

Conclusion

In 2020, CO₂ emissions decreased significantly for the first time, due to Corona (cf. Friedlingstein et al. 2020). However, as was the case after the global financial and economic crisis in 2010, a rapid rebound in CO₂ emissions in the transport sector can be expected in the course of the economic recovery after the Corona pandemic. If the constraints imposed in the context of the pandemic are not followed by an equivalent determination to shape transport policy, the transport development detailed in the present book will simply continue. The transport sector will then go on accounting for the lion's share of the growth in greenhouse gas emissions, and the aspirations in transport policy and the actual transport development will continue to diverge, to the point of being diametrically opposed. Instead of the targeted reduction of CO₂ emissions, they are increasing; instead of shifting freight transport to the railways, road freight transport is increasing; and land consumption cannot be reduced to the extent originally planned. Urban sprawl in suburban areas continues, bringing with it corresponding car traffic. Integrated transport policy and planning that systematically encompasses spatial, settlement and transport development is still not discernible.

So far, the Federal government has reacted to this negative net result in transport policy with a watered-down sustainability strategy in which transport is either largely left out or target criteria, which one expects in a strategy, are not specified for transport (cf. Bundesregierung 2016). One gains the impression that German governments have abandoned the aspiration to ensure that transport development is in conformity with a strategy of sustainable development. Instead, both Germany and

the European Union are pursuing an end-of-pipe strategy that is limited to minimising the negative effects of the supposedly natural development of transport, relying on technical innovations. On the other hand, the social innovations necessary for a successful sustainability strategy in the transport sector, which are tied to behavioural changes and aim to avoid traffic, are largely disregarded. Here, by questioning the growth paradigm, transport policy comes up against systemic limits that result from the tight interplay of economic and transport growth.

Transport policy is afraid of the consequences of its own aspirations. It knows, without admitting it, that profound social changes are required to achieve the self-defined goals of sustainable transport development. But it also knows that this requires political struggles that fundamentally question the existing relations of power and domination. The centre of power in transport policy – the German car industry – would have to be disempowered. This seems just as unimaginable today as the disempowerment of the four big energy companies was just a few years ago. And just as the energy turnaround was not driven by the oligopoly of the energy companies, the transport turnaround will not be driven by the established transport industry. The dilemma is that politicians still make up part of the power cartel with the automotive industry and the trade unions. As was the case with energy policy, the question in transport policy is how it can go from being part of the problem to being part of the solution.

While transport policy seems to be in disarray currently, even deadlocked, the example of the energy transition is encouraging, even if it remains politically contested (cf. Kemfert 2017). It shows that tenacious political engagement on the part of actors from civil society, outside established politics, can break up encrusted power structures. The central challenge for transport policy is social innovation aimed at breaking with the growth paradigm in the transport sector. Without a social transformation that enables a decoupling of transport development from economic growth, there will be no sustainable transport development. Whether such a social reorganisation is possible on the basis of the capitalist mode of production remains to be seen (cf. Mason 2016). If the efforts being made in transport policy to achieve a people-centred

transport system happen to encourage anti-capitalist development, then so much the better.

