

Changing gears - Identifying pluralistic mobility perspectives of young Viennese people

As mobility critically underpins daily life, understanding young people's nuanced preferences and patterns is essential to design sustainable and inclusive transportation systems. Based on the knowledge that early mobility experiences shape lifelong behaviours and the alarming WHO statistic indicating that 83% of Austrian schoolchildren do not meet recommended levels of physical activity, a comprehensive understanding of youth mobility needs is required. In particular, qualitative insights into the subjective dimensions of young people's mobility experiences are crucial for informing the design of future-oriented, sustainable urban mobility frameworks.

Addressing this research gap, our study explores the subjective influences on young people's everyday mobility decisions through the lens of Qmethodology. This approach allowed a nuanced exploration of mobility perceptions among 116 participants (pupils aged 12 – 13 years) from three schools in and around Vienna. Our methodology involved the systematic ranking of 23 mobility-related statements (formulated in a child-friendly way), derived from an extensive literature review and complemented by findings of a participatory workshop with young people. For the Q survey, the research team visited the pupils in their classes, explained the method and its aim, and supported the children in sorting the statements on their tablets.

Data analysis was conducted by statistically analyzing the categorized Q-sorts to identify common patterns and differences in young people's perspectives. The analysis unveiled four distinct mobility perspectives. Young people sharing perspective 1, "*Relaxed and comfortable from A to B,*" prioritize convenience, privacy, leisure, and safety, while environmental compatibility and the opportunity to be physically active are less critical. Perspective 2 "*Sporty & healthy = free!*" describes a view that focuses on sporting activity and health. Young people with this perspective feel happiness and freedom when they commute, they like to exercise and think about their environmental impact. Safety is less critical. Perspective 3, "*Environmentally conscious and healthy? But safe!*" means a strong ecological awareness and a need for safety. Comfort is sacrificed for predictability in daily mobility behavior. Perspective 4 "*The best way to travel is together!*" describes a view that emphasizes social interactions. The opportunity to be out and about with friends and make new acquaintances is central. Flexibility and speed are valued, while environmental awareness and personal space are less important. It is worth noting that concerns about bicycle or scooter theft and lack of space in transport were considered unimportant across all perspectives, which points to certain common basic assumptions in the perception of mobility safety and comfort.

The results clearly show that young people have different perspectives and preferences regarding mobility, challenging the effectiveness of one-size-fits-all solutions and highlighting the need for tailored, participatory approaches in mobility planning. An integrative approach that considers the plurality of perspectives could lead to more effective and sustainable mobility solutions. For instance, the importance of the social environment for mobility choices could indicate that measures to promote sustainable mobility should also

target social networks and communities. In conclusion, the study underscores the importance of adopting a nuanced, youth-inclusive perspective in mobility research and planning.