

**THREATS FROM CAR TRAFFIC TO THE
QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE:
PROBLEMS, CAUSES, AND SOLUTIONS**

THREATS FROM CAR TRAFFIC TO THE QUALITY OF URBAN LIFE: PROBLEMS, CAUSES, AND SOLUTIONS

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PREFACE

When thinking about current growth trends in motorized traffic and in particular private car use, there are many reasons to be worried about the future, even the near future. The ever-increasing documentation of negative effects on the environment, most importantly the transport sector's adverse effects on global climate change, is one reason for serious concern. Not enough seems to be done. Some have argued that the political system is non-linear – when the situation becomes *really* severe, politicians will react forcefully. This may or may not be an over-optimistic view.

There must be reasons why the public does not react strongly. The private car is instrumental for many important and desirable activities that people have time to engage in. And they gain even more time from using the car, at least as long as it remains a fast mode of daily travel. However, we know that this is no longer always the case. That people continue to use the car may therefore appear strange. Apparently, other factors account for this: freedom of choice, resistance to change a habit, affective attachment to the car, and the pleasure to drive. A diluted responsibility for undertaking required changes is an additional important factor.

In particular, in urban areas the negative effects of private car use are felt. Noise pollution, air pollution, pedestrian traffic accidents, infringement on land use resulting in the destruction of historic, cultural, and restorative qualities are among the most severe negative threats to the quality of urban life. A primary cause is the immense growth in urban populations, car ownership, and car use.

How can urban-life quality be restored? In any solution private car use must most likely be restrained, although not banished. Is increasing the price a solution? Regulation? Information and education?

We were lucky to manage to recruit scholars as authors of the chapters in this book, who are experts on various aspects of (i) what the threats are from car traffic, (ii) which the determinants of car use are, and (iii) what possible policy measures for curtailing car use can be implemented. This guaranteed a broad coverage of both positive and negative aspects of private car use in urban areas. We hope readers coming from one of the many disciplines represented by the authors of chapters in this book will appreciate this broad coverage. At the same time, we are particularly pleased that all chapters take a behavioural perspective on the problems as well as their solutions. This is needed as a contrast to other perspectives that tend to dominate. After all, it is ordinary people who are both drivers benefiting from the car (excluding the benefits to the car producers) *and* are exposed to the negative effects. We hope that this message will get through to policy makers in the transport sector.

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