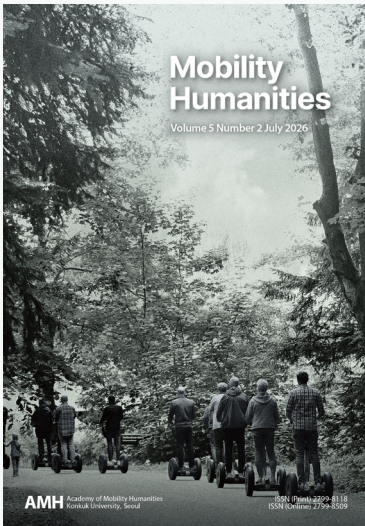




ISSN(Print) 2799-8118
ISSN(Online) 2799-8509

Mobility Humanities

Volume 5 Number 2
July 2026

OPEN  ACCESS



Academy of Mobility Humanities
Konkuk University, Seoul

SPECIAL ISSUE

Understanding Activists' Perspectives on Fare-Free Public Transport: What Can We Learn for Transport Justice?

Christine Milchram and Michael W. Schmidt

-
- **Published online:** 31 July 2026
 - **To cite this article:** Milchram, Christine, and Michael W. Schmidt. "Understanding Activists' Perspectives on Fare-Free Public Transport: What Can We Learn for Transport Justice?" *Mobility Humanities*, vol. 5, no. 2, July 2026, pp. 98–132, DOI: 10.23090/MH.2026.07.5.2.006
 - **To link to this article:** <https://doi.org/10.23090/MH.2026.07.5.2.006>
-

Submit your article to this journal

Full Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at journal-mobilityhumanities.com

SPECIAL ISSUE

Understanding Activists' Perspectives on Fare-Free Public Transport: What Can We Learn for Transport Justice?

Christine Milchram^a and Michael W. Schmidt^b

Abstract

Faced with increased urbanisation and aiming to mitigate climate change, many cities strive to develop conditions that support environmentally friendly, efficient, and socially acceptable modes of transport. A key challenge is to strengthen public transport and generate a modal shift away from private cars, while ensuring citizens' access to job opportunities, education, and health services. Accordingly, there is growing research interest in the morally normative perspective on these issues under the label of 'transport justice.' Historically, much work in this field has emphasised a narrow understanding of distributional (in)justice—the allocation of the benefits (resources and opportunities) and burdens of transportation. There is a growing awareness that we need more emphasis on other dimensions of justice (or a broader understanding of distributional justice), such as the need for fair procedures and recognition of affected groups, which are well-established concepts in the literature on environmental and energy justice. In addition, understanding conceptions of justice in civil society through bottom-up and qualitative approaches is central to a comprehensive conceptualisation of transport justice. We investigate activist movements across the Global South and Global North promoting fare-free public transport (FFPT)—an understudied yet key issue for debates on redesigning urban mobility systems. The study reveals that social justice—rather than environmental or economic reasons—is the primary basis for the arguments advanced by FFPT activists and that these groups conceptualise justice in a way that strengthens the trend in transport justice to move beyond a narrow understanding of distributional justice. This, in turn, can augment the academic debate on FFPT and transport justice.

AUTHOR(S) ^a**Christine Milchram** christine.milchram@kit.edu *corresponding author*
Member of Scientific Staff, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany
Role(s) Conceptualisation, Methodology, Analysis, Data Curation, Writing (Original Draft, Review, and Editing),
Visualisation, Project Administration

^b**Michael W. Schmidt** michael.schmidt@kit.edu
Member of Scientific Staff, Institute for Technology Assessment and Systems Analysis, Karlsruhe Institute of Technology, Karlsruhe, Germany
Role(s) Conceptualisation, Analysis, Writing (Original Draft, Review, and Editing).



Articles in this journal are licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). © 2026. The author(s).

Keywords

Activism, Fairness, Fare-Free Public Transport, Social Justice, Social Movements, Transport Justice

1. Introduction

Recent years have seen a growing interest in questions of justice in transportation or mobility (e.g., Martens; Schwanen; Sheller). Literature on transport justice addresses how transport disadvantages and inequalities can lead to social exclusion and thus compromise the well-being of individuals (Pereira et al.; Schwanen et al.). To assess transport disadvantages and inequalities, most authors emphasise distributional (in)justices, i.e., the allocation of transport benefits (resources and opportunity) and burdens (Martens and Di Ciommo; Pereira et al.). Typical transport justice analyses include assessing which neighbourhoods of a city benefit from transport infrastructure, how policies impact the affordability of transport services for different income groups, or how the exposure to transport emissions, pollution, and accidents is distributed among social groups (Pereira et al.). For public transport (PT), there seems to be a consensus that accessibility should be the focal variable for measuring transport justice (Pereira et al.). In this context, accessibility refers to “the ease with which a person can reach a range of destination from a given location in space” (Martens and Golub 426). Accessibility studies are typically concerned with how access to opportunities that are important for, or even prerequisites for, the pursuit of a meaningful life—such as access to jobs, leisure, and social contacts—is distributed among social groups and areas of a given city (Pereira et al.).

The typical operationalisation of accessibility and other quantitative measures of transport inequality implies a rather narrow emphasis on specific issues of distributive justice. This disregards other dimensions such as procedural and recognition justice—for example, participation in and influence on governance and decision-making, and the acknowledgement and respect of the views of all affected groups—which are aspects of justice highlighted in environmental studies and deserve due consideration (Schlosberg). Additionally, this focus means that transport justice literature typically starts from theory-based definitions and conceptualisations of justice. Citizen voices and examples of PT activism are “frequently and problematically absent from transport justice theorizations” (Enright 669).

In this paper, we recognise that understanding conceptions of justice in civil society through bottom-up and qualitative approaches is necessary for a comprehensive conceptualisation of transport justice. We analyse how citizen activists, in the form of grassroots organisations, social movements, campaigns, or advocacy groups, advocate for a specific kind of public transport innovation, namely fare-free public transport.

Fare-free public transport (FFPT) is a policy of abolishing public transport fares and is another understudied, yet key issue for transport justice debates as it can facilitate social and political transformation, addressing social exclusion, inequality, and transport poverty (Kębłowski). We selected activist groups in three cities across the Global North and Global South (Bremen, Germany; Ottawa, Canada; São Paulo, Brazil) to capture a wide range of transport activism in very different geographical and institutional contexts. The study addresses the following research question: What considerations of justice are discussed by activists who advocate for fare-free public transport, and how can these considerations enrich the academic debate on FFPT as well as current literature in transport justice?

The paper contributes empirically by investigating how social justice is at the basis of arguments by FFPT activists and conceptually by exploring how considerations of justice in civil society can enrich the current academic debate on FFPT and transport justice. Therefore, we theorise justice not exclusively top-down or theory-based (deductively), but also bottom-up (inductively), drawing on street level and lived experiences of transport infrastructure (Enright). In this work, we build on Enright's study, which is, to the best of our knowledge, the only study to analyse discourses of transport activism with a view on "how issues of mobility and justice are framed" (669). We also build on previous research that has explored public transport or FFPT activism. For example, Schein discussed the potential of Toronto's Free Transit campaign to become a forward-looking political project that can reinvigorate left-wing political demands due to its aptness for expressing an anti-capitalist vision while demanding very concrete policy changes for transit as a specific public good. Verlinghieri and Venturini studied two urban social movements that played a significant role in the 2013 protests in Rio de Janeiro, which were sparked by increases in PT fares and quickly expanded to become mass protests against current mobility systems and neoliberal urban development. Furthermore, Sunio et al. studied how social media platforms enable the collectivisation of two urban transport movements in Manila. More recently, Štraub explored the 'Free Public Transport' campaign in Wrocław (Poland) to better understand public discourses on transport planning processes. Similar to these studies, we provide an in-depth qualitative analysis to understand the discourse around FFPT as a counterweight to the dominance of quantitative analyses in transport research, including the transport justice literature and its emphasis on quantitative measures of accessibility (Marsden and Reardon; Pereira et al.; Štraub). Whereas ideas of justice may be implicit in some of this work, we aim here to make explicit how FFPT activists across the Global North and Global South use social justice frames to advocate for their proposals and how, in turn, their conceptions of justice could further enrich academic debates on FFPT and transport justice. In this respect, our paper is also inspired by work in environmental justice, in which bottom-up citizen voices matter, mirroring an understanding that justice always includes a fight by the disadvantaged (Schlosberg; Walker). The resulting combination of bottom-up and top-down reasoning can be interpreted as following what John Rawls called the method of reflective equilibrium, which is a standard method in practical philosophy and applied ethics (Daniels; Knight; Schmidt). This aligns with Martens' approach

to theorising on transport justice (Martens 215). Our idea here is that the arguments of FFPT activists can serve as relevant judgments on justice in transport contexts that have to be considered in the quest for a justified account of transport justice.

2. Transport Justice

This section briefly reviews the notion of social justice and its interpretation in the field of transport justice. The aim is to introduce the concept and highlight possible ways forward to refine and expand it, rather than provide a comprehensive literature review.

Prominent theories of justice within philosophy and political theory have predominantly focused on distributive justice. Brighouse, for example, suggests that the fundamental question is how, and to what end, a just society should distribute the various benefits (resources, opportunities, and freedoms) it produces, and the burdens (costs, risks, and unfreedoms) required to maintain it. Indeed, Rawls, whose work is a major point of reference, defines the kind of justice that his theory is concerned with as “a standard whereby the distributive aspects of the basic structure of society are to be assessed” (8). Rawls’ complex theory of distributional justice, however, also incorporates the idea that every citizen in a well-ordered society must be recognised as free and equal (which includes securing the social bases of self-respect) and that the political liberties which guarantee due participation in political processes have their fair value (Bercuson; Rivera-Castro). Other political theorists, like Young, Taylor, Fraser, and Honneth, claim that even more attention has to be given to the topic of recognition and, in applied justice contexts such as environmental and energy justice, a three-tenets approach to social justice has emerged that distinguishes between distributional justice in a rather narrow resource-based form, recognition justice, and procedural justice (Heffron and McCauley; Jenkins et al.; McCauley et al.; Schlosberg).

In the field of transport justice, authors acknowledge that there is a need for conceptual clarity about what justice means (Pereira et al.). They accept, to a large degree, the focus on distributive justice provided by political philosophy, however in a form that is ultimately rather narrow. This narrowness is not immediately apparent, since transport justice is in many respects a well-developed field. In the following paragraphs, we therefore elaborate on why the prevalent operationalisations of distributive justice remain too narrow.

Consider approaches to transport justice that focus on social exclusion and people’s (in)ability to participate in society due to transport disadvantages. Participation in society concerns the ability to “engage with a reasonable range of activities within society, with ‘reasonable’ defined in relation to the society in question” (Farrington and Farrington 5). Thus, the central idea in this body of work is that a just society is a socially inclusive one, and a society is unjust if it is a socially exclusive one. In this view, social inclusion or exclusion is affected by the distribution of ‘benefits and burdens,’ and accessibility, or lack thereof, can affect this distribution (Farrington and Farrington). That is, the ability to participate in society

is not only dependent upon personal characteristics of individuals or groups, but also on their location and their level of access to life opportunities (Farrington). Similarly, other authors emphasise the distributive character of social exclusion, suggesting that exclusion results from a lack of access to key life-enhancing opportunities, such as employment, education, health and their supporting social networks (Jones and Lucas; Preston and Rajé). Accessibility, thus, rightly takes a central place in the transport justice discussion.

Important works embody and further contribute to this accessibility agenda. Martens (Martens; Martens et al., "Justice-Theoretic") advocates that a fair transportation system is a system that provides sufficient accessibility to (virtually) all. As such, the author establishes access as the appropriate social meaning of the transport good. One further example is the research from Pereira et al., who, after an investigation of conceptualisations of justice within political theory, approach the issue from a distributive perspective and claim that accessibility should be the primary focus of transport researchers and transport policymakers addressing questions of justice and disadvantage. This way, they claim, a detailed analysis of the distributional effects of transport policies should take account of the setting of minimum standards of accessibility to key destinations and the extent to which these policies respect individuals' rights and prioritise disadvantaged groups, reduce inequalities of opportunity, and mitigate transport externalities. The negative externalities of transport, such as pollution and risk of accidents, have to be considered as burdens in a distributive framework (Martens et al., "Measuring Transport Equity"). Lucas et al. advocate for (and propose a method suited to support) greater attention to the social dimensions of transport policy, which include the distribution characteristics of mobility and accessibility levels and how this may affect various social outcomes, including individuals' levels of social participation, social inclusion, and community cohesion.

Whilst valuable and key in the debates of transport justice, looking only at poverty of access and at negative externalities of transport is insufficient. It overlooks, for example, justice aspects of governance and decision-making (Kębłowski and Bassens; Marsden and Reardon). The basic idea is that a just public transportation system does not only entail a just distribution of transport benefits and burdens, chances and risks, but is co-created by participatory processes that respect citizens' dignity. There have been some recent efforts to amplify the discussion of justice in relation to transportation, expanding upon (not neglecting) the distributive paradigm as it is currently understood. Advancing the mobilities paradigm, Sheller proposes an intersectional view of mobility justice according to which mobility justice calls for recognition, participation, and public deliberation. This partially resonates and overlaps with Schwanen's proposal that theories of environmental and energy justice can serve as a potential source of inspiration for transport studies.

3. Fare-Free Public Transport

FFPT is a policy intervention in public transport finance, which eliminates passenger fares and replaces the revenue from ticket sales by collective forms of funding such as taxes (Hess, Kębłowski).¹ Depending on the scope of FFPT implementation, many authors distinguish between full and partial FFPT (Cats et al., “Prospects”; Kębłowski; van Goeverden et al.). Full FFPT means that PT is free for all passengers on all routes in a given PT network at all times. Partial FFPT is restricted to certain social groups (e.g., students), areas (e.g., specific bus routes), time periods (e.g., weekends only), or a combination of these. In this paper, we focus on full FFPT.

FFPT was first implemented during the 1960s and 70s, for example in the United States and Western Germany, in response to growing car use and protests against fare increases (Baum; Hess; Scheiner and Starling). Today, full FFPT can be found mainly in smaller urban areas with fewer than 100,000 inhabitants (Kębłowski; Štraub and Jaroš). In the most extensive survey of FFPT implementations to date, Kębłowski shows that most examples are located in Europe, followed by North America and Brazil (fig. 1).

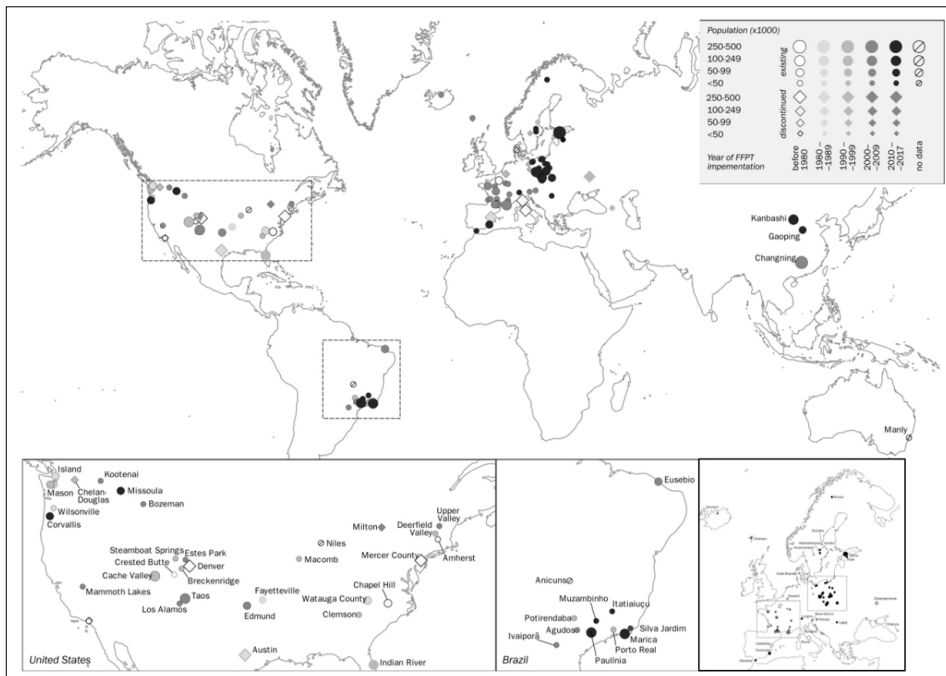


Fig. 1. Distribution of Full FFPT Cases (Kębłowski 2818)

¹ Note that most PT systems worldwide are heavily subsidised even in the absence of FFPT. The average public subsidies cost-coverage ratio in the 26 main European cities is 48%. The average share of operating costs covered by revenues is between 40% and 60% (EMTA).

Municipalities that abolish PT fares are motivated by a diverse set of goals “related to access, mobility, sustainability, environmental protection, and social equity” (Hess 691). Kębłowski distinguishes three main sets of arguments pro and contra FFPT: arguments as to whether FFPT is “economical,” “sustainable,” and “socially just and politically transformative” (2813; see also Kębłowski and Bassens). The majority of academic papers, and particularly empirical results, seem to revolve around the debate on whether and how FFPT would inspire a modal shift towards PT and decrease car use, and under what conditions it is economically feasible.

First, arguments whether FFPT is ‘economical’ pertain mostly to its impact on the economic efficiency of PT systems. Criticism regarding efficiency losses, lower revenue, and the issue of ‘non-productive trips’ and overcrowding (e.g., Cats et al., “Public Transport”; Fearnley; Storchmann) stand vis-à-vis cost savings from abolishing fare collection and enforcement (Volinski).

Second, arguments related to ‘sustainability’ address FFPT’s impact on increased PT ridership and decreased car use with its corresponding externalities. FFPT might play a small role in inspiring a modal shift to PT, but studies indicate that the improvement of PT quality and measures to disincentivise car use might be more effective than FFPT (e.g., Bull et al.; Cats et al., “Prospects”).

The third set of arguments, which is the most relevant for this paper, relates to whether FFPT is ‘socially just and politically transformative.’ These arguments stress that the main purpose of FFPT is to ensure the universal provision and equal affordability of public transport within a city (Enright). Through increasing mobility options, FFPT increases the accessibility of socio-economic opportunities within a city, particularly for lower-income groups and residents with limited access to cars (Sträuli; Cats et al., “Prospects”). FFPT is thus praised for addressing transport poverty, social exclusion, and increasing quality of life for all residents (Kębłowski 2813; Kębłowski and Bassens). Arguments here are therefore essentially about the potential of FFPT to create more just PT systems, focusing particularly on accessibility as a measure of transport justice. Arguments regarding the potential of FFPT to address social justice—which are the focus of this paper—are often brought forward by transport activists (Kębłowski). Hence, in this paper, we have made the choice to study activists’ voices as they support their FFPT proposals.

4. Material and Methods

4.1. Research Design and Materials

To study how citizen activists advocate for FFPT, we chose a qualitative case study research design with qualitative content analysis that suited the exploratory nature of our study (Flyvbjerg; Mayring). Relevant citizen initiatives were identified based on internet searches.

Kębłowski's compilation of countries and cities where FFPT has been implemented formed a useful starting point for identifying relevant places as potential case studies. In addition, the website lists a number of citizen initiatives on FFPT worldwide and formed a useful starting point for our search. Out of a larger list of initiatives, three groups were selected for detailed analysis: Free Transit Ottawa (FTO; Canada), Movimento Passe Livre (MPL; São Paulo, Brazil), and Einfach Einsteigen (EE; Bremen, Germany; see section 4.2 for a detailed description of the cases). The selection of these cases was guided by considerations of diversity, choosing maximum variation cases in terms of geographical location (Flyvbjerg). Thus, we chose initiatives both from the so-called Global South and Global North, with cities that differ widely in terms of size, population density, and modal split (see table 1). In addition, we applied two inclusion conditions to ensure sufficient and comparable activist-authored material as well as long-term commitment: initiatives had to have an identifiable organisational form and communicate about FFPT in written form over a number of years.

For analysing the initiatives' arguments on FFPT, we collected publications that were authored by the initiatives themselves, such as websites, petitions, and concept papers, between January 2019 and March 2023. A list of these publications is included in Appendix (9 publications by MPL; 19 publications by FTO; 21 publications by EE²). Before analysing the data, Portuguese texts were translated to English by a Brazilian Portuguese native speaker. German and English texts could be analysed without translation. For background information on the three groups, we complemented this data with secondary sources such as newspaper articles and reports.

For data analysis, we used the qualitative and mixed-methods software MAXQDA. In an initial round of analysis, we coded arguments (statements brought forth by the initiative with respect to FFPT) in an inductive manner and iterated the coding until saturation was reached (Bowen). The inductive coding was followed by deductive coding, in which statements were assigned to the three main sets of arguments pro and contra FFPT as distinguished by Kębłowski: arguments related to whether FFPT is 'economical,' 'sustainable,' and 'socially just and politically transformative.' Based on how Kębłowski defines these categories (see section 3), we reformulate these categories as economic efficiency, environmental sustainability, and social justice. Overlapping statements (i.e., statements containing references to more than one category) were assigned all relevant codes. By doing so we could both analytically separate arguments on social justice from other arguments and identify if and how issues of justice manifest in the initiatives' communication as well as identify economic or sustainability arguments that are 'also' framed in terms of social justice. Text was coded as 'social justice' if the statement made an explicit—for example, "[a]creditamos que gastar um terço do salário mínimo ou um terço do dia nos nossos deslocamentos não deve ser visto como algo normal, mas sim como injustiça social" ("[w]e

2 Note that publications differ in length and that we collected all available publications between January 2019 and March 2023.

believe that spending a third of the minimum wage or a third of the day on our commutes should not be seen as something normal, but as social injustice"; MPL, "Violência")³—or implicit—for example, "[g]erade in den Stadtteilen mit ärmerer Bevölkerung, die stärker auf den Nahverkehr angewiesen sind, ist dieser oft nicht so gut ausgebaut oder die Anbindung zu langsam" ("[p]articularly in neighborhoods with poorer population, who are more strongly dependent on public transport, the network is not dense enough ..."; EE, "Handreichung")—reference to a situation being (un)fair or (un)just to (a group of) people, or if it argued for certain situations, changes, and so on that would be more just or fair. The statements related to social justice were then coded in further detail (inductively) in order to identify in a data-driven manner what kind of injustices were considered important by the three initiatives or what kind of justice frames were used to advocate for FFPT. Again, we iterated the coding until saturation was reached. Throughout the analysis, the main coding was performed by the first author, and we conducted an inter-coder agreement check to enhance the validity of the results. A second coder checked all the coding, and disagreements between coders were solved through discussion (Krippendorff). Before presenting the results of our analysis, we turn to a brief description of the three citizen initiatives.

4.2. Case Descriptions

4.2.1. Movimento Passe Livre, São Paulo, Brazil

Movimento Passe Livre (MPL) is a grassroots organisation based in regions and cities all across Brazil and refers to itself as a horizontal social movement. It was founded in Porto Alegre in 2005 and originated in protests against PT fare increases in Salvador in 2003 and Florianópolis in 2004 and 2005. MPL is particularly strong in São Paulo—hence the focus on São Paulo in this article—where it played a crucial role in the Brazilian mass protests in 2013. These protests were triggered by fare increases, but soon addressed a much wider set of issues related to public services, such as poor-quality health care or education (Purdy). Since 2013, MPL São Paulo has continued to organise public discussions and demonstrations. With respect to PT fares, MPL advocates for full FFPT, funded through progressive taxes and municipal income from traffic fines, parking fees, car taxes, and advertisement. At the same time, they demand more public control of PT to be achieved through municipalisation of PT operators. Besides their claims on (FF)PT, MPL advocates for a tax reform that would increase progressive taxes and wants to trigger wider discussions on urbanisation in Brazil—For example, on city planning, environmental issues, real estate speculation, drugs, violence, and social inequality. Their identification as a social movement, as a group that represents the will of 'the people,' serves as a strong legitimisation of their claims. MPL's written communication on FFPT consists mainly of blog entries and newspaper articles directed at

3 Quotations from Portuguese-language sources follow the translations prepared by Fabio Hirschhorn; quotations from German-language sources are the authors' own translations.

the general public and the movement's members and mainly addressing problems with public services as well as calls for joining the movement.

4.2.2. Free Transit Ottawa, Canada

Free Transit Ottawa (FTO) is a group of environmental and social justice activists who started communicating about (FF)PT in 2018. The initiative's formation was inspired by 'Free Transit Toronto,' a campaign that has been advocating for FFPT since 2010 (Enright; Free Transit Toronto). FTO's main activities include writing articles and blog posts and engaging in the public discourse in Ottawa, aligning with other PT groups such as the representatives of transit users. In principle, they demand full FFPT but have advocated introducing at least partial FFPT for health staff and recipients of social benefits during the COVID-19 pandemic. To fund FFPT, FTO suggests that the municipality should focus on progressive taxes, reallocate funds that flow into car infrastructure such as road widening, and raise additional fees such as congestion charges and parking fees. Their proposal is based on evidence on how Ottawa's PT is currently funded (e.g., OC Transpo's funding structure and fare price developments) and includes a detailed cost estimation. In addition to their engagement for FFPT, FTO emphasises the importance of safe and reliable PT systems and calls for significant service improvements such as bus-only lanes or increased frequency on bus lines. They also propose stronger representation of citizens and workers on the Transit Commission. FTO makes strong use of newspaper and magazine articles, mainly in the local media, to convey their demands as well as website entries and blog articles.

4.2.3. Einfach Einsteigen, Bremen, Germany

EE is a citizen initiative in Bremen (Germany) that was founded in 2017 as a registered association. Between 2017 and 2019, the initiative's main activity was to develop a concept paper for FFPT, including a funding model. The proposal was developed based on their own research and refined in discussion with civil servants, politicians, transport associations, and PT companies, and the participatory development is used to legitimise the proposal. Alongside their work on FFPT, EE organises public events with politicians, civil servants, public transport companies, unions and federations, activists, and researchers. They conducted several citizen deliberation events and are engaged in educational activities, organising contests for high school students and setting up a public transport lab at the local university.

EE advocates for full fare-free public transport within the entire local PT network, which covers buses and trams of the local PT operator, regional buses, and trains within Bremen. In their proposal, FFPT is to be funded on equal terms by employees (including residents and commuters) and employers (businesses located in the city of Bremen). The funds raised by this mechanism are intended to finance both FFPT and extensions of the local PT network, including new vehicles. EE also emphasises the need to increase PT quality by increasing the

network and adding more vehicles; the importance of disincentivising car use through, for example, higher parking fees; and the significance of further increasing the attractiveness of cycling and walking through infrastructure improvements. EE's written communication of FFPT is often directed at policy makers, for example, by writing policy papers or position statements during processes of legislative change. They also write blog entries and publish interviews with their members.

4.2.4. City context and PT network information

Table 1

City Context: São Paulo, Ottawa, and Bremen, including information on Public Transport Networks

	São Paulo	Ottawa	Bremen
Experience with FFPT	1990: Proposal for FFPT by left-wing mayor was not approved by the municipal legislative body.	December 2021 to March 2022: PT operator implements 'no-charge service' on selected lines in a bid to make up for service disruptions (CBC News).	2019-2023: The state government's coalition agreement contains a feasibility assessment of FFPT together with two other alternative PT fare structures (Mirja Mader; SPD Landesverband Bremen et al).
Population	Estimate 2021: 12.4m (city), 22m (metropolitan region) (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) Population density per km ² : approximately 7,200 (city) (World Population Review).	Census 2016: 934,243 (city), 1.3m (metropolitan region including Gatineau, Quebec) Population density per km ² : approximately 330 (city) (City of Ottawa, "2016 Census").	2023: 563,290 (city), 676,000 (state) Population density per km ² : approximately 1,700 (city) (Statistisches Landesamt Bremen).
PT Governance	Public authority SPTrans manages the municipal bus system and concessions for private companies who operate bus lines. The State of São Paulo (Secretary for Metropolitan Transport) is responsible for suburban rail, intermunicipal buses, and the underground, which is partly operated by the state metro company and partly by a private concessionaire.	Public transport agency OC Transpo, owned by the municipality of Ottawa, operates buses, two light rail train lines "O-Train," and ParaTransport ("door-to-door transit services for people with disabilities"; OC Transpo). Service to and from Gatineau (Quebec) is provided by the Société de Transport de l'Outaouais (STO).	Public transport operator BSAG is a joint-stock company owned by the city of Bremen. It operates buses and trams (BSAG). Local trains in the city (Regio S-Bahn) are operated by NordWestBahn (Nord West Bahn).
Modal Split	Public Transport: 31% Walking: 32% Cycling: 0% Car: 36% (Deloitte)	Public Transport: 14% Walking: 12% Cycling: 2% Car: 72% (Ottawa Community Foundation; latest data from 2011)	Public Transport: 17% Walking: 15% Cycling: 20% Car: 48% (Senat für Umwelt Bau und Verkehr)

Other Peculiarities	Rises in public transport prices have sparked mass-protests in Brazil in 2013. In São Paulo, price increases are regularly met with large-scale protests organised by MPL (Purdy).	The metropolitan region of Ottawa—Gatineau stretches across the provincial border of Ontario and Quebec and separated by the Ottawa river. Interprovincial public transit links are limited but projects are underway to increase rapid transit links (City of Ottawa, "Public Transit System"; transitloop.ca).	Approximately 120.000 employees commute into Bremen daily, commuters account for 40% of employees (Arbeitsnehmerkammer Bremen) "Bike city" Bremen: Bremen has a strong biking culture, and is one of the most attractive cities for biking in Germany (ADFC).
---------------------	--	--	--

5. Results

This section presents the findings of our empirical analysis regarding how the three citizen initiatives discuss public transport systems and FFPT.

5.1. Are Social Justice Arguments Salient in Activists' Communication?

Initially, we were interested in whether citizen activists, as suspected, discuss FFPT with respect to economic efficiency, environmental sustainability, and social justice—a distinction that is based on Kębłowski (see section 4.1). The analysis confirms that FFPT is most frequently discussed by the activists in terms of social justice. Fig. 2 shows that for all cases, the majority of FFPT-related statements relate to social justice. The next sections will analyse in detail what these social justice frames entail.

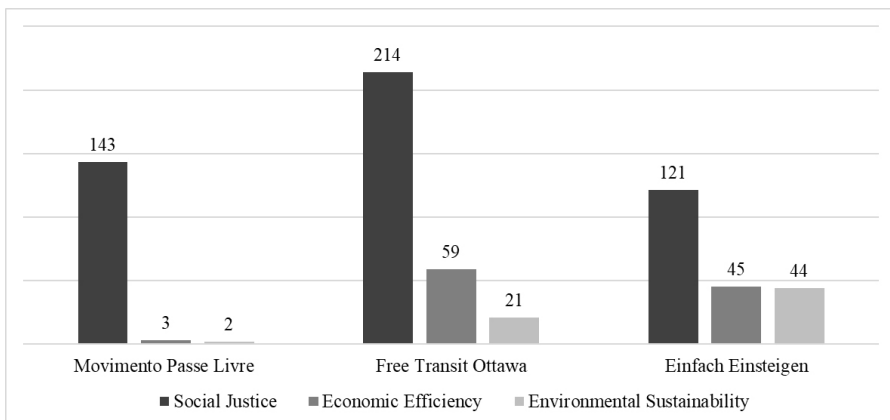


Fig. 2. Number of Statements Coded as Social Justice, Environmental Sustainability, and Economic Efficiency, per Citizen Initiative

5.2. What Social Injustices Do Activists Emphasise?

First, we found during our analysis that the initiatives build their argumentation around FFPT on the identification of a number of aspects or problems that they perceive as unjust in the current PT systems. Here, all three groups see two main issues with the PT systems: (1) PT is not affordable enough, and (2) its quality is not sufficient to ensure accessibility and social inclusion for the part of the population who depend on PT. FTO highlights, for example, that transport fares in Ottawa are among the highest in Canada, and that it “is lower income people who depend on public transit to move around the city who are most affected” (FTO, “Free Transit in Ottawa”). In São Paulo, the problems identified by MPL strongly relate to the origins of the movement in protests against bus fare increases: “Nossas manifestações são para demandar o que queremos e precisamos para viver na cidade. Acreditamos que gastar um terço do salário mínimo ou um terço do dia nos nossos deslocamentos não deve ser visto como algo normal, mas sim como injustiça social” (“Our demonstrations are to demand what we want and need to live in the city. We believe that spending a third of the minimum wage or a third of the day on our commutes should not be seen as something normal, but as social injustice.”; MPL, “A Violência”).

EE and FTO criticise the fact that PT quality—the network coverage and frequency of trips—is insufficient in certain geographic areas and for certain parts of the population: “Gerade in den Stadtteilen mit ärmerer Bevölkerung, die stärker auf den Nahverkehr angewiesen sind, ist dieser oft nicht so gut ausgebaut oder die Anbindung zu langsam” (“Particularly in neighborhoods with poorer population, who are more strongly dependent on public transport, the network is not dense enough or the connections are too slow”; EE, “Handreichung”). FTO stresses repeatedly that PT service is designed to favour white collar workers’ commuting to downtown and disadvantages people working shifts or relying on PT for non-work activities. They frame poor PT quality as a matter of disrespect towards these groups: “The prevailing attitude is that the disproportionately low-income, racialized people who rely on the bus—frontline workers, caregivers, grocery and retail staff, people with mobility issues—will use it no matter how lousy the service” (Grover).

All three groups stress that these problems are particularly severe as PT ensures accessibility and social inclusion. For example, the statements “cannot afford the cost of commuting to work, seeking out employment opportunities, getting together with family or attending support groups” (FTO, “Free Transit for OW”), and “muitas pessoas estão excluídas da educação porque não podem pagar o ônibus até a escola” (“many people are excluded from education because they cannot afford the bus to school”; MPL, “Movimento”) reflect the activists’ understanding that PT is not just a matter of transport but is of essential importance for fulfilling central human needs and creating equal opportunities.

Throughout their argumentation, the activists identify a whole range of social groups that are particularly affected by these problems (table 2). At the same time, all three groups recognise the intersectionality between these characteristics. In addition, MPL and FTO

point out that the COVID-19 pandemic increased problems related to poor PT for all of these groups, due to their dependence on PT, job situations that do not allow working from home, and limited income.

Table 2

Disadvantaged Groups as Prioritised by the Three Initiatives

Characteristic	Group	Recognised by...			Example quote
		EE	MPL	FTO	
Income	Low-income	✓	✓	✓	EE: "Aktuell ist der ÖPNV besonders dort schlecht ausgebaut, wo eher Menschen mit kleinem Geldbeutel leben." ("Currently, public transport is particularly poorly developed in places, where low-income people tend to live"; Geißler)
Race	Black / Non-White		✓	✓	MPL: "Não é à toa que dizemos que todo vagão ou ônibus tem muito de navio negreiro. Na verdade, bem antes dos ônibus, metrô e trens, o primeiro transporte de massas que tivemos no Brasil foi feito pelos navios que traziam pessoas africanas escravizadas para trabalhar na colônia. ... Hoje, a maior parte das pessoas que dependem do transporte coletivo pra ir e voltar do trabalho são negras ou não-brancas, mulheres e periféricas. E as condições em que essas viagens acontecem são extremamente precárias." ("It is not for nothing that we say that every wagon or bus has a lot of slave ship. In fact, long before buses, subways and trains, the first mass transport that we had in Brazil was done by ships that brought enslaved African people to work in the colony. ... Today, most of the people who depend on public transport to get to and from work are black or non-white, women and from the periphery. And the conditions in which these trips take place are extremely precarious"; MPL, "Do Navio")
Living area	Periphery	✓	✓		EE: "Wenn ich z.B. von Osterholz-Tenever zum Hauptbahnhof fahren möchte, dann brauche ich mit der Straßenbahn eine geschlagene Dreiviertelstunde—eine ziemlich schlechte Anbindung." ("If I want to go, e.g., from Osterholz-Tenever [an area in the periphery of Bremen, comment of authors] to the main station, this takes me a whole 45 min by tram—a quite bad connection"; Geißler)
Gender	Women		✓		MPL: "Hoje, a maior parte das pessoas que dependem do transporte coletivo pra ir e voltar do trabalho são negras ou não-brancas, mulheres e periféricas. E as condições em que essas viagens acontecem são extremamente precárias." ("Today, most of the people who depend on public transport to get to and from work are black or non-white, women and from the periphery"; MPL, "Do Navio")
Abilities	Disabilities	✓		✓	FTO: "Services for disabled people are particularly hard to access." (FTO, "Free Transit in Ottawa")

Class & working times	Working class & shift workers		✓	FTO: "For people living on low incomes, doing shift work, commuting between suburbs, or trying to access services and shopping during off-peak hours, the system is nearly unworkable." (Szwarc)
Origin	Immigrants		✓	FTO: "As a recent study showed, those who continued to rely on transit during the pandemic were more likely to be poor, racialized, have a disability, and to be born elsewhere than those who stopped riding." (FTO, "Campaign Statement")

When discussing the underlying reasons for these problems, all three groups criticise the fact that car infrastructure in their cities is prioritised in terms of public funding and public space. This is not justified (a) because of climate change, pollution, accidents, and traffic congestion (mentioned by EE and FTO) and (b) because it benefits richer parts of the population (MPL). Hence, EE and FTO make FFPT an issue of climate justice, while MPL positions it mostly in terms of economic, racial, spatial, and gender inequalities. Blame for problems with PT is attributed to political decision makers at national and city level, and economic elites. Hence, MPL and FTO in particular posit PT issues as a manifestation of more systemic problems. PT is not treated just as a matter of transport, but as embedded in wider systemic and societal problems, and the one underlying cause identified by both groups is the capitalist economic system with economic growth and neoliberal policies. MPL presents their protests as "expressão da digna raiva contra um sistema completamente entregue à lógica da mercadoria" ("a well-deserved expression of rage against a system completely delivered to the logic of the commodity"; MPL São Paulo 13). Their fight against PT fares is symbolic for a larger fight against poverty and inequality of opportunities: "não queremos que os ônibus tenham catracas ... mas sabemos que só isso não basta. ... há desigualdades entre brancos e negros, homens e mulheres, ricos e pobres" ("we don't want buses to have turnstiles ... But we know that this alone is not enough. ... there are inequalities between whites and blacks, men and women, rich and poor") and "pensamos na mudança da sociedade através da mudança na lógica da mobilidade urbana" ("we think about changing society through changing the logic of urban mobility"; MPL, "Movimento"). FTO criticises the economic system particularly in the context of climate change ("Our fossil-fueled capitalist economic system, with its pursuit of endless growth, is driving [climate changes] and stands as the principal obstacle to meaningful measures to halt and reverse them. Meanwhile, working people, and especially the poorest among us, bear the brunt of these changes" [FTO, "Free Transit in Ottawa"]) and the COVID-19 pandemic ("COVID-19's particularly devastating impact ... has laid bare the tragic consequences of decades of neo-liberal policies of privatization and austerity" [FTO, "Campaign Statement"]).

5.3. Why Is FFPT Considered a More Just Solution?

Following the analysis of social injustices claimed by the activists, we looked at the solutions

they propose, and particularly at how they argue that FFPT would be a more just way of governing and funding PT. Our analysis reveals that the activists discuss four main themes here: the need to reframe PT as a common good or basic right; the opportunity for FFPT to improve the affordability of PT and accessibility; the redistribution of public funding and space associated with FFPT, which would make cities more liveable; and the need for participatory transport planning.

5.3.1. Public Transport as Common Good or Basic Right

On a fundamental level of PT governance, the three activist groups advocate for a crucial reframing of PT. They argue that PT should be seen as a service or an infrastructure that is oriented towards the ‘common good’ and fulfils basic needs, and access to PT should thus be seen as a basic right granted to all individuals. EE uses the language of ‘common-good oriented services,’ stating that “Nahverkehr ist Bestandteil einer gemeinwohlorientierten Daseinsvorsorge und muss entsprechend von der Gemeinschaft finanziert werden” (“public transport is part of the common-good oriented services of public interest and accordingly, it has to be funded by the community”; EE, “Handreichung”). They argue that this status is grounded in PT’s importance to enable basic human activities like having social contacts or shopping for groceries. In their view, this fundamental change in the way PT is perceived makes it very logical to fund PT collectively. In contrast, FTO uses the term ‘public service’ to make the equivalent argument, and MPL uses the language of a right to mobility, stating that PT “precisa ser visto como um direito essencial, não pode mais ser visto como uma mercadoria” (“needs to be seen as an essential right, it can no longer be seen as a commodity”; MPL, “Movimento”). The activists draw explicitly from other public sectors that are already funded through collective means like taxes to make FFPT a more intuitive idea: “Public transit should become a public service that is provided free of charge to users similar to the way public education, medical care, fire services—and roads and sidewalks—are provided” (FTO, “Statement of Principles”). This understanding of PT as providing essential services to society is taken as a starting point for advocating for FFPT.

5.3.2. Affordability, Accessibility, and Social Inclusion

Two of the main arguments in favour of FFPT put forward by the activists are that the measure would increase the affordability of PT and thus increase accessibility for all inhabitants. FTO makes an explicit connection between the affordability of public transport and climate policy and climate justice: “Free transit is a policy that, unlike market-based solutions such as carbon pricing, can help to reduce carbon emissions without placing additional burdens on working people” (Szwarc).

In order to realise those affordability benefits, the activists advocate for FFPT to be funded based on the principle of ‘ability-to-pay,’ “de modo que pague mais quem tem mais dinheiro, que pague menos quem tem menos e quem não tem não pague” (“so that those who have

more money pay more, those who have less pay less, and those who don't, do not pay"; MPL, "Movimento"). Here, MPL and FTO demand that FFPT be financed through taxes. EE presents a more detailed funding proposal that foresees fixed monthly costs for all people living and working in Bremen. A monthly fee for everyone is justified through the perceived value of paid goods and services—"... halten wir es für sinnvoll, dass der Nahverkehr nicht ganz 'kostenlos' ist, damit das Bewusstsein dafür da ist, dass man für den Nahverkehr etwas bezahlt und dementsprechend auch das Recht hat ein gutes, funktionierendes Netz und Angebot einzufordern" ("We think that it makes sense that public transport is not entirely 'for free,' such that there is awareness of having to pay for public transport and thus also having the right to demand a good, functioning network and offer"; Wege, "Was nichts kostet")—and by referring to collective benefits connected to strengthened PT and less car traffic—"Schließlich profitieren alle ... von Klimaschutz, sauberer Luft, weniger Lärm, mehr Verkehrssicherheit und reduzierten Staus" ("After all, everybody ... benefits from climate measures, clear air, less noise, more safety, and reduced traffic jams"; EE, "Einfach Einsteigen"). The model is akin to the way in which health insurance is funded in Germany, where costs are shared between employers and employees and deducted from employees' salaries (EE, "FAQ"). Benefits for the local economy are listed to justify why employers should pay half of the costs: the avoidance of traffic jams and associated reduced stress for employees as well as delivery people, lower barriers for people to access retail and hospitality, and an enhanced city image that attracts skilled workers.

The activists point out that affordability would increase accessibility, particularly for disadvantaged groups: "Expanding public transit would increase the ability of poor people, recent immigrants and other marginalized groups to access employment, and participate in the social, political and cultural life of the city" (FTO, "Free Transit in Ottawa"). Table 3 gives an overview of the opportunities that are stressed as important by the three groups.

In addition, it is particularly EE and FTO who argue that spatial segregation in a city could be reduced, and that FFPT can contribute to social inclusion, cohesion, and a greater sense of belonging among all inhabitants. Thereby, both groups are making FFPT not only a matter of transport and environmental policy but also expanding it to issues of urban planning and social policy.

Table 3

Accessibility to Social and Economic Opportunities as Stressed by the Activists

Accessibility to...	Mentioned by...			Example quote
	EE	MPL	FTO	
life and society in general	✓		✓	EE: "Nahverkehr ist also nicht nur eine Infrastrukturfrage, sondern ermöglicht insbesondere für sozial Schwache die Teilnahme am gesellschaftlichen Leben" ("Public transport is not just a matter of infrastructure, but enables societal participation particularly for socially weaker groups"; EE, Basiskonzept 2019)
employment, work	✓		✓	EE: "... dass sich der Suchradius Arbeitssuchender vergrößert und sich so ihre Chancen am Arbeitsmarkt verbessern." ("... expanding the search radius of people searching for work and thus improving their chances on the labor market"; Cordes)
health system		✓	✓	MPL: "A educação e a saúde só vão ser públicas de verdade se o transporte for público de verdade." ("Education and health will only be truly public if transport is truly public"; MPL, "Movimento")
leisure, culture	✓		✓	FTO: "Expanding public transit would increase the ability of poor people, recent immigrants and other marginalized groups to access employment, and participate in the social, political and cultural life of the city." (FTO, "Free Transit in Ottawa")
social contacts	✓		✓	FTO: "Expanding the mobility of ODSP and OW beneficiaries opens their horizons by facilitating the social connections that cultivate a sense of belonging." (FTO, "Free Transit for OW")
groceries, food	✓		✓	FTO: "Finally, I want to point out that the cost of transit compromises the fight against COVID-19. It is far more difficult to stock up on essentials when you can't afford transit." (FTO, "Free Transit for OW")
education		✓	✓	MPL: "A educação e a saúde só vão ser públicas de verdade se o transporte for público de verdade." ("Education and health will only be truly public if transport is truly public"; MPL, "Movimento")
public services		✓	✓	MPL: "Muitas pessoas são excluídas do transporte 'público' e de outros serviços 'públicos' porque não podem pagar pelas tarifas dos ônibus e do metrô." ("Many people are excluded from 'public' transport and other 'public' services because they cannot afford bus and metro fares"; MPL, "Movimento")
political participation			✓	FTO: "Expanding public transit would increase the ability of poor people, recent immigrants and other marginalized groups to access employment, and participate in the social, political and cultural life of the city." (FTO, "Free Transit in Ottawa")

5.3.3. Redistributing Public Funding and Space for Collective Benefits

A further advantage of FFPT stressed by all three groups is that it would entail a redistribution of public funding and space away from car-centric infrastructure towards PT as an infrastructure that has collective benefits. With regard to funding, FTO advocates that the budget for FFPT should come from funds that are currently spent on car infrastructure

(FTO, "Our Demands"). The redistribution of public funding would entail cost savings for fare enforcement and a reduction of discrimination in fare enforcement and policing: "Taking this step would also serve to do away with fare enforcement, which only serves to add to the over-policing of Black, Indigenous and other people of colour" (FTO, "Campaign Statement"). EE highlights that not only the costs for enforcement would be saved but also that people who evade fares would no longer be threatened with jail sentences, a particularly adverse perspective for very low-income groups.

Additionally, it is particularly EE and FTO who stress that FFPT—in combination with further measures (see below)—would lead to redistribution of space, in which less space would be dedicated to streets and more space freed up for walking, cycling, and green spaces. This would have indirect benefits for all inhabitants of a city, in particular for quality of life, health, and safety. For EE, such collective benefits are a strong argument for why they advocate for a fixed fee for all people living and working in Bremen (see 5.3.2).

Here, the activists stress that all these collective benefits depend on the implementation of FFPT as one intervention among others. FFPT alone is not enough to realise these benefits, but needs to be coupled with, for example, increased PT quality or with disincentivising car use. Table 4 gives more insights into which interventions are stressed by the three groups.

Table 4

FFPT Needs to Be One Intervention among Others

FFPT needs to be combined with...	Mentioned by...			Example quote
	EE	MPL	FTO	
increased PT quality	✓	✓	✓	FTO: "free transit is a critical piece of a broader strategy to improve overall accessibility, and that has to include service ... in a broader transit system that just isn't reliable, affordable or accessible. So we need a broader plan that actually improves service not only for active riders, but to make the service attractive enough for people to ditch their cars, to go on transit, so we can lower carbon emissions" (FTO, "Case for Free Public Transit")
disincentives for driving	✓		✓	EE: "... müssen jedoch begleitende Maßnahmen ergriffen werden ... flächendeckende Parkraumbewirtschaftung und ggf. auch der Rückbau von Straßen." ("... accompanying measures need to be taken ... comprehensive parking space management and, if necessary, the dismantling of streets"; Geißler)
incentives for biking and walking	✓			EE: "Of course it is necessary for the city to take parallel measures to make cycling and walking in Bremen much more attractive. We would like to strengthen the environmental alliance as a whole and co-finance the measures for cycling and pedestrians by a comprehensive parking management system." (Wege, "Einfach Einsteigen")
declaring a climate emergency	✓			EE: "Ferner unterstützt Einfach Einsteigen Forderungen nach einer Feststellung des Klimanotstands" ("Furthermore, Einfach Einsteigen supports demands for declaring a climate emergency"; EE, "Handreichung")

reforming the tax system		✓	✓	FTO: "This operational funding needs to be made permanent and increased by an additional \$125M. This should be based on progressive forms of taxation that target the income of Canada's richest citizens." (FTO, "Our Demands")
a systemic discussion on urbanisation		✓		MPL: "O MPL deve fomentar a discussão sobre aspectos urbanos como crescimento desordenado das metrópoles, relação cidade e meio ambiente, especulação imobiliária e a relação entre drogas, violência e desigualdade social." ("The MPL should encourage discussion on urban aspects such as the disorderly growth of metropolises, the relationship between the city and the environment, real estate speculation and the relationship between drugs, violence and social inequality"; MPL, "Movimento")
improving working conditions in PT	✓	✓		MPL: "Devem ter estabilidade e qualidade na sua profissão. Devem ter jornadas dignas, boas condições de trabalho, salários dignos e satisfatórios." ("They must have stability and quality in their profession. They must have decent working hours, good working conditions, decent and satisfactory wages"; MPL, "Campanha Nacional")

5.3.4. Participatory Transport Planning

In addition to arguing why FFPT should be introduced, MPL and FTO also advocate changes in public transport planning that would allow greater public participation and control of how decisions on PT systems are made in the respective cities. Both groups argue that people's mobility needs can only be met by having those affected participate in PT systems. FTO explicitly speaks of 'democratised transit' and would like to see PT users and workers have direct influence over decisions regarding PT development and functioning. MPL goes even one step further in demanding a form of self-governance in which the power to take decisions lies with users and workers: "A gestão do transporte deve direcionar o poder de decisão sobre a mobilidade para quem efetivamente o utiliza, o faz funcionar no dia-a-dia e dele se beneficia" ("Transport management must direct decision-making power over mobility to those who actually use it, make it work on a daily basis and benefit from it"; MPL, "Campanha Nacional"). To implement such governance mechanisms, MPL does not only demand changes in decision making, but the creation of a municipal fund for PT, which is managed by the public.

EE does not demand participatory transport planning, but has instead developed their concept in a participatory way, widely presenting and discussing it at public events with a wide audience, in order to get input for further developing the concept (*Basiskonzept* 2019). They particularly stress having discussed the concept with policymakers, public servants, professional associations, and transport companies.

The different views on participation in transport planning seem to reflect the groups' differing understandings of agency for societal change. MPL and FTO perceive citizens and citizen protests as the main driver for change: "Somente a organização e a iniciativa popular pode conquistar mudanças realmente significativas na sociedade. é o povo, somente ele, que tem o poder e a vontade necessária para mudar as coisas ..." ("Only organization and popular initiative can achieve really significant changes in society. It is the people, only them,

who have the power and the will to change things ... ”; MPL, “Movimento”). In contrast, EE takes a more integrative role and seems to work within the existing and rather technocratic governance structure. They perceive themselves as providing a platform for exchange among policymakers, experts, PT companies, and the public (*Basiskonzept* 2019).

6. Discussion

The following section discusses these findings vis-à-vis current literature in FFPT and transport justice, highlighting fruitful avenues for future research.

6.1. Comparing Activist and Academic Debates on FFPT

Summarising our analysis of three activist groups' arguments for FFPT, it is noteworthy that FFPT is mainly discussed in terms of social justice. The activists argue that FFPT would improve the affordability of mobility, increase accessibility, and thereby strengthen social inclusion, particularly for disadvantaged groups. It would entail a redistribution of public funding and space to measures with collective benefits. As a consequence of all of this, it would be a means to guarantee a right to mobility for all inhabitants in a city. Our review of the FFPT literature in section 3, however, indicates that the majority of the academic discussion on FFPT pertains to economic efficiency (e.g., whether it is economical for PT operators due to changes in revenue streams) and environmental sustainability (e.g., whether it would incentivise a modal shift from cars to PT; cf. Kębłowski). Our empirical findings indicate, however, that activists predominantly justify FFPT on justice grounds. For them, the potential of FFPT to create a more equitable mobility system is a much stronger reason to abolish fares or advocate for fare abolishment than environmental sustainability or economic efficiency. Framing FFPT predominantly as a matter of environmental sustainability and economic feasibility in academic and policy debates might overlook an entire set of justifications for the introduction of FFPT.

What is more, even economic or sustainability aspects are often discussed by the activists as issues of social justice. Further research might thus probe into the diverse overlapping reasons to introduce FFPT, providing a wider range of considerations for political debates on FFPT. For example, economic arguments that are often treated as ‘neutral’ in the academic literature, such as cost savings for fare enforcement (Volinski), are discussed as issues of justice—For example, as the reduction of unfair criminal prosecution related to fare enforcement. In addition, the ridership increase associated with FFPT, which is criticised by many economists and transport engineers as ‘non-productive’ trips, is not seen as a problem but as a positive effect of enabling more accessibility for less privileged and less mobile groups. This also includes framing environmental sustainability as a matter of social justice. For example, the prioritisation of car infrastructure is seen as not justified due to climate

change and its benefits for richer parts of the population. This overlap is not surprising given strong conceptual ties between environmental sustainability and social justice, addressed in the rich literature on environmental and climate justice (Gardiner et al.; Heyward and Roser; Jamieson; Martinez-Alier et al.; Schlosberg; Schlosberg and Collins; Walker). It is notable, however, how academic debates on FFPT rarely analyse or address these overlapping considerations.

6.2. Expanding the Distributional Paradigm in Transport Justice

Many of the arguments in favour of FFPT that are brought forth by the activists resonate with issues that are identified in the literature on transport justice. This concerns in particular arguments on social inclusion and exclusion, which are tied to the distribution of benefits and burdens in transportation, and to accessibility (Farrington and Farrington; Jones and Lucas). This can be taken as an indicator that the theoretical literature on transport justice is to a large degree coherent with respect to conceptions of justice brought forth by the activists.

Notably, the activists' perspective on accessibility coincides with how transport justice is mostly operationalised in the literature, namely as ensuring equitable accessibility to social and economic opportunities. Furthering accessibility is understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition for expanding "people's freedom of choice and promotion of equality of opportunities in terms of employment, healthcare, education services, etc." (Pereira et al. 177–78). The focus on accessibility emphasises that the transport system, and particularly PT, has the purpose of providing people with access to places, activities, and opportunities they have reason to value (Pereira et al.).

However, some issues that activists highlight with respect to burdens and benefits go beyond the work on distributive justice in transport studies. Two exemplary issues raised by FFPT activists might be taken as a starting point for corresponding inquiries in transport justice. First, as shown in section 5.3.3, criminal prosecution related to fare enforcement can be extensive and often affects highly vulnerable population groups. In a certain sense, criminal prosecution with all related social and personal costs could be seen as negative externalities of regular public transport systems. They should be investigated in the context of transport justice. Second, as shown in sections 5.3.2 and 5.3.3, the funding and spending schemes of public transportation can be designed in various ways that are considered to impact the justice of the transport system. With respect to the spending schemes, there is a close tie to the outcome, e.g. improved accessibility for specific groups. However, the funding scheme involves considerable burdens connected to the fare system and beyond the fare system, as transport systems typically are subsidised. How the burdens of funding public transport are in fact distributed should be more in focus of studies in transport justice (cf. Zhou et al.).

6.3. Considering Procedural Justice

In addition, the activists' arguments on participatory transport planning (see section 5.3.4) go beyond a narrow framing of distributive justice. In general, two arguments which speak in favour of participatory transport planning can be distinguished (cf. Bidwell). First, participatory procedures in transport planning can be seen as a final end that should be valued for itself. This can be justified with respect to democratic ideals of self-governance and autonomy. Second, participatory procedures in transport planning can be, in addition or exclusively, seen as instrumentally valuable. For example, because this leads to more accessibility due to domain knowledge of the included users of public transport or because the transport interests of marginalised groups and communities are better represented. FFPT activists' arguments for more participation can be interpreted in both ways, and their arguments highlight that procedural justice with respect to PT decision-making should be raised as an issue of justice and receive more attention in the field of transport justice (cf. Verlinghieri and Schwanen).

6.4. Considering a Right to Mobility as an Issue of Recognition and Respect

Mobility in the form of genuine transport options that provide accessibility to various opportunities is a precondition for pursuing reasonable life plans as a free and equal person. This is well reflected by the focus on accessibility in the transport justice literature. The quest for the definition of a sufficiency threshold of accessibility is in line with considering mobility as a basic need (Martens 120–80).

What is not common in the transport literature, however, is to proclaim a corresponding moral right to mobility. A moral right to mobility, as a negative right, already exists in the form of freedom of movement. With respect to the guarantee of sufficient accessibility, the corresponding right would have to be a positive one, where one has a claim to be provided with the necessary resources. Interestingly, FFPT activists do proclaim or imply such a positive right to mobility (see section 5.3.1; cf. Verlinghieri and Venturini).

One might wonder whether there really is a difference between the claim that a sufficient level of accessibility has to be guaranteed and the claim that there is a positive right to mobility. There indeed might be a difference if one assumes that adequately granting or unjustly denying rights is closely tied to the issue of recognition (see also van Uffelen). To deny someone a due right is to disrespect them as free and equal citizens. This is something that might not be completely captured by a discourse on sufficiency thresholds. To couple the right to mobility with the issue of recognition and respect would be coherent with the FFPT activists' argumentation (see section 5.2 and 5.3.1).

Additionally, hand in hand with the framing of mobility as a right, FFPT activists consider public transport as the way to provide sufficient mobility. Public transport is, in this way

understood to be truly public in two senses. First, it is ‘the’ means to ensure a right for the general public; and second, the means to ensure the right to mobility is or should be run by the general public themselves. This points to a procedural and democratic dimension of the right to mobility.

6.5. Governing Public Transport as Commons

For MPL and FTO, the fight for FFPT is embedded in a larger struggle against the commodification of public transport and other public services. This becomes apparent, for example, in EE’s framing of PT as “Bestandteil einer gemeinwohlorientierten Daseinsvorsorge und muss entsprechend von der Gemeinschaft finanziert werden” (“part of the common-good oriented services of public interest and accordingly, it has to be funded by the community”; EE, “Handreichung”) and in FTO’s argument that “public transit should become a public service that is provided free of charge to users similar to the way public education, medical care, fire services—and roads and sidewalks—are provided” (FTO, “Statement of Principles”; see section 5.3.1.). This fundamental shift in the contemporary governance of public transport systems can be interpreted as being embedded in a larger struggle to reclaim the urban commons (cf. Enright and Rossi); to transform PT into systems that are self-governed by and for the city’s inhabitants, with democratic decision-making, recognising and fulfilling the mobility needs of its users rather than succumbing to a profit-oriented capitalist logic. Previous research has also positioned MPL’s efforts as a ‘struggle for the new commons’ (Larrabure) and this is in line with discussions of ‘commoning’ as a process that is about rethinking and enacting mobility outside of a capitalist logic (Nikolaeva et al.; Sheller; Enright and Rossi). Across our cases, the activists gesture toward concrete mechanisms consistent with ‘commons’ that would lead to a more just mobility system (e.g., MPL proposes a municipal PT fund managed by the public and demands democratising transport decision making while EE proposes a rule-based funding model and FTO seeks stronger representation of users and workers on the Transit Commission). However, further conceptual and empirical research could contribute to a more encompassing picture of how the creation of rules, norms and networks to distribute benefits, shape participation or enforce compliance (Dietz et al.; Ostrom et al.) would be conducive to realising more just PT systems.

7. Conclusion

This study investigated how citizen activists in three cities across the Global North and South advocate for FFPT. It reveals that social justice—rather than environmental or economic reasons—is mainly the basis of arguments by FFPT activists. We explored how the activists’ considerations of social justice can enrich the current academic debate on FFPT and

transport justice. Interestingly, FFPT activists conceptualise justice in a way that strengthens the trend in transport justice to move beyond a narrow understanding of distributional justice.

Our findings indicate that—despite different geographical, political, and social contexts—the activists' diagnosis of issues in the PT system and their arguments in favour of FFPT are remarkably similar, potentially reflecting the sharing of learning among FFPT initiatives (section 5). More importantly, however, their arguments are not naïve ideas of providing free public transport, but reflect a deep understanding that PT provides an essential service that many people—and particularly lower-income groups—depend upon to undertake activities that are of fundamental importance for humans, such as access to employment, leisure options, maintaining social contacts, or access to health and education. This understanding leads them to discuss FFPT mainly from the perspective of social justice. In other words, the activists emphasise that PT is never only about transport and that FFPT is an issue that goes way beyond 'only' abolishing fares. PT is embedded in a wider set of systemic problems (e.g., climate justice or larger economic, racial, and spatial inequalities) and FFPT would be an effective means to guarantee a right to mobility for all, benefiting particularly underprivileged groups and contributing to social inclusion. FFPT also entails reimagining the use of public space and is linked with efforts to make PT decision-making more participatory and democratic and thus procedurally just.⁴

These findings point to interesting avenues for future research, both in the literature on FFPT as well as for current conceptualisations of transport justice, as discussed in section 6. In relation to the current academic debate on FFPT, we note that the activists' overarching focus on social justice arguments and their intertwined discussion of economic and environmental issues as matters of social justice could provide a wider range of considerations for introducing FFPT. In relation to transport justice, our findings point to expanding the current dominant distributional paradigm by looking beyond accessibility as the central benefit to be distributed and by considering issues of procedural justice, particularly through forms of participatory transport planning. In addition, we pointed out that the idea of a right to mobility—coupled with the issue of recognition and respect—and of governing PT as commons would be interesting future areas of research for transport justice scholars.

To conclude, this paper showed that conceptions of justice in civil society studied through qualitative and bottom-up approaches can enrich considerations of justice in the context of PT and should therefore be considered more strongly in the academic debate on transport justice. Thereby, it was not our aim to provide an encompassing or generalisable conceptualisation of transport justice. The study is exploratory in nature; limitations

4 While one might argue that these broader issues can be more adequately captured by the term 'free transit' (and indeed, activists use this term to rhetorically link PT and freedom) than 'fare-free public transport' (emphasising the issue of fares), 'fare-free public transport' is used in this paper to maintain policy precision. 'Free transit' can evoke the wrong impression of transit being 'for free' (cf. Kębłowski). This obscures that FFPT is about a collective funding model and, importantly, hides that solidarity is a central aspect of it.

include relying on activists' public communications rather than interviews or ethnographic observation, which was important to obtain carefully spelled out arguments for and against FFPT but may have introduced some messaging bias. A second limitation is the translation of Portuguese materials to English, which was necessary to analyse the material but may have affected interpretation due to translation and cultural filters despite careful cross-checks. We selected FFPT as a specific case that we considered useful because it is discussed in civil society, can address issues of social justice in transport, and is understudied from the perspective of transport justice. While we believe that this focus on FFPT and the study of three activist groups has offered interesting considerations to enrich the transport justice debate, further research is needed to develop more comprehensive understandings of transport justice.

Appendix

Overview of Articles Analysed, per Citizen Initiative

Title	Type of data	URL	Date of publication (if not available: date last accessed)
Movimento Passe Livre São Paulo			
Apresentação - Sobre o MPL ("Introduction - About MPL")	Website	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/apresentacao/	No date / date last accessed 26 March 2023
Carta de Princípios ("Charter of Principles")	Website	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/apresentacao/ carta-de-principios/	No date / date last accessed 26 March 2023
A violência do aumento da tarifa— e por que estamos nas ruas ("Charter of Principles")	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://brasil.elepais.com/brasil/2019/01/18/ opinion/1547769111_232247.html	19 January 2019
Do Navio Negroiro às Catracas ("From the Slave Ship to the Turnstiles")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/01/16/ mpl-do-navio-negroiro-as-catracas/	16 January 2020
Nota em resposta à declaração de Lula sobre a revolta popular de 2013 ("Note in Response to Lula's Statement on the 2013 Popular Uprising")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/01/02/ nota-em-resposta-a-declaracao-de-lula- sobre-a-revolta-popular-de-2013/	1 February 2020

A Tarifa Zero nas eleições municipais e fora delas: uma pauta urgente, possível e construída desde baixo ("The Zero Tariff in Municipal Elections and Beyond: An Urgent Agenda, Possible and Built from Below")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/08/05/a-tarifa-zero-nas-eleicoes-municipais-e-fora-delas-uma-pauta-urgente-possivel-e-construida-desde-baixo/	8 May 2020
POR QUE A PRAIA CHEIA CHOCA MAIS QUE O BUSÃO LOTADO? ("Why Does the Full Beach Shock More Than the Crowded Bus?")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/09/15/por-que-a-praia-cheia-choca-mais-que-o-busao-lotado/	15 September 2020
CAMPANHA NACIONAL POR TARIFA ZERO: "TRANSPORTE PAGO PELOS RICOS E CONTROLADO PELO POVO" ("National Campaign for Zero Rate: 'Transport Paid by the Rich and Controlled by the People'")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/09/28/campanha-nacional-por-tarifa-zero-transporte-pago-pelos-ricos-e-controlado-pelo-povo/	28 September 2020
NOTA SOBRE A MANIFESTAÇÃO CONTRA O CORTE DA GRATUIDADE DOS IDOSOS ("Note on the Demonstration Against Cutting Free [Transport] for the Elderly")	Blog	https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2021/01/31/nota-sobre-a-manifestacao-contr-a-o-corte-da-gratuidade-dos-idosos	31 January 2021
Free Transit Ottawa			
Rethinking Ottawa's Transit System: A bold proposal for free transit in a city designed for cars	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://leveller.ca/2019/03/rethinking-ottawas-transit-system-a-bold-proposal-for-free-transit-in-a-city-designed-for-cars/	21 March 2019
Free Transit in Ottawa	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://socialistproject.ca/2019/03/free-transit-in-ottawa/	25 March 2019
Campaign for Improved and Democratized Transit in Ottawa	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://socialistproject.ca/2020/02/campaign-for-improved-and-democratized-transit-in-ottawa/	18 February 2020
Free Transit is in Town, For Now	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://socialistproject.ca/2020/04/free-transit-is-in-town-for-now/	13 April 2020
Grover and Matkovsky: On-demand bus service won't fix Ottawa's transit woes	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/grover-and-matkovsky-on-demand-bus-service-wont-fix-ottawas-transit-woes	21 May 2021
Community Groups Call on City to Include Public in Hiring Process of New Transit Head Ahead of Wednesday Transit Commission Meeting	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://www.horizonottawa.ca/press_release_manconi_replacement	14 June 2021
The Ottawa Hospital (TOH) development plan favours cars over transit access	Blog	https://freetransitottawa.ca/ftos-statement-on-the-ottawa-hospital-development-plan/	12 July 2021

Home	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022
Cars erode greenspace; a quality transit system would not	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://www.ottawalife.com/article/cars-erode-greenspace-a-quality-transit-system-would-not?c=85	19 August 2021
The politicians have failed. It's time to democratize Ottawa's public transit	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/grover-the-politicians-have-failed-its-time-to-democratize-ottawas-public-transit	4 November 2021
Fare Free Now Fare Free Forever	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/campaigning-for-free-transit/	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022
Fare-free transit, done right, can make all the difference in Ottawa	Newspaper / Magazine Article	https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/pulles-fare-free-transit-done-right-can-make-all-the-difference-in-ottawa	11 April 2022
Campaign Statement	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/campaign/	No date / date last accessed 17 August 2022
Free Transit for OW and ODSP Recipients	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/free-transit-for-ow-and-odsp-recipients/	No date / date last accessed 22 March 2022
In the News	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/news/	No date / date last accessed 20 August 2022
Our Demands	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/new-vision-for-transit/our-demands/	No date / date last accessed 12 August 2022
Petition	Petition	https://freetransittottawa.ca/petition/	No date / date last accessed 17 August 2022
Statement of Principles	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/statement-of-principles/	No date / date last accessed 17 August 2022
Transit Policy and Covid-19	Website	https://freetransittottawa.ca/transit-policy-and-covid-19/	No date / date last accessed 20 August 2022
Einfach Einsteigen			
Einfach Einsteigen: Fahrscheinfreier Nahverkehr für Bremen—gut ausgebaut und attraktiv! ("Einfach Einsteigen: Fare-Free Public Transport for Bremen: Well Developed and Attractive!")	Petition	https://weact.campact.de/petitions/einfach-einsteigen-einfuehrung-fahrscheinfreien-umlagenfinanzierten-nahverkehrs-in-bremen	8 May 2019

Einfach Einsteigen— Handreichungen zu den Koalitionsverhandlungen ("Einfach Einsteigen - Guidance For The Coalition Negotiations")	Policy Paper	https://einsteigen.jetzt/wp-content/ uploads/Handreichung.pdf	18 June 2019
Stellungnahme und Forderungen von Einfach Einsteigen für den Prüfauftrag von SKUMS zu Tarifänderungen im bremischen Nahverkehr ("Statement and Demands from Einfach Einsteigen regarding the review mandate of the Senator for climate, environment, mobility, urban development and buildings on fare changes in Bremen's public transit system")	Position Statement	https://einsteigen.jetzt/wp-content/ uploads/Input-Pr%C3%BCauftrag- Tarifkonzepte.pdf	4 December 2019
„Was nichts kostet ist nichts wert“— oder doch? ("If it is Free, It Cannot be Any Good—or Can it?")	Blog	https://einsteigen.jetzt/was-nichts-kostet- ist-nichts-wert-oder-doch/	9 December 2020
Einfach Einsteigen Basiskonzept 2019—Eine Perspektiver für den Bremer Nahverkehr ("Einfach Einsteigen Concept 2019 - A Future for Bremen's Public Transport")	Concept Paper	https://einsteigen.jetzt/wp-content/ uploads/Einfach-Einsteigen-Basiskonzept- 2019.2.pdf#:~:text=Die%20Initiative%20 Einfach%20Einsteigen%20stellt%20hier%20 ihr%20Basis-,Nahverkehr%20in%20der%2- 0Stadt%20Bremen%20ab%202023%20vor.	26 January 2020
Wolfgang Geißler (Einfach Einsteigen): Nahverkehr für alle! ("Wolfgang Geißler [Einfach Einsteigen]: Public Transport for Everyone!")	Interview	https://denkhausbremen.de/wolfgang- geissler-einfach-einsteigen-nahverkehr- fuer-alle/ 2022-08-22	19 August 2020
Fahrscheinfreier Nahverkehr für Bremen?! ("Fare-Free Public Transport for Bremen?!")	Interview	https://dermobilemensch.de/ fahrscheinfreier-nahverkehr-fuer-bremen/	24 August 2020
Einfach Einsteigen: A Public Transport Revolution?	Blog	https://www.bremenize.com/en/wird- bremen-bald-einfach-einsteigen/	20 November 2020
Jahresrückblick 2020 ("Yearly Review 2020")	Blog	https://einsteigen.jetzt/ jahresrueckblick-2020/	18 December 2020
Stellungnahme zu den Planungen für die weitere Straßenbahnanbindung der Überseestadt ("Statement on the Plans for the Expansion of the Tram Service to Überseestadt")	Position Statement	https://einsteigen.jetzt/wp- content/uploads/Stellungnahme- zu-Stra%C3%9Fenbahnplaenen- Ueberseestadt-1.pdf	March 2020

Friedrich-Ebert-Straße: Kulturwandel gegen das Auto im Kopf ("Friedrich-Ebert-Straße: A Cultural Shift Away from the Car as the Center of Our Thinking")	Blog	https://www.bremenize.com/friedrich-ebert-strasse-kulturwandel-gegen-das-auto-im-kopf/	19 January 2021
Mehr Straßenbahn wagen ("Let's Go Big on Trams")	Policy Paper	https://einstiegen.jetzt/mehr-strassenbahn-wagen-bund-bremen-und-einfach-einsteigen-legen-strassenbahnausbaukonzept-fuer-bremen-vor/	25 February 2021
Ver.di Verkehrsreport – „Das lohnt sich in jedem Fall“ ("Ver.di Traffic Report—'It's Definitely Worth It'")	Interview	https://verkehr.verdi.de/++file++604a0cea0a23169c09be8b5f/download/Verkehrsreport_0121.pdf	1 March 2021
Wege aus der Klimakrise— Nahverkehr für alle! ("Ways Out of the Climate Crisis—Public Transportation for Everyone!")	Interview	https://denkhausbremen.de/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/Wege-aus-der-Klimakrise_Bremen-erneuerbar-Broschue.pdf	25 August 2021
Stellungnahme von Einfach Einsteigen im Beteiligungsverfahren Friedrich-Ebert-Straße ("Position Statement from Einfach Einsteigen in the Public Participation Process regarding Friedrich-Ebert-Street")	Position Statement	https://einstiegen.jetzt/wp-content/uploads/Beteiligungsverfahren-Friedrich-Ebert-Strasse_final.pdf	2021
Wir älteren in den Gewerkschaften – „Einfach Einsteigen“ Eine Bremer Initiative im Interview ("Older Members of the Unions—'Einfach Einsteigen': An Interview with a Bremen Initiative")	Interview	https://aulbremen.de/projekt/seniorinnenzeitung-wir/WIR_43_online.pdf#page=1&zoom=auto,-174,798	2021
Verkehrswendestudie 2022 ("Study on the Transport Transition 2022")	Blog	https://einstiegen.jetzt/verkehrswendestudie-2022/	7 April 2022
Mehr als nur systemrelevant: 5 notwendige Schritte, um den ÖPNV zum Jobmotor und Schlüssel der Verkehrswende zu machen ("More Than Just Systemically Important: 5 Essential Steps to Turn Public Transit Into a Job Engine and the Key to the Transport Transition")	Policy Paper	https://einstiegen.jetzt/wp-content/uploads/positionspapier-oepnv-corona.pdf	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022
Stellungnahme von Einfach Einsteigen zur Fortschreibung des Verkehrsentwicklungsplans (VEP) Analyse-Phase ("Position Statement by Einfach Einsteigen on the Update of the Transportation Development Plan [VEP] Analysis Phase")	Position Statement	https://einstiegen.jetzt/wp-content/uploads/Stellungnahme-Analysephase-VEP.pdf	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022

FAQ: Fragen & Antworten ("FAQ: Questions & Answers")	Website	https://einsteigen.jetzt/faq/	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022
Über uns ("About Us")	Website	https://einsteigen.jetzt/ueber-uns/	No date / date last accessed 22 August 2022

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Dr. Fabio Hirschhorn for his collaboration in developing the initial idea for this article, as well as his support in data collection and translation of Portuguese-language materials. We also thank two anonymous reviewers for their thorough feedback on the manuscript.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

ORCID

Christine Milchram <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6325-4329>

Michael W. Schmidt <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4602-1478>

Works Cited

- ADFC. "ADFC-Fahrradklima-Test" ["ADFC Test of Cycling Conditions"]. *ADFC-Fahrradklima-Test*, 2022, <https://fahrradklima-test.adfc.de/ergebnisse>.
- Arbeitsnehmerkammer Bremen. "Pendlerzahlen" ["Commuter Statistics"]. *Arbeitsnehmerkammer Bremen*, 2020, https://www.arbeitsnehmerkammer.de/fileadmin/user_upload/Downloads/Kammer_kompakt/KammerKompakt_Pendler_2020.pdf.
- Baum, Herbert J. "Free Public Transport." *Journal of Transport Economics and Policy*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1973, pp. 3–19.
- Bercuson, Jeffrey. "Democracy." *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, edited by David A. Reidy and Jon Mandle, Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 190–94, <https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139026741.055>.
- Bidwell, David. "Thinking through Participation in Renewable Energy Decisions." *Nature Energy*, vol. 1, 2016, pp. 1–4, <https://doi.org/10.1038/nenergy.2016.51>.
- Bowen, Glenn A. "Naturalistic Inquiry and the Saturation Concept: A Research Note." *Qualitative Research*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2008, pp. 137–52, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1468794107085301>.
- Brighouse, Harry. *Justice*. Polity, 2004.
- BSAG. "Geschäftsbericht 2022" ["Financial Report 2022"]. *BSAG*, 2022, <https://www.bsag.de/unternehmen/geschaefliches/berichte-veroeffentlichungen.html>.
- Bull, Owen, et al. "The Impact of Fare-Free Public Transport on Travel Behavior: Evidence from a Randomized Controlled Trial." *Regional Science and Urban Economics*, vol. 86, 2021, p. 103616, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.regsciurbeco.2020.103616>.
- Cats, Oded, et al. "The Prospects of Fare-Free Public Transport: Evidence from Tallinn." *Transportation*, vol. 44, no. 5, 2017, pp. 1083–104, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-016-9695-5>.
- Cats, Oded, et al. "Public Transport Pricing Policy: Empirical Evidence from a Fare-Free Scheme in Tallinn, Estonia." *Transportation Research Record*, vol. 2415, 2014, pp. 89–96, <https://doi.org/10.3141/2415-10>.
- CBC News. "OC Transpo Announces Free Bus, Para Transpo Service Downtown." *CBC News*, 21 Feb. 2022, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/ottawa/downtown-ottawa-oc-transpo-commuters-1.6359088>.

- City of Ottawa. "2016 Census." *Ottawa.ca*, 23 Feb. 2017, <https://ottawa.ca/en/living-ottawa/statistics-and-demographics/2016-census>.
- . "Public Transit System for Gatineau's West End—Complementary Study." *Ottawa.ca*, 31 May 2022, <https://ottawa.ca/en/city-hall/public-engagement/projects/public-transit-system-gatineaus-west-end-complementary-study>.
- Cordes, Simone. "Fahrscheinfreier Nahverkehr für Bremen?!" ["Fare-Free Public Transport for Bremen?!"] *Universum Bremen*, 24 Aug. 2020, <https://dermobilemensch.de/fahrscheinfreier-nahverkehr-fuer-bremen/>.
- Daniels, Norman. "Reflective Equilibrium." *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy Archive*, 28 Apr. 2003, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/sum2020/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.
- Deloitte. "Deloitte City Mobility Index 2020 Sao Paulo." *Deloitte Insights*, 2020, https://www2.deloitte.com/content/dam/insights/us/articles/4331_Deloitte-City-Mobility-Index/SaoPaulo_GlobalCityMobility_WEB.pdf.
- Dietz, Thomas, et al. "The Drama of the Commons." *The Drama of the Commons*, edited by Elinor Ostrom et al., National Academy Press, 2002, pp. 3–35.
- EE. *Einfach Einsteigen: Eine Perspektive für den Bremer Nahverkehr!* [Simply Get On Board: A Vision for Bremen's Public Transport. Einfach Einsteigen e.V., 2019, https://einsteigen.jetzt/wp-content/uploads/Basiskonzept_lang_2020.pdf.
- . "Einfach Einsteigen: Fahrscheinfreier Nahverkehr für Bremen: Gut ausgebaut und attraktiv!" ["Einfach Einsteigen: Fare-Free Public Transport for Bremen: Well Developed and Attractive!"] *WE ACT*, 2019, <https://weact.campact.de/petitions/einfach-einsteigen-einfuehrung-fahrscheinfreien-umlagenfinanzierten-nahverkehrs-in-bremen>.
- . "FAQ: Fragen & Antworten" ["FAQ: Questions & Answers"]. *Einfach Einsteigen*, 21 Mar. 2024, <https://einsteigen.jetzt/faq/>.
- . "Handreichung zu den Koalitionsverhandlungen" ["Guidance For The Coalition Negotiations"]. *Einfach Einsteigen*, 18 June 2019, <https://einsteigen.jetzt/positionspapiere>.
- EMTA. *EMTA Barometer 2021 Based on 2019 Data*. 2021, <https://www.emta.com/publications/article-emta-barometer-of-public-transport/>.
- Enright, Theresa. "Transit Justice as Spatial Justice: Learning from Activists." *Mobilities*, vol. 14, no. 5, 2019, pp. 665–80, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2019.1607156>.
- Enright, Theresa, and Ugo Rossi. "Ambivalence of the Urban Commons." *The Routledge Handbook on Spaces of Urban Politics*, edited by Kevin Ward et al., 1st ed., Routledge, 2018, pp. 35–46.
- Farrington, John H. "The New Narrative of Accessibility: Its Potential Contribution to Discourses in (Transport) Geography." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 15, 2007, pp. 319–30, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2006.11.007>.
- Farrington, John, and Conor Farrington. "Rural Accessibility, Social Inclusion and Social Justice: Towards Conceptualisation." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2005, pp. 1–12, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2004.10.002>.
- Fearnley, Nils. "Free Fares Policies: Impact on Public Transport Mode Share and Other Transport Policy Goals." *International Journal of Transportation*, vol. 1, no. 1, 2013, pp. 75–90, <https://doi.org/10.14257/ijt.2013.1.1.05>.
- Flyvbjerg, Bent. "Five Misunderstandings about Case-Study Research." *Qualitative Inquiry*, vol. 12, no. 2, 2006, pp. 219–45, <https://doi.org/10.1177/1077800405284363>.
- Free Transit Toronto. "Home." *Free Transit Toronto*, 2023, <https://www.freetransittoronto.org/>.
- FTO. "Campaign Statement." *Free Transit Ottawa*, 25 Mar. 2024, <https://freetransittottawa.ca/campaign/>.
- . "The Case for Free Public Transit." *Ottawa Morning with Robyn Bresnahan*, directed by Robyn Bresnahan, 29 Dec. 2021.
- . "Free Transit for OW and ODSP Recipients." *Free Transit Ottawa*, 2024, <https://freetransittottawa.ca/free-transit-for-ow-and-odsp-recipients/>.
- . "Free Transit in Ottawa: Fighting against Climate Change and for Social Justice." *The Bullet*, 25 Mar. 2019, <https://socialistproject.ca/2019/03/free-transit-in-ottawa/>.
- . "Our Demands." *Free Transit Ottawa*, 2024, <https://freetransittottawa.ca/new-vision-for-transit/our-demands/>.
- . "Statement of Principles." *Free Transit Ottawa*, 20 Mar. 2024, <https://freetransittottawa.ca/statement-of-principles/>.
- Gardiner, Stephen M., et al. *Climate Ethics: Essential Readings*. Oxford UP, 2010.
- Geißler, Wolfgang. "Wolfgang Geißler (Einfach Einsteigen): Nahverkehr für alle!" ["Wolfgang Geißler (Einfach Einsteigen): Public Transport for Everyone!"] *Denkhausbremen*, 19 Aug. 2020, <https://denkhausbremen.de/wolfgang-geissler-einfach-einsteigen-nahverkehr-fuer-alle/>.
- Grover, Nick. "The Politicians Have Failed. It's Time to Democratize Ottawa's Public Transit." *Ottawa Citizen*, 4 Nov.

- 2021, <https://ottawacitizen.com/opinion/grover-the-politicians-have-failed-its-time-to-democratize-ottawas-public-transit>.
- Heffron, Raphael J., and Darren McCauley. "The Concept of Energy Justice across the Disciplines." *Energy Policy*, vol. 105, 2017, pp. 658–67, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.enpol.2017.03.018>.
- Hess, Daniel Baldwin. "Decrypting Fare-Free Public Transport in Tallinn, Estonia." *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, vol. 5, no. 4, 2017, pp. 690–98, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2017.10.002>.
- Heyward, Jennifer Clare, and Dominic Roser, editors. *Climate Justice in a Non-Ideal World*. Oxford UP, 2016.
- Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística. "Estimativas da população residente para os municípios e para as unidades da federação | IBGE" ["Resident Population Estimates for Municipalities and Federation Units"]. *Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística*, 2021, <https://www.ibge.gov.br/estatisticas/sociais/populacao/9103-estimativas-de-populacao.html?=&t=resultados>. Accessed 14 Mar. 2023.
- Jamieson, Dale. "Responsibility and Climate Change." *Global Justice: Theory Practice Rhetoric*, vol. 8, no. 2, 2015, pp. 23–42, <https://doi.org/10.21248/gjn.8.2.86>.
- Jenkins, Kirsten, et al. "Energy Justice: A Conceptual Review." *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 11, 2016, pp. 174–82, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2015.10.004>.
- Jones, Peter, and Karen Lucas. "The Social Consequences of Transport Decision-Making: Clarifying Concepts, Synthesising Knowledge and Assessing Implications." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 21, 2012, pp. 4–16, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2012.01.012>.
- Kębłowski, Wojciech. "Why (Not) Abolish Fares? Exploring the Global Geography of Fare-Free Public Transport." *Transportation*, vol. 47, no. 6, 2020, pp. 2807–35, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-019-09986-6>.
- Kębłowski, Wojciech, and David Bassens. "All Transport Problems Are Essentially Mathematical: The Uneven Resonance of Academic Transport and Mobility Knowledge in Brussels." *Urban Geography*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2018, pp. 413–37, <https://doi.org/10.1080/02723638.2017.1336320>.
- Knight, Carl. "Reflective Equilibrium." *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, edited by Edward N. Zalta and Uri Nodelman, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2023, <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2023/entries/reflective-equilibrium/>.
- Krippendorff, Klaus. *Content Analysis: An Introduction to Its Methodology*. Sage Publications, 2004.
- Larabure, Manuel. "The Struggle for the New Commons in the Brazilian Free Transit Movement." *Studies in Political Economy*, vol. 97, no. 2, 2016, pp. 175–94, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07078552.2016.1211135>.
- Lucas, Karen, et al. "A Method to Evaluate Equitable Accessibility: Combining Ethical Theories and Accessibility-Based Approaches." *Transportation*, vol. 43, no. 3, 2016, pp. 473–90, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11116-015-9585-2>.
- Mader, Mirja. "Kostenlos fahren mit Bus und Bahn? Diese neuen Ticket-Modelle diskutiert Bremen" ["Free Rides on Buses and Trains? These New Fare Options Are Being Discussed in Bremen"]. *Kreiszeitung.de*, 8 Sept. 2020, <https://www.kreiszeitung.de/lokale/bremen/bremen-oepnv-bsag-vbn-politik-kostenlos-ticket-konzepte-attraktiver-bus-bahn-90033669.html>.
- Marsden, Greg, and Louise Reardon. "Questions of Governance: Rethinking the Study of Transportation Policy." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, vol. 101, 2017, pp. 238–51, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2017.05.008>.
- Martens, Karel. *Transport Justice: Designing Fair Transportation Systems*. Routledge, 2016.
- Martens, Karel, and Floridea Di Ciommo. "Travel Time Savings, Accessibility Gains and Equity Effects in Cost-Benefit Analysis." *Transport Reviews*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2017, pp. 152–69, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2016.1276642>.
- Martens, Karel, and Aaron Golub. "A Fair Distribution of Accessibility: Interpreting Civil Rights Regulations for Regional Transportation Plans." *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2018, pp. 425–44, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0739456X18791014>.
- Martens, Karel, et al. "A Justice-Theoretic Approach to the Distribution of Transportation Benefits: Implications for Transportation Planning Practice in the United States." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2012, pp. 684–95, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2012.01.004>.
- Martens, Karel, et al. "Measuring Transport Equity: Key Components, Framings and Metrics." *Measuring Transport Equity*, edited by Karen Lucas et al., Elsevier, 2019, pp. 13–36.
- Martinez-Alier, Joan, et al. "Between Activism and Science: Grassroots Concepts for Sustainability Coined by Environmental Justice Organizations." *Journal of Political Ecology*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2014, pp. 19–60, <https://doi.org/10.2458/v21i1.21124>.
- Mayring, Philipp. *Qualitative Content Analysis: Theoretical Foundation, Basic Procedures and Software Solution*. 2014, <https://qualitative-content-analysis.org/wp-content/uploads/Mayring2014QualitativeContentAnalysis.pdf>.

- McCauley, Darren, et al. "Advancing Energy Justice: The Triumvirate of Tenets." *International Energy Law Review*, vol. 32, 2013, pp. 107–10.
- MPL. "Campanha nacional por tarifa zero: Transporte pago pelos ricos e controlado pelo povo" ["National Campaign for Zero Rate: Transport Paid by the Rich and Controlled by the People"]. *Movimento Passe Livre São Paulo*, 28 Sept. 2020, <https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/09/28/campanha-nacional-por-tarifa-zero-transporte-pago-pelos-ricos-e-controlado-pelo-povo/>.
- _____. "Do navio negreiro às catracas" ["From The Slave Ship To The Turnstiles"]. *Movimento Passe Livre São Paulo*, 16 Jan. 2020, <https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/2020/01/16/mpl-do-navio-negreiro-as-catracas/>.
- _____. "A violência do aumento da tarifa—e por que estamos nas ruas" ["The Violence of the Fare Increase – And Why We Are on the Streets"]. *El Pais*, 18 Jan. 2019, https://brasil.elpais.com/brasil/2019/01/18/opinion/1547769111_232247.html#.
- Movimento Passe Livre São Paulo* [Free Fare Movement São Paulo]. 2023, <https://saopaulo.mpl.org.br/>.
- MPL São Paulo. "Não começou em salvador, não vai terminar em São Paulo" ["It Didn't Start in Salvador, and It Won't End in São Paulo"]. *Cidades Rebeldes: Passe Livre e as Manifestações que Tomaram as Ruas do Brasil*, by Carlos Vainer et al., Boitempo Editorial, 2013. https://biblioteca.magisbrasil.org.br/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Cidades-Rebeldes_passelivre-e-as-manifestacoes-que-tomaram-as-ruas-do-Brasil.pdf
- Nikolaeva, Anna, et al. "Commoning Mobility: Towards a New Politics of Mobility Transitions." *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol. 44, no. 2, 2019, pp. 346–60, <https://doi.org/10.1111/tran.12287>.
- Nord West Bahn. "Regio-S-Bahn" ["Regional Train Line"]. *Nordwestbahn.de*, 2024, <https://www.nordwestbahn.de/de/regio-s-bahn>.
- OC Transpo. "Service Types | OC Transpo." *OC Transpo*, 2023, <https://www.octranspo.com/en/our-services/bus-o-train-network/service-types/>.
- Ostrom, Elinor, et al. *Rules, Games, and Common-Pool Resources*. U of Michigan P, 1994.
- Ottawa Community Foundation. "Transportation." *Ottawa Insights*, 2023, <https://www.ottawainsights.ca/themes/environment-and-sustainability/transportation/>.
- Pereira, Rafael H. M., et al. "Distributive Justice and Equity in Transportation." *Transport Reviews*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2017, pp. 170–91, <https://doi.org/10.1080/01441647.2016.1257660>.
- Preston, John, and Fiona Rajé. "Accessibility, Mobility and Transport-Related Social Exclusion." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2007, pp. 151–60, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2006.05.002>.
- Purdy, Sean. "Brazil's June Days of 2013: Mass Protest, Class, and the Left." *Latin American Perspectives*, vol. 46, no. 4, 2019, pp. 15–36, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0094582X17699905>.
- Rawls, John. *A Theory of Justice*. Rev. ed., Belknap Press, 1999.
- Rivera-Castro, Faviola. "Self-Respect." *The Cambridge Rawls Lexicon*, edited by David A. Reidy and Jon Mandle, Cambridge UP, 2014, pp. 762–64.
- Scheiner, Rebecca. "Free Transit and Social Movement Infrastructure: Assessing the Political Potential of Toronto's Nascent Free Transit Campaign." *Alternate Routes*, vol. 22, 2011, pp. 115–22.
- Scheiner, James I., and Grover Starling. "The Political Economy of Free-Fare Transit." *Urban Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 10, no. 2, 1974, pp. 170–84, <https://doi.org/10.1177/107808747401000204>.
- Schlosberg, David. *Defining Environmental Justice: Theories, Movements, and Nature*. Oxford UP, 2009.
- Schlosberg, David, and Lisette B. Collins. "From Environmental to Climate Justice: Climate Change and the Discourse of Environmental Justice." *WIREs Climate Change*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2014, pp. 359–74, <https://doi.org/10.1002/wcc.275>.
- Schmidt, Michael W. "Defining the Method of Reflective Equilibrium." *Synthese*, vol. 203, no. 5, 2024, p. 170, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11229-024-04571-6>.
- Schwanen, Tim. "Low-Carbon Mobility in London: A Just Transition?" *One Earth*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2020, pp. 132–34, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.oneear.2020.01.013>.
- Schwanen, Tim, et al. "Rethinking the Links between Social Exclusion and Transport Disadvantage through the Lens of Social Capital." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, vol. 74, 2015, pp. 123–35, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2015.02.012>.
- Senat für Umwelt Bau und Verkehr. *Verkehrsentwicklungsplan Bremen 2025* [Traffic Development Plan Bremen 2025]. 2014.
- Sheller, Mimi. *Mobility Justice: The Politics of Movement in An Age of Extremes*. Verso, 2018.
- SPD Landesverband Bremen, et al. *Vereinbarung zur Zusammenarbeit in einer Regierungskoalition für die 20. Wahlperiode der Bremischen Bürgerschaft 2019–2023* [Agreement on Collaboration in a Government Coalition for the 20. Legislative Period of the Bremische Bürgerschaft 2019–2023]. 13 Aug. 2019, <https://spd-land-bremen.de/>

- Binaries/Binary_6302/Koalitionsvereinbarung-RGR-2019-2023-mitU-final.pdf.
- Statistisches Landesamt Bremen. "Bremen in Zahlen: Statistisches Landesamt Bremen" ["Bremen in Numbers: Statistical Office Bremen"]. *Statistisches Landesamt Bremen*, 2023, <https://www.statistik.bremen.de/publikationen/bremen-in-zahlen-2056>.
- STO. *Société de Transport de l'Ottawa* [Society of Transport in Ottawa]. 2024, www.sto.ca.
- Storchmann, Karl. "Externalities by Automobiles and Fare-Free Transit in Germany—A Paradigm Shift?" *Journal of Public Transportation*, vol. 6, no. 4, 2003, pp. 89–105, <https://doi.org/10.5038/2375-0901.6.4.5>.
- Straub, Daniel. "On the Road to a Fare-Free Public Transport Policy: A Case Study of the Wrocław Anarchist Federation." *Prace Komisji Geografii Komunikacji PTG*, vol. 26, no. 1, 2023, pp. 40–51, <https://doi.org/10.4467/2543859XPKG.23.003.17400>.
- Štraub, Daniel, and Vaclav Jaroš. "Free Fare Policy as a Tool for Sustainable Development of Public Transport Services." *Human Geographies*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2019, pp. 45–59, <https://doi.org/10.5719/hgeo.2019.131.3>.
- Sträuli, Louise. "Fare-Free, Not Carefree: Care Mobilities in a Fare-Free Public Transport System in Tallinn." *Mobilities*, vol. 19, no. 4, 2024, pp. 686–703, <https://doi.org/10.1080/17450101.2024.2328215>.
- Sunio, Varsolo, et al. "How Urban Social Movements Are Leveraging Social Media to Promote Dignified Mobility as a Basic Human Right." *Case Studies on Transport Policy*, vol. 9, no. 1, 2021, pp. 68–79, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.cstp.2020.07.006>.
- Szwarc, Julia. "Rethinking Ottawa's Transit System: A Bold Proposal for Free Transit in a City Designed for Cars." *The Leveller*, 21 Mar. 2019, <https://leveller.ca/2019/03/rethinking-ottawas-transit-system-a-bold-proposal-for-free-transit-in-a-city-designed-for-cars/>.
- transitloop.ca. "Ottawa-Gatineau Transit Loop." *Ottawa-Gatineau Transit Loop*, 2023, <https://www.transitloop.ca>.
- van Goeverden, Cees, et al. "Subsidies in Public Transport." *European Transport / Trasporti Europei*, vol. 32, 2006, pp. 5–25.
- van Uffelen, Nynke. "Revisiting Recognition in Energy Justice." *Energy Research & Social Science*, vol. 92, 2022, p. 102764, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.erss.2022.102764>.
- Verlinghieri, Ersilia, and Tim Schwanen. "Transport and Mobility Justice: Evolving Discussions." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 87, 2020, p. 102798, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2020.102798>.
- Verlinghieri, Ersilia, and Federico Venturini. "Exploring the Right to Mobility through the 2013 Mobilizations in Rio de Janeiro." *Journal of Transport Geography*, vol. 67, 2018, pp. 126–36, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jtrangeo.2017.09.008>.
- Volinski, Joel. *Implementation and Outcomes of Fare-Free Transit Systems*. The National Academies Press, 2012.
- Walker, Gordon. "Beyond Distribution and Proximity: Exploring the Multiple Spatialities of Environmental Justice." *Antipode*, vol. 41, no. 4, 2009, pp. 614–36, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8330.2009.00691.x>.
- Wege, Mark. "Einfach Einsteigen: A Public Transport Revolution?" *Blogging for a Liveable City*, 10 Nov. 2020, <https://www.bremenize.com/en/wird-bremen-bald-einfach-einsteigen/>.
- . "Was nichts kostet ist nichts wert'—oder doch?" ["If It Is Free, It Cannot be Any Good'—or Can It?"] *Einfach Einsteigen*, 9 Dec. 2020, <https://einsteigen.jetzt/was-nichts-kostet-ist-nichts-wert-oder-doch/>.
- World Population Review. "Sao Paulo Population 2022 (Demographics, Maps, Graphs)." *Worldpopulationreview.com*, 2024, <https://worldpopulationreview.com/world-cities/sao-paulo-population>.
- Zhou, Jiang, P., et al. "The Equity and Spatial Implications of Transit Fare." *Transportation Research Part A: Policy and Practice*, vol. 121, 2019, pp. 309–24, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tra.2019.01.015>.