



Justice and urban transformation in light of accelerating climate change

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Climate change adaptation in urban spaces will only be successful if societal actors from science, politics and public find common ground, and join forces on a local level. One of the sectors that is notoriously difficult to transform in a sustainable way is transportation, and linked to it the way we design our cities. Bike infrastructure is almost universally under-developed (apart from notable exceptions such as Utrecht, NL, or Copenhagen, DK), putting marginalised people at a massive disadvantage in that they cannot freely choose which mode of transport to use. The structural privilege for motorists in virtually all post-war western societies is so prevalent, that even mentioning of the sheer existence of those privileges is considered offensive and met with huge outcry and media frenzy in support of the status quo.

So how to address the issue, given the fact that a host of transformative steps are undoubtedly required to make urban spaces future proof? How are we raising awareness to the fact that the externalised costs of excessive car use in cities are vastly underappreciated - be it health related costs due to noise and air pollution, accidents, lack of exercise; environmental costs due to carbon emissions; infrastructural investments; or the lack of greenery due to parked cars, and so on? In short, how can we change the conversation such that justice and visionary thinking (rather than fear) become front and center of the discourse?

We show how tailored science communication can help to expose preconceived notions and thus reduce conflict between various actors. The strategy is based on solid evidence, which highlights the hidden costs of currently privileged modes of transport. Also, it demonstrates why certain arguments in support of the status quo are deeply flawed. Using expertise from colleagues in the social sciences (organizational psychology), we aim at understanding why decision makers act so hesitantly. Ultimately, a list of guiding principles when it comes to constructive dialogue - and identifying bad faith actors - will be developed (with the help of experienced societal actors) and disseminated amongst decision makers but also colleagues in disciplines with similar levels of public controversy. First results are presented at EGU'24.