

---

## AK Verkehr Page 2018

Joachim Scheiner

Prof. Dr. Joachim Scheiner, Technische Universität Dortmund, Faculty of Spatial Planning, Department of Transport Planning, 44227 Dortmund, Germany  
phone ++49-231-755-4822, fax ++49-231-755-2269, e-mail [joachim.scheiner@tu-dortmund.de](mailto:joachim.scheiner@tu-dortmund.de)

---

This is an author produced version of a report written for **Journal of Transport Geography**. This version is uploaded with kind permission of the publisher. The final version can be downloaded at doi: 10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2018.10.001

Published paper:

Scheiner, Joachim (2018): AK Verkehr page. In: Journal of Transport Geography 72, 278-279.

Please reference this paper as shown above.

---

As always, the most important event that needs to be reported about was the annual AK Verkehr conference. It was organised this year as a joint meeting of two working groups that are both hosted by the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Geographie (German Society of Geography): AK Verkehr and AK Geographische Handelsforschung (Geographical trade research). The conference was held in Lüneburg from 7-9 June, hosted by Peter Pez, Leuphana University Lüneburg, who jointly organised the conference with Cordula Neiberger, RWTH Aachen University. It was the second time (after 2006 in Erfurt) that the two working groups had come together for a meeting. For AK Verkehr, this year marks the 20th birthday. Keep on keeping on!

As usual, the conference was a stimulating and relaxed event. The first day was dedicated to various transport topics, and the last day to trade issues. The middle day served to bridge the two working groups' themes with presentations that linked transport and shopping, or transport and trade. With about 60 participants, attendance reached that of most previous AK Verkehr meetings, though one should highlight that only about half of the attendants were from the transport community, which is less than at past meetings.

There is no space to touch upon all of the twenty presentations here. From my own perspective, three perhaps particularly deserve a note. Christian Holz-Rau, TU Dortmund, presented a critical view on the modal split, which is used by many urban and regional practitioners, but also academics, as an indicator for sustainability and policy evaluation, though modal split changes in favour of public transport or the bicycle may well mask continuing car traffic increases. Alexandra Appel, University of Würzburg, presented a rare case study of the US-based enterprise 'Local Motors' who consider themselves disruptive in vehicle production, though it is by no means clear whether this intended disruption will occur or not. Rolf Monheim, emeritus professor at the University of Bayreuth, made a broad and in-depth presentation about the links between transport, retail, and inner-city development that appeared to reflect a fair part of his lifetime work.

It was good that the tried and tested time schedule of not less than 30 minutes per presentation was maintained, and there was enough time for discussion. The city of Lüneburg was an ideal location. Not only is the city centre an excellent representation of medieval to early modern age Hanse architecture that survived World War II, it also has brewery cellars that are ideal for chatting and socialising. The hot summer weather was of course also advantageous, not least for the excursions headed by Peter Pez and other local experts where we visited the city centre, the Kurpark and the Leuphana University main building. The latter is a spectacular deconstructivist

building by the US architect Daniel Libeskind in which it seemed possible to still smell the humidity in the concrete of the multiple non-rectangular angles (the opening was in 2017).

There is ongoing discussion in the AK Verkehr as to how to handle the situation whereby we have two academic transport working groups with many personal interconnections, i.e. AK Verkehr and Pegasus. Though Pegasus is an interdisciplinary network, both networks have strong roots in geography, and AK Verkehr has always involved members from other disciplines as well. The AK intends to discuss the possibility and benefits of closer collaboration in the upcoming meeting, and plans to invite Pegasus to join.

The upcoming Pegasus meeting will be held from 12 to 13 October 2018 in Munich. The call for papers rightly claims that 'Everyday mobility matters', and it is open until 1 July ([pegasus-netzwerk.de](http://pegasus-netzwerk.de)). As in past years, it includes the classic presentation format, poster presentations, and workshops.

The next AK Verkehr conference is scheduled for 9 to 10 May 2019 in Würzburg. It will be hosted by Alexandra Appel, University of Würzburg, and jointly organised by Alexandra Appel, Mathes Wilde and Joachim Scheiner.

And now for something completely different. A notable side issue is that the new cabinet Merkel includes a new federal transport minister, Andreas Scheuer. He is a member of the strictly conservative Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU) that has recently gained much attention for their anti-immigrant politics that seem to be forcing the government coalition into an existential crisis only a few months after its formation, and this crisis is reaching a new and unprecedented climax as I write. The transport ministry itself continues to be heavily criticised in the media for its zero-activity in the regulation of the inflow into cities of high-emissions vehicles that do not comply with the Euro 6 norm, thus leaving cities 'holding the baby' of their nitrogen oxide problems. In February the Federal Administrative Court decided that in cases where European emission standards were strongly exceeded, local bans for high-emissions (diesel) vehicles were legal, and the city of Hamburg introduced such a ban by the end of May, albeit only on a short inner-city road link. Environmentalists call for the introduction of the so-called Blaue Plakette (blue badge) that would inhibit cars with higher emissions than Euro 6 from entering cities, but the Federal Ministry of Transport does not support this idea, and rather prefers to call for voluntary change.

Unsurprisingly, academic voices start to sardonically criticise the historical decline in the ambition of federal transport policy. "It is idle to criticise the intellectual void and client-oriented simplicity of what was once called transport policy" comments Hesse (2018, p. 18) and continues, with a reference to recent spatial identity policy being based on the notion of "Heimat" (homeland): "It is hardly possible to stoop lower" (*ibid.*). Indeed. Not a perfect situation in German transport politics, but much to do for transport geographers.

#### Literature

Hesse, Markus (2018): 25 Jahre Verkehrswende: Ein Rückblick auf die Zukunft. *Ökologisches Wirtschaften* 33(2), 16-18.