand, legal and planning aspects must be taken into account in the implementation process. The conference provided important insights into these aspects and how they determine decision-making processes and policy implementation.

3.2.1. Measures on the Municipal Level

Municipalities are the decisive players in the transport transformation. Since responsibility for public transportation lies with the municipalities, it is only within the cities and districts that model projects can be launched, and the necessary course set towards achieving a comprehensive transformation of transportation. At ÖffiCON*, there was room to give examples of projects that are already gaining momentum and to show how urban discourses on local transport expansion are taking shape and evolving.

The “Einfach Einsteigen” model:
Financing based on monthly
contributions

An important example of this is the Hanseatic city of Bremen, which is also where the initiative Einfach Einsteigen is based. Mark Wege, spokesman for Einfach Einsteigen, gave one of the two keynotes at ÖffiCON*. In his presentation, he emphasized that Bremen is already known as a bicycle city, but that looking beyond national borders, towards Amsterdam or Copenhagen, for instance, makes evident that there is still a lot more Bremen can do for a transformation of mobility!

Wege described the potential for improvement in the Hanseatic city with regard to the transportation transformation: First, he demanded that public space be used better by allotting less space to parked cars. Secondly, he argued that public transport is not developed well enough to ensure adequate mobility for commuters or people who live outside the city centre. He sees the potential to draw attention to these shortcomings and to change the current situation in the initiative **Einfach Einsteigen**. The initiative works to bring about a change in awareness on a social and cultural level and advocates for an improvement in public transportation services. Wege appealed to politicians to do more for the transport transformation, even if political goals and planning processes could not be implemented overnight. He concluded the first and introductory event of the conference with the words that for him, mobility is a fundamental right.

Another example of how alternative concepts in transport planning and financing can be tested and implemented in German municipalities is the **tenant ticket**, which has already been used on a trial basis for the Sennestadt district of Bielefeld. Janina Welsch and Michael Herwegen, employees of the Institute for Regional and Urban Development Research in Dortmund, explained how the ticket works and how it resonated with users and officials in the test region.

Sennestadt pilot project: Experiences from Bielefeld

The idea of the tenant ticket is that the rent for people who live in the Sennestadt district is increased by a fixed sum, which is invested in the public transport system. In return, they receive a ticket which is valid for public transport in their district from moBiel, the company that operates public transport in Bielefeld. The results of a survey show that this approach proved effective to improve tenants' perception of public transport: Overall, 80% of respondents were in favour of the offer, and many who had not previously used public transport now said they used it at least once per month. Car traffic in the district decreased, buses were more heavily used, but bicycles were also used less frequently.

Another idea for how a municipality can use its legal powers to fundamentally change public transport through its financing method was introduced by the SPD in Bremen.

A property tax-funded ticket model

Only last month, the party announced that it had designed a new financing model for public transport. Falk Wagner, a member of Bremen's parliament and, among other things, spokesman for the Bremen SPD's Deputation for Mobility, presented the party's model for a "**Bremen-Ticket**" at the conference.

The idea seems simple: The SPD suggests financing public transport via property tax. The new concept is intended to advance the implementation of the transportation transformation, which, as Wagner admitted, has been slowed down by the corona pandemic. At the same time, it aims to address other problems of public transportation in Bremen – for example, the inequalities regarding access to mobility that persist despite social tickets and discounts mobility. And even though usage statistics show the comparatively high proportion of cyclists in Bremen, Wagner criticized that regarding usage numbers of public transport, the Hanseatic city lags behind other German cities of similar size. He hopes that the Bremen-Ticket will improve this situation. In the long term, Bremen's SPD is also striving for ticket-free travel, according to Wagner.

The highlight of the debate on municipal paths towards a public transport-based traffic transformation was the panel discussion "How to proceed with the traffic transformation and the expansion of local transport in Bremen?". Participants of the panel were Janin Schaffer, physical oceanographer working at the AWI, Anja Schiemann, member of the Bremen Parliament and spokesperson for mobility for the SPD, Ralph Saxe, also a member of the Bremen Parliament and spokesperson for mobility for the Greens, Michael Jonitz, member of the

Bremen: How to go from here?

Bremen Parliament for the CDU and member of the Deputation for Mobility, and Wolfgang Geißler, political scientist and spokesperson for Einfach Einsteigen.

At the beginning, the representatives explained their positions: Schiemann (SPD) advocated better connections to commercial areas and an increase in the frequency of public transport to create a better service. Saxe (Greens) saw a need for action to reduce car traffic to below 20% and strengthen multimodality in Bremen. Apart from pointing out the urgent need for improvement of the public transport system, Schaffer (AWI) criticized a shortage of sharing options and called for the development of an app to transparently present the different offers. Geißler seconded Schaffer's demand for a higher frequency of bus and tram connections, but also highlighted the importance of improving passenger's waiting experience at bus and tram stops.

Subsequently, the transport development planning of the Bremen government coalition was discussed. Schaffer, Saxe, Schiemann and Geißler expressed the wish for more participatory procedures.

Finally, the Bremen-Ticket designed by the SPD was discussed controversially. The CDU expressed doubts that the concept sufficiently considered means for covering the arising costs. The Greens were more concerned that the Bremen-Ticket could lead to increased use of public transport at the cost of other green modes of mobility, such as bicycle and pedestrian traffic – a development that has been observed, for example, in Tallinn. In response, Geißler explained that a Bremen-Ticket would have to be accompanied by an expansion of the entire environmental alliance.

3.2.2. Supraregional Policies: Reactivating Railway Lines

Another option for how local and state policy can bring about an expansion and improvement of rail transport services is the reactivation of formerly active railway lines. In a roundtable discussion, plans for such line reactivations were presented and their potential for creating better connections between rural areas and urban centres was emphasized.

This roundtable was led by Bettina Fabich, who is involved in a project for a direct rail link between Bremen and Groningen, mobility researcher Bente Grimm and Wolfgang Konukiewicz, spokesman for the Lower Saxony Local Transport Alliance.

According to the speakers, route reactivation is a cost-effective and sustainable alternative to the construction of new rail tracks. Explaining that many decommissioned lines were abandoned for economic reasons, they argue that now that an expansion of the public transport offer is needed as an incentive to switch to sustainable modes of transportation, many routes that were once considered uneconomical are becoming a necessary part of the transformation of transportation.

Not new, but improved: Infrastructure reactivation as cost-effective alternatives for mass transit expansion

Model projects are opening up further possibilities; for example, solar-powered trains could make the electrification of lines unnecessary. The participants of the event were then given the opportunity to become active themselves and relate the example presented to railway lines in their immediate living environment.

3.2.3. Innovations & Tools

In addition to policy strategies and projects aiming at the expansion of the transportation system, multimodality is a key to achieving a transformation of mobility. Participants of ÖffiCON* therefore not only discussed solutions for public transport, but also for MIT and the entire environmental alliance. One of the guiding questions was: How can the volume of traffic in cities be reduced?

On- and offline: Tools for end users and planners

The participants agreed that as long as there is no comprehensive and barrier-free public transport system, people will not be able to completely renounce using cars as a means of transportation. They therefore highlighted the potential for improvement with regards to car traffic, particularly when it comes to the number of people travelling in a car – which is often only one, the driver. Filling empty seats with other people could reduce the number of cars.

The speakers presented the following solutions to enhance multimodality and encourage sustainable mobility:

- Supporting **carpooling offers**. At least for a transitional period, car-sharing can work complementary to public transport; particularly when it is used to cover the distance to the next bus or tram connection. However, the usage rate is low, which is in part due to the shortcomings of the existing offer, which has been criticized as highly fragmented and confusing. A **portal** that combines different **providers** of ridesharing **services** could thus offer a solution.
- Minett and Niles presented a workshop based on the results of **their investigation** into the effort involved for drivers to become passengers by taking alternative mobility options, and the amounts of incentive that people would seek to offset that effort. For a case study route in California, carpooling was perceived as taking lower effort than vanpooling or buses. They proposed two new directions for the transformation of mobility: the use of incentives to encourage people to travel as passengers at congestion-clearing levels, and the possibility that it would be easier and less costly to encourage passenger travel in privately owned cars as carpools than on public transport.
- **StadtNavi** is a comprehensive open-source platform that, in addition to the local public transport offer, also integrates ridesharing offers and other modes of transport in order to fully exploit the possibilities of multimodality.

- The GoBonn app is —similar to StadtNavi— a platform that integrates public transport offers as well as ride-sharing services and offers these for direct booking.
- Pendlernetz.de functions like a bulletin board that enables an easy exchange of offers and requests for rideshares.
- Push and pull measures in the area of **parking management** make travelling by car in the city less attractive, but other modes of transport all the more appealing. The demand for parking space in cities is enormous. Where the number of parking slots cannot meet the demand, people turn to places not designated for cars, such as bike lanes and sidewalks. Parking management, i.e., the reduction of parking space and the location-specific pricing of parking, can thus be a factor in transforming inner-city transportation.
- The idea of “**Mobility as a Service**” can be useful in driving forward a demand-oriented, modern transformation of transportation and strengthening multimodality. By linking offers from different mobility providers, it increases users’ convenience in route planning while offering the opportunity to prioritize environmentally friendly modes of mobility. One challenge, however, is that little traffic data to build such a network on is currently available as open source.

Results: Structures for discussions

ÖffiCON* was able to help restructure the debate on transport policy measures and the implementation of public transport expansion. A fundamental distinction can be made between municipal levers and market- and innovation-based approaches. Not all measures operate exclusively at the municipal level; for example, the reactivation of abandoned railway lines plays a decisive role at the supraregional level. At the same time, although efforts towards the expansion of public transport and towards multimodality draw heavily from technical solutions, the implementation of the transportation transformation always requires communication, convincing arguments and the necessary push and pull factors to persuade people to shift to sustainable modes of mobility.



Environmental Impact

In its current form, transportation has significant impacts on our environment. The aim of combating climate crisis, which has become a serious threat to life as we know it, is a major reason for implementing a comprehensive mobility transformation. As of now, the transportation sector is one of the biggest emitters both in Germany and in all of Europe, causing 20% of Germany's CO₂ emissions and nearly 30% of the EU's CO₂-emissions. Since 1990, there has been no reduction of emissions in the transportation sector, on the contrary: at times, emissions have even increased. Motorized transport is responsible for 94% of these emissions. In order to reduce the CO₂-emissions and further greenhouse gases caused by the transportation sector, vehicle drivers must switch to modes of green transportation, namely a combination of walking, cycling and using public transport. How can we design public transport in a fashion that makes the most of its environmental benefits and ensures it forms an effective synergy with cycling and walking? Which previous experiences can we draw on? What can new drive technologies for buses contribute? How can transforming transportation change our cityscapes, assigning spaces previously taken up by streets and parking lots new functions and thereby making our cities more livable? Which further effects on the environment does the transportation transformation need to consider?

3.3. Environmental Impact

At ÖffiCON*, three aspects of the thematic strand “environmental effects” were discussed in more detail: Firstly, how alternative ticketing models can prove an incentive for people to switch to using public transport instead of other modes of mobility (mostly MIT). Secondly, which role transport planning plays for increased climate protection and thirdly, which investments are necessary to increase the impact public transport can make to enable a comprehensive mobility transformation.

3.3.1. Tariff Offers

Tariffs and their side effects

Alternative tariff offers are introduced to convince people to switch to public transport and thus contribute to climate protection. However, it often remains an open question to what extent these concepts achieve their goal. At ÖffiCON*, therefore, different concepts were compared: A 365€ ticket for urban public transport, a citizen ticket to which all citizens contribute through a fixed amount of money, and a zero-fare financed entirely by taxes. With all concepts, there is a risk that public transport might not be expanded accordingly in the event of an actual increase in demand. In addition, there might be rebound effects: The demand for public transport could increase, without the share of private transport declining. How do the concepts differ and what advantages and disadvantages do they offer?

Tax-funded public transport

The **citizen ticket**, which relies on a levy on all citizens for financing public transport, offers states and municipalities an opportunity to make more money available for the expansion of the public transport system and thus increase its appeal. However, when implementing this concept, it is important that the levy is scaffolded according to citizens' income in order to reduce social inequalities. At the same time, there must be a significant expansion of the bus and tram system. Finally, this financing model must be tested to determine whether it can also be used in rural areas.

Public transport financing from the municipal budget

Zero fares, i.e., the financing of public transportation from municipal budgets, are generally highly accepted. The example of the city of Tallinn shows that the concept has caused more people to move to the city, thus generating higher tax revenues, which in turn could be invested in the expansion of public transport system. However, Tallin has experienced a so-called rebound effect, according to which the increase in passenger numbers can largely be attributed to a shift between sustainable modes of mobility: Many of the new passengers switched to public transport from walking or cycling; only some of them gave up using private cars.

This shows that new tariff models must always be checked for real reductions in the use of private vehicles. Only then can they offer added value for protecting our climate.

3.3.2. Transportation Planning

Car-free neighbourhoods, limiting air pollution, bicycle lanes: Transforming the transport system in cities is currently a hot topic, especially from the point of view of transport and urban planning. The topic of transportation planning also played a role at ÖffiCON*, where the focus was on congestion and the reduction of private transport.

How can transportation planning enhance public transport?

One result of the conference is that the reduction of MIT contributes to making public transport more attractive on several levels: For instance, reducing congestion in the city has positive effects on both the actual efficiency of bus transport and its image. Particularly at “bottleneck” streets with little space available anyway, solutions need to be found. While car-sharing and car-pooling offers can contribute to directly reducing the volume of traffic, at the same time, the prices for local public transport must be reduced to make bus and tram rides accessible and affordable for everyone.

Under the motto “Fewer cars, more life: The art of transforming cities into sustainable, vital urban spaces,” experts from various parts of the world discussed how a reduction in the number of cars could make cities more sustainable and liveable. The panel included Anabel Gulías Torreiro, spokesperson for the city of Pontevedra in Spain and the local authority’s representative for promotion and urbanism; Elizabeth Deakin, professor of urban and regional planning at Berkeley; and John Niles, transportation expert from Vancouver.

Panel discussion on sustainable reduction of car traffic and liveable cities

The discussion showed how closely the so-called “right to the city” and the transportation transformation are intertwined. For, a liveable city is hardly conceivable without sustainable mobility concepts, as the participants emphasized. The right to the city demands that people on foot and on bicycles are given enough space in urban areas. At the same time, a liveable city also requires a well-developed public transport system. Since municipal funds are often scarce, passenger increases are considered the best way to generate higher revenues. Questioning the extent to which car traffic has a place in a liveable city, the participants agreed on the need for municipal control of the volume of private cars.

Transportation planning is therefore necessary in order to simultaneously achieve an expansion of public transport and a reduction in MIT. At the same time, ÖffiCON* was able to demonstrate once again that the transformation of transportation is not a matter of planning alone — rather, it is discursively and socially shaped and propelled forward.

3.3.3. Investments in the Public Transport System

In addition to many individual contributions, ÖffiCON* also created room for discussion between different political groups. In two workshops, organized by Mira Ball, head of the federal bus and rail group of the ver.di trade union, discussions were held with representatives of BUND and VCD and climate activists from Fridays for Future.

Public transport investment in
personnel and expansion

The first workshop focused on the great need for large-scale investments that ensure better working conditions for people employed in the public transport sector and to improve the system's infrastructure by creating possibilities for expansion. While it is largely up to the municipalities to take responsibility for this, some changes in legislation are also needed at the federal level. Expanding offers for advanced training and education, for example, would counteract the shortage of skilled workers. The speakers warned that increased competition and a market-based perspective enforced by private actors, presented dangers to the public transport system, as it dictates savings and purely economic considerations as the ultimate goal, irrespective of political objectives. They also see a need for action regarding the legal situation as especially the connection to environmental and health protection has to be strengthened.

How can workers and the climate
movement cooperate?

In a second workshop, possible alliances and joint campaigns between the climate movement and employees of the public transport sector were discussed. The participants identified an immediate need for action pointing out that the average age of employees is high and climbing, while there are few young people seeking work in the sector. Already, there are many vacant positions and speakers warned that without raising the social appreciation of employees in the public transport system, this crisis could not be overcome. Through strikes and public relations work, Fridays for Future could support public transport workers and stand up for a well-funded expansion of public transit services.

3.4



Diversity and Participation

Being mobile is more than simply getting from one place to another. We spend a large part of our lives on the go. Yet, the experiences individuals make are vastly different. Depending on which mode of transport we choose, but also depending on our age, origin, gender, or potential limitations of physical or financial capacities, we experience mobility in very different ways. Car owners are privileged in their mode of transportation, which goes on the backs of other transport users, who are limited in their mobility and subjected to potential dangers. Cities are designed for car mobility. Accordingly, city space is unequally distributed, with parking spaces being offered for free, or at very low fees, in many cities. Public transport, bikers and pedestrians have to share the remaining space, which is frequently not protected sufficiently from car traffic. Certain groups of society are particularly affected by this: children, women, families, people with disabilities or individuals lacking financial resources are restricted in their mobility and hampered in their access to social life. Luckily, many places are in the process of correcting these mistakes of the past, and the pandemic has reinforced this trend. How can we contribute to accelerating the transformation process? How can groups who have been put at a disadvantage in the past be considered in and made part of new processes of planning and designing mobility, so that their needs and concerns are taken into account from the very beginning? Which particular potential is there for implementing this process in public transit, which is predominantly designed by men, but used mainly by women?

3.4. Diversity and Participation

Social factors of mobility

Access and mobility are often intertwined with social factors: People living in rural areas or poor people who live in urban areas have limited options for mobility compared with affluent people living in the city. An important finding of ÖffiCON* is that citizen participation can be a fundamental step towards creating a mobility system that is fair, affordable and accessible to all. At ÖffiCON*, special attention was paid to the question of how gender is intertwined with mobility and to developing solutions against discrimination in the mobility sector. Participants also addressed opportunities for participation and other social factors that determine access to mobility.

Individual, personal mobility budgets can create mobility equity

Alexandra Millonig, Senior Scientist at the TU Vienna at the AIT Mobility Department in the field of Dynamic Transportation Systems, was a keynote speaker at ÖffiCON*. In her presentation, she explained that although women use public transport more frequently than men, the distances they cover are shorter on average. Like other people with a comparatively small mobility radius, they are thus disadvantaged in local transport planning. But how can mobility equity be achieved? Millonig presented a possible answer with the concept of individual mobility budgets, which are adapted to users' personal requirements and allotted according to their needs. Such a needs-oriented budgeting approach would at the same time create an incentive to question existing concepts and re-think options for creating a more inclusive mobility system in the future.

An inclusive transport transformation must include perspectives from less privileged groups

The question of how the transformation of transportation can be designed to be **socially inclusive** was also discussed by Janna Aljets. She introduced the notion of "Mobility of Care", which describes that people who take on most care work in the family and household have a different mobility behaviour than working people or children. Aljets criticized that transport policy too often adopts a singular perspective, which neglects that people's requirements differ according to their situation. For instance, because many men are involved in transportation planning, the design of services is also focused on the needs of working men, while other perspectives are missing. Aljets called for more opportunities for citizen participation, more diversity in the staff of the planning department, and for establishing equity as the guiding principle for future projects in transportation planning and policy, to make an inclusive transportation transformation a reality.

Local transport for all: Special challenges

For public transport to attract more people, its services must be tailored to the needs of different social groups. How can **public transit be "for everyone"**? Alexandra Millonig from the TU Wien and Sara Ortiz Escalante from the University of British Columbia in Vancouver discussed this question on the

panel with the title “Mobility for all”. The most important results of the discussion: First of all, it is crucial that the public transport network offer is so broad and efficient that users can reach any place they want to go by bus or tram, and that fares are affordable. Using the example of Mexico’s subways, where there are separate compartments for women, the speakers also showed that public transport must be an accessible and safe space for everyone. This also ties in with the demand to ensure accessibility in public transport for elderly people or people with disabilities. Put in a nutshell, mobility must be thought and designed sustainably and locally, not only by politicians, but also by social actors.

One example demonstrating possibilities for passengers to get actively involved in debating transport issues and develop solutions for them was presented by the German Railway Customer Association. The platform provides opportunities for an exchange on all aspects of rail transport, such as the abandonment of railway lines or the shift of logistics traffic to the roads. Action days and an internal communication strategy, as well as purposeful external communication directed at various passenger groups, create networking opportunities for the association’s members.

In addition to participation tools, ÖffiCON* participants also explored the idea of what is known as nudging: The creation of non-monetary incentives for public transport use, such as the principle of “**passenger appreciation**”. After all, they argued, people are more likely to use a mode of transportation if it is not only affordable, but also comfortable and appealing. Hence, there is a need for improvement measures of the interior and exterior design of public transport vehicles — measures which are not directed at improving the service itself, but at making it more comfortable and appealing. For instance, the interior design should be based on the needs of the passengers and include luggage racks, workstations and elements that make the ambience more pleasant.

Opportunities for participation using the example of the German Railway Customer Association

Design of vehicles to increase the attractiveness of public transport use



Culture, Philosophy and Art

Mobility as we know it has been centred around the automobile and its requirements for decades. Even though it is getting clearer by the day that motorized personal mobility will fail in the long run, as both natural resources and physical space are limited, cars have become deeply entrenched in our imaginations as symbols of freedom, individuality, progress, and status. They are part of our day-to-day life and of our culture and imagining a world without them seems impossible to most of us. Although there is an increasing number of positive examples for successful transformation processes, we know we will face many challenges and confrontations on our way there. How can we initiate a change in our culture and implement the transformation of transportation in the heads of people, as well as their hearts? How can we proceed when the resistance and prejudices against the transportation transformation are not rational at all? How can we make public transport a part of a lively mobility culture? Could it help to frame well-functioning, well developed public transport as a general service, to which all members of society have access? What can we learn by looking at cycling, which has gained ground in many areas?

3.5. Culture, Philosophy and Art

This thematic strand of ÖffiCON* showed: Creativity is an important building block of a comprehensive transformation of transportation. New ways, alternative approaches, and creative thoughts can lay the foundation for the development and implementation of a transport transformation that is well financed and opens room for participatory engagement. The following two program items illustrate the many ways in which creative approaches prove highly valuable for achieving the change of mind that must accompany or precede a change in transportation policy and habits.

Linieplus is a tool for the participatory development of new bus and tram lines. The project aims at promoting **participation in transport planning**, enabling exchange between experts and anyone interested in the developments in the transportation sector, and providing a source of inspiration for measures planned in the future. The platform is maintained by volunteers, it is free of charge and freely accessible.

A participation tool in local transport design

Another creative approach seeks to propose new ways of dealing with the COVID-19 pandemic, which has turned public transportation into a “space of fear”, according to some speakers. In a roundtable discussion, the participants debated what was necessary to increase users’ **sense of security** and to take effective security measures. They emphasized that what was needed above all were solutions that would raise the sense of security of all social groups. Women, for example, frequently fear sexual assault when waiting at bus or tram stops at night, regardless of Corona. Creative solutions and collaborative projects are therefore needed to ensure safe access to public transportation for all members of society.

Sense of security — intended for all people



Behind the scenes at ÖffiCON*

4. ÖffiCON*: Networking, the Transformation of Transportation and New Sources of Financing

The transformation of transportation can only succeed if the environmental alliance and public transport, in particular, attracts more users on a regional, nation-wide and international level. The COVID 19 pandemic has fired up the debate about new ways of financing attractive local transport once again. ÖffiCON* took up this debate and structured it to create a targeted, productive debate. Members from different areas of knowledge shared their insights about local transport expansion and contributed to a greater understanding between different groups of interest. The organizers thus achieved their goal of promoting the extensive networking that is fundamental for a transformation of mobility based on the backbone of a strong public transport system.

ÖffiCON* focused on five building blocks: New Sources of Financing, Public Transport Policy and Implementation, Environmental Impacts, Diversity and Participation, and Culture, Philosophy and Art.

Looking back on the event now, we are asking ourselves: What are the core messages of the conference? And what questions remain to be discussed?

The major takeaway of ÖffiCON* is that public transportation, especially its expansion, is never free. Good financing concepts, whether municipal, supported by companies or by citizens, are the basis for the expansion and sustainable operation of local public transport. The relevant actors in the transformation are the municipalities, for it is there that politicians can take responsibility for boldly driving forward the transformation of transportation. But transport planning and innovations, driven by groups of committed individuals or by start-ups, also play an important role. While innovations can provide new tools for improving the offer and facilitating the use of sustainable modes of transportation, transportation planning has a responsibility to diversify. Citizens from all backgrounds should have a voice in planning the expansion and operation of public transit to ensure the different needs of different population groups are considered. Factors such as gender and age, as well as social background, play a decisive role. Considerable funds must thus be invested not only in the expansion of public transport, but also, for example, in fair pay for public transport employees. But ÖffiCON* also showed that discourse and creative solutions, collaboration and an exchange of ideas are needed to drive forward innovative approaches for improvement and implement a comprehensive transformation of transportation.

Although there have been several pilot projects in Germany for the expansion of local transport in selected cities in recent years, there is still a lack of sustainable solutions for public transit as a whole. That is why it was part of

Networked and strengthened — but many discussions remain necessary

Learning from other countries

A look into the future

our strategy to invite experts from abroad who provided and explained examples from Luxembourg or Estonia, where completely new financing approaches have not only been developed, but also successfully implemented and made a reality. People involved in these projects participated in ÖffiCON* in various ways and shared their experiences.

ÖffiCON* was the first conference of this format. It was more than an impact, but its potential is far from exhausted. Our goal is to bring together people from politics, trade unions, from start-ups and transport and urban development projects, students and interested parties again in the future, and to foster even better networking between them. A follow-up conference can succeed in further advancing the international debate around public transport by addressing the international character of the event and focusing on creating a diverse program in which speakers from different levels of experience, backgrounds, and sectors create a fruitful exchange and basis for collaboration – a diversified and international exchange which we strive to achieve in the audience as well. In the future, Einfach Einsteigen will continue to promote the networking between all those involved in and striving for a transformation of mobility.

We are looking forward to welcoming you again!

Kind regards,

Annika Fuchs



Planning and preparation of ÖffiCON*

5. About Us

The Initiative **Einfach Einsteigen** ("simply hop on") advocates for the expansion and improvement of the public transport system as part of an extensive transformation of the transportation sector. More concretely, we have come up with a concept for a public transport (system) which requires no tickets and is financed in equal parts —share by citizens and companies. The senate in Bremen is currently reviewing this concept for feasibility/viability. Moreover, we want to create awareness and interest among the public to engage in the transition of the transportation sector, and are launching projects targeted at this goal.

The focus of our work so far has been on Bremen and the surrounding area. With **ÖffiCON***, we have now gone a step further and provided an impetus for networking in Germany and beyond. We believe that networking and knowledge exchange is essential for the step towards new financing methods for local transport - and only in this way can the transport transformation succeed in the coming years. We would therefore like to invite you to join us in rethinking local transport. So that soon everyone everywhere can simply get on board.

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Team **ÖffiCON***



Left: Planning and preparation of ÖffiCON*

Below: Behind the scenes of the livestreams



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