Traffic-political commitments and mobility decisions: A question of morals, self-interest, or lifestyles?

In light of the severe air pollution in Trier, restrictions of motorized traffic and the associated personal willingness to do so are absolutely essential. Yet before an effective model of intervention can be developed, the following questions must be addressed from an analytical and conditional perspective: Which motives underlie the willingness of the citizens of Trier to reduce their personal automobile use or to participate actively in a political way with respect to traffic? Do they do this because of their own responsibility-related and justice-related beliefs or from purely rational and self-interest oriented calculations?

The results of a questionnaire study ($N = 369$) could show that the postulate of the rational choice theory is not tenable with the dominance of the self-interest motive. Instead, there is a pluralism of motives based on responsibility, justice, and self-interest related cognitions and emotions that form the basis of the willingness to act with respect to traffic.

The interviewees in Trier are, above all, willing to actively speak up in favor of local political measures for reducing traffic when they regard these measures as fair; are outraged about the low commitment of other citizens, but also expect personal benefits from such measures. In the first place, specific internal and external control beliefs are relevant for the reduction of personal automobile use. Other important influential factors here also include outrage over the low commitment of others and the expectation of personal benefits.

The results of this study allow specific starting points to be derived for developing interventions aimed at the reduction of the amount of traffic in Trier. Moreover, important from the practical point of view of intervention, general lifestyle analyses identified seven lifestyle clusters which make it possible to design intervention programs specifically for the target groups, thus allowing intervention programs to be organized more effectively.