Stuck in traffic?

Discursive positions and institutional barriers in the debate on a national mobility strategy in Denmark

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ABSTRACT

This project explores the research question: *How do distinct discursive positions among central stakeholders shape the debate of national mobility planning in Denmark?*

Despite broad stakeholder support for a national mobility strategy, no such strategy has been implemented. This thesis investigates why, by analysing the discursive landscape surrounding Danish transport planning. Through a critical discourse analysis that draws on Fairclough's model and Hajer's discourse concepts, the project examines the language and positions of central stakeholders across documents, interviews, and public debate. The analysis reveals how stakeholders construct storylines that reinforce or challenge the status quo, forming discourse-coalitions with competing understandings of mobility. While some promote transformative change, others seek to modernise existing paradigms. The findings reveal that power is exercised not only through institutions, but also discursively, by defining problems, shaping legitimacy, and limiting what is politically feasible. In doing so, the project uncovers how institutionalised discourses and conflicting framings are barriers to radical change, explaining the continued absence of a national mobility strategy in Denmark.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

TABLE OF CONTENT

01

introduction

This chapter sets the scene for the project by highlighting its relevance, introducing the environmental challenges at the forefront of current discussions and the objectives established to address them. The focus then narrows to the Danish planning system, mapping out how Denmark approaches these challenges, particularly concerning transport planning and infrastructure decisions.

In recent years, calls for a national mobility strategy in Denmark have grown increasingly prominent in academic and professional circles. The conference "Fremtidens Transport 2025" brought together a diverse range of key stakeholders, and a notable consensus emerged: Denmark needs a coordinated, long-term strategy to guide the transformation of its transportation system. Throughout the conference, representatives from industry, government, and municipalities appeared to agree that such a strategy is necessary and overdue.

Yet, when a panel debate concluded with an obvious question - *"Why has it not happened yet?"* - panel participants fell quiet. Despite the apparent consensus, no participant could provide a clear answer. This project takes that silence as its starting point. It aims to examine the barriers that have hindered the formulation and implementation of a national mobility strategy in Denmark, despite growing pressure on its importance.

To set the scene, the following chapter outlines the environmental challenges posed by the current transport system, Denmark's national climate goals, and the broader international context that places increasing demands on national-level mobility planning.

1.1 Consequenses of car-centric planning

Transportation has long been a major driver of global oil consumption, increasing its share from 45.2% to 57% between 1973 and 2016, substantially contributing to global emissions [Robert Cervero, 2017, p. 36].

The connection between fossil fuel consumption and climate change is well-documented, with oil and petroleum usage making the EU transportation sector account for 23.8% of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2022 [European Environment Agency, 2022, p. 3]. The European Union (EU) has emphasised this issue, stating that: *"Transport activities are the main cause of unsustainable patterns, especially in urban areas. The European Commission reported that despite significant efforts to reduce emissions, transport has not yet achieved its decarbonisation targets. If these trends continue, transport is expected to contribute 50% of all CO_2 emissions in the EU by 2050, if not within the next two decades"* [Moradi and Vagnoni, 2018, p. 231]. This shows that the transport sector plays a major role in carbon emissions and that meeting international climate goals is challenging. Within the sector, cars account for 44% of Europe's transport emissions in 2019 [European Parlament, 2024, p. 26][Brown et al., 2009, p. 161]. In Europe, fossil-fueled transport dominates the transportation sector, accounting for 71% of total fuel consumption, while biofuels and electric-powered vehicles account for the rest [European Environment Agency, 2023, p. 6]. All of which is visualised in Figure 1.1. The Figure also illustrates, that the transport sector accounts for an even larger share in Denmark's total greenhouse gas emissions in 2022, with 29.7% [Klima-, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2024, p. 11]. In Denmark, cars dominate road transport, contributing 92% of the sector's emissions in 2019 [Energistyrelsen, 2023b, pp. 15-17]. The figures are even more concerning in Denmark than EU, as Denmark's fossil fuel consumption within the transport sector, accounts for 90% [Energistyrelsen, 2023a, p. 25].

For both cases, it is essential to recognise that other modes of transportation also contribute to emissions [European Parlament, 2024, p. 26]. Therefore, attributing all negative externalities solely to cars would be misleading [Pritchard, 2022a, p. 1485]. Besides being a major contributor to greenhouse gas emissions, the transport mode is widely associated with traffic-related challenges and their broader consequences [Gössling, 2020, p. 443]. The reliance on individual vehicles leads to significant traffic congestion, particularly during peak commuting hours, which increases air and noise pollution, especially in urban areas. In addition, private cars are frequently linked to traffic accidents, sometimes resulting in serious injuries or fatalities. These negative impacts, combined with the growing concerns surrounding climate change, call into question the sustainability of private car-dependency and its necessity in urban environments [Gössling, 2020, p. 444].

Additionally, fossil-fueled road transport has significant societal and health implications *[Zhang et al., 2023, p. 117][World Health Organization, 2024]*. This perspective is reinforced by Pritchard, who states that: *"Car-dependency is detrimental to health and well-being and not just for drivers (e.g., from reduced levels of physical activity). Even those without the benefits of access to a car suffer from climate change, poor air quality, exposure to noise, and the human cost of accidents" [Pritchard, 2022b, p. 1485].*

The current transportation system has significant negative implications for public health, strengthening the case for a shift away from car-centric mobility planning toward active transportation modes. Reducing the number of motorised vehicles in cities would significantly lower carbon dioxide emissions and noise pollution, fostering healthier urban environments [Robert Cervero, 2017, p. 36]. Furthermore, physical inactivity in car-dependent urban areas has been linked to an increased risk of heart disease, stroke, diabetes, and various cancers. Promoting active transportation, such as walking and cycling, reduces these health risks and supports healthy body weight, mental well-being, and overall quality of life [World Health Organization, 2025].

A reduction in car traffic is likely to lead to fewer road accidents, resulting in a decrease in both injuries and fatalities. According to Danmark Statistik, 2778 people were recorded as injured or killed in traffic accidents in 2023, including 162 deaths. Suggesting that fewer vehicles on the roads can contribute to improved traffic safety [Danmarks Statistik, 2023].

Modern cities have historically been designed around cars, allocating vast amounts of space to infrastructure that primarily serves the needs of cars. Cars require extensive road networks, parking facilities, and dedicated services, making them the most space-intensive mode of transport compared to bicycles and public transportation [Gössling, 2020, p. 444]. As a result, other modes of transport are often forced to compete for the remaining space, reducing their accessibility and appeal. This lack of prioritisation discourages the general population from choosing more sustainable

Percentage of total greenhouse gas emissions in 2022

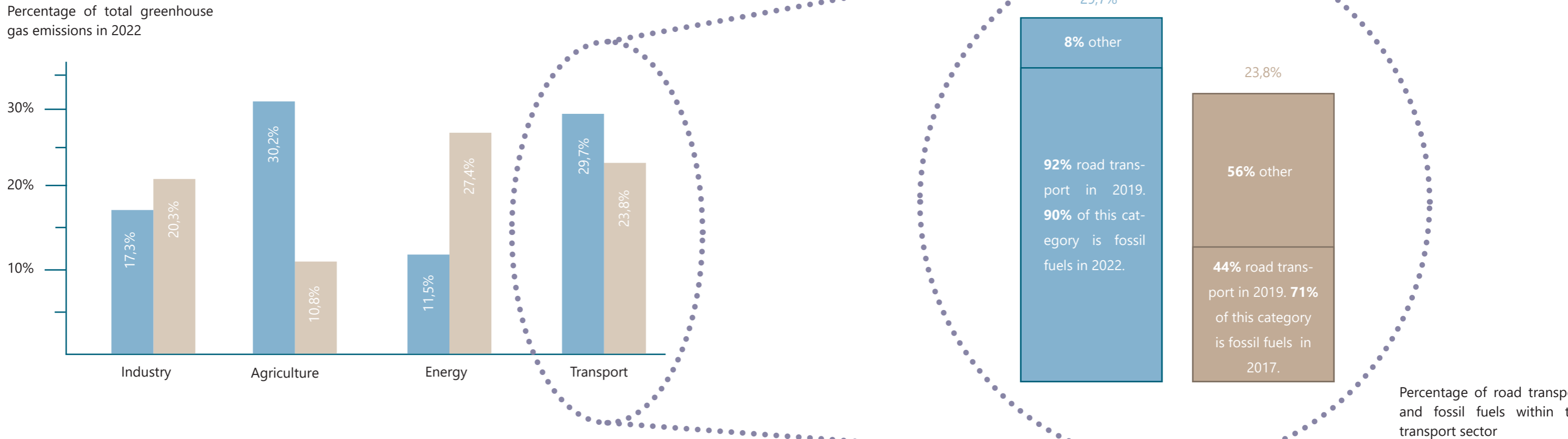Percentage of road transport and fossil fuels within the transport sector

Figure 1.1 | The figure visualises the transport sector's share of total greenhouse gas emissions. It then zooms in on the share attributed specifically to car transport, which is further broken down by fuel type. **Beige** represents EU figures, while **blue** indicates data for Denmark.

Greenhouse gas emissions

transportation options [Henley and O'Carroll, 2023]. A holistic approach is necessary to address these challenges to reduce emissions and create more liveable environments, a contemporary planning objective [Robert Cervero, 2017]. Therefore, the climate crisis is not the only factor in a sustainable transition; Limited space is another key issue, as highlighted: *"[...] plans have already been made for 99.7% of Denmark's land. This creates a complex challenge, as the climate crisis calls for space for renewable energy, while the biodiversity crisis demands more untouched nature. [...] and with so many competing interests, it ultimately comes down to prioritisation to address multiple challenges simultaneously within the same areas" KL [2024b, translated].* This means the growing car fleet, as visualised in Figure 1.2, cannot

be converted away from fossil fuels to solve all societal challenges. It is essential to emphasise that the car, regardless of its propellant, occupies increasing space in the urban landscape, sidelining other functions or modes of transport. While electric vehicles (EVs) offer considerable advantages in terms of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and improving air quality, relying on them does not fundamentally solve the broader challenges of car-dependency. Despite their low-emission propellant, EVs still contribute to issues such as spatial consumption, traffic accidents, physical inactivity, infrastructure wear, and emissions from vehicle production and maintenance [Muratori et al., 2021, p. 6][Guzek et al., 2024, p. 249][Namdeo et al., 2014, p. 190].

The widespread impact of car-dependency underscores the need for planning that prioritises alternative transportation modes. Encouraging walking, cycling, and public transit can improve health by increasing physical activity while reducing the adverse health effects associated with car emissions. The economic rationale for continued car-dependency is weakening, while investments in sustainable transportation and urban redevelopment are emerging as more viable and forward-thinking solutions [Newman and Kenworthy, 2015a, p. 2].

In Denmark, road congestion has increased yearly since the temporary decline during the COVID-19 pandemic [Vejdirektoratet, 2025]. In 2022, total traffic delays on Danish roads resulted in 80 million driving hours being lost. The total congestion in 2022 resulted in an estimated socioeconomic loss of approximately 31 billion DKK [Dansk Erhverv, 2024c]. These figures indicate that society demands a shift, either through further infrastructure expansion, as suggested by Dansk Erhverv, or through a holistic approach to mobility planning and restructuring in Denmark, as others discuss.

In addition to this conflicting rationality, an article by Gossling mentions that the European Union estimates an average trip by car has a social cost of 0.82 DKK per passenger per kilometre. In contrast, active transportation offers a net positive impact, as cycling and walking contribute to lower healthcare costs and reduced sick leave. The associated social benefits amount to 1.18 DKK per kilometre cycled, and 2.76 DKK per kilometre walked [p. 444 Gossling, 2020, currency converted from EUR to DKK]. Yet, car travel also brings economic benefits, such as access to a broader spectrum of employment opportunities [Pritchard, 2022b, p. 1484]. However, this happens at the

expense of maintaining infrastructure and the environmental costs associated with car-dependency [Pritchard, 2022b, p. 1484].

Additionally, the current transport sector, dominated by private cars, faces criticism regarding equity: *"It exacerbates both inequality and the climate crisis that large parts of the Danish population are so dependent on their cars" Tanzer [2022].* For years, substantial budget cuts in public transportation, especially in municipal bus networks, have created a pressing challenge threatening social cohesion [MobilityWatch, 2024]. An industry association declares: *"We believe that public transportation is a fundamental part of social welfare, and budget cuts in this sector lead to greater inequality and isolation for the most vulnerable groups [...]" MobilityWatch [2024],* highlighting that an effective solution is enhancing the existing public transportation system.

1.2 National and international goals for transport and sustainability

These urban challenges have been central to ongoing debates, driving the development of both international and national frameworks that work together to combat climate change and accelerate the transition toward global sustainability goals. The United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) and SDG 13 (Climate Action), highlight the necessity of efficient, accessible, and low-emission transportation systems to enhance sustainability and mitigate global warming [United Nations, 2015][United Nations, 2025]. These objectives align with former sustainability commitments, particularly those
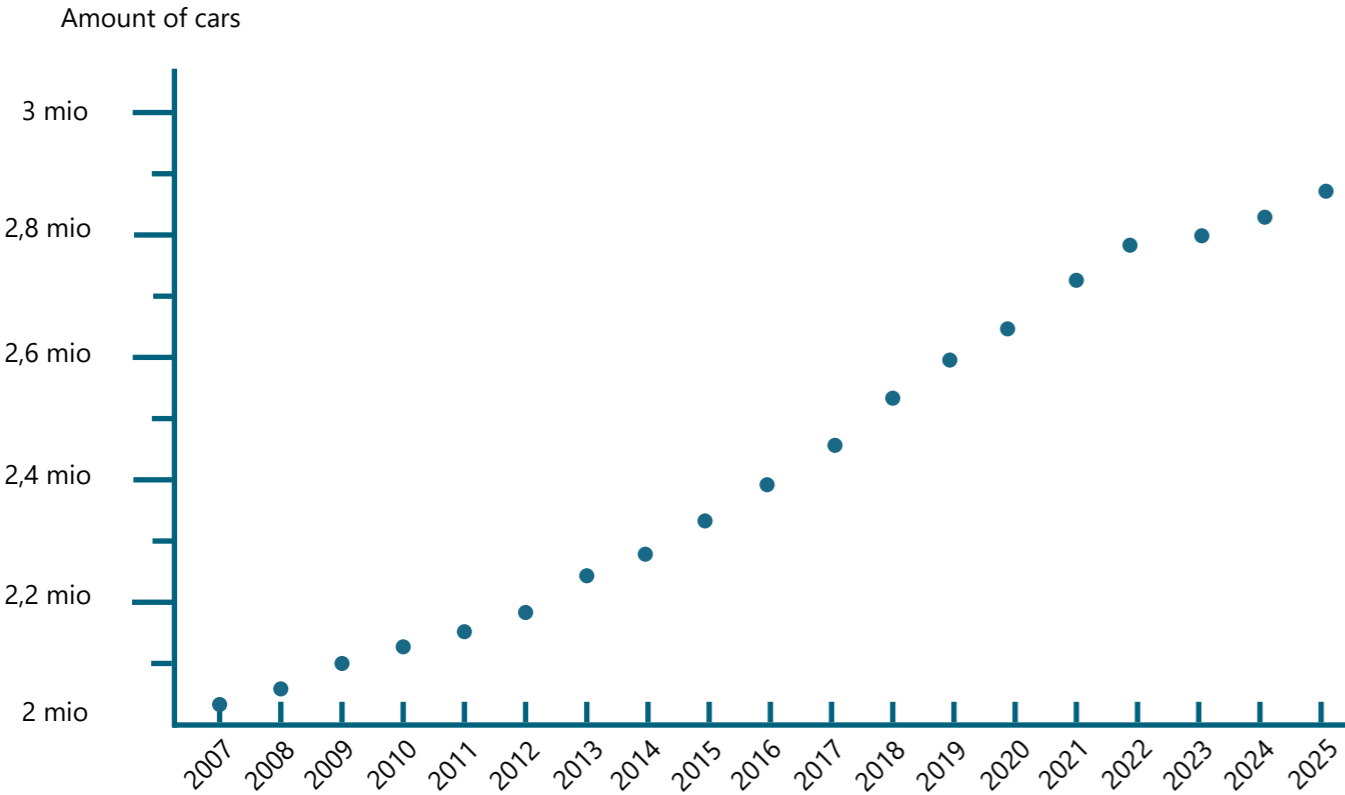

Amount of cars

Figure 1.2 | The growth of car ownership in Denmark, 2010–2025 [Danmarks Statistik, 2025].

Car ownership

outlined in the Paris Agreement, which aims to limit global temperature rise to well below 2 ℃, preferably 1.5 ℃. Achieving these goals necessitates a substantial reduction in greenhouse gas emissions from most carbon-intensive sectors, one of them being the transport sector [United Nations, 2015, p. 23][United Nations, 2025].

In Europe, the EU Green Deal and its Sustainable and Smart Mobility Strategy aim to achieve a climate-neutral transport sector by 2050 [European Commission, 2025]. The EU aims for a 90% reduction in transport-related emissions compared to 1990 levels, emphasising the integration of multimodal solutions, zero-emission vehicles, and increased investments in public transport to drive this transformation [European Commission, 2019, pp. 2-11][European Commission, 2025b; Carbon Brief, 2024]. These commitments are further reinforced by the European Climate Law, which legally binds emission reduction targets [European Commission, 2025a]. The EU's ambitious climate and mobility strategies outline a clear path toward a sustainable, climate-neutral future. A key premise of this transition is that the overall sustainability of the transport system is crucial for the success of the European Green Deal, underscoring the need for a holistic and integrated approach, in each member country: *"The success of the European Green Deal depends on our ability to make the transport system as a whole sustainable [...] All transport modes are indispensable for our transport system and this is why they must all become more sustainable" European Commission [2020, pp. 1-3].*

Denmark's national strategies reflect and support these international frameworks. The Danish Climate Act (Klimaloven, LBK2580) mandates a 70% reduction in emissions compared

to 1990 levels and achieving climate neutrality by 2050 [Klima-, Energi- og Forsyningsministeriet, 2021]. This ambitious target places significant demands on national policies that require a broad societal transition toward sustainability. The Danish Planning Act establishes a legal framework for spatial planning, balancing societal interests in land use while protecting nature, the environment and sustainable economic growth [By-, Land- og Kirkeministeriet, 2024]. However, despite transport's substantial contribution to emissions and its pivotal role in shaping mobility patterns, it is not explicitly designated in planning legislation. The siloed thinking of transport and spatial planning appears increasingly inadequate when viewed in light of how urban environments have historically been shaped around the car [Newman and Kenworthy, 2015b, p. 2][Canitez, 2019, p. 172]. This development underscores several societal challenges. This highlights the interconnection between mobility and spatial planning.

Ultimately, these international and national initiatives create a structured framework that drives the agenda and the transition toward sustainable mobility, pressuring the current state of the transportation sector. Global agreements establish overarching climate targets, while regional and national policies translate these ambitions into specific measures and actions. In the context of the transport sector, a sustainable mobility system must be promoted. The inherent interconnectedness of transport and spatial planning will be crucial to meet national climate commitments.

1.3 The Danish planning system

In Denmark, the planning and spatial distribution of interests are governed by the Planning Act (Planloven, LBK1157). While climate goals are not explicitly mentioned, they are integrated through the notion of "sustainable development" in the target paragraph of the law (§1).

The Planning Act aims to ensure coherent planning that balances societal interests in land use, protects nature and the environment, and fosters economic growth and development across the country. This is meant to facilitate societal progress on a sustainable foundation, respecting human living conditions, preserving biodiversity, and ensuring economic prosperity [By-, Land- og Kirkeministeriet, 2024]. The Danish planning system operates within a hierarchical framework where national policies set overarching goals, while municipalities and regions are responsible for implementing specific measures. This framework promotes coordinated governance, ensuring alignment across all levels in the planing hierarchy to support sustainable development [Plan09, 2009, p. 1518].

After the structural reform in 2007, Danish municipalities became primarily responsible for land-use planning under the Planning Act. To align municipal plans with national interests, the Minister for the Environment outlines state priorities and issues binding directives [Plan09, 2009, pp. 15-18]. Due to this hierarchical governance, municipalities are responsible for integrating climate goals into their local planning. However, they lack the authority to set overarching national guidelines and face uncertainty regarding municipal obligations [Esbjørn, 2022]. While the national government es-

tablishes the overall framework, municipalities receive little guidance on allocating resources effectively to contribute to national climate targets [Esbjørn, 2022]. As a result, each municipality must independently determine the extent of its efforts, leading to a highly individualised approach. Autrup highlights this variation, noting that *"each municipality approaches this [sustainable development] in its own way. Some engage in strategic planning, while others lack the competence or the willingness to do so" Autrup [2025, translated].* This disparity underscores the broader challenge of national coordination. Similarly, Skov points out that *"no one is systematically examining what mobility in the future of Denmark could truly offer: What opportunities do we have? How do we seize them? What would be most beneficial for Danish institutions, citizens, and society as a whole?" Skov [2025, translated].* These perspectives emphasise the municipalities' need for a more precise national direction to ensure a more coherent approach to climate and mobility planning. This challenge was also highlighted by the intro speaker at the IDA Conference "Fremtidens Transport 2025": *"I hope that today can help inspire the conversation about what it will take to establish a mobility plan in Denmark. Ultimately, it is the politicians we aim to inspire - so they can begin, or dare to begin, the discussion on which direction they want to prioritise for Denmark's future" Guldberg [2025, translated].* He emphasises a critical shortcoming in the Danish planning system, particularly in planning and deciding on infrastructure. The national governance level must play a more decisive role in establishing a clear direction and taking greater responsibility for guiding local development to ensure that it contributes effectively to achieving national and international goals.

1.4 Transport planning

Transport planning in Denmark operates within a hierarchical framework similar to general landuse planning, where municipalities must follow national guidelines set by the Transportministeriet. However, they retain authority over local roads. According to §4 of the Road Act (Vejloven, LBK435), the Minister of Transport is responsible for overarching road and traffic planning, ensuring national coherence in infrastructure development [Transportministeriet, 2025]. Additionally, §6 designates the Minister of Transport as the road authority for state roads, while §7 grants municipalities authority over local roads [Transportministeriet, 2025]. Within this structure, municipalities independently decide on the construction, reclassification, or closure of municipal roads, as outlined in §15, stk. 2. However, these decisions must be based on comprehensive traffic assessments rather than solely economic considerations [Transportministeriet, 2025]. This framework ensures national oversight while allowing municipalities a degree of autonomy in managing their road networks. The national government is responsible for large-scale infrastructure projects, including motorways, railways, and national public transport initiatives. In contrast, municipalities focus on local road networks, public transit, and cycling infrastructure.

Large infrastructure projects undergo extensive planning processes that consider economic viability, environmental impact, and societal benefits, which are equal to some of the considerations in the Danish Planning Act [Rich, 2025; By-, Land- og Kirkeministeriet, 2024]. In this context, §17 in the Road Act mandates that Denmark is legally bound to conduct environmental screenings for road proj-

ects [Transportministeriet, 2025]. Infrastructure investments in Denmark are typically based on economic cost-benefit analyses, where projects are assessed in terms of their financial return and efficiency [Betænkning, 2021, p. 4]. These analyses prioritise economic growth, often setting environmental and social concerns aside [Rich, 2025]. Rather than following a holistic approach that considers the broader impact of transport initiatives, planning is carried out, project-by-project. The current holistic aspects of transport planning are a national responsibility, encompassing large infrastructure projects, across municipal borders. However, these strongly emphasise economic incentives and financial gains on a project basis, often taking precedence over environmental and societal concerns. Questions are being raised about whether current methods are adequate for effectively meeting national and international climate objectives, especially in relation to the broader trends that planning seeks to address, such as space constraints, public health, and the need for a human-scale approach. This is one of the themes that is repeatedly discussed across various professional communities, including at the "Fremtidens Transport 2025" conference [Guldberg, 2025].

1.5 The role of transport

Transport planning in Denmark is crucial when acknowledging economic growth, mobility, sustainability and urban development. According to the Danish Infrastructure Commission, transport is key to ensuring connectivity, economic growth and sustainable planning. Planning for transport is often associated with expansion of infrastructure to enable efficient movement of people and goods [Danish Infrastructure Commission, 2008, p. 307].

Transport planning in Denmark serves multiple purposes within the national planning system, balancing environmental sustainability, economic viability and public needs [Regeringen, 2019, p. 2]. The transportation of people and goods is deeply embedded in everyday life, shaping how society functions and develops. However, as mobility demands continue to grow, so do the environmental and climate challenges associated with transport. As stated in a report by Danish Infrastructure Commission: *"The effort to limit the impact of transport on the environment and the climate must be intensified" [Danish Infrastructure Commission, 2008, p. 308],* highlighting the need for stronger measures to mitigate transport-related emissions and environmental harm. Yet, despite these climate challenges, transport remains indispensable - society cannot stop moving. As Danish Infrastructure Commission states: *"Transport is about quality of life and prosperity - about connections between people, families and businesses. Infrastructure ensures that we can get to work and that products and goods can be transported to their destination in the shops and consumers. This makes infrastructure a vital cornerstone for our welfare and prosperity" [Danish Infrastructure Commission, 2008, p. 306].* This highlights how transport infrastructure facilitates movement and strengthens social and economic cohesion, ensuring that individuals and businesses remain well-connected. Rather than seeing transport as merely a challenge to sustainability, it must be understood as a critical component of Denmark's future growth, individual accessibility and environmental strategies [Danish Infrastructure Commission, 2008, p. 307].

02

framing the research

The following chapter will present the research question and supporting questions that guide the thesis.

Despite a growing consensus among stakeholders about the urgent need for a national mobility strategy in Denmark, such strategy has yet to be implemented. This is particularly evident in light of the recent conference "Fremtidens Transport 2025", where stakeholders across sectors, shared support for a coordinated approach to transport planning, in Denmark. However, when panel participants were confronted with the straightforward question of why this strategy has not been formulated, a notable silence followed. This project is based on that silence.

The relevance of this investigation is underscored by the growing academic literature that points to sustainable transformation not merely being a local issue but deeply interconnected with regional, national, and global frameworks [McCormick et al., 2013, p. 4]. The aim is to understand why there has been no progress in developing or implementing a national mobility strategy despite evidence in the literature and expressed support from stakeholders across sectors with diverse mobility interests.

Without a coherent national strategy, municipal initiatives risk being fragmented [McCormick et al., 2013, p. 4]. National governments are in a position to control policy and agenda, making them able to shape sustainable transport systems [Kaye, 2019, p. 11]. While local initiatives have played a crucial role in advancing sustainable mobility, they alone cannot meet the scale and urgency of climate and transport challenges. A national mobility strategy ensures that sustainability efforts are not confined to urban centres but extend to rural areas, promoting equitable access to transport solutions for all communities [Kaye, 2019, p. 23]. This suggests a need for a national mobility strategy when addressing societal challeng-

es, which conflicts with the Danish transport sector's current structural and institutional landscape.

The current planning paradigm, heavily centred on private car use, contributes to environmental challenges, congestion, and health issues [Vejdirektoratet, 2025; World Health Organization, 2025; WSP Global, 2025; Gössling, 2020]. The reliance on project-by-project decision-making further increases these issues, as economic considerations often precede long-term environmental, spatial distribution and health-related concerns [Betænkning, 2021, p. 4]. A national mobility strategy has the potential to address these challenges by providing an overarching framework. It could facilitate cross-municipal coordination, as they lack alignment with broader national and international sustainability objectives [Esbjørn, 2022; Autrup, 2025].

This project, therefore, seeks to explore why such a strategy has not been realised. By drawing on critical discourse theory, the project aims to reveal how power dynamics within institutionalised discourses through the concepts of storylines and discourse-coalitions. In doing so, the thesis addresses the following question to investigate how central stakeholders are positioning themselves within the institutional landscape to influence the implementation of a national mobility strategy through reinforcing or challenging the status quo:

How do distinct discursive positions among central stakeholders shape the debate of national mobility planning in Denmark?

Sub-Q1: What are the transport sector's traditional and emerging discourses?

Sub-Q2: What storylines are revealed by each stakeholder's understanding of mobility in Denmark?

Sub-Q3: Which shared discursive positions can be identified through the storylines on national mobility in Denmark?

Sub-Q4; How do the discursive positions reveal barriers to implementing a national mobility strategy in Denmark?

discursive
landscape
in literature

This chapter identifies the dominant discourses and stories shaping the transport sector, thereby answering the first supporting question: What are the transport sector's traditional and emerging discourses? It will explore how these discourses become institutionalised and creating resistance to change.

3.1 Traditional transport discourse

The traditional approach to transport planning is based on a technocratic understanding of transport, also known as instrumental, where transport economics and engineering have been the dominant approach [Doughty and Murray, 2016, pp. 308-309].

Within this understanding, a predict-and-provide paradigm has dominated transport planning aiming to reduce overall travel costs while improving the efficiency of transport systems [Banister, 2008, p. 73] [Rye et al., 2024, p. 2]. Rooted in a policy-making process heavily reliant on mathematical models and forecasting techniques, it involves predicting future transport patterns based on past trends and adapting infrastructure to meet the expected demand [Curtis and Low, 2016, p. 104]. This car-centric approach has reinforced a technocratic perspective, where infrastructure expansion is seen as the primary solution to mobility challenges, often prioritising technical solutions and technological advancements over systemic or behavioural interventions [Doughty and Murray, 2016, pp. 308-309], but expanding transport networks has also led to urban sprawl and rising emissions, which is creating a negative spiral, as elaborated in section 1.1 [Fransen et al., 2023, pp. 1-2].

Infrastructure investments focus on minimising travel time and increasing capacity, which has typically led to prioritising road networks [Witzell, 2021, pp. 7-8]. The rationale behind these investments is deeply rooted in neo-liberal economic principles, where transport is considered a facilitator of market efficiency and individual choice [Curtis and Low, 2016, pp. 18-19]. The dominant discourse emphasis-

es that increased mobility leads to economic opportunities, reinforcing the belief that transport infrastructure should accommodate unrestricted movement, particularly for private vehicles [Doughty and Murray, 2016, pp. 308-309].

As a result, congestion has been framed as an obstacle to economic progress, necessitating continuous infrastructure expansion rather than systemic changes in mobility behaviour [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. The neo-liberal principles can be identified in this quote, highlighting the fundamental aspects of the technocratic discourse: *"Unrestricted mobility is considered a fundamental right of the contemporary Western citizen and obstructions to mobility networks are seen as an affront to liberty and freedom of citizens. This right is an individual one, and the car continues to both represent and provide a means to practice this right" Doughty and Murray [2016, pp. 308-309].*

The dominance of economic rationales in transport planning has led to a persistent focus on mobility as a commodity rather than a public good [Curtis and Low, 2016, pp. 104-105]. This is particularly evident in the strong emphasis on principles, where road infrastructure is seen as an investment that should yield financial returns rather than as a means to enhance societal wellbeing [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. Decision-makers often prioritise large-scale projects with economic payoffs over local improvements [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. This rationality is further reinforced by the Danish Transport Model, which primarily functions as a transport demand model, simulating travel behaviour and transport patterns based on population, car ownership, and infrastructure [Rich and Hansen, 2016, p. 576].

While the model does not exclusively focus on travel time savings, these remain a dominant factor within the economic framework they support [Rich and Hansen, 2016, p. 576]. The model forms the foundation for cost-benefit analyses of transport investments in Denmark, often sidelining broader, long-term goals like equality and sustainability [Have and Gudmundsson, 2024] [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10].

Within the technocratic discourse, three storylines was identified by Curtis and Low, which reinforce the current institution [Curtis and Low, 2016, p.104-105]:

Technocratic transport planning has been institutionally embedded in the Danish planning system, which has created a structural dependency on existing transport patterns and limited the possibilities of diverging from the established paradigm [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. The contemporary decision-making of transport planning in Denmark is highly criticised by Have and Gudmundsson: *"Today, the societal balancing of the various considerations and consequences of transport broadly takes place in two stages. First, through a political negotiation process that results in agreements where the justification for the overall package and its individual elements often appears disconnected from concrete societal goals, making it opaque to the public. These agreements tend to reflect a "quid pro quo" approach rather than an attempt to allocate society's investment funds in a way that maximises overall value. Once established, these agreements are complicated to modify, regardless of the strength of factual arguments presented" [Have and Gudmundsson, 2024, translated].* This disconnect from strategic, societal objectives

results in infrastructure agreements driven more by political bargaining than long-term planning principles.

As a result, even when strong evidence supports adjustments or alternative strategies, the strict nature of these agreements makes them challenging to change.

Transport planning is often reactive rather than proactive in promoting sustainable development. This is evident in investment plans for transport infrastructure that primarily respond to projected future demand rather than addressing the need for sustainable mobility. For instance "Investeringsplan 2030" noted: *"It is, therefore, important to plan infrastructure investments leading up to 2030 in a way that supports growth opportunities and addresses the key challenges facing the infrastructure in the coming years. Otherwise, congestion will increase, and mobility will decline" Regeringen [2019, p. 3, translated].*

The technocratic discourse of transport development frames road expansion as an unavoidable necessity, therefore proclaiming a reactive solution. This makes it challenging to advocate for a systemic change, where a proactive approach is deemed essential [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10].

Decision-makers have historically prioritised road projects over investments in sustainable transport modes, reinforcing car-dependency rather than facilitating a shift toward more sustainable alternatives [Makarova et al., 2017, p. 757].

The Danish planning system has been criticised for prioritising infrastructure expansion over efforts to change mobility behaviour [Guldberg, 2025]. This concern is reflected in recent legislative proposals imposing stricter limitations on such initiatives. As Nicolaisen highlights, *"We are moving in the opposite direction because a proposal for a revised Road Act has now been put forward, [...] From now on, such projects [changing mobility behaviour] will no longer be allowed. Road closures will only be permitted if the ÅDT (Annual Average Daily Traffic) is at least 8000. One-way street conversions will not be allowed. Speed limits cannot be lowered. As a result, much of the plan [Aarhus green mobility plan] I have developed for Aarhus Municipality, 90% of the projects currently in the pipeline for Copenhagen Municipality, and a significant portion of those in Odense Municipality will no longer be feasible" Nicolaisen [2025, translated].*

The dominant discourse further legitimises road expansion by linking it to national economic competitiveness and productivity. However, this discourse overlooks the long-term economic costs associated with congestion, environmental degradation, and public health impacts. Curtis and Low elaborates: *"An unbalanced focus on the simple problem of impeded mobility - traffic congestion - deflects attention from more important challenges facing transport in the twenty-first century" [Curtis and Low, 2016 - 2012, p. 13].* The narrow focus on economic efficiency has been criticised for sidelining alternative approaches [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10].

the engineering storyline

follows the predict-and-provide approach, where future transport demand is forecasted based on past trends, and infrastructure is expanded accordingly. It assumes unrestricted mobility as the ideal and frames congestion as a problem that must be eliminated, primarily for car users. This perspective assumes that technological advancements, such as cleaner fuels and intelligent traffic management, will ultimately resolve transport challenges.

the economic storyline

views travel as a fundamental right that improves social and economic opportunities. It assumes that private corporations and market forces are best suited to meet travel demands and that investments in transport infrastructure drive economic growth. Roads are essential to facilitate mobility, support freight transport and promote consumer satisfaction. This storyline highlights personal choice, associating car use with freedom, status, and modern lifestyles.

the town storyline

is shaped by engineering and economic storylines, emphasising reduced travel times within urban areas. It assumes that public transport cannot efficiently serve low-density areas, justifying road investments as a means to improve accessibility. There is also an emphasis on locational equity, arguing that suburban and outer urban areas require better road connections. Minor storylines include the importance of road links to central business districts, the need for transport corridors to guide urban growth, and the continuation of highway construction due to historical land reservations.

3.2 Emerging mobility discourse

In recent decades, a new mobility discourse has emerged, emphasising sustainability, technological innovation, and user-centred solutions in transport planning. Mobility planning now focuses more on accessibility and less on car use, with greater attention to public space [Sietchiping et al., 2020, p. 92]. The new paradigm emphasises minimising the necessity for travel, promoting shifts to walking, cycling, and public transport, and aligning land use with transport planning to shorten trip distances and enhance urban accessibility [Banister, 2008, p. 75]. This discourse contrasts with the traditional transport discourse, which has focused mainly on infrastructure expansion, traffic management, and economic calculations based on cost-benefit analyses, as described in the previous section 3.1 [Isaksson, 2023, p. 18]. The sustainability discourse has developed as a response to the environmental and social challenges of the car-centred mobility planning, advocating for a radical transformation of the transport sector to reduce CO$_2$ emissions, minimise dependence on fossil fuels, and promote more inclusive and equitable mobility [Curtis and Low, 2016, p. 105]. Because of this, the theoretical understanding of mobility planning has undergone significant changes, moving from a primary focus on technical efficiency to a broader consideration of sustainability, urban quality, public spaces, and social impacts [Shibayama and Emberger, 2023, p. 1].

Another significant difference between the new and traditional paradigm is the shift from mobility to accessibility. As previously mentioned, transport planning was traditionally based on a predict-and-provide approach, where infrastructure was expanded to accommodate an assumed future demand [Witzell, 2021, pp. 3-9]. In contrast, the new discourse advocates for a predict-and-prevent approach, also known as a decide-and-provide approach, which seeks to reduce travel demand through urban planning, digitalisation, and increased use of alternative transport modes [Witzell, 2021, pp. 3-9]. Instead of merely responding to existing travel behaviours and patterns, it shapes urban environments to meet evolving needs. Within the sustainable mobility discourse, one storyline was identified by Curtis and Low, which conflicts with the technocratic discourse [Curtis and Low, 2016, pp. 104-105].

Over time, people have become more aware of the issues caused by relying too much on cars. As a result, there has been a theoreitcal change toward more sustainable ways to move. Planners envision a more sustainable and resilient future [WSP Global, 2025, p. 5][Rye et al., 2024, p. 4][Lyons and Davidson, 2016, pp. 105-114]. The sustainable mobility paradigm has yet to be fully integrated into practice, as proclaimed by the following quote: *"Today, there is currently no direct mechanism for local and city governments to contribute to the implementation of the New Urban Agenda. However, notions about cities have evolved radically in policy discourses over the last two decades" Sietchiping et al. [2020, p. 92].* This highlights a gap between the theoretical understanding of mobility planning and decision-making in practice.

This project distinguishes between transport and mobility planning as a response to previous research and as part of recognising the new discourse. The distinction between transport and mobility planning lies in their scope, which again refers to the discourse present in each approach: *"Transportation ("across-carry" in Latin) describes the act of moving some-thing or someone, whereas mobility ("capable of movement") describes the ability of a person to move or be moved. In other words, you do transportation, and mobility is something you have" McKay [2019].* This shift is part of the new mobilities paradigm, which emphasises movement as a fundamental aspect of social life, spatial equality and sustainability rather than merely a technical problem to be solved [Sheller and Urry, 2006, pp. 207-214][Sheller and Urry, 2016, pp. 11-12]. The discourse of the new mobilities paradigm challenges traditional transport research by highlighting that travel time is not necessarily dead time, as conventional models assume [Sheller and Urry, 2006, pp. 207-214].

Despite the growing political and academic recognition of the new mobility discourse, significant barriers remain in its implementation. One of the primary challenges is resistance from established interests and institutions embedded in the existing transport system [Doughty and Murray, 2016, pp. 309-310]. The engineering and economic perspectives of transportation have led to a path dependence, where previous investments in road networks and car-centric infrastructure continue to shape planning priorities and limit the potential for transitioning to more sustainable solutions [Isaksson, 2023, pp. 18, 32-34].

The dependence on cars and the increased decentralisation of cities have undeniably led to a significant decline in walking, cycling, and public transport [Banister, 2008, p. 73]. The traditional view of travel as a cost to minimise is undergoing a fundamental shift as more people begin to question the broader societal impacts of their transport choices [Rye et al., 2024, p. 2]. Planners increasingly recognise the limitations of existing planning approaches in addressing the climate crisis, making it a cen-

tral focus of the political agenda. While practice may not have dramatically changed yet, the understanding of mobility is continuously evolving [Andersen et al., 2024, pp. 4-6].

3.3   The challenge of change

The mobility discourses have advanced significantly in theory, yet, as Haustein and Kroesen illustrates, the goal has not been achieved. Despite professional awareness of mobility, the number of cars continues to rise *"even though cities have changed their perspective in planning towards more sustainable alternatives, the number of cars still rises" [Haustein and Kroesen, 2022, pp. 3-4].*

This persistent growth in car use is not merely a consequence of individual choices but is deeply rooted in structural dependencies. These interdependencies reinforce the dominance of cars, making systemic change toward sustainable mobility particularly challenging. Research indicates that transport planning remains influenced by institutionalised routines and practices that create "lock-in" effects: *"Previous research illustrates how transport planning practices are performed by routinised practices embedded in power relations and discourses that hold them in place despite attempts to change them. The concept of path dependence can be used to understand better how such factors produce "lock-in" pathways of planning decisions" [Hrelja and Rye, 2023, pp. 447-448].* Furthermore, Path dependency in transport planning is influenced by institutionalisation, infrastructural limitations, and dominant discourses that frame mobility choices [Pritchard, 2022b, p. 1489]. These interrelated factors make it difficult to transition away from car-centric urban planning. path dependence

is crucial in understanding the challenges of transitioning to sustainable mobility. Cars are deeply intertwined with various factors in society, including habits, cultural norms, businesses, car-dealerships, taxation, and regulations, that sustain their dominance and complicate efforts for change. As mentioned by Newman and Kenworthy [2015a]: *"The development of auto-mobile dependence in cities is a complex process, enacted over decades of land-use and infrastructure development linked to the dominant economic waves of innovation" [Newman and Kenworthy, 2015a, p. 2].*

Car-oriented planning has led to self-reinforcing effects in infrastructure investments [Rodrigue, 2025]. Decades of investment in road networks have prioritised cars over other transport modes, making it challenging to shift mobility patterns [Esbjørn, 2022; Autrup, 2025]. Resistance to change also stems from sunk costs, as authorities often have financial stakes, with potential gains or losses influencing their decisions to continue the current trajectory [Carson and Carson, 2014, p. 463]. Furthermore, political decision-making often prioritises short-term economic growth over longterm strategic objectives [Have and Gudmundsson, 2024] [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. However, implementing such a new paradigm is challenging, as it includes overcoming embedded behaviours, sunk costs and aligning policy frameworks with long-term environmental objectives [Rodrigue, 2025]

Although these barriers are significant, research suggests that a national mobility strategy could help redefine the transport system in Denmark. Such a strategy should integrate sustainable alternatives while addressing the economic, social, and infrastructural challenges that hinder a transition toward more sustainable mobility. However, implementing a

new mobility paradigm is not without its difficulties. Behavioural change takes time, and structural barriers must be addressed [Freudendal-Pedersen et al., 2023, p. 1].

3.4   Institutional barriers and path-dependence in mobility planning

Institutional barriers and path dependence are crucial in maintaining the dominant transport planning paradigm, making it difficult to implement sustainable alternatives.

The concept of path dependence explains how past decisions and investments create self-reinforcing mechanisms that lock in specific development trajectories. As Imran and Pearce argue, *"Path dependence explains the process of how a particular solution becomes stable over time in an institutional context" [Imran and Pearce, 2015, pp. 393-394].* Once an investment in a specific mobility trajectory, such as large-scale road infrastructure, generates structural constraints, it discourages a shift towards alternative transport models. This is particularly evident in the case of sunk costs associated with infrastructure investments, where previous road network expenses make further public transit investments politically and economically challenging. As Carson and Carson notes, *"The scapes can have a strong tendency to path dependence and lock-in, as previous investments (particularly in built infrastructure and technology) often involve large sunk costs which may discourage new investments" Carson and Carson [2014, p. 463].* This lock-in extends beyond infrastructure to policies, laws, and daily habits. Policies facilitating car use create *"[...] self-reinforcing feedback loops and ultimately a lock-in of mobility trajectories that*

may require substantial external shocks or radical innovations to enable new path creation" [Carson and Carson, 2014, p. 463]. The dominance of car-based transport is further reinforced by political decision-making structures, where short-term electoral cycles make it difficult for politicians to prioritise long-term systemic change.

Beyond political resistance, institutional landscape plays a crucial role in reinforcing car-dependency in transport planning. The legal structures are designed to make incremental adjustments rather than radical systemic change. Even with political support, alternatives struggle to gain traction due to institutions. This is because policies, once embedded in legal frameworks, establish clear rules for what is possible, what is restricted, and which actions are encouraged or restricted. *"Policies, grounded in law and backed by the coercive power of the state, signal to actors what has to be done, what cannot be done, and what activities will be associated with particular rewards and penalties. Most of these policies are also remarkably durable" [Pierson, 1997, p. 25].* This means that key decision-makers operate within established institutional structures that often serve to protect their interests, thereby reinforcing the status quo.

Institutionalisation in transport planning extends beyond formal structures and policies to include the shared language and storylines that shape decision-making processes. As Phillips et al. notes, *"institutionalisation occurs as actors interact and come to accept shared definitions of reality, and it is through linguistic processes that definitions of reality are constituted" Phillips et al. [2004, p. 635].* This highlights the central role of dominant discourses in sustaining existing transport paradigms, as institutions continuously reproduce the same

logic in their policy-making. The self-reinforcing nature of these discourses maintains existing power structures, limiting the potential for transformative change.

Discourses play a crucial role in enabling and constraining institutional change by "ruling in" specific ways of talking about a topic while simultaneously sidelining, limiting and restricting other ways of constructing knowledge [Phillips et al., 2004, p. 636]. The institutionalised discourse of technocratic transport planning exemplifies this dynamic. It often prioritises technological advancements as the key solution to mobility challenges, overshadowing more radical changes in travel behaviour and land-use planning. As Curtis and Low explains, *"[...] the assumption (often implicit) that transport problems will be solved by future technological advances: non-polluting fuels, low-energy vehicles, advanced traffic management software, and so forth" Curtis and Low [2016, p. 104],* illustrates how faith in technology can delay more profound structural changes in mobility planning. This logic fits with the interests of industries and policymakers that favour car use. As Niskanen et al. states: *"Powerful coalitions can shape the political context in which transport policy is made" Niskanen et al. [2023, p. 7].* In transport, this often results in policies favouring car-centric solutions and upholding existing systems.

Beyond formal institutional barriers, informal institutional conditions such as discursive frameworks, organisational culture and planning routines significantly influence decision-making processes in transport planning. Previous research suggests that these informal elements shape what happens (and what does not happen) in practice [Sørensen and Isaksson, 2021, p. 25]. Institutionalisation, as Phillips et al. describes, is the *"social process by which*

individuals come to accept a shared definition of social reality" Phillips et al. [2004, p. 638]. This process results in a stabilisation of dominant discourses, reinforcing historical solutions and generating path dependent characteristics [Imran and Pearce, 2015, p. 395]. Such discursive stability can lead to lock-in effects, where ideas, practices, and networks become strict and embedded, making structural change increasingly difficult [Carson and Carson, 2014, p. 462]. These deeply embedded institutional structures influence the ability to adopt the new mobility discourse and can either facilitate or hinder the transition towards more sustainable transport models.

The power of a discourse to produce lasting institutional structures depends on its internal coherence, alignment with broader discourses, and the presence or absence of competing discourses [Phillips et al., 2004, p. 645]. When other dominant discourses support a given discourse, it reinforces existing institutions and their self-regulating mechanisms. This dynamic is particularly evident in the discourse surrounding sustainable transport. While the concept of sustainable development has facilitated the formation of a global discourse-coalition in environmental politics, its broad and often vague storyline allows for diverse interpretations, making it both an inclusive and unstable foundation for radical change [Hajer, 1995a, p. 14].

Moreover, dominant discourses of mobility have become institutionalised in such a way that they obscure the possibility of alternative discourses. As Doughty and Murray notes: *"Dominant discourses of mobility claim scientific truth as embedded in the powerful academic traditions of engineering and economics" Doughty and Murray [2016, p. 308].* These "regimes of truth" establish particular ways of

thinking about transport and mobility, selectively emphasising certain facts while sidelining others. This framing effect reinforces historical planning approaches and contributes to the persistence of car-centric transport systems.

From a philosophy of science perspective, this reflects an epistemological problem concerning valid transport planning and policy knowledge. Epistemology concerns knowledge's nature, scope, and justification and is crucial in understanding how certain mobility paradigms gain dominance while others remain marginalised. As Hajer argues, environmental conflicts have evolved into discursive struggles, where the primary issue is not whether a crisis exists but how it is represented and understood [Hajer, 1995a, p. 14].

In particular, transport planning has historically relied on positivist and quantitative methodologies, privileging economic modelling, forecasting, and cost-benefit analyses as the primary sources of knowledge [Witzell, 2021, pp. 48-49]. These dominant practices define what is considered relevant, valid, and true knowledge, excluding alternative approaches that challenge the underlying assumptions of car-centric planning. The rejection of alternative methods, exemplifies how embedded epistemological norms limit transformative change in mobility planning [Witzell, 2021, pp. 48-49]. Dominant mobility discourses, shaped by positivist epistemologies, dictate what is considered valid transport knowledge, reinforcing car-centric planning. This exclusion of alternative paradigms limits transformative change and sustains the current system.

Despite these deeply ingrained barriers, change is possible if the right institutional mechanisms are implemented to challenge path dependence. One approach is to intro-

duce external shocks or disruptive innovations that make it necessary for decision-makers to reconsider long-standing policies. Carson and Carson suggest that *"substantial external shocks or radical innovations"* may be required to break the self-reinforcing feedback loops that sustain the dependency of cars [Carson and Carson, 2014, p. 463]. Aligning institutional reforms with broader economic and environmental goals helps overcome some of the barriers to change. Comparative research shows that strong national policy frameworks and coordinated governance structures are essential for enabling transitions toward sustainable mobility. Without these structural changes, efforts to promote sustainable mobility may fit into the existing transport system.

partial conclusion

As the discourse on sustainable mobility gains traction, the demand for a national mobility strategy has become increasingly central. Many stakeholders advocate for a clear national framework, questioning why Denmark has yet to establish such a strategy when academic literature demonstrate its benefits. However, the debate extends beyond mere policy formulation to fundamental epistemological and institutional challenges, raising questions about what is considered valid knowledge in transport planning and how deeply embedded paradigms influence decision-making [Witzell, 2021, pp. 48-49].

The challenge lies in creating a strategy and implementing it within an institutional landscape shaped by embedded technocratic discourses [Doughty and Murray, 2016, pp. 308-309]. The transition from a predict-and-provide model, which has dominated mobility planning for decades, to a sustainable and accessibility-driven paradigm, requires structural change. However, institutions tend to resist radical shifts, preferring incremental adjustments that do not disrupt established power dynamics [Imran and Pearce, 2015, p. 395]. This raises the fundamental question: Can Denmark introduce a national mobility strategy, or is the very difficulty of doing so evidence of the structural barriers that must first be addressed?

The very fact that establishing a national mobility strategy is challenging suggests that underlying institutional constraints must be addressed before radical change can occur. Research highlights that even when new mobility discourses gain theoretical legitimacy, implementation remains constrained by structural dependencies and political decisions [Hrelja and Rye, 2023, pp. 447-448]. In this context, disruption - whether through political intervention, external crises, or bottom-up pressures - may be necessary to break the cycle of path dependence and institutional lock-in [Carson and Carson, 2014, p. 463].

Suppose Denmark fails to align its mobility planning with long-term sustainability goals. In that case, it risks failing to transition and falling into symbolic policy-making, where sustainability goals are acknowledged but remain sidelined to economic and infrastructure priorities [Witzell, 2021, pp. 2-10]. Without addressing these institutional barriers, even a well-formulated national strategy risks being absorbed into existing paradigms, preventing the fundamental shift needed for a sustainable mobility future [Hrelja and Rye, 2023, pp. 447-448].

04
theoretical framework

This chapter provides the theoretical foundation for examining the debate, outlining the concepts and considerations that shape the discursive landscape of mobility planning in Denmark.

4.1 Defining discourse theory

Discourse is a central concept in the study of social reality, shaping how knowledge, power, and social structures are constructed and reinforced. The theoretical exploration of discourse in this project has been deeply influenced by researchers such as Michel Foucault, Norman Fairclough, and Maarten Hajer, each contributing to the understanding of how discourses operate within society and policy-making [Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 253][Jensen et al., 2020, pp. 172-173][Hajer and Versteeg, 2019, pp. 122-126].

Discourse is broadly defined as a set of ideas, concepts, and practices that shape how social and physical phenomena are understood and acted upon [Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 175]. In other words, language both influences and reflects societal power dynamics, norms, and institutions. This is also highlighted in the following quote: *"Discourse analysis sees language as a form of social practice and focuses on the relationship between language use and the wider social/cultural structures" Jensen et al. [2020, p. 172].* According to Foucault, discourse is more than just language; it constitutes knowledge and social practices that define what is considered *"truth"* within a given social context [Doughty and Murray, 2016, p. 304]. Discourse is not merely descriptive but also performative, producing reality rather than simply reflecting it: *"A discourse is not then simply a "way of seeing"; it is always embedded in social practices which reproduce that way of seeing as the "truth" of the discourse" Knights and Morgan [1991, p. 253].* Therefore, *"discourse analysis is the method of finding and illuminating that pattern, its mechanisms and its political effects" Hajer [2009, p. 60].* Discourse is always embedded in social practice,

influencing and being influenced by power dynamics. For example, Foucault argues that discourses construct categories such as madness or criminality - once established, they become self-reproducing through institutions and social norms [Knights and Morgan, 1991, p. 253]. Similarly, transport discourses shape the way mobility is conceptualised, prioritising certain modes of transport while marginalising others.

Discourses are not static, they evolve through interactions between actors and institutions. As Hajer argues, storylines play a crucial role in shaping discourse by providing stories that structure complex problems into digestible formats [Imran and Pearce, 2015, p. 395] [Hajer, 1993, pp. 56 & 63]. This is particularly relevant in transport planning, where certain storylines, such as "sustainable mobility", can justify specific interventions while sidelining others. The same applies to the traditional technocratic discourse, where stories such as the economic storyline justify interventions in terms of economic growth. In this context, storylines function as an argumentation embedded within policy documents, shaping how transport problems and solutions are framed and legitimised [Imran and Pearce, 2015, p. 395]. The discourse analysis will adopt Hajer's framework as visualised on the following page.

storyline

A storyline is a simple way of telling a story that helps make sense of complex issues by connecting different ideas and experiences [Hajer, 1993, p. 56]. Storylines serve to reduce discursive complexity and make political issues more manageable [Hajer, 1993, p. 63]. As more actors adopt the same storyline, it becomes a shared reference point, a way of framing the issue that feels familiar [Hajer, 1993, p. 63]. In practice, they serve as a medium for larger discourses, facilitating communication and shared understanding [Hajer, 2006, p. 69].

discourse coalition

A discourse-coalition is formed when different actors start using the same storylines to talk about a shared issue [Hajer, 1993, p. 65]. Unlike traditional political alliances, discourse-coalitions are rooted not in shared interests, but in shared language and stories, which can even reshape actors' perceived interests [Hajer, 1993, p. 66]. They emerge over time as actors begin to consistently use particular storylines within specific institutional or political contexts [Hajer, 2006, p. 70].

discourse institutionalisation

Discourse institutionalisation occurs when a discourse becomes embedded in the institutional landscape, such as regulatory frameworks or measurement systems [Hajer, 2006, p. 70]. Discourses are shaping which institutions are dominant, through the traction of storylines and discourse-coalitions. Yet, institutions also reinforce certain discourses over time [Hajer, 1993, p. 48]. Thus, discourse analysis reveals how power is structured within institutions and how political change unfolds through discursive dynamics [Fischer and Forester, 1993, p. 264]. When a particular discourse becomes dominant, it shapes how actors discuss and address a specific issue [Hajer, 1995b, p. 45] [Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 177].

4.2 Understanding power through discourse

Power is not merely hierarchical and top-down; in discourse, it shapes how society and politics are understood. Knowledge, legitimate speech, and accepted truth constitute power in discourse analysis. Doughty and Murray argue, *"dominant discourses of mobility claim scientific truth as embedded in the powerful academic traditions of engineering and economics. These dominant discourses mobilise certain "regimes of truth", which establish particular ways of thinking about mobilities that claim to unilaterally make sense of the world we live in" Doughty and Murray [2016, p. 308].* This implies that power is embedded in discourse, influencing how issues are framed and which perspectives gain authority. The control of discourse determines not only what can be said, but also which interpretations are seen as valid or legitimate. Hajer refers to the concept "mobilisation of bias", highlighting how political organisation inherently favours specific conflicts: *"All forms of political organization have a bias in favour of the exploitation of some kinds of conflict and the suppression of others, because organization is the mobilization of bias" Hajer [1995b, p. 43].* In other words, discourse does not merely reflect power relations but actively constitutes them. This is evident in policy debates, where dominant discourses shape public perception and define the scope of possible interventions.

The way mobility problems are framed, whether in terms of climate, efficiency, or economic growth, fundamentally shapes policy development and legitimises decision-making. Policy and planning documents articulate visions, priorities, and concerns about the future, outlining the frameworks that guide decision-making. These strategies reflect the dominant

discourses policymakers and planners employ, shaping perspectives through storylines that justify choices and set expectations. In doing so, they influence how issues are framed and how positions evolve over time [Brandtner et al., 2016, p. 5]. Pälli et al. suggest that planning strategies embed storylines that can either reinforce or challenge established institutional discourses [Brandtner et al., 2016, p. 5]. This idea is further expanded by Brandtner et al., who argue that *"[...] the authors of strategy documents reveal which coalitions they deem relevant for the city's future" Brandtner et al. [2016, p. 6].*

According to van Dijk, a key mechanism in this process is the control of discourse production itself. The ability to shape discourse is not equally distributed but is closely tied to power structures. Those in positions of power control what is said and who has the authority to speak and in what contexts. Access to discourse is differentiated; the more powerful an individual or group is, the more opportunities they have to participate in and shape various forms of communication: *"They control formal dialogues with subordinates, chair meetings, issue commands or laws, write (or have written) many types of reports, books, instructions, stories or various mass media discourses" van Dijk [2008, p. 31].*

In contrast, those with less power often face barriers to participation, limiting their ability to challenge dominant storylines. In extreme cases, the most marginalised individuals are left without a platform, forced into silence when more powerful actors set the terms of discourse [van Dijk, 2008, p. 31]. This uneven distribution of discursive power reinforces existing hierarchies, as the ability to define *"truth"* and legitimate knowledge remains concentrated among those who already hold insti-

tutional and structural influence. As a result, discourse is not only a medium of communication but also a mechanism of social control, determining whose perspectives are systematically excluded. For example, congestion is framed primarily as an issue of traffic flow and efficiency. In that case, the proposed solutions will focus on aspects such as road expansion and optimisation of technology. If the dominant discourse frames congestion as an environmental and public health crisis, policy solutions might prioritise public transport, cycling infrastructure, and car-free zones. These competing discourses shape public perception and determine which interventions are deemed politically feasible [Hajer et al., 2003, p. 103]. Control over discourse is not solely exercised by those in formal positions of authority.

While some actors have direct control over political, economic, and institutional decision-making, other stakeholders plays a crucial yet less obvious role in shaping public perception and discourse: the symbolic elites. These symbolic elites include journalists, writers, artists, academics, and influencers, who do not necessarily hold direct political or economic power but exert influence through their ability to shape stories, cultural norms, and public understanding of social and political issues [van Dijk, 2008, p. 32]. Their power lies in their ability to define what is talked about, how it is framed, and whose voices are included or excluded from public debate. As van Dijk argue, *"power is directly exercised and expressed through differential access to various genres, contents, and styles of discourse" van Dijk [2008, pp. 31-32].* The symbolic elites actively shape what is considered socially and politically relevant by influencing what information is shared with the public, how issues are framed, and which perspectives gain legitimacy. Their influence extends beyond merely producing dis-

course. Their power is ideological, influencing how people think and interpret reality, often in ways that reinforce existing power structures [van Dijk, 2008, p. 32]. While political actors enforce laws and policies through institutional power, symbolic elites shape public understanding by influencing ideas and stories. These two forms of power work together to maintain social hierarchies, as those who control discourse, whether through political authority or cultural influence, shape the scope of public debate and knowledge.

"The exercise and maintenance of social power presupposes an ideological framework ... mainly acquired, confirmed, or changed through communication and discourse" van Dijk [2008, p. 27]. This reinforces the idea that power is not merely about domination and enforcing rules but also about producing meaning, an essential aspect of social reality. The production of a shared belief and shared meaning is defined as a necessary perspective on discursive power: *"The capture of the collective imagination is undoubtedly one of the most fundamental ways in which power is exercised. It is what Steven Lukes referred to as the third dimension of power influencing people's wishes and thoughts" Hajer and Versteeg [2019, p. 128].* This understanding of power as the shaping of meaning and shared beliefs leads to a crucial consideration: while discourses play a fundamental role in structuring perception, they do not exert power independently. Instead, their influence depends on how they are adopted and employed in political interactions. Power in discourse emerges through processes of mutual positioning, where language is used to construct, transform, and routinise political conflicts. Additionally: *"Whether they like it or not, actors are positioned by the language of nature development, either unintentionally or actively" Hajer et al. [2003, p. 107].*

4.3   Critical discourse analysis

Critical discourse analysis (CDA) is one approach within the field of discourse analysis, and will be the foundation for this project. CDA is a research approach that examines how language is used to establish, maintain, and challenge power relations in society. It focuses on how discourse both reflects and shapes social structures, particularly about power, dominance, and inequality by examining how language contributes to their reproduction [van Dijk, 2008, pp. 85-86]. A key principle in CDA is the understanding that texts are not isolated but are shaped by social structures and power relations. Texts often contain traces of competing discourses and ideologies [Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 11].

As Cummings et al. states, *"one aspect of this ordering is dominance: some ways of making meaning are dominant or mainstream in a particular order of discourse, others are marginal, or oppositional, or alternative" Cummings et al. [2017, p. 729].* This means that some ways of communicating ideas hold more influence, while others are pushed to the side or challenge the dominant perspective. Understanding these power dynamics is key in this theory, as it helps reveal how different voices are included, excluded, or positioned within discourse [Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, pp. 176-177]. CDA, therefore, provides a framework for critically examining how power is exercised through language, both in reinforcing authority and enabling resistance. Language does not inherently produce power but serves as a tool through which power can be exercised, challenged, or undermined the power and authority.

Discourse structures can either reinforce existing power relations or challenge them, making CDA a valuable tool for analysing political and social struggles [Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 11].

CDA operates on the assumption that all discourse is historically situated, meaning that language must be understood concerning the broader socio-political and ideological context in which it is produced and interpreted [Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 15]. This highlights how discourse analysis must consider factors beyond the text, such as culture, ideology, and power structures, to comprehensively understand social reality [Phillips et al., 2004, p. 637]. Because CDA is explicitly concerned with social justice and equality, it often aligns itself with marginalised or dominated groups, seeking to reveal how discourse contributes to suppressing those groups, while also identifying possibilities for changing the storylines [van Dijk, 2008, p. 86]. The goal is not merely to describe discourse structures but to explain their role in shaping social relations and to contribute to social change by critically analysing the reproduction of power and dominance in various forms of communication [van Dijk, 2008, p. 86]. According to [Jensen et al., 2020], [Fairclough, 1989] and [Fairclough, 1992], conducting a critical discourse analysis involves a methodology of three main components:

Synthesis

text

Refers to language itself, including words, documents, and written materials. This involves examining how words, metaphors, pronouns, and sentence connections are used to shape meaning and influence interpretation [Fairclough, 1989, pp. 110-111]. This aspect focuses on a narrow, detailed level of analysis, which Fairclough also defines as the stage of "description".

discursive practice

Examines how texts are interpreted and used. This involves analysing which types of discourses are drawn upon and how they are combined in a given context. This stage explores how text and interaction are connected, which is also defined as the stage of "interpretation" [Fairclough, 1989, p. 26]. Understanding a text goes beyond the words themselves, it is also shaped by the recipients experiences, beliefs, cultural context, and prior understanding [Fairclough, 1989, p. 141].

social practice

Looks at the broader organisational and institutional settings in which discourse takes place: *"Language does not simply 'float' in society, but should be related to the particular practices in which it is employed" Hajer and Versteeg [2005, pp. 176-177].* This stage, also defined as "explanation", examines how interaction is shaped by the broader social context [Fairclough, 1989, p. 26]. It shows discourse as a social practice that both influences and is shaped by structures like power dynamics, cultural norms, and institutional systems. Discourse is never neutral, it reflects the conditions in which it emerges and can either reinforce existing power relations or challenge them [Fairclough, 1989, p. 163].

The theoretical framework presented in this chapter highlights the central role of discourse in shaping social reality, power structures, and policy development. Discourse is not merely a way of communicating ideas but a social practice that constructs knowledge, defines what is considered legitimate, and influences governance. As shown through the perspectives by Foucault, Fairclough, and Hajer, discourse is deeply embedded in institutional and political processes, shaping how mobility policies and mobility strategies are framed, justified, and implemented.

A key element of discourse is its connection to power. Power is not only exercised through formal institutions but also through symbolic control over language and stories. Dominant discourses establish frameworks for understanding problems and solutions, often reinforcing existing power relations while marginalising alternative perspectives. This is particularly evident in transport policy, where technocratic discourses have justified infrastructure investments and planning priorities. However, competing discourses, such as the sustainability mobility discourse, challenge the existing understandings of mobility.

CDA is a methodological approach that investigates how language shapes and maintains social hierarchies. It analyses discourse on multiple levels: the textual content, the discursive practice, and the social practice. Meaning, that CDA investigates the interaction between discourse and its recipients, but also the social structures that influence and are influenced by discourse. This perspective highlights how discourse not only reflects power but also actively contributes to its reinforcement or disruption [Fairclough, 1989].

This study employs Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) to examine how dominant discourses influence policy priorities and marginalise alternative perspectives within the debate of a national mobility strategy. CDA is particularly relevant as it reveals how language reinforces power structures, shaping which mobility strategies are seen as legitimate. In this study, CDA will be used to analyse how discursive framing influences policy-making and creates barriers to change, thereby highlighting institutional path dependencies and power structures. This framework enables the study to uncover why certain discourses dominate decision-making, how they sustain the status quo, and what discursive shifts are necessary for a sustainable national mobility strategy in Denmark. This makes critical discourse theory particularly relevant, as discourses shape perception and define what is seen as legitimate or possible. Their power lies not in isolation, but in how they are embedded in institutions and practices - what this study seeks to investigate.

05

operationalising discourse theory

The following chapter outlines the methodological approach and analytical framework of the thesis. This is essential for understanding how the project identifies and interprets the discursive landscape that influence policy-making and contribute to institutional barriers in Denmark.

5.1 Methods

The following section outlines the project's methods with reference to their application, defining characteristics, contribution to knowledge, and criteria for assessing quality.

5.1.1 Literature review

A literature review established the theoretical foundation and provided insights into discourses and rationales within mobility planning.

The literature review is a narrative review that offers a broad overview of existing research [Snyder, 2019, p. 335]. It aims to summarise prior studies, providing context for the current body of knowledge related to the project. This review helps clarify existing information, identify gaps, and highlight how previous researchers have approached and defined the problem at hand [Snyder, 2019, p. 335][Li and Zhang, 2022, p. 33].

The first stage of the literature review involved defining key topics to structure the chapter effectively: "traditional transport planning", "alternative mobility discourse", "institutional barriers", "path dependence in mobility planning", etc. Each group member then reviewed articles individually, highlighting potentially helpful content. Afterwards, the group collectively evaluated and reorganised their findings, identifying the most relevant knowledge for the literature review and the theoretical framework. It served as a control mechanism as the group collectively discussed selected articles to minimise individual interpretation bias. The literature review process has inherent limitations that can affect the project's validity.

A common strategy employed by the group to select relevant literature was the "snowballing" method. Snowballing ensures structure and consistency in the search. Returning to key sources that others are likely to reference enhances the search's reliability and reproducibility. This approach involved using the articles found in the initial search as starting points for further searches, potentially uncovering more valuable resources. Also, searching for recurring authors such as Greg Marsden, Maarten Hajer, David Bannister, etc., enhances the reliability of the work. This process also served as a means of evaluating the credibility of the authors, as multiple references to the same author in various sources helped build an understanding of their reputation and authority within the field. This limitation of sources based on academic value and scientifically recognised sources strengthens the validity and relevance within the academic context [Ferrari, 2015, p. 232].

A critical criterion for the article's inclusion was the literature's reputation, which was determined by its citation frequency within the academic community. This helped filter out sources lacking scientific recognition, ensuring the research was based on well-regarded studies [Ferrari, 2015, p. 232]. A specific limitation within the narrative review is the lack of transparency in the selection and evaluation of literature [Ferrari, 2015, p. 231]. This lack of transparency can decrease the reliability and reproducibility of the review. However, this limitation is a natural feature of a narrative review. Unlike a systematic review aiming for a more systemic and reproducible process, it must be accepted as it cannot be avoided. This narrative review aimed to build a broad foundation of knowledge. Although this approach sacrifices some detailed transparency in systematic reviews, it offers a broader scope [Snyder, 2019, p. 335].

Expert interviews was conducted to gather insights that would be difficult to obtain through other means [Brinkmann and Kvale, 2015, p. 201]. To ensure flexibility and in-depth exploration of various aspects of the research topic, all interviews will be semi-structured [Bryman, 2012, p. 212]. This format enables thorough discussions while minimising the risk of missing critical information. However, leading questions should be avoided, as they could influence the responses or result in misinterpretations by either party, challenging the validity. This is important to ensure that the answers reflect the interviewees' personal viewpoints rather than the researcher's expectations [Kallio et al., 2016, p. 2955]. Hence, clarifying questions during the interview process is essential to avoid ambiguity in the later interpretation phase.

The interviewees was selected based on their professional background, relevant work, and contributions to the project. These individuals were chosen for their expertise, authority, and relevance in the public debate concerning Denmark's mobility planning. The selected interviewees are prominent figures in the debate, experts in their field, central organisations or high-ranking individuals. This strengthens the validity as their knowledge is directly linked to the research problem.

These interviews helped clarify various perspectives on the research problem, supporting the data collection, which supports all steps in the analytical framework in section 5.2. The knowledge gained from conducted interviews is triangulated with knowledge found through the critical discourse method, increasing the validity of the discourse analysis. Interviews

also provide a deeper understanding of power dynamics and mobility views among stakeholders in section 7. The insights gained from the interviews will contribute to the project and will be further discussed in chapter 9. After the interviews are conducted, they will be transcribed and included in the appendix. These transcriptions will be used to extract direct quotes from the interviewees, which will then be translated from Danish to English.

It is crucial to recognise and account for the biases present in all interviewees, as these biases are not merely obstacles but essential components of the analysis. Given the stakeholders' diverse backgrounds, roles, and perspectives, each interviewee brings a unique construction of reality, influencing their understanding and approach to mobility planning. In this research, bias plays a central role in uncovering the various interests and differences among the stakeholders. Identifying and making these biases explicit will enable the examination of where the barriers to change lie and why specific mobility strategies or solutions have not yet gained traction. These biases are critical to understanding society's contrasting visions of mobility. They reveal why different stakeholders, such as planners, politicians, and business leaders, hold divergent views on the same issues, often resulting in disagreements and inefficiencies in decision-making.

Lone Johannsen

She works in KL's climate division with a focus on public transport and rural development, reflecting KL's support for local governments in delivering sustainable, regionally adapted solutions.

Søren Have

He leads the mobility department in CONCITO focusing on transport and infrastructure. His role in CONCITO makes him central to understanding the organisation's influence on transport policy and its perspective on sustainable mobility in Denmark.

Jacob Heinsen

He has for many years served as the Permanent Secretary of Transportministeriet since 2007. He has a Master's degree in Political Science. His role in Transportministeriet makes his statements central to understanding the ministry's discursive position on mobility.

Mads Olsen

He represents the parliamentary party, SF, as their spokesperson on transport and is a part of Transportudvalget. While Olsen represents SF and not a unified committee view, he provides valuable insight into the Transport Committee's internal handling of the national mobility strategy.

Peter Lübcke

He is a senior consultant in Dansk Erhverv's transport department, with a background in Transportministeriet and the European Commission, where he worked on aviation policy. As lead author of DE's draft national mobility strategy and green mobility plan, he offers key insights into the organisation's discourse and approach to addressing sectoral challenges.

Anders Rody Hansen

He is a senior consultant at DI Transport, representing the interests of 20,000 members. With a background in civil engineering and experience from Copenhagen Municipality, he brings practical insight into transport planning. As lead author of DI's draft mobility strategy, he provides a key perspective on their approach to mobility.

Lasse Schelde

He is political chief advisor at IDA, with a background in architecture and urban planning. Focused on climate-neutral mobility in Denmark and the Nordics, he offers key insights into the structural and institutional barriers shaping the transport sector.

Stakeholder mapping was used to identify the most central stakeholders based on power and interest in the mobility debate, both based on observations from the IDA conference and through a "Power vs. Interest Grid" (also known as Mendelow's Matrix), which classifies stakeholders according to their influence and level of engagement in the mobility debate. All organisations and stakeholders are referred to by their original Danish names, reflecting the fact that the primary audience of this project is Danish. Job titles, however, are rendered in English to minimise linguistic disruption and avoid confusion when shifting between Danish and English.

Freeman introduced the stakeholder theory and identified it as: *"A stakeholder in an organisation is (by definition) any group or individual who can affect or is affected by the achievement of the organisation's objectives" Freeman [2010, p. 46].* An essential aspect of stakeholder engagement is stakeholder mapping, which entails identifying individuals, organisations, or groups that have the potential to influence or be impacted by a project. This process enables implementers to determine who should be engaged, to what extent, and how their involvement can contribute to achieving project objectives. One commonly used tool for this purpose is Mendelow's Matrix, a well-established framework for stakeholder analysis [Mendelow, 1991]. Mendelow's Matrix categorises stakeholders based on their power (level of influence) and interest (level of engagement or concern) in a project. It consists of four quadrants:

- High Power, High Interest (Key players): These stakeholders have the most influence over the implementation process and must be actively engaged.
- High Power, Low Interest (Keep satisfied): These stakeholders have significant power but may not be deeply interested in the project.
- Low Power, High Interest (Keep informed): These stakeholders are interested but lack decision-making power. They should be regularly informed and consulted.
- Low Power, Low Interest (Monitor with minimal effort): These stakeholders have little influence and interest, requiring minimal but not ignored engagement.

It is essential to mention that stakeholder mapping is an ongoing process, as power and interest levels can shift over time. Some stakeholders may become more influential or engaged, while others lose relevance due to organisational changes or shifting priorities [Mendelow, 1991].

Initially, the group brainstormed a wide range of potential stakeholders, filtering out those with insufficient power or interest in the topic. Some were excluded simply because they had no clear stance on the issue. To ensure a structured approach, relevant sources supported stakeholder mapping, identifying stakeholders participating in hearings, opinion pieces, or public debates. Additionally, key stakeholders were identified based on insights gained at the IDA conference in January 2025, which the group attended. Several stakeholders at the conference expressed clear positions on the topic, making it relevant to include them.

Each stakeholder was then rated on a low, medium, or high scale in both power and interest categories, as visualised in Figure 5.1. This rating was based on observations, visibility in debates, and stakeholder engagement, aligning with Mendelow's Matrix while incorporating qualitative influence assessments. Stakeholders actively participating in discussions, hearings, or industry events were rated higher, while those with limited engagement were ranked lower.

After categorising stakeholders, the group focused on those with the highest combined power and interest scores, which were deemed the most central to the study. This approach ensured that the analysis prioritised stakeholders with influence and active involvement, making them key figures in the implementation process.

The group assessed power and interest, making it inherently subject to bias. To validate the selection of the most central stakeholders, the group contacted Lene Wagner Hartmann, chair of IDA Traffic & Urban Planning, to help identify any overlooked stakeholders or suggest adjustments to the selection process. She was chosen for this role because her team, IDA Transport, organised the conference that brought together numerous stakeholders interested in a national mobility plan. Hartmann circulated the email among other relevant internal stakeholders, highlighting that academic institutions play a crucial role. However, these institutions were ultimately excluded from the final stakeholder selection due to practical limitations and lack of visibility in the written debate, making a discourse analysis particularly challenging.

In addition to academic institutions, the advisory sector and one-sided interest organisations were also excluded, primarily due to time constraints and the project's scope. While these stakeholders are relevant to the research, their limited engagement in the public debate and the project's available time frame made their inclusion less feasible.
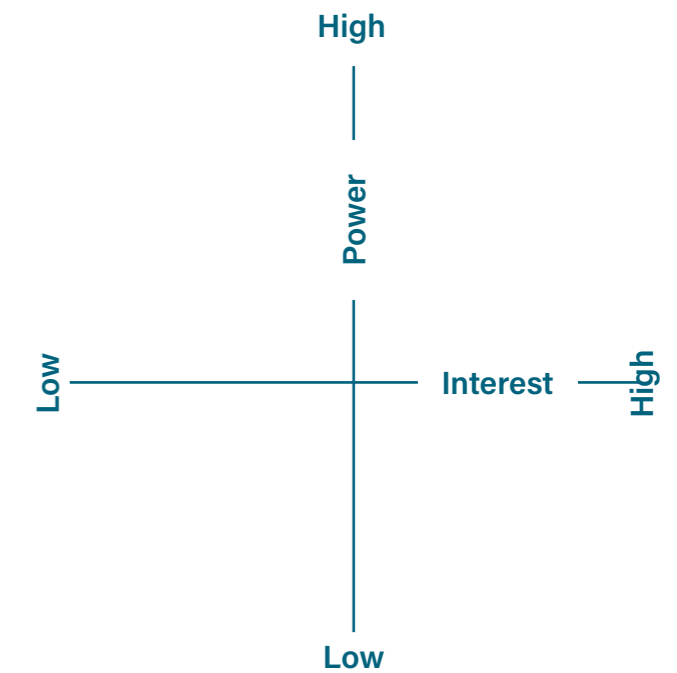

Figure 5.1 | Mendelow's Matrix for stakeholder mapping [Mendelow, 1991]. The matrix is the original unfilled version.

Basis for stakeholder mapping

The discourse method is used as a comprehensive lens through which it is possible to gather information about and establish an understanding of the complexities of different perspectives on mobility in Denmark. The analysis followed a systematic process to identify and examine various discursive elements in documents, articles, and LinkedIn posts. Using multiple types of texts enhances the discursive foundation and strengthens validity.

The discourse method delves into the language, thereby revealing power relations and personal viewpoints [Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 175][Hajer, 2009, pp. 59-60]. The discourse method provides valuable insights into the different understandings of mobility, ranging from technocratic to sustainable discourses. The documents incorporated are visualised in Figure 5.2. These are opinion pieces concerning critique of current and challenging perspectives on mobility in Denmark, documents related to understandings of mobility, and LinkedIn posts expressing personal or organisational mobility discourses.
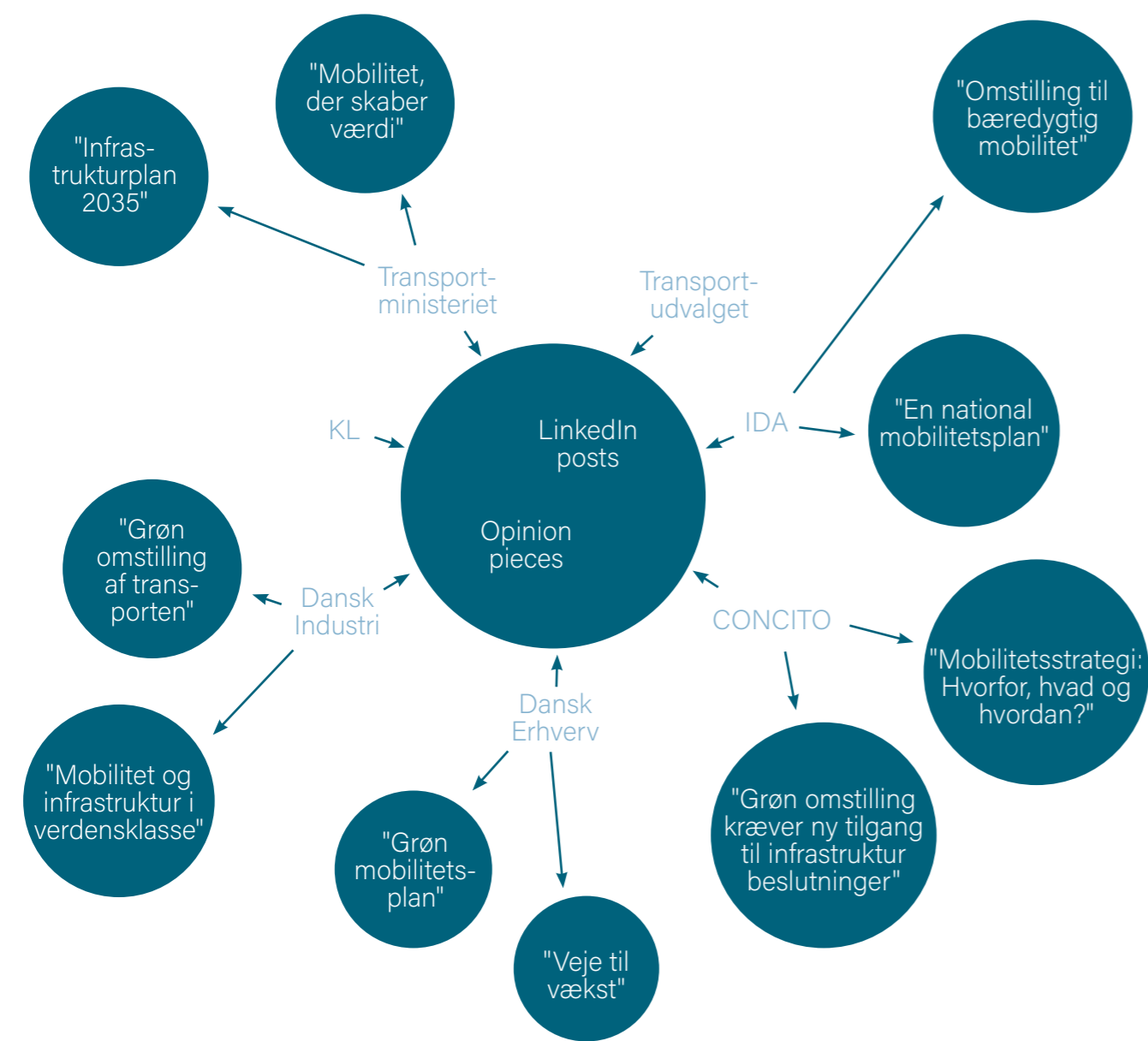

Figure 5.2

Literature in discourse analysis

The figure shows that the light blue text represent stakeholders, while the dark blue bubbles indicate the literature identified visualised with Danish titles. LinkedIn posts and opinion pieces are summarised as general themes shared across stakeholders, whereas documents linked to specific stakeholders are listed by title under each respective stakeholder.

Discourse analysis is inherently influenced by the researcher's resources, including their background knowledge, values, and perspectives [Fairclough, 1989, p. 142]. As Fairclough highlights: *"'members' resources' (MR) which people have in their heads and draw upon when they produce or interpret texts - including their knowledge of language, representations of the natural and social worlds they inhabit, values, beliefs, assumptions" Fairclough [1989, p. 24].* This concept is particularly relevant in this project, as the interpretation of texts will inevitably vary depending on the researchers' viewpoints. To ensure the validity and reliability of the analysis, this section will outline the methodology used, providing transparency in how the documents' mobility discourses were interpreted and weighed.

The objective was to develop coding schemes for each stakeholder. Each coding scheme was analysed and interpreted one at a time to assess the individual stakeholder's discourse. After selecting relevant statements from the documents, a systematic coding process was exercised based on a particular practice. The practice included identifying storylines from section 3 and colourcoding them according to the technocratic or sustainable orientation. Sustainable framing involves language emphasising the advantages of more sustainable approaches, behavioural change, and environmental concerns. On the other hand, technocratic framing includes statements that reinforce the technocratic discourse, such as presenting the expansion of motorways, electrification, or economic growth as solutions to mobility challenges. The coding process also looked for adjectives, tone, and other framing used to describe mobility.

This consistent structure in the coding process, ensures similarities in the analytical

framework, thereby increasing reliability. This approach ensures that what is being searched aligns with what is ultimately found, enhancing the accuracy and consistency of the analysis.

Figure 5.3 is an example of how the language was interpreted, focusing on the implicit or explicit messages. After analysing all the statements, each stakeholder was summarised based on its statements to capture more general storylines that illustrates the discourse of the stakeholder.

> *"Denmark is grinding to a halt in traffic jams and delayed trains. This benefits neither society nor businesses. We must use our determination to create a green and mobile future."*

Figure 5.3

Coding example

An example of the systematic coding process. Beige represents text that were promoting the technocratic discourse whereas green depict the sustainable discourse. The quote is from [Dansk Erhverv, 2021, p. 2].

In addition, a thematic coding process was carried out, in which all interview transcripts, as listed in the appendix, were organised according to a series of predefined themes. Each stakeholder was assigned a specific colour. This resulted in a structured sampling of quotes, making it easier to identify theme-specific positions for each stakeholder. The themes were defined based on recurring patterns across the interviews and on what was considered analytically relevant for the discourse analysis. These include, among others, understandings of mobility, institutionalisation and barriers, power relations, stakeholder roles, and discourse-coalitions. The thematic cod-

ing has enabled a systematic comparison of stakeholder statements during the analysis and provided a structured basis for using the interviews actively. This has been particularly useful in the discussion section, where quotes and perspectives are contrasted across stakeholders.

5.2 Analytical framework

This project combines Maarten Hajer's discourse concepts with Norman Fairclough's three-dimensional model of critical discourse analysis (CDA). Hajer provides the theoretical lens through which the research understands the discourses, while Fairclough offers the methodological approach to analyse how discourse operates across different levels of social practice. Together, these perspectives enable a comprehensive investigation of how discourses surrounding mobility in Denmark are constructed, circulated, and potentially institutionalised.

As visualised in Figure 5.4, the analytical approach in this project consists of three steps. The analytical framework is based on Fairclough's 3-dimensional model, which is operationalised by Hajer's theoretical concepts. Together, these three steps will form the basis for answering the research question: How do distinct discursive positions among central stakeholders shape the debate of national mobility planning in Denmark?

This project will adopt the philosophy of science, critical realism, which recognises that while the world exists independently of knowledge (ontological realism), understandings of the world are always subjective (epistemological relativism) [Egholm, 2014, pp. 125 & 138]

[Næss, 2015, pp. 1230 & 1235]. This dual perspective aligns with the project's aim to explore how discursive positions among central stakeholders construct competing understandings of mobility in Denmark, while acknowledging that structural constraints influence these discourses.

Most of the analysis focuses on how meaning is constructed through language, particularly concerning stakeholders' storylines and the formation of discourse-coalitions. The reasoning behind this focus is that: *"Discourse analysis takes as its starting point that language and speech are never neutral representations of the world. It is not the world that asks to be represented in a certain way, but the representation of it that makes the world specific" Egholm [2014, p. 153].* From a position of critical realism, the project recognises that all knowledge is shaped by context, perspective, and discourse. Stakeholders in the Danish mobility debate do not operate in a vacuum, but various social and structural conditions shape their discursive positions, including institutional frameworks, political power relations, economic interests, and broader contextual factors such as climate policy goals. Such conditions enable and constrain how stakeholders legitimise and establish certain storylines within the debate on national mobility planning [Næss, 2015, p. 1235]. This reflects a constructivist understanding of knowledge as context-dependent and shaped by social interaction and communicative practices [Næss, 2015, p. 1233][Egholm, 2014, p. 141]. Critical realism provides an essential bridge between social constructivism insights and institutional analysis: it allows for the study of meaning-making while also attending to the structural and political conditions that shape, and are shaped by, discourse [Jespersen, 2021, p. 189]. In particular, this is essential for address-

ing Sub-question 4, which investigates how discursive positions reveal barriers to implementing a national mobility strategy. A purely social constructivist perspective would be insufficient here, as it would overlook the power of institutional structures, economic interests, and political path dependencies.

"The view of human nature in [...] critical realism is that humans are subject to structural conditions in which the individual forms part of the collective. Individual intentions are not individual, but shaped by the inner logic of the structures. The individual barely sees or is aware of the inner logic, [...] a relationship in which the individual is contextualised as a user of the structures s/he both is shaped by and continuously forms through his/her use of them" [Egholm, 2014, pp. 126-127]. By adopting a critical realist perspective, the project recognises that discourses are not merely choices of language, but reacts to, broader structures that stakeholders both partially reproduce and partially seek to challenge. Fairclough argues that critical realism insists that *"social structures are by no means reducible to meaning and meaningful structures" Reed [2015].* Although discursive practices constitute social reality, they interact with other non-discursive structures such as institutions [Reed, 2015, p. 24]. This enables an analysis of how discourse constructs meaning, becomes institutionally embedded, and ultimately contributes to reproducing or challenging the status quo.

Step 1: Analysis of textual practice

Dansk Erhverv

CONCITO

IDA

KL

Dansk Industri

Transportudvalget

Transportministeriet

Common stories?

Step 2: Analysis of discursive practice

Step 3: Discussion of social practice
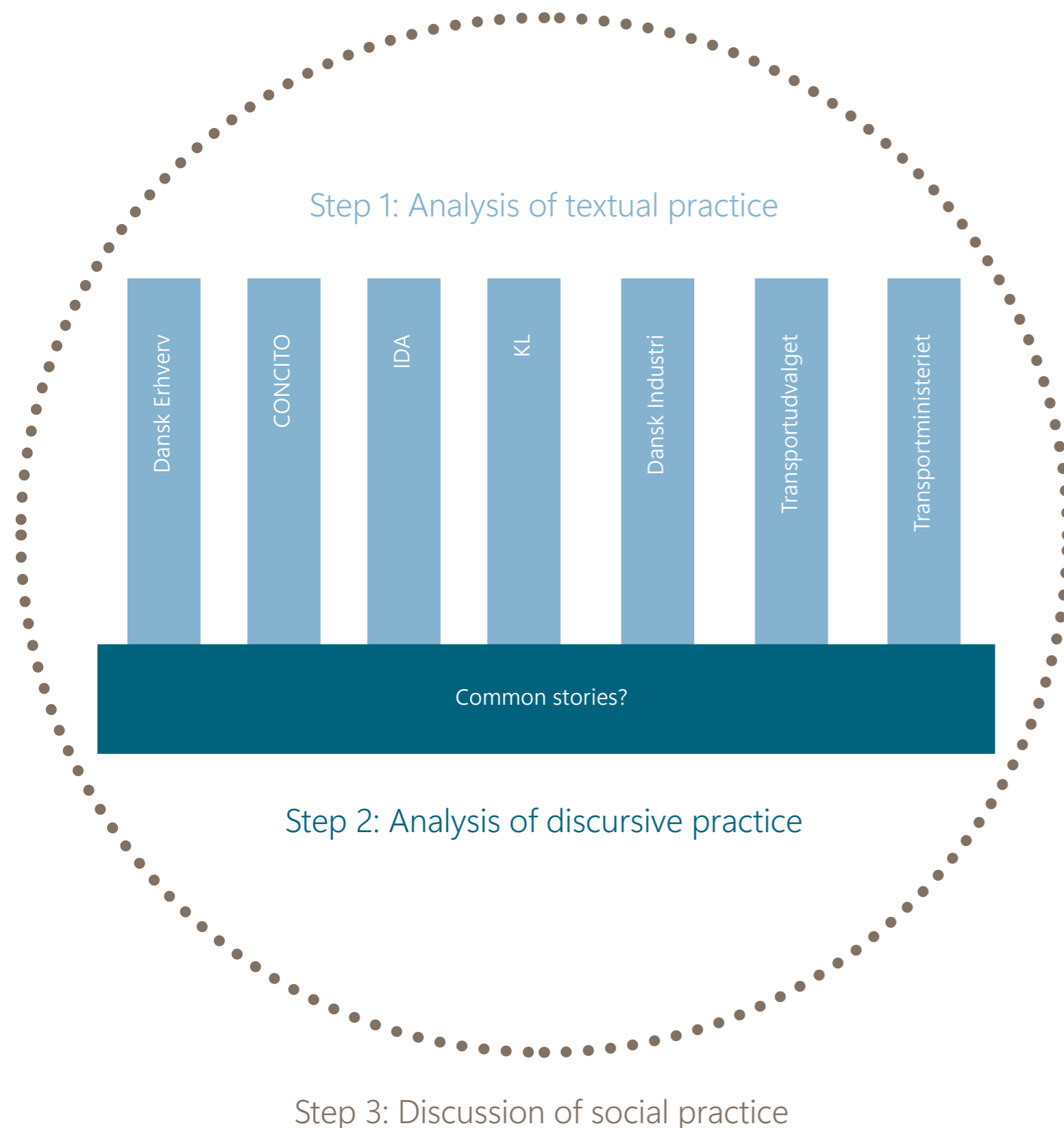
Figure 5.4 | This figure illustrates the analytical approach, divided into three steps: Step 1 is the vertical analysis, Step 2 is the horizontal analysis, and Step 3 is the discussion of the two previous steps.

Analytical framework

1. This first step of the analytic approach is utilising Fairclough's first dimension, the textual. This dimension focuses on analysing text [Fairclough, 1992, p. 4]. It involves closely reading stakeholders' written work and oral expressions to identify word choices, metaphors, sentence structures, and framing. The theoretical framework applied here is Hajer's concept of storylines. The aim is to understand the central stakeholders' perspectives in the mobility debate. Step 1 is defined as a vertical analysis focusing on each stakeholder individually. In other words, the goal is to identify storylines within each stakeholder's discourse in a vacuum, thereby answering: Sub-Q2: What storylines are revealed by each stakeholder's understanding of mobility in Denmark?

2. The second step of the analytical approach draws on Fairclough's second dimension, discursive practice. This dimension focuses on *"which types of discourse [...] are drawn upon and how they are combined"* Fairclough [1992, p. 4]. This step is used to analyse how the storylines identified in Step 1 circulate across different stakeholders, to identify discursive positions through Hajer's concept of discourse-coalitions. Step 2 is therefore a horizontal analysis, examining across the individual storylines. In doing so, it answers: Sub-Q3: Which shared discursive positions can be identified through the storylines on national mobility in Denmark?

3. This third step of the analytical approach draws on Fairclough's third dimension, social practice. This dimension examines how certain storylines are supported by existing institutions and how power relations are reinforced or challenged by specific discursive positions, both through individual storylines and broader discourse-coalitions. This part of the project seeks to answer Sub-Q4: How do the discursive positions reveal barriers to implementing a national mobility strategy in Denmark?. Step 3 thus represents the surrounding landscape, linking a broader societal understanding with the discursive landscape outlined in Step 1 and Step 2. As a theoretical lens, the analysis employs Hajer's concept of discourse institutionalisation, which investigates how dominant discourses gain traction and shape institutional responses, thereby setting the agenda.

06

analysis of textual practice

To explore how different stakeholders shape a national understanding of mobility in Denmark, this chapter focuses on the discursive practices of central stakeholders involved in transport policy and planning. It addresses the second supporting question: What storylines are revealed by each stakeholder's understanding of mobility in Denmark? Analysing the language used by key stakeholders helps to show how different understandings of sustainable mobility are constructed and communicated.

6.1 Identifying central stakeholders

It is necessary to identify the most central stakeholders in the debate to address the second supporting question. This is done through a stakeholder mapping methodologically described in section 5.1.3. This preliminary analysis is essential to delimit the scope of the study so that an in-depth analysis can be conducted within a limited time frame.

Several organisations, institutions, and associations can be identified as potential stakeholders in this debate as they have a stake in a national mobility strategy. These stakeholders were identified through the participant list from the IDA conference "Fremtidens Transport 2025", references made by others in the debate, or visibility in the discussion through various channels, including opinion pieces, consultation responses, and LinkedIn posts.

All stakeholders were cross-checked about who they were, their interests and expectations, how they participated and under what conditions, their ability to influence the project, and any efforts to exert pressure on the discourse. It provided the foundation for assessing stakeholders based on the parameters in Mendelow's Matrix, which served as the basis for the stakeholder mapping. All stakeholders were assessed according to power, influence, interest, and engagement, as visualised in Figure 6.1.

Not all of these stakeholders are equally central to the debate, therefore, this project will focus on the top-right quadrant, the stakeholders with the highest levels of power and interest. Seven carefully selected stakeholders have been chosen to identify and analyse key stakeholders within the field of sustainable

mobility. Transportministeriet, Transportudvalget, KL, Dansk Erhverv, Dansk Industri, IDA and CONCITO.

Transportministeriet and Transportudvalget are central in setting political agendas and determining legislation, making them crucial in shaping national transport strategies. KL is instrumental at the municipal level, where policies are implemented in practice, particularly within public transport systems. Dansk Erhverv and Dansk Industri act as powerful business voices, influencing political decisions through lobbying and partnerships, especially concerning infrastructure, innovation, and economic growth. IDA and CONCITO contribute significantly to the sustainability discourse through technical expertise, policy recommendations, and the publication of influential reports.

Several stakeholders have been consciously excluded to ensure a clear analytical focus and a feasible study within the limited time available for the project. This does not imply that these stakeholders are irrelevant to the debate on mobility, but rather that their inclusion would have made the analysis too broad, beyond what is manageable for a focused discourse analysis. Due to time constraints, excluding some otherwise relevant stakeholders has been necessary. COWI, a representative from the advisory sector, has been excluded on this basis, as their discourse closely aligns with that of IDA and CONCITO. Since they appear to form a discursive coalition, including COWI, they would likely not have added significantly new perspectives to the analysis. Prioritising variation in viewpoints, focusing on stakeholders representing distinct positions in the mobility debate was considered more meaningful. Organisations such as FDM and the Danish Cyclists' Federation tend to promote specific transport modes, which may

lead to more one-sided or biased perspectives. Others, like BaneDanmark and Danske Regioner, are less involved in policy development or primarily focus on unrelated sectors such as healthcare. While Rådet for Grøn Omstilling's vision promote sustainable development, their limited visibility in national-level discussions made it less central in this context. Academic institutions constitute a broad category, which would have required the project to engage with multiple institutions under one the category of one stakeholder, such as DTU, AAU, KU and others. Moreover, they were not particularly visible in the public debate.
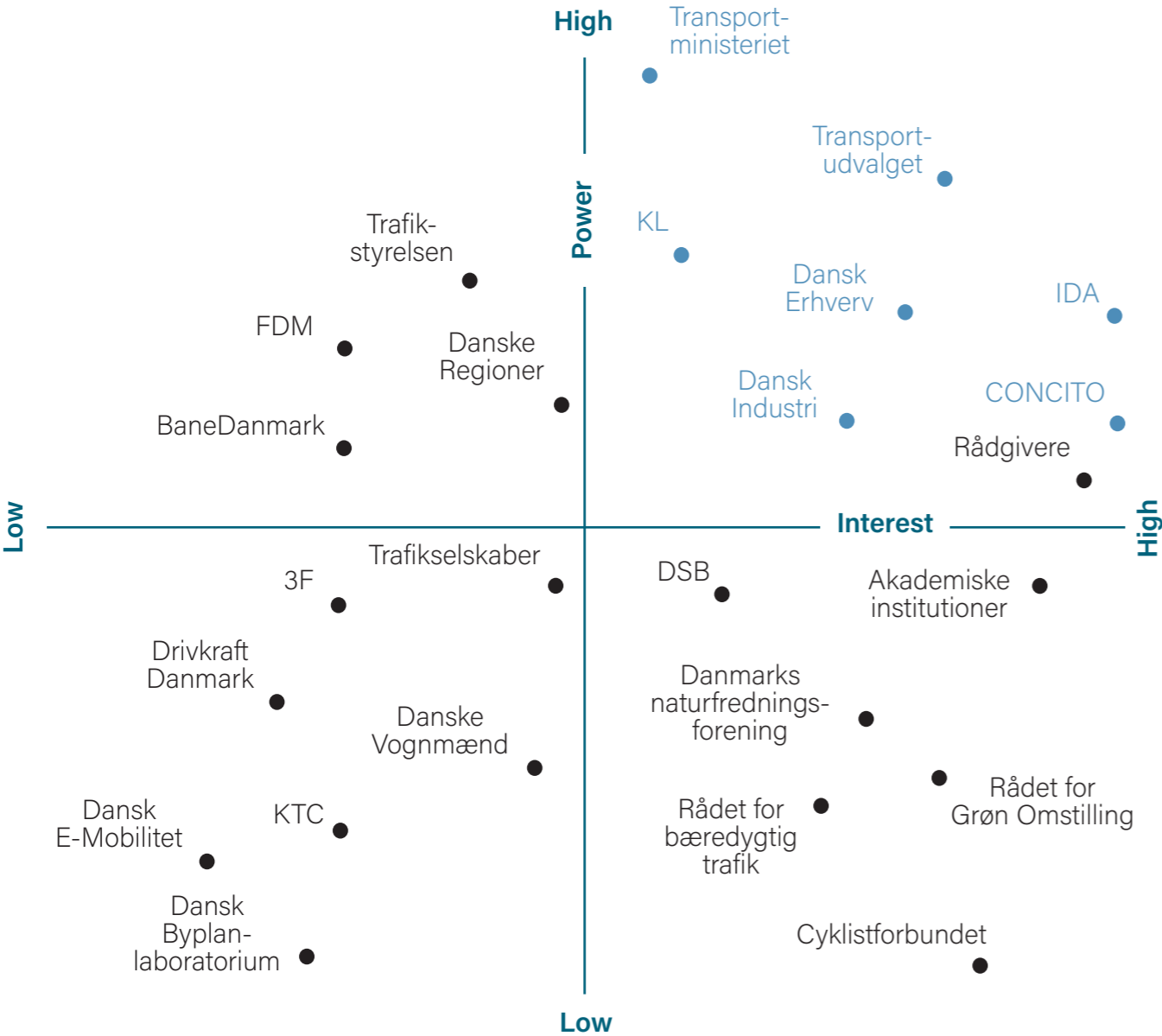

Figure 6.1

Stakeholder mapping

Mendelow's Matrix for stakeholder mapping [Mendelow, 1991] – This figure illustrates the categorisation of stakeholders based on their level of power and interest. All stakeholders are presented using their Danish organisation names.

Although some perspectives are not represented, the chosen stakeholders allow for a focused and nuanced analysis of how sustainable mobility is framed, promoted, and contested within the Danish context, with insights from those that scored the highest in both power and interest according to Mendelow's Matrix [Mendelow, 1991]. The limitations of this selection are acknowledged, with potential contributions from excluded stakeholders considered in the broader discussion.

6.2 Storylines of central stakeholders

The following analysis addresses the research questions presented in section 2 by investigating how selected stakeholders frame mobility and seek to influence the agenda for a national mobility strategy in Denmark. This first analytical step (Figure 5.4) aims to examine the individual positions held by central stakeholders and uncover the storylines they employ. According to [Hajer, 1993], storylines aim to simplify and reduce discursive complexity into more manageable stories. Analysing these storylines is essential because they show how stakeholders interpret and seek to shape a policy like national mobility. To understand how these storylines are constructed and communicated, the analysis draw on Fairclough's textual dimension of critical discourse analysis. This dimension focuses on the details of texts, including the use of metaphors, word choices, and framing [Fairclough, 1992, p. 4]. It allows for identifying how meaning is shaped by language, and how textual choices contribute to the broader articulation of a particular storyline [Fairclough, 1992, p. 75].

The analysis is vertically oriented, as it examines each stakeholder individually to identify their specific discursive constructions of mobility. This step is a basis for the horizontal analysis (Step 2) that follows, in which similarities between stakeholders are found to identify discourse-coalitions [Hajer, 1993, pp. 65-66]. The analysis of the individual storylines, is thereby, the foundation for understanding how broader patterns of alignment and discourse institutionalisation emerge.

The documents and articles analysed were identified through targeted keyword searches focusing on mobility, organisational interests, and contributions to national mobility strategy debates. In addition, LinkedIn was used to systematically collect recent activity, with attention to both official organisational posts and content from prominent individuals who appear to act as key representatives or public figures for the stakeholder. In several cases, a snowballing effect was employed, whereby one document or post led to the discovery of additional relevant materials. This snowballing effect was particularly evident on LinkedIn, where individual posts frequently referenced or were linked to other stakeholders within the same organisation, thereby expanding the data set organically.

6.2.1 Dansk Erhverv

Dansk Erhverv is a Danish business organisation and employers' association representing 18,000 member companies and over 100 trade associations. Their mission is to help companies thrive in Denmark, supporting industries such as commerce, transport, and services, focusing on growth, legal support, and creating a competitive environment for businesses in Denmark [Dansk Erhverv, 2025b].

Dansk Erhverv's storylines illustrate a business-oriented understanding of mobility in Denmark that aligns economic growth with technological innovation and selective environmental solutions. Through these storylines, Dansk Erhverv aims to shape the national discourse by positioning mobility as both an economic engine and a societal necessity. Their framing emphasises that growth and sustainability are not mutually exclusive, provided the right investments and technologies are in place. Rather than challenging current mobility patterns, they reframe sustainability as green competitiveness, advocating for electrification and infrastructure development as key solutions.

1. The first prominent storyline for Dansk Erhverv is "Efficient mobility", where they emphasise mobility as a driver of growth, welfare and societal cohesion. The values in this storyline align with the town planning storyline. Dansk Erhverv highlights mobility's vital role in ensuring economic growth and improving the well-being of both businesses and citizens. As stated, *"Efficient mobility therefore helps to create growth and jobs, and to bring Denmark closer together" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 2, translated].* This reflects their belief that effective transport systems foster economic development, thereby ensuring their members a more efficient transport system: *"[...] of course, we represent our companies, and an organisation like Dansk Industri would do the same" Lübcke [2025, translated].* In addition, Dansk Erhverv recognises the interconnection between mobility and workplace environments. They argue that a well-developed transport system also influences the quality of life, particularly for workers, highlighting that *"It is good business. When we cycle to work, it not only creates a more active and greener everyday life, but we also believe it contributes to a less stressful working environment and better results that show on the bottom line" Kronborg [2024, translated].* Moreover, Dansk Erhverv stresses that effective mobility policies must focus on efficiency, competition, and sustainability, as reflected in their call for an integrated and forwardthinking approach: *"We need more cohesive, efficient, competitive, and green mobility. Not less" Dansk Erhverv [2021, translated].* To ensure an efficient transport system, Dansk Erhverv calls for a mobility strategy: *"It is about enabling more efficient mobility and better use of infrastructure. Currently, infrastructure is planned by many stakeholders, state, munici-palities, and even regions, without a unifying strategy or coordination between plans" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This is further supported by the quote: *"how do we get the different modes of transport to work better together? How do we make better use of the infrastructure that has already been built, and that is currently being developed? We need a more holistic view. That is why we clearly believe there is a need for a mobility plan" Lübcke [2025, translated].*

For Dansk Erhverv, mobility is a tool that can drive positive outcomes both environmentally and economically, providing a framework for ensuring Denmark's competitiveness in the global economy. The business-oriented focus on mobility is also evident in the organisation's advocacy for policies that foster business productivity and a strong infrastructure. They note that, *"The core of transport policy is efficient mobility. It is crucial for Danish businesses and citizens that they can get from point A to B as quickly, sustainably, and smoothly as possible. This has a significant societal benefit. it is as simple as that" Dansk Erhverv [2024a, p. 4, translated],* reflecting a view of mobility, where the aim is to enhance the movement of goods and people for economic benefit while acknowledging the importance of sustainability in achieving these objectives. In contrast to the environmental storyline, Dansk Erhverv also points out the critical role of infrastructure in driving growth, particularly through regional mobility. They argue: *"Dansk Erhverv views positively the willingness of Danes to be mobile about their workplace, but the expansion of the road network must keep up with this willingness" Stenbæk [2018, translated],* suggesting that infrastructure development should align with the willingness of the workforce to commute, especially from regions such as Sweden, where cross-border commuting is seen as beneficial for Denmark's economy. As expressed: *"Commuters from Sweden are good*

business for Denmark [...] The more people who work in Denmark, the better it is for the Danish economy. Therefore, it is very positive that the number of commuters is increasing" Kronborg [2025, translated]. Through this storyline, Dansk Erhverv underscores the importance of efficient transport systems to keep up with the growing demands of business and society. However, while acknowledging the environmental benefits of efficient mobility, their primary concern is ensuring that transport systems support economic growth, job creation, and social integration. In this context, the transport sector is seen as an enabler of sustainability and as a contributor to Denmark's overall economic success.

2. The second prominent storyline is: "Technological modernisation". This storyline represents a hybrid between reinforcing the economic storyline and promoting the environmental storyline. A central quote illustrating this hybrid logic is: *"The overarching goal should always be to create efficient, competitive and green mobility" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 9, translated].* Dansk Erhverv adopts a *"green"* growth logic, where sustainability is integrated but not dominant. Efficiency and competitiveness are still given equal status, indicating a persistent influence of the economic storyline. While they acknowledge climate change, their position explicitly rejects behavioural change as a legitimate path forward: *"While some may argue that the solution to the transport sector's climate footprint is to travel less and transport fewer goods, we see a completely different potential, to maintain and develop mobility. This requires investing in green fuels, seizing technological opportunities [...]" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 2, translated].* This quote demonstrates their commitment

to technological and infrastructural solutions over demand reduction. Instead of advocating for less transport activity, Dansk Erhverv frames green fuels, technological innovation, and systemic optimisation as key enablers of sustainable growth. This framing positions the storyline as hybrid: growth is not to be reduced in favour of sustainability but rather redefined as *"green"*. The idea that efficiency and competitiveness co-exist with climate responsibility marks a discursive shift from purely growth to green competitiveness. However, despite the increased focus on sustainability, the paradigm of predict-and-provide remains unchallenged. This is confirmed in the quote: *"The core of transport policy is efficient mobility. It is fundamentally about getting from A to B as quickly and smoothly as possible - this applies to companies and citizens. There is no indication that we will demand less mobility in the future" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 2, translated].* The quote illustrates how projected demand legitimises infrastructure investment whether such demand should be redirected or managed. Further reinforcement of this technological logic is seen in their one-sided view on technology as the solution to all problems: *"Technology continues to open up new possibilities to promote mobility and prevent bottlenecks" Dansk Erhverv [2025c, translated].* Here, sustainability is absent. Instead, technology is presented as a tool for enhancing flow and efficiency. This perspective falls outside the environmental storyline, though it modernises the traditional engineering discourse. Electrification emerges as a central pillar of Dansk Erhverv's sustainable mobility framework. For instance, they state: *"A green and sustainable development of road transport requires investments in charging and refuelling infrastructure for vehicles running on alternative fuels" Dansk Erhverv [2021, p. 3, translated].* This quote frames green transformation as a state-led in-

vestment agenda, highlighting infrastructure as the key to sustainability. Another example of the optimistic technological approach is their promotion of autonomous vehicles: *"Selfdriving technology can also help solve our increasing congestion problems, as long as we do not all sit in our cars and drive off" Dansk Erhverv [2021, p. 32, translated].* The sentence, *"as long as we do not all sit in our cars",* introduces a limited behavioural critique. Yet, the focus stays on technological solutions instead of regulation, aiming for optimisation rather than a change in priorities. Electrification features prominently in their discourse and is positioned as the cornerstone of their version of an environmental storyline: *"We need to accelerate the electrification of Danish society - this also applies to the transport sector" Pindbo [2025, translated].* However, this push for electrification is not solely motivated by environmental concerns. They note that electrification *"plays a very big role" Lübcke [2025, translated]* in their approach to transport policy. In particular, *"when it comes to passenger cars, it seems over time to be solving itself" Lübcke [2025, translated].* It is also tightly linked to market logic and global competitiveness: *"Electrification is not only crucial for the green transition - it is also a prerequisite for strengthening the competitiveness of Danish companies" Dansk Erhverv [2025a, translated].* The term *"prerequisite"* is central to Dansk Erhverv's discourse, positioning electrification as an environmental and economic necessity. In this way, mobility and energy policy are woven into a strategic discourse of technological competition, where electrification becomes the bridge between climate goals and business interests. Through this storyline, Dansk Erhverv frames mobility as a matter of green modernisation rather than reduction. Sustainability is integrated as a means to maintain economic growth, not to limit it. Technological solutions, particularly

electrification and infrastructure investment, are presented as key to achieving green competitiveness.

3. The third storyline is: "Mobility as freedom and necessity". Here, Dansk Erhverv directly links mobility to social inclusion, particularly in improving regional accessibility and connectivity, aligning it with the town planning storyline. The supporting quote for this storyline follows: *"Mobility gives us the freedom to meet, work, and live wherever we choose" Stenbæk [2018, translated].* Furthermore, they point out that: *"Safety and efficiency are key principles of Danish infrastructure. We need to be able to travel safely and quickly from A to B and transport goods across the country. That is why we must create space on the roads to avoid dangerous and time-consuming congestion" Stenbæk [2018, translated].* In line with this, Dansk Erhverv calls for a holistic approach to mobility that ensures different modes of transportation work together seamlessly. Their greatest concern is a reduction in mobility, which they see as a restriction of freedom: *"We believe modes of transport must transition, and as they do, which is already happening, we need to consider how this transition can support mobility, rather than lead to its reduction. That is probably our biggest concern" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This is particularly important for creating regional cohesion. As they assert: *"We need to create growth across the entire country. That requires a Denmark that is connected and cohesive" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 2, translated],* emphasising that mobility is key to connecting both urban and rural areas. Expanding upon this, Dansk Erhverv also underscores that connectivity and efficient travel is essential: *"The distance between two points is not mea-*

sured in distance, but in time" Dansk Erhverv [2021, p. 2, translated]. They argue that effective mobility policies are essential to reduce bottlenecks, prevent barriers to access, and maintain a functioning society. Dansk Erhverv acknowledges the intersection of mobility and climate change but stresses that reducing mobility is not the solution. They caution against limiting mobility as a climate strategy, arguing that: *"It is important that we avoid falling into the trap where the solution to the climate challenge becomes that we need to transport less in the future. Because less mobility has significant costs for our society" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 5, translated].* This highlights the critical role of mobility in maintaining economic activity, where reducing mobility could harm societal progress, particularly in the face of challenges like climate change. Dansk Erhverv calls for holistic solutions that integrate different modes of transportation to ensure effective and sustainable mobility systems. They state: *"Mobility is, in fact, not exclusively a national phenomenon. It is largely international, which requires international measures and not national isolation" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 8, translated].* Dansk Erhverv highlights, *"It is a significant societal issue if we do not ensure that citizens have the best possible conditions to be mobile" Stenbæk [2018, translated].* By emphasising mobility as a fundamental right, Dansk Erhverv advocates for an environment where citizens can freely choose where they live and work, without transport limitations. Overall, this storyline underlines the social necessity of mobility, stressing that effective transport systems support not only the economy but also the social fabric of society. By ensuring that mobility is accessible and efficient, Dansk Erhverv advocates for a transport system that strengthens the country's social and economic ties, allowing for greater freedom, equality, and connectivity.

6.2.2 CONCITO

CONCITO is a Danish think tank focusing on research and advocacy in areas such as sustainability, energy, mobility, economy, cities, behaviour, and more. CONCITO's purpose is converting: *"relevant knowledge into climate action and thereby accelerating the green transition" CONCITO [2025, translated].*

CONCITO's three storylines illustrate an effort to reshape the national discourse on mobility in Denmark. By challenging the assumption that more mobility is inherently beneficial, CONCITO reframes mobility as a means to create societal value. It integrates climate and social considerations, promoting behavioural change over technological solutions and positioning transport as a driver of broader societal goals. Finally, it critiques the traditional discourse, calling for a shift in priorities. In doing so, CONCITO seeks to influence how stakeholders understand and engage with mobility, steering the discourse towards a more sustainable, strategic, and integrated national approach.

1. The first prominent storyline is: "Mobility is not a goal in itself". This storyline is an extension of, and an attempt to promote, the environmental storyline: *"Often, "more mobility" becomes a goal in itself, as if everything automatically improves with increased mobility, but that is not the case. Sometimes, more mobility can create less value than it takes from society" Have [2024, translated].* This is further outlined: *"Our view is that mobility creates a great deal of value – but only up to a certain point" Have [2025e, translated].* In addition to challenging the dominant assumption that mobility is inherently good, the following statement highlights the hidden costs associated with mobility: *"Mobility is described as an almost unconditionally good thing, something society invests heavily in delivering and expanding. However, mobility is not free" CONCITO [2024, translated].* Likewise, mobility is viewed as a growth driver, which CONCITO critiques: *"When people are asked what kind of regional development is needed, it is often said that mobility creates growth, and growth creates development" Have [2025e, translated].* Another quote critiques the current tendency of decision-making, urging a departure from *"autopilot"* infrastructure expansion: *"We hope that our respective analyses, [...] can help move mobility planning away from operating on autopilot. Otherwise, increased mobility may destroy more value than it creates" Have and Schelde [2024, translated].* A similar point is made regarding the role of government in ensuring direction: *"The key task of Transportministeriet is to ensure clear political goals are in place [...] so that when various business organisations present ideas, the civil service can assess them against these strategic objectives and the agreed political direction" Have [2025e, translated].* Additionally, CONCITO

calls for a shift in focus from quantity to quality and necessity, reframing the mobility debate to address how much, what kind, and for whom, with implications for justifying new infrastructure *"Yes, we do need mobility, but not necessarily more mobility. It is not a matter of mobility versus no mobility, but more mobility versus current levels. And that is what should be considered when discussing new infrastructure" Have [2025c, translated].* It emphasises that mobility should not be treated as a goal in and of itself but rather as a means to create value, and that increased movement can sometimes result in reduced or even negative returns. For this reason, it challenges the traditional discourse in which more mobility is seen as synonymous with growth, progress, and efficiency.

2. The second prominent storyline is "Mobility within planetary boundaries". This again highlights the emergence of a new mobility discourse, where the framing aligns with an environmental storyline. One of the quotes that support this storyline says: *"Society must ensure and limit mobility within social and planetary boundaries" Have [2024, translated].* This quote calls for planning, where mobility serves broader goals like welfare, accessibility, and sustainability. The following quote adds a more explicit emphasis on the climate responsibilities: *"[...] the transport sector needs to contribute more. Also, it would align well with meeting the recently tightened EU targets for the non-ETS sector" Have [2022, translated].* Here, CONCITO frames mobility policy as a tool for setting climate targets and prioritising investments based on emissions impact. CONCITO promotes a discourse that prioritise behavioural change, over technological innovations, which is especially relevant in

a country like Denmark: *"In Denmark, we do not produce many means of transport, so the most important measure in terms of reducing emissions is to influence transport behaviour" Have [2022, translated].* This quote exemplifies a behavioural change and climate policy. Through the lens of CONCITO, the national mobility plan is thus framed as a tool for shaping mobility behaviour, tied closely to CO_2 reduction targets and public spending priorities: *"we are talking about having mobility that creates more value than it destroys" Have [2025e, translated].* It positions behavioural change, not infrastructure expansion, as the key to sustainable transition in the transport sector. Finally, the implications of the new mobility discourse extend beyond climate and behaviour to a broader understanding of mobility's societal role: *"If approached correctly, the transport sector can act as a lever for other sectors and goals in society" CONCITO [2024, translated].* Overall, the quotes mentioned above represent the sustainable mobility discourse, where mobility is understood as something that must be actively regulated to avoid exceeding planetary boundaries. CONCITO, therefore, understands mobility as a phenomenon with both environmental costs and social consequences instead of a neutral good.

3. The third prominent storyline is "Shifting priorities", aligning with the environmental storyline. One of the supporting quotes is: *"Instead of continuing to project historical demand and base decisions on that (in professional terms known as "predict and provide"), there is a need to take account of changing needs and constraints. We therefore recommend a shift towards a more vision-based approach (in professional terms called "vision and validate"), where a national mobility strat-*

egy begins by defining which needs the transport sector should meet" CONCITO [2024, translated]. Here, CONCITO advocates for a paradigm shift in transport planning, directly critiques the predict-and-provide model that assumes mobility demand must always be met through expanded infrastructure: *"We cannot build our way to sustainable mobility" Have [2025a, translated].* While CONCITO acknowledges that infrastructure investment may still be necessary in some instances, it demands a more critical assessment for justification: *"It is not that we should never build again, but the bar needs to be raised drastically" Have [2025d, translated].* This aligns with a broader view that mobility must be rethought within clear environmental constraints: *"It is not that mobility should not develop, but it must develop within these two boundaries [climate targets and resource limits]" Have [2025e, translated].* This questions the assumption that traffic growth should be met with more infrastructure. Instead, it calls for a strategic reassessment of mobility needs. This critique is further exemplified in the quote: *"There is a need to break with the idea that more roads, railways, and bridges - and the resulting increase in traffic - are automatically the answer" CONCITO [2024, translated].* The current model of transport planning is critiqued in the following quote: *"Current national mobility planning in Denmark roughly consists of allocating around 100 billion DKK every 10-15 years to new motorways and rail lines, accompanied by smaller funds for the green transition and cycling" Borring and Have [2024, translated].* This quote critiques a planning model prioritising time savings as the main benefit, justifying significant infrastructure investments while underestimating environmental and societal costs. Future mobility planning, according to CONCITO, should support the following: *"When we build new transport infrastructure, we must de-*

mand that the need is clearly evident [...] It is not that we should never build more, but the bar must be raised significantly, both in terms of when and how" Have [2025d, translated]. This quote reframes mobility policy to focus on purpose rather than sheer expansion. They call for a higher standard for justifying new transport projects. CONCITO also problematises the funding priorities in public investment and decision-making: *"Why is it easier to find billions for black (carbon-intensive) investments than millions for green ones? At the same time, billions are being spent on loss-making and CO$_2$-intensive infrastructure" Have [2025b, translated].* Through this storyline, CONCITO seeks to influence the understanding of mobility by challenging the dominant technocratic decision-making. CONCITO's approach to mobility decision-making promotes a reprioritisation of public investment logic. A national mobility strategy, from this perspective, should be a tool for shifting from reactive, backward-looking policies to proactive planning. It must move beyond cost-benefit calculations, embracing instead a strategic, holistic, and sustainability-led approach to national mobility. The metaphor of *"looking through the windscreen, not the rear-view mirror"* summarises this call for value-driven planning aligned with long-term societal goals [Borring and Have, 2024, translated].

6.2.3 IDA

IDA (Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark) is a professional association and think tank focused on sustainable transport and energy solutions. They engage in research, advocacy, and policy development to promote green mobility, particularly through adopting electric vehicles and integrating renewable energy solutions in transportation. IDA works to drive the transition to a zero-emission transport system in Denmark, collaborating with various stakeholders, including government, industry, and other organisations [Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark, 2025].

Through the three prominent storylines, IDA seeks to shape a national understanding of mobility as a complex societal issue beyond infrastructure and engineering. These storylines aim to influence the mobility discourse by promoting sustainability, cross-ministerial collaboration, and the re-prioritisation of transport modes. Each storyline highlights different dimensions of the mobility challenge, illustrating how IDA frames car-dependence, siloed governance, and outdated economic models as barriers to a sustainable future.

1. The first prominent storyline is: "Mobility plan or chaos". This storyline promotes the environmental storyline. It communicates a need for coordinated, strategic, and cross-ministerial planning that does not solely focus on infrastructure but also addresses the overall mobility needs of society. One of the supporting quotes is as follows: *"If we invest without a goal, it is just individual projects. So the big question is, what is the goal?" Schelde [2025c, translated].* This represents a break with the technocratic discourse. Here, mobility is framed as a tool for achieving broader societal objectives: *"There is therefore a need for a long-term national mobility plan [...]" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021a, translated].* In continuation, IDA points out that silo thinking obstructs sustainable solutions, as seen in the following quote: *"A formal ministerial forum should be established, in which all relevant ministries collaborate on mobility planning" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021a, translated].* Here, they propose a Mobility Agency to overcome silo thinking. The storyline, therefore, assumes that various interests must be brought together in a broad discourse-coalition to collaborate across sectors [Hajer, 1995b]. This is highlighted in the following quote: *"Decisions are made in several ministries that influence transport behaviour, and it is therefore essential that a National Mobility Plan is anchored at the highest decision-making level" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021a, translated].* The national mobility strategy is meant to coordinate different policies influencing transport behaviour, so that infrastructure and behavioural efforts support each other within one overall plan. IDA believes there is a *"lack of regional perspective"* and that Denmark has *"actively dismantled all forms of planning whatsoever" Schelde [2025d,*

translated]. The following quote critiques the status quo, where different transport sectors are planned in isolation, which is why IDA also refers to it as chaos: *"There are already existing plans for road network expansion, as well as modernisation and expansion of airports and freight ports, but these sub-plans are not integrated into a comprehensive whole that also includes railways and cycling infrastructure. On their own, they appear as fragmented contributions" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 17, translated].* Additionally, IDA explains that: *"in our view, the dream scenario is that a mobility plan would function as a screening tool for all the projects proposed by politicians, so that the worst ones are filtered out before they are even allowed to move forward" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Through this storyline, IDA seeks to influence the understanding of mobility as a societal issue rather than a purely technical or economic matter. IDA aims to reshape the policy agenda and foster long-term, sustainable solutions by advocating for an integrated and strategic national mobility plan.

2. The second prominent storyline is: "Sustainability as the obvious choice". This reflects IDA's emphasis on shifting society towards sustainable transport choices, making options like cycling, walking, and public transport the most attractive. According to IDA, individual transport, especially by car, is one of Denmark's most significant sources of emissions. They state: *"A significant part of Denmark's emissions comes from personal transport, with cars being the biggest culprit" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 3, translated].* This highlights the need for a drastic change in how transport is used, emphasising reducing car-dependence to meet Denmark's climate targets. IDA suggests that

the number of cars in Denmark should be controlled, specifically focusing on reducing fossil fuel-powered vehicles. As they note: *"A key focus in the mobility plan is the number of cars, especially fossil cars: the number of cars must stagnate" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 3, translated].* IDA argue that the focus should be on optimising existing infrastructure and ensuring it is used more efficiently, as stated in the quote: *"Expanding the existing road infrastructure is not a sustainable solution, but its use can and should be optimised" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 9, translated].* This marks a clear departure from traditional transport beliefs. In addition to reducing car numbers, IDA calls for rethinking how transport is assessed in economic models. They argue that current models favour cars and fail to account for the benefits of reducing car use. As they highlight: *"The models should be adjusted so that limits on driving private cars are not counted as welfare loss, as they are today" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 19, translated].* IDA proposes that the economic models used to plan transport infrastructure should reflect the broader societal and environmental benefits of reducing car use rather than treating it as a negative outcome. Thereby critically assessing infrastructure expansion: *"that is where you really need to think carefully: do we actually need this infrastructure in 100 years? And in many cases, the honest answer is simply: no, we really do not" Schelde [2025d, translated].* This point is further criticised *"Fundamentally, it is about the fact that doing nothing is very costly. It is simply foolish not to think things through, especially now, when you could say that crises are lining up one after the other. So understanding that there are multiple distinct layers that can be addressed at the same time is incredibly important" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Furthermore, IDA advocates for a restruc-

tured transport pricing system encouraging sustainable choices. They propose that: *"The pricing system should fundamentally change so that short trips are relatively more expensive, as it gives greater social and climate value to walk or cycle" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 25, translated].* This proposal seeks to make sustainable transport more attractive and financially viable. In contrast, longer trips should be priced in a way that makes public transport a competitive alternative to driving. *"For example, if you have a national mobility plan, then in our view it would logically imply that you also ensure there are customers for public transport. But today, there is no real stance on that, the prevailing idea is that it is entirely up to individuals to choose. But of course, it is not, when the state is actively investing in car-based mobility" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Denmark can transition towards a more sustainable transport system by reducing the number of cars on the road, optimising existing infrastructure, and adjusting economic models and pricing systems. This storyline aligns closely with the broader sustainable mobility discourse, which strongly focuses on making these choices the default for everyone, not just a niche option for a few.

3. The third prominent storyline is: "Active mobility first". This storyline emphasises prioritising active transport modes, such as cycling and walking, over traditional car-based mobility. They highlight that: *"Traffic jams have the great advantage that "active" traffic is promoted, which results in a significant improvement of urban space quality" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021a, p. 1, translated].* This suggests that by reducing traffic congestion, cities can be made more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly, ultimately improving

the quality of life in urban areas. IDA further advocates for the integration of cycling into the broader transport framework, emphasizing that it should be given equal importance to traditional infrastructure like roads and rail. As they state: *"In the Mobility Agency, cycling must be promoted and placed on equal footing with roads and rail" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 16, translated].* This call for *"equal footing"* underlines the need for cycling to be seen not as a secondary or alternative mode of transport but as a primary, legitimate form of mobility that deserves the same attention and investment as other transport sectors. Another example of how IDA envisions promoting cycling is their reference to the broader European context: *"Bees do it - all the countries in the EU do it! All EU countries have, or have had, some form of bicycle tax deduction" Schelde [2025a, translated].* By mentioning this, IDA draws attention to the fact that many European countries already recognise the value of cycling through financial incentives. The storyline aligns with IDA's overarching vision of creating a more sustainable, efficient, and equitable transport system. By prioritising cycling and walking, IDA seeks to shift societal attitudes towards more environmentally friendly, healthier, and space-efficient forms of transport. It challenges the dominance of cars in transport planning. It encourages a holistic, integrated approach to mobility, where active mobility is seen as a key player in achieving long-term sustainability goals. Through this approach, IDA envisions a future where cycling and walking are not just alternatives but are the foundation of Denmark's transportation system.

6.2.4 KL

KL (Kommunernes Landsforening) is an organisation that plays a crucial role in strengthening and maintaining a local democracy in Denmark. It represents and negotiates on behalf of all municipalities. KL influences policies and achieves results on behalf of municipalities, ultimately benefiting citizens and society. KL ensures that local governments have a strong voice in national discussions and decisions [KL, 2025]. KL is crucial in advocating for policies that balance urban and rural areas. Despite their less active role in the public debate, their position holds immense responsibility as they represent the collective interests of all municipalities in Denmark.

Through KL's three storylines, they seek to shape a national discourse on mobility that is inclusive, needs-driven, and socially cohesive. By highlighting the need for a transport system that ensures equal access across both rural and urban areas, KL underscores mobility as a cornerstone of societal equality and national cohesion. They frame transport as both an infrastructure and welfare problem. Moreover, by advocating for mobility solutions rooted in citizens' real and diverse needs, KL challenges top-down approaches and calls for flexible, locally anchored strategies.

1. The first prominent storyline "Regional cohesion", emphasis the importance of equality across the country, from rural areas to urban centres. As highlighted by KL, *"Denmark must stay together - from the islands to the cities. It should be attractive to live, work, study, and run businesses in all parts of the country" KL [2024a, p. 4, translated].* The importance of ensuring equal mobility for all citizens is explained by KL as: *"For us, it is about ensuring that people can choose to live wherever they want" Johannsen [2025, translated].* This is further supported by KL's call for effective public transport systems that provide equal access across the country: *"All citizens, regardless of income or place of residence, should therefore have the opportunity to travel quickly and efficiently across the country, between cities and rural areas" KL [2023, translated].* KL stresses that mobility is not just about convenience but is a fundamental enabler of societal equality. By advocating for efficient transportation networks, KL aims to ensure that people can move freely, access opportunities, and contribute to the economy, whether they are in urban or rural regions. KL's emphasis on *"proximity"* further underscores this perspective, as *"Proximity. That is the key word for the future of public transport" Jensen [2025b, translated].* This statement highlights the importance of tailoring transport solutions to the needs of local communities, ensuring that public transport systems are accessible, efficient, and serve to connect citizens in both large cities and more remote regions. KL also stresses that the development of public transport must be designed in a way that supports citizens in their daily lives, saying: *"We must organise our public transport so that it helps Danes get through their everyday lives - no mattter where they live in the country"*

Jensen [2025b, translated], which is further illustrated: *"we want rural and urban areas to be connected. And it comes down to how we want Denmark to be connected, because we believe transport plays a key role in supporting that" Johannsen [2025, translated].* This highlights the need for a holistic approach to transport planning that considers the diverse needs of citizens across Denmark and ensures that no region is left behind. Ultimately, KL is advocating for a transport system that brings Denmark closer together, ensuring that citizens can access opportunities and contribute to the nation's social and economic well-being regardless of where they live.

2. The second prominent storyline: "The good life", promotes the environmental storyline. It communicates a holistic understanding, where transport policy is also social, environmental, and health policy. One of the supporting quotes is as follows: *"Mobility is part of the framework for the good life" KL [2023, p. 2, translated].* This quote presents a broad view of mobility as a foundation for quality of life and economic opportunities. It draws attention to the dual challenge of congestion in urban areas and insufficient mobility options in rural areas, highlighting a fundamental inequality in access. By stressing that all citizens, regardless of income or location, should have access to fast and efficient transport, the quote calls for a national mobility strategy that ensures both spatial and social inclusion. An attempt to prioritise walking and cycling is found here: *"It must be easier and safer to walk and cycle" Jensen [2025a, translated].* This brief but powerful quote reflects a clear commitment to the sustainable mobility discourse, focusing on active transport, safety, and accessibility. The quote calls for

a shift from car-centered planning towards a human-scaled mobility culture, where walking and cycling are natural, safe, and accessible options for all citizens. To accommodate a future mobility system, KL states: *"What we need is to think in terms of wholes and balance. That also applies to transport, which involves accessibility, noise, climate, air pollution, business development and much more" Jensen [2025b, translated].* It highlights a fragmentation in political and administrative processes, where issues are tackled in silos. The point is that it affects transport, which is interconnected with topics such as accessibility, environmental impact, economic development, noise pollution, and public health. It implicitly critiques current governance structures that struggle to connect these dots and points toward the need for a national mobility strategy that works across municipal borders: *"We believe there are gaps in the story when the government relocates educational institutions [...], but young people struggle to get there. This leads to more cars. We would like to see a more holistic perspective, though it is not something we strongly advocate for" Johannsen [2025, translated].* KL does not present a solution to the regional challenge but sees different forms of mobility as potential responses, without favouring cars: *"We would actually like to see a few more mobility hubs. And that there is active work on organising our public transport system in a way that gives easier access to mobility. That could mean decentralisation. It could mean things like car sharing, bike sharing, or ride-sharing. We do not necessarily think it has to be a bus" Johannsen [2025, translated].* Through this storyline, KL frames mobility as a driver of quality of life, environmental sustainability, and equality.

3. The third prominent storyline is: "Everyday mobility", emphasising that the transport system should reflect individuals' diverse and specific mobility requirements in different areas. As stated: *"It must be the citizens' needs that define what type of collective transport is right. It is the municipalities that have the closest contact with the citizens. Therefore, the municipalities can uncover the needs and develop the right solutions - even locally in small rural communities" KL [2024a, p. 4, translated].* This reflects the belief that transport solutions should be tailored to the real-world demands of citizens rather than a one-size-fits-all approach dictated from a national or top-down perspective. This is explained by the fact that *"The municipalities face different challenges" Johannsen [2025, translated].* Furthermore, there is a recognition that urban areas face congestion, noise, and air pollution, which obstruct mobility even when distances are short. In contrast, rural areas often suffer from a lack of public transport services. As stated, *"The challenges can be different. Today, large cities are typically challenged by congestion, noise, and air pollution, while public transport is often inadequate in rural areas and villages" Kommunernes Landsforening [2021, translated].* KL explains that *"we would very much like to have a plan that addresses the challenges related to mobility, and the differences between rural and urban areas, as well as the opportunities for using public transport. We would like to see a broader, more holistic picture of that" Johannsen [2025, translated].* According to KL, the car remains the most efficient transport option for many people. As *"For many citizens, the car will still be the most effective mode of transport. Therefore, the electrification of the car fleet must be prioritised. An expand-*

ed charging infrastructure must be secured so that both visitors and residents can achieve the same mobility and freedoms as a petrol car provides today" Kommunernes Landsforening [2021, translated], indicating that while public transport is essential, the private car remains a key part of the mobility system, especially in areas where public transport is less viable. KL highlights the need for transport solutions that fit people's everyday lives. Electrifying cars can help many, especially where alternatives are limited. The focus is on practical, local solutions that reflect actual needs. The goal is to create a more equitable and efficient transport system that serves everyone, regardless of their location.

6.2.5 Dansk Industri

As part of Dansk Industri, DI Transport works to strengthen the sector, supporting both domestic and international transport needs. The sector is a key export industry, generating significant revenue. By collaborating closely with customers in agriculture, construction, and the public sector, Dansk Industri ensures a well-functioning transport sector that contributes to growth and prosperity [Dansk Industri, 2023].

Dansk Industri uses the selected storylines to shape a national understanding of mobility that balances economic growth, infrastructure expansion, and selective sustainability. Each storyline supports a strategy rooted in the traditional transport discourse of prioritising socio-economic return and technological innovation while integrating sustainability without challenging existing mobility patterns. The emphasis is clear: CO_2 reduction comes last in their top ten priorities, while congestion and accessibility are top of the list, reflecting a synthesis of traditional discourse and elements of the new mobility discourse [Dansk Industri, 2021, p. 3].

1. The first prominent storyline is: "Mobility as a growth driver". This storyline is an extension of the economic storyline. One of the supporting quotes is: *"The solution to the climate challenge is not to stop building infrastructure" Noack [2025, translated]*. It strongly defends continued infrastructure development, positioning it as non-negotiable, even in the face of climate challenges. The following quote addresses the reason for this: *"It is crucial for Denmark and Danish businesses to have internationally competitive infrastructure [...]" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated]*. The quote identifies the role of infrastructure as supporting international competitiveness. The emphasis is on freight transport efficiency and businesses' ability to function within a globalised economy: *"Many businesses find that a lack of mobility options or transport infrastructure hinders their growth opportunities" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated]*. Additionally, Dansk Industri views the economy as the main driver for mobility priorities: *"We must prioritise investments and efforts that deliver the greatest socio-economic return and the most significant impact on business" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated]*. The storyline highlights the need for more infrastructure: *"[...] capacity limits are being reached in many areas, and the system is highly vulnerable to accidents and other closures. There is, therefore, a need to invest in more and better motorways" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 5, translated]*. It reflects a traditional growth mindset, with no questioning of car-dependency or modal split, thereby reinforcing the traditional discourse, which is also visible in the following quote: *"Our transport needs are changing. We commute longer distances than before, and leisure traffic is also growing, making up an increasing share of overall traffic. This shows that we, as citizens, are moving around more than ever. The problem is that our infrastructure cannot keep up. One more lane will not fix it. We need to build more new infrastructure [...]" Lauritzen [2023, translated]*. Here, the existence of a shared political investment plan is seen as a necessary first step *"First and foremost, we are pleased that there is a political agreement on what to invest in, an investment plan. The alternative would have been having no shared vision at all" Hansen [2025, translated]*. At the same time, there is a concern about the plan: *"Can we make it fit into the review we are doing, without somehow having to dismantle the entire agreement? Because our "worst case" is that the whole deal gets politically blown apart" Hansen [2025, translated]*. This is based on companies' investments and their expectations for future infrastructure: *"For example, if you are a business transporting goods and need the road network, maybe even a motorway" Hansen [2025, translated]*. This storyline assumes increased travel demand as a given and responds by expanding infrastructure - a straightforward extension of the predict-and-provide paradigm. Dansk Industri frames mobility as essential for economic growth, competitiveness, and productivity: *"We have an interest in ensuring that it benefits Danish businesses and that it can, in the best possible way, generate jobs and economic activity for society" Hansen [2025, translated]*. Infrastructure is seen not as social or climate policy but as a tool to support business and global trade. The quote: *"New infrastructure and new mobility options reduce travel and wasted time [...] conversely, wasted time in traffic costs growth and welfare" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 4, translated]* highlights this focus on efficiency. Rooted in economic rationality, the storyline justifies continued investment by emphasising socioeconomic returns while sidelining sustainability and social concerns.

2. The second prominent storyline is "Infrastructural solutions", which follows the technocratic discourse. Here, DI Transport emphasises the importance of infrastructure development in addressing congestion and ensuring regional cohesion, aligning it with the town planning storyline. Furthermore, DI Transport advocates for a comprehensive approach to infrastructure planning, where investment in transport networks is central to solving congestion and promoting regional equality, as stressed in the following quote: *"Therefore, there is a need to invest in more and better motorways" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 5,, translated]*. This is further elaborated as a crucial part of societal development: *"There is a lack of consideration that maybe some of the things we are building are actually a prerequisite for achieving some of the other goals we are aiming for" Hansen [2025, translated]*. A critical component of DI Transport's argument is the need for a long-term investment plan managing the growing demands of mobility: *"A long-term rolling investment plan is crucial" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated]*. A national mobility strategy should ensure that investments work together to address long-term and short-term challenges, including regional connectivity and equal mobility opportunities. *"What we think a mobility plan should be able to do, as its overall purpose, is to set the overarching principles for how we plan and invest in our infrastructure. Whether we are building something new, maintaining what we already have, or improving the efficiency of the existing system, those are the three tracks we are looking at" Hansen [2025, translated]*. DI further highlights that *"Different modes of transport are not opposites to each other" Dansk Industri [2024, p. 16, translated]*. This viewpoint encourages a holistic approach to mobility planning, where solutions such as road expansion, public transport improvement, and cycling infrastructure development are all integrated to create a more cohesive and efficient transport system. Expanding on this, it is stated that: *"We must prioritise the investments and efforts that yield the greatest socio-economic return and the greatest business effects" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated]*, highlighting the need for balancing societal and economic benefits in transportation policy. However, DI Transport has begun to recognise the importance of integrating sustainability into its approach. The increasing attention to public transport and cycling infrastructure represents a shift towards a more holistic, multimodal transport strategy. This shift is particularly evident in the quote: *"One solution is the continued expansion of cycling and collective transport systems in larger urban areas, as these systems will inherently have greater capacity and be less space-consuming." Dansk Industri [2021, p. 19, translated]*. However, while there is agreement on the *"green transition",* concerns remain about the pace of change and its consequences *"so in that sense, there is really nothing that separates us in terms of our ambitions, we all want to make things more environmentally friendly, "greener". The question is how quickly we can do it without everything falling apart" Hansen [2025, translated]*. This approach is further emphasised in a LinkedIn post, where DI Transport supports the following statement by Prehn: *"Public transport can ensure mobility across the entire country, reduce congestion, and push forward the green transition" DI Transport [2025, translated]*. The storyline recognises the environmental storyline but continues to frame mobility as a system designed primarily to support economic growth.

3. The third prominent storyline is: "Technological optimisation". This is a hybrid between the traditional economic and the environmental storyline. One of the supporting quotes is as follows: *"DI believes that the environmental and climate challenges of transport should primarily be addressed through technological development, increased energy efficiency, and a shift to more climate-friendly fuels such as electricity, hydrogen, biogas, or other biofuels. The transport system should become greener by reducing CO_2 emissions without restricting mobility" Dansk Industri [2021, pp. 5-6, translated].* This reflects a belief in sustainable technology over behavioural change. Emphasis is placed on alternative fuels, energy efficiency, and low-emission technologies. The quote warns against constraints, suggesting that sustainability should not override economic efficiency or freedom of movement. As one interviewee observes *"The transition to electric vehicles is going relatively well when it comes to private cars. Public transport has also seen progress for several years in terms of investment [...] Things are progressing quickly [...]" Hansen [2025, translated].* This technological focus is also included in Dansk Industri's proposal of a national mobility strategy: *"The plan should also contribute to improved urban accessibility, better integration between modes of transport, greater innovation, the implementation of new technologies, and, not least, climate considerations and the green transition" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated].* While *"climate considerations"* and *"green transition"* are mentioned, they appear at the end of the argument. They are positioned as additional outcomes rather than primary drivers, rather than advocating for structural or behavioural change, the focus lies on making greener choices more attractive within existing mobili-

ty patterns. Instead of addressing behavioural changes, Dansk Industri highlights that: *"The strategy must ensure that greener transport is an attractive choice and support resource efficient transport of goods in and out of the country" Dansk Industri [2024, translated].* Through this storyline, Dansk Industri seeks to shape the discourse on mobility by promoting a vision of technological optimisation as the key to a sustainable transport future. By emphasising innovation, energy efficiency, and green fuels, they present a solution to climate challenges that preserves economic growth and freedom of movement.

6.2.6 Transportudvalget

Transportudvalget is the Danish Parliament's standing committee responsible for transport policy. It plays a key role in shaping and overseeing legislation related to public transport, road and rail infrastructure, traffic regulations, and congestion [Folketinget, 2024]. The committee processes proposals of laws and exercises parliamentary oversight of the government's implementation of transport policies. Through questions, consultations, and debates, the committee ensures that transport policy is managed in line with the decisions of the Danish Parliament [Folketinget, 2024]. While the formal decisions are made in the parliamentary chamber, control of the detailed groundwork takes place within this committee [Folketinget, 2025a].

Transportudvalget employs a range of, at times conflicting, storylines to influence Denmark's national understanding of mobility. Through these beliefs, they seek to highlight the perspectives of different stakeholders and legitimise specific priorities. In doing so, it positions itself as a political body and an active shaper of mobility discourse. At the same time, the contrasting understandings expose underlying ideological tensions within the committee, shaped by its different parliamentary parties. Meilvang, representing the Liberal Alliance, advocates for large-scale infrastructure projects like the Kattegat connection, framing congestion primarily as an economic issue. His focus on socio-economic return reflects a liberal rationale, where mobility solutions are legitimised through their potential to generate value to enhance individual rights. In contrast, Prehn from Social Demokraterne promotes a more socially inclusive and sustainability-oriented approach. His emphasis on public transport as an alternative to car travel illustrates a broader understanding of mobility as a common good. Olsen from Socialistisk Folkeparti mentions *"I think it has become more apparent to us, the parties on the left, that this is an important issue" Olsen [2025, translated].* *"I think there is a clear split along the transport policy spectrum, where those of us to the left of centre, in Alternativet, Enhedslisten, Socialitisk Folkeparti, and Radikale Venstre, are clearly in favour of a national mobility strategy, whereas parties like the Liberal Alliance, Dansk Folkeparti, and Danmarks Demokraterne are perhaps more concerned that it might take power away from them" Olsen [2025, translated].* These diverging positions demonstrate how political ideology directly shapes the storylines promoted by committee members, making the influence on mobility decisions conflicting.

1. The first prominent storyline is: "Attractive mobility". This aligns with the environmental storyline. The rationale can be found in the supporting quote: *"Partly it is about climate and the environment. Partly, it is about the need for an alternative for the many who cannot drive or afford to. Finally, it is also about congestion" Prehn [2025b, translated].* Prehn, the former chairman of Transportudvalget, has contributed to this storyline through personal experiences and states: *"I am taking the train across the country from Aalborg to Copenhagen. It works well, people are friendly, the staff are super service-oriented, and we are on schedule. There are many people here, but it is pleasant and the atmosphere is good. Last time I took the car (I also love driving), I was delayed due to roadworks" Prehn [2025a, translated].* This quote positions public transport as an attractive and functional alternative to driving a car for everyday use and during peak travel hours. Although he acknowledges issues within the public transportation system elsewhere in the same LinkedIn post, it becomes a discourse of improvement and investment in sustainable infrastructure. Personal experience is used strategically to legitimise the political prioritisation of rail and public transport. He attempts to reach a broader audience by adding *"I also love driving",* thereby acknowledging its appeal and limitations. Prehn has published multiple posts of this type, where he promotes sustainable transport not merely as functional but as something people actually want to use: *"Transportudvalget test rides Aalborg Municipality's excellent PlusBus service. Interesting presentations along the way. Attractive and very well-functioning buses" Prehn [2025c, translated].* This quote highlights public transport not as a last resort, but as an attractive alternative to the car. Through this storyline, Transportudvalget seeks to reshape the mobility discourse by presenting transport as a right, not a privilege. It moves beyond a car-centric view, promoting both sustainable and appealing public transport, and reframes mobility as a question of fairness and environmental responsibility.

2. The second prominent storyline "Improving public transport", promotes the sustainable mobility storyline, and reflects Transportudvalget's acknowledgement that while progress is being made, there is still work to be done to reach the desired level of efficiency and effectiveness of the public transportation. A central part of this storyline is the role of infrastructure development, particularly in rail transport. The electrification of the railway system is seen as a critical step towards improving efficiency and sustainability, as indicated by the quote: *"The railway is being electrified - new signals are coming" Prehn [2025a, translated].* Transportudvalget emphasises the need to enhance regional connectivity. Transportudvalget advocates linking all parts of Denmark more effectively to reduce regional inequality. This goal is exemplified in the quote: *"Yesterday, we reached an excellent agreement for the rural areas. [...] that will make it easier [...] to create life and growth in the rural areas" Meilvang [2025a, translated].* The focus here is on ensuring that transport solutions benefit both urban and rural areas, promoting a more equal distribution of opportunities and access to services across the country. Additionally, environmental concerns also play a central role in this storyline. Transportudvalget underscores the importance of sustainable development, particularly in reducing emissions and addressing climate change. As Transportudvalget points out, the aim is to make public transport a viable alternative to private car usage for many people, particularly those who cannot drive or afford a car. *"Regardless, the goal and desire are for public transport to be much better than what we experience today. It is about climate and the environment. It also provides an alternative for those who cannot drive or afford to. Finally, it is also about congestion" Prehn [2025b, translated].* It highlights the intertwined nature of sustainability, regional connectivity, and the need to decrease congestion in urban areas.

3. The third prominent storyline is: "Congestion is an economic problem". This aligns with the traditional economic storyline. The rationale behind this storyline is found in the supporting quote: *"We need to get started on the Kattegat connection - the sooner the better!" Meilvang [2025b, translated].* The Kattegat connection is a large-scale infrastructure megaproject typically legitimised through arguments about travel time reduction, efficiency, and economic growth. The project is framed as urgent and necessary, with no discussion of consequences, alternatives, or public debate. Liberal Alliance published an article in Altinget stating: *"New life must be breathed into the Kattegat connection, which will better connect Denmark's two largest cities",* to which Meilvang comments: *"It would be a major socio-economic gain for Denmark. Had it been a Danish company that presented this project, it would have been launched already" Meilvang [2025b, translated]. "Socio-economic gain"* is a key term in the economic storyline, where infrastructure investments are legitimised through growth, efficiency, and returns for the state and society. The project is framed as a no-brainer, where any rational stakeholder would have proceeded. The quote implicitly critiques a lack of political momentum, framing the Liberal Alliance as bold stakeholders who dare to think big. This is a clear example of both the engineering and economic storylines, where the Kattegat connection is presented as a rational and almost self-evident solution. There is no reflection on sustainability, climate impact, or travel behaviour; the focus is solely on economic gain, growth, and rapid realisation. Through this storyline, Transportudvalget seeks to reshape the mobility discourse by framing congestion primarily as an economic issue that demands urgent, large-scale infrastructural solutions.

6.2.7 Transportministeriet

Transportministeriet is the governmental body overseeing Denmark's transportation systems and policies. Its vision is to ensure safe, efficient and sustainable transport systems. As part of the central administration, Transportministeriet provides professional advice and support to the sitting government and its ministers within the legislative framework [Transportministeriet, 2022].

Transportministeriet's storylines prioritise economic efficiency and congestion as a basis for decisionmaking, the Ministry aligns transport planning with cost-effectiveness and productivity. The Infrastructure Plan 2035 from Transportministeriet encapsulates several of these storylines: *"The initiatives of the agreement aim to ensure that Denmark is better connected, to help make society more prosperous, and to support a greener future" Transportministeriet [2021, p. 3, translated].* In this regard, the technocratic discourse is reinforced: *"The parties to the agreement wish to strengthen the road infrastructure through better connected road links across the whole of Denmark. At the same time, congestion should be alleviated in places where motorists are stuck in traffic, and timely action should be taken with regard to the expected future development of congestion" Transportministeriet [2021, p. 5, translated].* Together, these storylines construct a hybrid discourse that blends tradition and transition, which steers the national understanding of mobility towards technological solutions, infrastructure investment, and national cohesion - rather than systemic change or reduced mobility.

1. The first prominent storyline, "Technocratic decision-making", is central to the perspective of Transportministeriet, which emphasises the importance of incorporating economic calculations in decision-making for transport policy. This is reflected in their statement *"We started looking at socio-economic calculations to assess the value of it. At least we try to assess it, even if the models can be debated" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* Addressing congestion is a top priority for Transportministeriet, which further emphasises that decision-makers must tackle the ongoing congestion issues impacting citizens: *"It is also important for us decision-makers to look at concrete challenges we face in the short term. [...] where Danes are currently under pressure from congestion" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* However, they do not see the need for a national overarching plan: *"Who actually wants a national mobility strategy - and what is it they want from it? What are they asking for?" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This underscores the belief, that infrastructure in itself is not the problem. Tansport policies are viewed as reactive over proactive: *"And that is also why, if you ask: "Why is Denmark a car country?", the answer is that Denmark is a detached house country. It is really not more complicated than that" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* Transportministeriet stresses the importance of new infrastructure projects designed to reduce congestion, which results in lost time and money for citizens and businesses. This is evident in their quote: *"New infrastructure should help address congestion problems that cost citizens and businesses time and money" Transportministeriet [2024, translated].* The ministry emphasises that congestion reduction is not just about improving mobility but also about enhancing economic efficiency and

societal well-being. Further, Transportministeriet believes in evaluating projects through socio-economic analysis, ensuring that only the most cost-effective solutions are implemented. Their statement *"The initial screening [...] showed no solutions that were viable from a socio-economic perspective" Rantorp [2025, translated]* indicates that they prioritise economically viable projects. In conclusion to the storyline, Transportministeriet emphasises economic considerations as the driver in transport decision-making, seeking to ensure that transport infrastructure projects support economic productivity and long-term benefits.

2. The second storyline, "Cohesion and regional equality", focuses on the importance of mobility in ensuring equal opportunities across urban and rural regions, aligning with the town planning storyline. Transportministeriet highlights the need for a transport system that allows people to live and work in all parts of Denmark, regardless of location. The quote: *"We need to ensure that Denmark stays connected so that people can live and work in all areas" Folketinget [2025b, translated]* reflects this vision. It reinforces the idea that connectivity between different regions is essential for maintaining social and economic balance in Denmark. This concern is expressed in the quote: *"How can Skive avoid being left off the growth wheel?" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* It speaks to the importance of ensuring that even rural areas are not excluded from the economic opportunities and growth enjoyed by more central locations. This quote underlines the need for strategic investment in infrastructure to prevent certain regions from being economically sidelined. Further reinforcing the theme of so-

cietal cohesion, the ministry emphasises that *"mobility and infrastructure are prerequisites for a well-functioning society and for the connection between cities and rural areas" Transportministeriet [2024, translated].* Stressing mobility is essential for economic efficiency and ensuring societal balance, particularly by bridging the gap between urban and rural areas. The statement: *"The infrastructure, buildings and regulation we implement today will form the foundation for the green society of future generations" Transportministeriet [2024, translated]* connects the idea of physical connectivity with a broader social responsibility. It frames infrastructure development as a long-term commitment to current and future generations, ensuring that regional equality and cohesion are prioritised in Denmark's future. In summary, the storyline centres around the belief that mobility is critical for ensuring that all regions, regardless of their economic position, are equally integrated into the nation's social and financial framework.

3. The third prominent storyline is "Technological revolution". While aligned with the sustainable mobility discourse, it prioritises green fuels and innovation over behavioural change, thereby also having roots in a technocratic discourse: *"What is happening right now is this revolution of green fuels" Folketinget [2025b, translated],* which signals a transformative, yet primarily technical shift, from fossil fuels to greener alternatives, rather than a rethinking of mobility itself. This reflects a *"green"* technological discourse: a middle ground between traditional and sustainable perspectives, creating a hybrid storyline. Another quote attempts to combine growth and environmental goals: *"Transportministeriet must ensure mobility that creates value*

for Danish society. The Ministry must combine the goal of high mobility with the goals of an efficient transport system, a green transition, and safe traffic management" Transportministeriet [2024, p. 5, translated]. This hybrid storyline does not reject traditional values but seeks to integrate them with climate objectives, without advocating for reduced mobility or behavioural shifts. For example: *"Denmark must have transport systems, infrastructure, and buildings that meet society's needs in an efficient, green, and safe manner under proper conditions" Transportministeriet [2024, p. 7, translated].* Here, mobility is framed as a societal responsibility, emphasising both *"commitment"* and *"regulation".* Yet, the focus remains largely on green fuels, as seen in: *"Transport's CO_2 emissions must be significantly reduced, for example through electrification" Transportministeriet [2024, p. 7, translated].* The proposed solutions: electrification, green vehicles, charging stations, CO_2-neutral trains, and greener aviation, point to a technocratic, innovational approach. Transportministeriet elaborates that: *"First and foremost, it is about climate, specifically CO_2 emissions and the shift from fossil fuels to electricity, but it also includes what you might call externalities in a broader sense. Historically, the focus has mainly been on traffic accidents, but now it has expanded to include CO_2, particulates, and noise" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This version of sustainable mobility promotes low-emission technologies without questioning overall transport volumes or car-dependence. The traditional discourse is indirectly challenged through calls for smarter, more holistic planning: *"Overall, as mentioned at the outset, there is a need to think more holistically towards a mobility plan. We must think smarter than merely carrying out physical investments that expand road capacity" Barfoed [2025, translated].* Similarly, the Ministry notes: *"We are working on things where*

we are not only thinking in terms of roads, but also considering public transport" Folketinget [2025b, translated]. While these statements suggest a shift, they remain cautiously formulated, lacking strong emphasis on behavioural change or climate goals. The discourse appears to be expanding the toolkit rather than fundamentally changing direction. Transportministeriet seeks to shape the understanding of mobility by implementing the *"green transition"* through technological solutions, such as electrification, green trains, charging stations, and new types of asphalt. It creates a storyline of progress where major behavioural change is unnecessary; transport becomes *"green"* through innovation. Thus, the objective is not to reduce mobility, but to preserve it through green growth. The way the problem is framed helps determine the type of solution that emerges. In this case, Transportministeriet focuses on the transition in relation to the climate challenges posed by fossil-fuelled cars, overlooking other societal issues associated with car use, as highlighted in section 1.1: *"Well, I do not think there is much basis for a more extensive national mobility strategy than the one we already have, because the climate aspect needs to be addressed regardless - and that will happen through electrification" Heinsen [2025b, translated].*

4. The fourth prominent storyline is "Mobility for quality of life". This is a hybrid storyline situated between the environmental and economic storyline, and with nodes of the town planning storyline. It attempts to frame mobility as an individual right *"It must be easy and safe for citizens to get to work and to combine work and leisure" Transportministeriet [2024, p. 5, translated].* This aligns with traditional mobility discourses,

mainly from economic and engineering perspectives. Another quote states: *"We were and still are very focused on making sure Denmark stays connected, in a way that people can live and work in all areas of the country" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* Mobility is seen as a means of ensuring social and regional cohesion, though the solution is typically infrastructure investment rather than a change in mobility forms. This is especially evident in the following: *"how Ringkøbing can avoid falling off the growth wheel" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* The language invokes a growth and competition discourse, where mobility is tied to economic survival in peripheral areas. Likewise, Transportministeriet emphasises the importance of maintaining current mobility freedoms for Danes: *"Many people love to travel and experience the world. It improves the quality of life and connects the world; we must be able to do so in the future. That requires us to find new and climate-friendly ways" Rantorp [2025, translated].* This statement defends mobility as a human right essential to quality of life. It counters ideas of limiting movement or slowing growth and instead supports the notion that people should be free to move, even while recognising the climate challenge. Responsibility is shifted towards systemic innovation rather than individual sacrifice. The Minister of Transport speaks of mobility as if sustainability equals restriction, loss, or guilt: *"The path to a sustainable green transition is not through dismantling or bad conscience" Rantorp [2025, translated].* Through this storyline, Transportministeriet seeks to influence public understanding of mobility by reinforcing it as a fundamental individual right. By combining liberal values with climate awareness, the ministry promotes a vision of preserving mobility, not reducing it, through technological innovation rather than behavioural change.

partial conclusion

The analysis in chapter 6.2 shows that Danish mobility planning is challenged by competing discourses. While some stakeholders actively promote an emerging sustainable mobility discourse, others continue to reinforce traditional paradigms rooted in economic growth, infrastructure expansion, and technocratic rationale. This reflects the coexistence of multiple, and often competing, storylines, a concept defined by Hajer as condensed stories that reduce complexity [Hajer, 1993, p. 63]. By identifying these storylines, the project gains insight into the embedded assumptions, values, and priorities that different stakeholders bring into the debate. This vertical analysis reveals not only what stakeholders say, but how they construct meaning through specific textual choices, as proclaimed by Fairclough's methodological approach of the textual dimension [Fairclough, 1992, p. 4].

To summarise: Dansk Erhverv adopts a hybrid position that selectively incorporates sustainability within a market-oriented framework. CONCITO stands out as a primary driver of the emerging environmental storyline. They challenge the assumption that mobility is inherently beneficial. IDA supports this discursive shift, advocating for a national mobility plan to overcome siloed decision-making. KL advances a more socially grounded discourse, focusing on equity and local adaptability. KL does not strongly challenge the technocratic discourse but reframes mobility as a facilitator of everyday life and social inclusion, particularly for rural areas. Dansk Industri resists the environmental storyline. DI's discourse is shaped primarily by concerns around efficiency, capacity, and economic return. Transportudvalget represents a fragmented discursive space, reflecting the pluralism of the Danish political system. Committee members promote both progressive and traditional discourses depending on the parliamentary parties. Transportministeriet represents a blend of traditional and emerging discourses. While the ministry signals awareness of sustainability, cohesion, and regional development, it remains primarily guided by economic rationales and cost-benefit logic.

Therefore, stakeholders shape the discourse on national mobility in Denmark in distinctly different ways. Promoters of the emerging discourse (e.g., CONCITO, IDA, and partially KL) challenge existing assumptions and advocate for structural change rooted in climate, health, and equity. Resistors (e.g., Dansk Erhverv, DI, Transportministeriet) seek to adapt the dominant discourse rather than changing practice, aligning with sustainability only when it supports continued mobility and economic efficiency. Mediators (Transportudvalget) host a dynamic mix of perspectives that reflect political differences and ongoing debates. These roles are not fixed positions but are shaped by the way stakeholders draw on, reinforce, or destabilise particular storylines in different contexts.

This first step in the discourse analysis is essential because it lays the groundwork for identifying discourse-coalitions in Step 2 of the analytical framework 5.2 [Hajer, 1993, p. 66]. By exposing the underlying conflicts and alignments within storylines, this analysis reveals the foundations upon which shared discursive positions occur [Hajer, 1993, p. 66]. Without this foundational analysis, it would be difficult to track how certain discourses become dominant within the political field. It shows that the conflicting meaning of mobility in Denmark is not merely a technical policy debate but a deeply discursive disagreement over which will define the future of sustainable transport.

07

analysis of discoursive practice

The following analysis will investigate the third supporting question: Which shared discursive positions can be identified through the storylines on national mobility in Denmark? This analysis of discourse-coalitions is necessary before engaging with the broader question of discourse institutionalisation. While the vertical analysis showed how individual stakeholders make sense of their distinct discursive positions, the horizontal analysis maps their shared discursive alignments. These coalitions forms the foundation for understanding how certain discourses come to hold institutional power [Hajer, 1993, p. 48].

Through the methodological approach of Fairclough, the discursive practice guides this analysis, as the circulation of storylines between stakeholders reveal a reproduction of social reality. Without attention to this, the third step (social practice) risks overlooking how certain discourses gain dominance across multiple stakeholders, thereby constructing a coalition of shared views [Fairclough, 1992, p. 4][Hajer, 1993, pp. 65-66]. Discourse-coalitions emerge, some promoting transformation, others reinforcing established practices. As Hajer identifies, these coalitions form a united front, sharing an understanding of certain themes, thereby reinforcing the status quo or challenging the current practice [Hajer, 1993, pp. 48 & 65]. Discourse becomes politically significant because it brings stakeholders together and legitimises specific actions or decisions, which is the foundation for discourse-institutionalisation [Olsen, 2025][Hajer, 1993, pp. 48 & 65]. Identifying who says what reveals how power is exercised within the political landscape.

This analysis of discourse-coalitions is not based on an actively coordinated effort, yet due to shared understandings of mobility, they appear as a unified front supporting distinct discourses [Hajer, 1993, pp. 65-66]. That means that coalitions are defined by how individual stakeholders' storylines align with those of others, to establish cross-coordinated discursive positions, as visualised in Figure 7.1.

Mobility for quality of life

Transport-ministeriet

Cohesion and regional quality

SPATIAL COHESION COALITION

Regional cohesion

Technological revolution

Technocratic decision-making

Everyday mobility

KL

Soft mobility first

IDA

Mobility plan or chaos

Sustainability as the obvoius choice

ECONOMIC GROWTH COALITION

The good life

Mobility as freedom and necessity

Attractive mobility

SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY COALITION

Transport-udvalget

Technological modernisation

Efficient mobility

Dansk Erhverv

Improving public transport

Mobility is not a goal in itself

Congestion is an economic problem

Shifting priorities

GREEN MODERNISATION COALITION

Mobility within planetary boundaries

CONCITO

Mobility as a growth driver

Technological optimisation

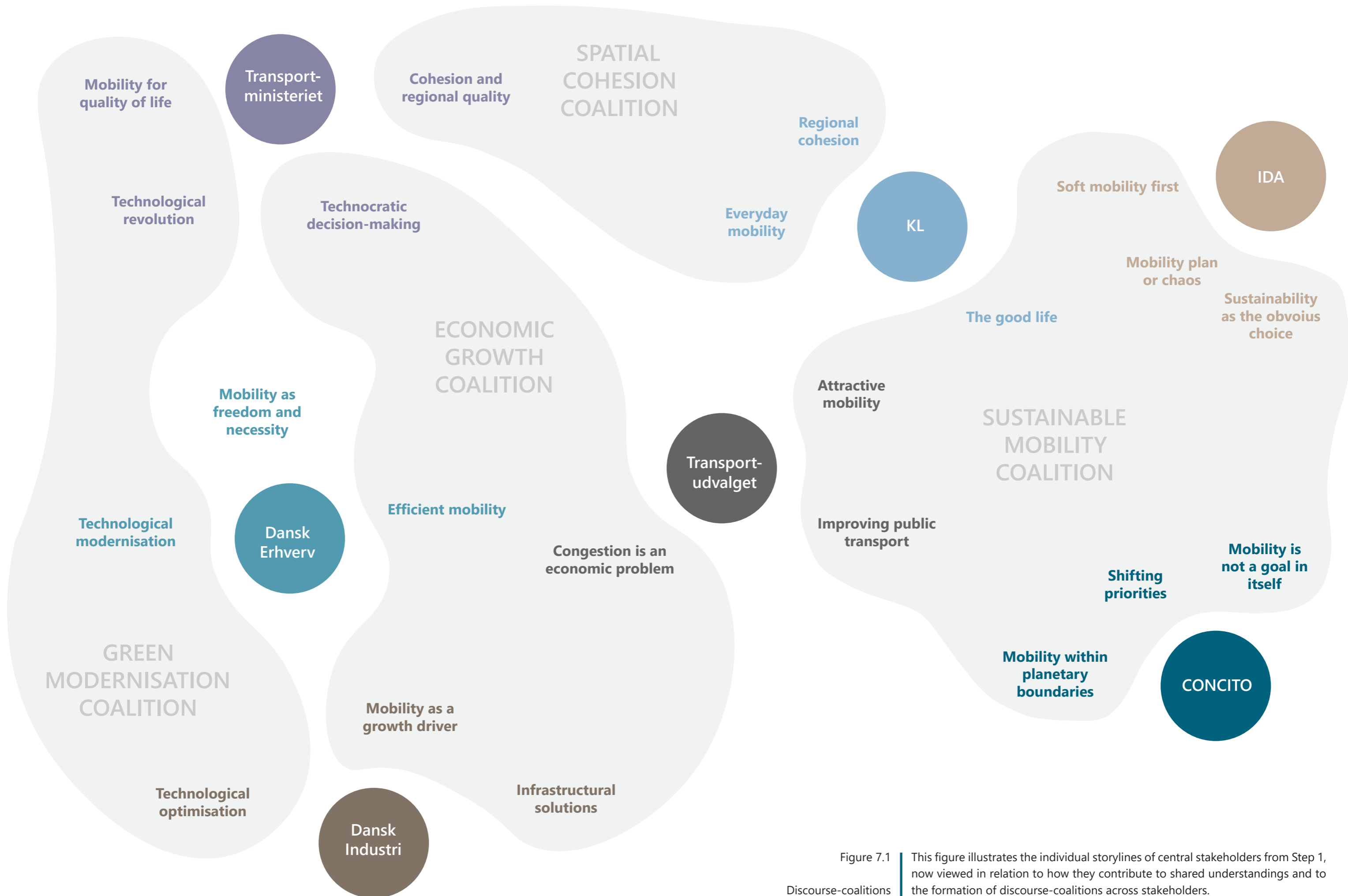**Dansk Industri**

Infrastructural solutions

Figure 7.1 | This figure illustrates the individual storylines of central stakeholders from Step 1, now viewed in relation to how they contribute to shared understandings and to the formation of discourse-coalitions across stakeholders.

Discourse-coalitions

7.1 SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY COALITION

The sustainable mobility coalition brings together stakeholders with a common vision: mobility should be actively governed within environmental and social boundaries. In this case, CONCITO, IDA, and elements of KL and Transportudvalget form a coalition by reproducing a common understanding of mobility. This coalition is structured around shared storylines that foreground sustainability as the central concern. The coalition challenges dominant transport paradigms and seeks to reframe mobility as a societal issue, not just a technical one. KL presents a storyline that aligns with this line of thinking but does not challenge the dominant practice, as it does not actively engage in advocacy within the debate on a national mobility strategy. For this reason, KL will not be examined further as part of this coalition.

The sustainable mobility coalition brings together stakeholders who share a commitment to governing mobility within planetary boundaries. Their storylines challenge car-centric planning and call for systemic change in how mobility is defined and governed in Denmark. One stakeholder in the coalition puts, *"we have no gain from this. Except that, as a country, we get more rational policy. it is not something we profit from" Have [2025e, translated].* This reflects a critique of stakeholders who use mobility planning as a tool to push specific projects and promote distinct interests: *"some business organisations' members care a lot about, say, a roundabout that gets clogged. And if such a plan gives them a way in, they will use it to get something pushed through" Have [2025e, translated].* Instead, the coalition frames itself as taking responsibility for the climate challenges, over focusing on distinct interests, insisting that *"one can travel as much as one likes, in principle, but it must be covered climate-wise. That is what the others do not want to address" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Their stance is that *"the others take on special interests [...] we do not care about that" Schelde [2025d, translated],* making clear their rejection of planning based on one-sided interests.

This coalition is composed of both symbolic elites and political stakeholders. As van Dijk notes, this distinction is crucial, since control over discourse does not rest solely with formal political authority. Symbolic elites exert influence through their ability to shape understandings; their power lies in their capacity to push for changes in institutional discourse. They help define what is discussed, how issues are framed, and whose voices are amplified or silenced. As one committee member observed, *"I also believe that IDA contributes with qualified input to the debate" [Olsen, 2025, translated],* underlining the impact of non-political stakeholders in shaping the discursive landscape.

CONCITO's approach is the commitment to translate knowledge into action: *"Our role is to produce knowledge that can be translated into action" Have [2025e, translated].* This reflects the coalition's broader emphasis on evidence-based policy-making to achieve sustainability goals. CONCITO also fundamentally challenges the assumption that all mobility is inherently good. Instead, they argue that mobility must *"create more value than it destroys" Have [2025e, translated],* aligning with the coalition's critical stance toward growth for growth's sake. CONCITO brings a systemic view that locates mobility within planetary boundaries. As one quote puts it, *"mobility [...] must develop within these two [climate goals and resources]" Have [2025e, translated],* reflecting the coalition's shared belief in planning constrained by environmental challenges. They also advocate for optimisation of existing infrastructure instead of further expansion: *"many times it will be more rational to optimise what you already have [...] instead of building more roads" Have [2025e, translated].* This reflects a belief that the current socio-economic model fails to value climate, health, and quality of life on par with time savings and financial cost. This critique of expansion is further reinforced by an emerging awareness among the public. As Have notes, citizens increasingly express frustration over persistent congestion *"I drive to and from work - why is there always traffic? I am always stuck in traffic", to which he responds: "yes, but you are traffic. And the person behind you is also stuck in traffic. It will not get better by building more" Have [2025e, translated].* This reflects a broader structural challenge, that ordinary citizens, who constitute the democratic foundation for political decision-making, often share this perception. When citizens adopt and circulate this framing, it further reinforces the technocratic discourse.

IDA fits into the sustainable mobility coalition through their critique of fragmented decision-making, commitment to systemic planning, and alignment with environmental priorities, many of which are also present in CONCITO's perspective. Together, these shared principles reinforce the coalition's broader vision. IDA strongly criticises the lack of coordination, stating that *"if we invest without a goal, it is just individual projects" Schelde [2025b, translated].* This critique directly supports the coalition's emphasis on strategic mobility planning. Rejecting traditional infrastructure expansion, IDA states that *"expanding the existing road infrastructure is not a sustainable solution" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 9, translated],* and insists that *"a key focus in the mobility plan is the number of cars, especially fossil cars: the number of cars must stagnate" Ingeniørforeningen i Danmark [2021b, p. 3, translated].* For IDA, sustainable mobility requires behavioural change as much as technological adaptation: *"in the end, it is very much about behaviour" Schelde [2025d, translated].* IDA does not position itself as a

neutral technical organisation, as it embraces responsibility: *"with great power comes great responsibility" Schelde [2025d, translated].* The organisation uses its expertise not just to execute plans, but to shape them responsibly: *"IDA sees itself as a torch-bearer for what is rational for Denmark" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Their leadership in delivering the first climate response under the Danish Climate Act demonstrates their longstanding commitment: *"this is not an interest that has been invented recently. It is an interest that has always been part of societal development" Schelde [2025d, translated].*

Transportudvalget emerges as a political stakeholder. A central voice is Rasmus Prehn, who uses political storytelling to frame mobility as a universal right, rather than a privilege for car owners. He promotes the storyline that *"mobility should be attractive for everyone -not just for car owners"* advocating for inclusive planning that benefits those without access to private vehicles [Prehn, 2025a, translated]. This reflects an understanding that sustainable mobility must serve the many, including those without access to private cars, and must prioritise public transport, cycling, and walkability. This defines the structural nature of mobility planning, pointing to the intersection between housing and transport, which is further highlighted by Olsen: *"I believe the reason I find a national mobility strategy important is that some politicians simply do not fully grasp the impact of housing policy on transport policy" Olsen [2025, translated].* This statement underscores the coalition's systemic view, advocating for integrated policy solutions and challenging the present, siloed approaches. This view is emphasised by Mads, who has been a member of Transportudvalget for about a year. This is part of organisational changes that are the reason for Transportudvalget's position in

this discourse-coalition [Have, 2025e]. Many supporters of the 2035 Infrastructure Plan have left the committee, replaced by younger representatives, as Have has observed. Due to the organisational changes, Have has observed that the new members are asking more critical questions and are speaking about mobility with a changed understanding [Have, 2025e]. This organisational shift illustrates how discourse is circulated and gains traction, eventually becoming institutionalised. The changes within Transportudvalget, where new members increasingly articulate sustainability-oriented concerns, reflect a shift in its discursive practice. Although the shift in priorities is gradual, it does not immediately transform decision-making.

7.2 ECONOMIC GROWTH COALITION

The economic growth coalition is composed of stakeholders who continue to view mobility through a traditional planning lens, where transport is primarily a facilitator of economic growth, productivity, and competitiveness. This coalition sees congestion and regional inequality as barriers to efficiency, best addressed through infrastructure expansion and improved flow. This is an example of a dominant discourse, which maintains power not necessarily through coercion, but through its normalisation as common sense [Hajer, 1995b, p. 246].

The coalition acknowledges that *"no matter what we do, we have a CO_2 emission" [Hansen, 2025, translated],* reflecting the belief that emissions are an inevitable consequence of economic growth. From their perspective, all activities, whether investing in infrastructure, childcare workers, or increasing citizens' income, generate emissions. This challenges the idea that building infrastructure is some necessary evil. A shared understanding across the coalition is that the future should not be about reducing mobility to protect the climate. Instead, emissions should be reduced where possible, project by project. Rather than limiting how people and goods move, the ambition is to lower emissions without holding back economic and societal development, as emissions always play a part in decisions, no matter the cause.

The coalition's resistance to ideas promoted by the sustainable mobility coalition, such as reducing transport demand or encouraging people to change their travel behaviour, helps draw a clear line between different political positions. They often describe their approach as *"realistic"* and dismiss other ideas as too *"idealistic."* This distinction is used to justify their focus on technical fixes and infrastructure expansion. As Fairclough notes, discourses are never neutral, they always involve power struggles and help shape which political ideas are seen as achievable [Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 11].

Dansk Industri plays a central role in shaping and promoting a growth-oriented view of mobility. In their approach, transport is primarily seen as a driver of business and economic development. As they put it, *"we must prioritise the investments and efforts that yield the greatest socio-economic return and the greatest business effects" Dansk Industri [2021, p. 2, translated].* This perspective reinforces the traditional predict-and-provide model, where expanding road capacity and improving freight efficiency are viewed as key to sustaining national prosperity. In contrast to sustainability-focused approaches, this discourse positions economic return and competitiveness above environmental or social considerations. This tension becomes particularly clear in Hansen's statements. He expresses concern over potential revisions to major infrastructure agreements, stating that *"splitting up the entire agreement [IP35] would be our worst-case" Hansen [2025, translated].* His worry reflects the expectations and investments businesses have already made, highlighting a conflicting difference from the sustainable mobility coalition, which often views large infrastructure commitments as an unfortunate result of path-dependent planning [Have, 2025e]. From DI's perspective,

infrastructure development is not just a matter of adding new roads but a foundation for broader urban and societal transformations. As explained, *"maybe some of what we build is a prerequisite for achieving the other things we want" Hansen [2025, translated],* suggests that infrastructure projects enable cities to adapt, grow, and shift traffic patterns more sustainably. DI further points to the ageing state of much of Denmark's infrastructure, noting that *"a large part of our society, buildings, etc., were built around the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, and they are getting old and must be renewed" Hansen [2025, translated].* Thus, within the economic growth coalition, infrastructure is not viewed as an optional investment but as a necessary condition for maintaining both economic vitality and social development. This positions DI in contrast to more sustainable discourses that emphasise reducing mobility demand or fundamentally rethinking transport needs.

Transportministeriet echoes this logic in its emphasis on congestion and cost-benefit analyses as the primary planning tools. The ministry frames congestion as a key barrier to economic efficiency, stating that *"new infrastructure should help address congestion problems that cost citizens and businesses time and money" Transportministeriet [2024, translated].* The reliance on socioeconomic methods to evaluate project viability reflects a technocratic rationale that prioritises quantifiable returns over qualitative or transformative goals: *"We started looking at socio-economic calculations to assess the value of it. At least we try to assess it, even if the models can be debated" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* While climate and cohesion are occasionally invoked, they are often subordinated to an economic framing of mobility challenges. The ministry's approach remains in a cost-efficiency paradigm, legitimising investments that promise the most

significant short-term gains in productivity and flow. Heinsen defines Denmark's development according to the predict-and-provide principle, a reactive planning logic rooted in prevailing market trends and economic demand. He states: *"[...] Instead, it is some kind of combination of municipal planning activities and market conditions that determines development. Is that not how it works? Based on both supply and demand" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This statement is central to the traditional economic discourse on mobility, as it encapsulates the foundational belief that infrastructure development should follow market signals and projected demand rather than actively shaping future mobility patterns. Transport investments are legitimised through existing trends rather than long-term societal goals such as sustainability or behavioural change. Transportministeriet further reinforces the economic growth coalition's perspective: *"it is actually very important to complete the projects that have been decided – more important than whether the absolute best project has been chosen" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* They acknowledge that securing investments and delivering infrastructure projects is, in itself, a significant achievement: *"If you have two projects, and one is slightly better than the other, but at least you get something done, then you have achieved something" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This viewpoint reflects a fundamental belief embedded in the economic growth coalition that more mobility is equivalent to more economic growth. It emphasises building and expanding infrastructure as inherently valuable, even if it does not align with the most sustainable or optimal solution. In this framing, the certainty of investment and expansion is prioritised over pursuing *"better"* alternatives that might risk delay or failure.

This prioritisation of growth and infrastructure is particularly visible in one of the discourses from Transportudvalget, especially in the statements of Jens Meilvang from Liberal Alliance. Meilvang consistently frames mobility projects such as the Kattegat connection regarding their economic benefit and urgency: *"We need to get started on the Kattegat connection - the sooner the better!" Meilvang [2025b, translated].* He further asserts that "it would be a major socio-economic gain for Denmark" and that private sector logic would have expedited the project: *"Had it been a Danish company that presented this project, it would have been launched already" Meilvang [2025b, translated].* In these statements, large-scale infrastructure is framed as a self-evident solution to economic inefficiency. Congestion is not viewed as a climate issue, but as a drain on economic output and individual productivity.

Dansk Erhverv consistently prioritises flow and economic return, aligning them with the traditional planning rationale: *"I believe our role is [...] to advocate for not reducing mobility" Lübcke [2025, translated],* framing mobility as a driver for business development and economic growth. They reject demand reduction: *"It is important that we avoid falling into the trap where the solution to the climate challenge becomes that we need to transport less in the future" Dansk Erhverv [2024b, p. 5, translated].* This confirms their preference for expanding or upgrading infrastructure rather than changing current mobility behaviour. Dansk Erhverv highlights that their understanding of mobility is closely related to Dansk Industri, as both represents their member organisations [Lübcke, 2025].

The economic growth coalition contains stakeholders who continue to view mobility through a traditional planning lens, where transport is primarily a facilitator of economic growth and competitiveness. Together, these stakeholders reinforce and legitimise Denmark's contemporary transport planning. Their discourse frames mobility expansion as both inevitable and necessary to meet future demands, rather than something to be fundamentally questioned or reframed.

Maintaining momentum in project completion is seen as more important than pursuing a more sustainable alternative. This logic contrasts with the sustainable mobility coalition, where reducing transport demand is considered a legitimate climate strategy. Stakeholders in the economic growth coalition reject such ideas. As one coalition member explains, *"There is a very fundamental contrast, if we just take the difference between us and CONCITO, for example. The thing is, CONCITO believes that reducing mobility is a way to reduce the climate footprint. Essentially, they believe we should be moving less, right? We have the opposite view because we believe that - perhaps it is a bit much to say, but - it harms society. There are significant socio-economic costs for businesses, and indeed also for citizens, when mobility is reduced. So, we would much rather talk about how we can maintain mobility, and, in fact, further develop it" Lübcke [2025, translated].* In this context, continued and expanded mobility is desirable and crucial for maintaining economic vitality and welfare. At the same time, the economic growth coalition cautions against rapid, radical transitions. Here, CONCITO's proposals are considered harmful and thus implicitly unrealistic or irresponsible. At the same time, a preference is expressed for gradual, achievable solutions, such as technological development, which frames their view-

points as legitimate and *"realistic"* from the perspective of the economic growth coalition. As outlined, *"we fundamentally agree on the goals, but where we differ is on how fast and how easily we can move from where we are today to where we need to be" Hansen [2025, translated].* Radical shifts in infrastructure and mobility systems are perceived as unrealistic without first securing the necessary technological and economic foundations. He notes that *"there must be substance before businesses dare take the risk" Hansen [2025, translated],* highlighting that a lack of viable electric trucks and charging infrastructure makes it impractical to demand immediate change in freight transport.

7.3 GREEN MODERNISATION COALITION

The green modernisation coalition brings together stakeholders who support the green transition of the transport sector, but who do so by maintaining the core assumptions of traditional mobility planning. The coalition believes sustainability can be achieved through technological innovation, infrastructure investment, and efficiency improvements, without substantial behavioural change or reductions in transport demand. While the stakeholders adopt elements of the sustainable mobility discourse, such as electrification and green fuels, they continue to reproduce a growth-oriented, car-dependent, and predict-and-provide planning logic.

Together, these stakeholders form a coalition that promotes a version of green mobility centred on technical solutions, infrastructural upgrades, and efficiency gains. They seek to preserve core aspects of the existing system, such as car use, economic growth, infrastructure expansion, while overlaying them with green technologies. In doing so, they acknowledge parts of the sustainable mobility discourse but sideline its transformative and radical elements.

The green modernisation coalition represents a stabilising discourse that seeks to preserve dominant social and economic structures by integrating climate concerns without causing structural change. Dansk Erhverv plays a central role within the green modernisation coalition by promoting a vision of sustainable mobility that aligns with continued economic growth and technological progress. They argue that *"the overarching goal should always be to create efficient, competitive and green mobility" [Dansk Erhverv, 2024b, p. 9, translated],* reflecting the coalition's belief that environmental goals can be achieved without challenging the fundamental assumptions of current transport systems. Rather than advocating for less transport, Dansk Erhverv sees potential in modernising mobility through innovation: *"While some may argue that the solution to the transport sector's climate footprint is to travel less and transport fewer goods, we see a completely different potential" [Dansk Erhverv, 2024b, p. 2, translated].* This view is reflected in statements emphasising green transition over reduction: *"We do not believe in flying less, we believe in flying greener. It is two different perspectives, one says stop flying, the other says use green fuels so we can keep flying" [Lübcke, 2025, translated].* The focus is on enabling existing transport patterns to continue with greener fuels and technologies. Reducing transport is seen as a risk, even if the technologies become more sustainable. This diverges from the sustainable mobility coalition, which accepts reduced demand as a possible path to climate mitigation, as one representative notes, *"We believe transport modes need to transition, and then it becomes a question of how we can utilise that in a mobility context, so that it does not become a matter of transition while also reducing mobility. That is our biggest concern" [Lübcke, 2025, translated].* There is a strong emphasis on *"[...] when it comes to passenger cars, it seems like over time that is sorting itself out" [Lübcke, 2025, translated].* In this way, Dansk Erhverv adopt elements of the sustainable mobility discourse, such as electrification and climate-friendly fuels, yet remain committed to a growth-oriented, car-dependent planning paradigm. Dansk Erhverv presents their approach as broadly aligned with other stakeholders, suggesting a shared understanding that change is necessary: *"I think we all agree that transport modes need to transition... and many of us, including Transportministeriet, see it the same way when it comes to utilising capacity in infrastructure" Lübcke [2025, translated].* However, despite this sense of common ground, they distance themselves from what they perceive as more radical positions that call for significant reductions in mobility: *"We believe transport modes should transition, but then it becomes about how we use that in a mobility context - so it does not become a situation where we transition, but still have to reduce mobility. That is really our biggest concern" [Lübcke, 2025, translated].* Green transition is seen as a technical challenge, not one that requires lifestyle or demand changes. This mirrors the statement: *"Transportministeriets raison d'être (reason for being) [...] is to create mobility [...] but with the added element of sustainability" [Lübcke, 2025, translated],* illustrating how green policies are layered on top of existing logics rather than replacing them.

Dansk Industri aligns closely with the green modernisation coalition, articulating a vision in which technological innovation and economic rationals drive the green transition of the transport sector. Their position is clear: *"The environmental and climate challenges of transport should primarily be addressed through technological development" Dansk Industri [2021, pp. 5–6, translated],* reflecting a belief that sustainability can be achieved without challenging existing mobility patterns or car-dependence. While they do acknowledge cycling and public transport, these are framed as being efficient, rather than as transformative shifts. The sustainable mobility coalition is implicitly associated with destabilising change, suggesting that too rapid a shift away from existing systems could do more harm than good. In this light, Dansk Industri's approach presents itself as responsible. They reject calls to reorient infrastructure planning, arguing instead that building, when done wisely, enables broader societal goals: *"Some people say we should stop building things altogether, but perhaps what we build is a prerequisite for the other things we want to achieve" [Hansen, 2025, translated].* Dansk Industri stresses that visible progress must come first before a broader shift can happen. As one representative notes: *"Something has to happen before we can begin a transition. Whether it is a chicken-and-egg situation, there needs to be substance before businesses are willing to take that risk. There are always some who want to be first movers, and a small group that will jump on board as soon as the first "something" appears" [Hansen, 2025, translated].* Their approach is shaped by a need for stability and predictable markets, indicating that they are not the first movers. Their vision of sustainability is therefore one of gradual, investment to avoid disruption.

Transportministeriet similarly integrates green transition goals without disrupting existing planning ways. They highlight that *"what is happening right now is this revolution of green fuels" Folketinget [2025b, translated],* presenting electrification, alternative fuels, and smart infrastructure as the primary instruments of change. Yet, these solutions are framed as ways to maintain, rather than reimagine, mobility freedom. The Ministry states that:

"many people love to travel and experience the world. It improves the quality of life and connects the world; we must be able to do so in the future. That requires us to find new and climate-friendly ways" Rantorp [2025, translated]. The idea that mobility creates value remains central, and the Ministry explicitly defends existing freedoms: *"The path to a sustainable green transition is not through dismantling or bad conscience" Rantorp [2025, translated].* Transportministeriet reinforces the prevailing mobility discourse and planning culture by framing electrification as the primary solution to the climate challenges in the transport sector. As one representative states: *"I do not believe there is much basis for a more comprehensive national mobility strategy than the one we already have, because the climate aspect needs to be addressed regardless - and that must happen through electrification" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This incremental approach, in which *"sustainability"* becomes synonymous with electrification, perpetuates a car-oriented paradigm and fails to engage with alternative challenges or solutions highlighted by the sustainable mobility coalition. As another quote illustrates: *"When it comes to electrification, there has been strong political will to invest, and we have indeed done so. That is also why something is happening -something that a country like Denmark, with its suburban character, can benefit from" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This clearly illustrates how the Ministry remains entrenched within existing institutional frameworks, where suburban housing patterns are allowed to dictate transport investments, rather than critically questioning established practices and assumptions. Their storyline of mobility as "individual freedom and quality of life" blends liberal values with technocratic modernisation, aligning closely with the discourse of Dansk Erhverv and Dansk Industri.

7.4 SPACIAL COHESION COALITION

The spatial cohesion coalition shares a vision of mobility that ensures social equity and regional balance across Denmark. Instead of focusing primarily on climate goals or economic growth, this coalition highlights the importance of connecting everyday life, making it easier for people to live, work and access services, no matter where they are. Mobility is framed as a fundamental right and a key part of building equal opportunities between cities and rural areas.

Together, these stakeholders promote a discourse where mobility is understood as a driver for regional development. This coalition does not strongly challenge car-dependency or existing economic models but insists that public infrastructure and planning must reflect differing needs across Denmark. Unlike the more clearly defined technocratic and sustainability coalitions, the spatial cohesion coalition positions itself less directly in the mobility debate. It does not promote a solution or call for fundamental changes to how transport is planned. Instead, it draws attention to a specific problem: the risk of growing inequality between different parts of the country. A shared concern unites this coalition for regional cohesion, the idea that all areas of Denmark should remain connected. But unlike the other coalitions, it does not offer a clear, unified response to this challenge. Rather than proposing a national mobility strategy, it works within the current system to improve access and inclusion, especially in rural and less densely populated areas. This absence of a clear link between problem and solution sets it apart from the other coalitions, where shared understandings of challenges and solutions have been central to shaping their technocratic or sustainability-oriented discourse.

KL is central part of the spatial cohesion coalition, as they consistently advocates for mobility as a cornerstone of equality and cohesion across Denmark. KL articulates this perspective through multiple overlapping storylines. Representing all Danish municipalities, KL emphasises a national perspective grounded in local realities, where each municipality faces unique mobility challenges. As a representative puts it, *"regional cohesion means it should be attractive to live, work, study, and run businesses in all parts of the country" KL [2024a, p. 4, translated].* This means mobility is not merely a tool for climate or economic goals, it is a precondition for people to live wherever they choose. As they put it: *"People must be able to settle where they want, and they must be able to travel to where they want" Johannsen [2025, translated].* This ambition aligns with the coalition's vision by underscoring the role of infrastructure in supporting rural areas. KL further emphasises the importance of mobility in connecting different parts of Denmark, as argued *"we want rural and urban areas to be connected. And we want Denmark to be connected" Johannsen [2025, translated].* KL believes that transport, is what makes this cohesion possible. A connected Denmark should not rely solely on car-oriented infrastructure. KL challenges this approach and seeks to create favourable conditions for public transport: *"More and more people no longer have access to a bus. And more and more people can not use public transport. So they are forced to have a second, third or even fourth car" Johannsen [2025, translated].* KL stress that *"we want to see changes in the way our public transport system is designed, to make mobility more accessible" Johannsen [2025, translated]* and while they do not campaign hard for a national mobility plan, they see a clear need: *"We would like to have a plan that addresses mobility challenges and the differences between town and coun-*

try, and the options for collective transport. We would like to see a broader picture" Johannsen [2025, translated]. KL explicitly frames mobility as a fundamental right that must be accessible to all citizens, regardless of where they live or their income. They argue that *"all citizens, regardless of income or place of residence, should therefore have the opportunity to travel quickly and efficiently across the country, between cities and rural areas" KL [2023, translated].* This framing challenges centralised and one-size-fits-all planning models.

Transportministeriet contributes to this coalition by acknowledging regional inequality and the risk of leaving rural areas behind. Transportministeriet states that *"we need to ensure that Denmark stays connected so that people can live and work in all areas" Folketinget [2025b, translated].* The quote *"mobility and infrastructure are prerequisites for a well-functioning society and for the connection between cities and rural areas" Transportministeriet [2024, translated],* further positions transport as a key component and values infrastructure investments as essential to a well-functioning society.

partial conclusion

The analysis in chapter 7 demonstrates how shared discursive positions emerge across stakeholders through recurring storylines on national mobility. These coalitions are not based on formal alliances but on a shared meaning, framing, and problem definition across institutional and organisational boundaries. Four primary discourse-coalitions can be identified: the sustainable mobility coalition, the economic growth coalition, the green modernisation coalition, and the spatial cohesion coalition. Each reflects a distinct understanding of what mobility is, what it should achieve, and how it should be governed.

The sustainable mobility coalition, consisting of CONCITO, IDA, and some parties of Transportudvalget, constructs mobility as a societal issue that must be governed within planetary boundaries. This coalition shares a transformative vision, promoting behavioural change, overcoming silo planning, and equality. Their storylines support moving beyond predict-and-provide models, positioning mobility within broader concerns.

The economic growth coalition, consisting of Dansk Industri, Dansk Erhverv, Transportministeriet and parts of Transportudvalget, constructs mobility as a driver for competitiveness and economic growth. Their shared discursive position reinforces the traditional planning paradigm, where infrastructure expansion and flow optimisation are framed as necessary. This coalition normalises existing practices by reinforcing economic rationality, socio-economic returns, and "realism" in contrast to more radical approaches.

The green modernisation coalition, consisting of Dansk Erhverv, Dansk Industri, and Transportministeriet, represents a stabilising position that adopts elements of the sustainable transition while preserving the foundational growth assumptions. This coalition promotes technical solutions like electrification but resists behavioural change or demand reduction. Their discourse integrates sustainability as an add-on rather than a transformative one, allowing the dominant planning rationale to remain rooted.

Finally, the spatial cohesion coalition consists of KL and Transportministeriet, frames mobility as a foundation for everyday life and equal opportunities across Denmark. While it does not actively challenge dominant mobility paradigms, it highlights the differentiated needs of rural and urban areas and promotes inclusive infrastructure to strengthen national cohesion.

These coalitions demonstrate that shared discursive positions are central to how mobility is framed, prioritised, and governed in Denmark. Rather than a neutral landscape, mobility understandings are shaped by competing coalitions, promoting distinct visions and values. Identifying these coalitions reveals the underlying power dynamics that determine which perspectives become normalised and which are marginalised [Wodak and Meyer, 2009, p. 11]. These shared understandings across stakeholders provide the foundation for certain storylines to unite into dominant discourses, thereby creating the conditions for discourse institutionalisation [Hajer, 1993, p. 48 & 65] - the aim of step 3 in the analytical framework as visualised in Figure 5.4.

08

discussion of social practice

This chapter will be discussing the barriers of implementation of a national mobility strategy, through the discursive positions identified in previous analyses. This is what will create the foundation for answering the fourth sub-question: How do the discursive positions reveal barriers to implementing a national mobility strategy in Denmark?

This final step of the analytical framework investigates how discursive positions are embedded or resisted within institutional structures. To guide the third dimension of Fairclough, the discussion draws on Maarten Hajer's concept of discourse institutionalisation. According to Hajer, discourse institutionalisation occurs when specific storylines are repeated and reinforced through discourse-coalitions, which begin to shape policy-making [Hajer, 2006, p. 70]. Making it highly relevant in Fairclough's social practice dimension, where discourse is analysed in relation to power structures, path dependencies, and institutional constraints [Fairclough, 1989, pp. 163 & 166]. In this step, it is explored whether the emerging sustainability-oriented storylines identified in earlier sections gain traction or whether the dominant, technocratic discourse reinforces status quo. In doing so, it assesses how power is exercised through discourse, and whether discursive change has resulted in structural transformation, or merely theoretical considerations.

This chapter does not further investigate the spatial cohesion coalition. The reason for this is that KL, the main stakeholder advocating for cohesion between urban and rural areas, explicitly downplays their own engagement: *"We have said that we would like to see some form of mobility plan. But it is not something we actively advocate for" Johannsen [2025, translated].* As such, spatial cohesion remains more of a symbolic objective than an active change agent.

8.1 Coalitions and the maintenance of the status quo

These differing worldviews are crucial in how coalitions uphold the status quo or challenge embedded practices and institutionalised discourses. The status quo in Danish mobility policy is not maintained through a single stakeholder, but through discursive positions, where various discourse-coalitions stabilise existing paradigms. Despite differing understandings of mobility, most of the analysed coalitions contribute in some way to this stabilisation, which limits the transformative shift promoted by the sustainable mobility coalition.

The economic growth coalition plays the most significant role in maintaining the status quo, as visualised in Figure 8.1.Through a discourse that links mobility to economic growth, competitiveness and technical efficiency, this coalition reproduces the dominant predict and provide paradigm. Mobility is framed as something to be accommodated and optimised, not regulated or fundamentally changed, where socioeconomic models and traffic forecasts are used as objective foundations of truth. Within this coalition, the word *"scare"* is used in relation to behavioural regulation of road transport, suggesting it is not seen as a viable solution: *"you can try to scare people away from driving, through economic incentives, that is, through some form of congestion-based road pricing" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This indicates that within the current dominant and technocratic discourse, behavioural change is framed as undesirable *"scare tactics",* instead of legitimate tools for transformation, reinforcing the status quo. This stands in direct contrast to the more holistic solutions pro-

posed by the sustainable mobility coalition, where behavioural change plays a central role. CONCITO, for instance, notes: *"we need mobility that creates more value than it destroys"* Have [2025e, translated].

Some of the barriers CONCITO identifies include the political agreement culture and projections [Have, 2025e]. They argue that the models currently used to plan infrastructure investments and mobility do not reflect what society truly needs in order to develop. *"I think this use of financial and traffic projections, based on the idea that this is how the world will be - no! This is how the world will be if you keep doing what you usually do. And the question is, is that what we want?" - "the forecast*

does not necessarily reflect what one would like to achieve politically. It shows what will happen if things politically continue as they always have" Have [2025e, translated]. This illustrates how the status quo is maintained primarily by economic arguments. This point is further reinforced by a statement from Transportministeriet: *"it is actually really important to follow through on what has been decided - more important than whether the very best project was chosen. If you are faced with two projects, and one is slightly better than the other, but at least you carry out the one you selected, then you have achieved something"* Heinsen [2025b, translated]. It shows that implementation is prioritised over quality, reinforcing the status quo and resisting structural change. This

is also pointed out by CONCITO *"you cannot remove a project, even if it turns out to be completely absurd"* Have [2025e, translated], it is furthermore stated: *"we are now beginning to reach the point where many projects [...] are loss making. [...] So these are actually negative growth projects. It would actually be better for growth not to carry them out. But because of this political inertia, where I need to do something good for my region [more infrastructure], I can then show that I have done something positive"* Have [2025e, translated]. Once an agreement is made, even flawed projects cannot be withdrawn. While this stability is often seen as a strength, it becomes a barrier to course correction in transport policy. Thus, the status quo is not merely the result of political disagreement, but of compromises and deals that effectively lock decisions in place: *"If we take IP35, where we believe it was created based on a deal-making logic, then it is understandable that even though all those politicians are now gone, those who remain are still bound by the fact that their party signed on to the agreement"* Have [2025e, translated]. Once such agreements are made, they are treated as virtually untouchable: *"I believe this Danish political agreement culture sees it as a great achievement in political understanding to make a large and broad agreement. Because then you know it will hold, and that it will not be changed"* Have [2025e, translated]. The result is that planning becomes less flexible, less evidence based and more shaped by political interests and bargaining.

The following quote illustrates on several levels how Transportministeriet maintains the status quo, not only through its decisions, but also through the way it frames the problem: *"most of those who want such a strategy, in some way want to shift transport from individual to collective modes. And that may*

sound reasonable, but in practice, it is impossible when you look at where people live and work. A large share of transport needs go from detached housing areas to workplaces, which are typically located in industrial zones - that is, not centrally located" Heinsen [2025b, translated]. Here, the ministry presents the current mobility pattern, between suburban housing and industrial areas, as natural and unavoidable. It thus becomes a premise to which planning must adapt, rather than something to be challenged. This is an example of path dependency, where earlier decisions about residential and workplace locations are used as arguments against change. *"They believe it is entirely up to people themselves [whether they use public transport], what they want to choose. But it actually is not when car traffic is being actively invested in. [...] At the same time, they complain that the finances of public transport are poor, but that is one hundred percent a political choice, I must say"* Schelde [2025d, translated]. This conceals that the state itself, through infrastructure priorities and planning policy, has helped shape these patterns. By labelling a shift towards public transport as *"an impossibility in practice",* the ministry effectively shuts down an entire class of solutions before they have even been explored. This is a discursive closure, where alternatives are portrayed as unrealistic or radical, and are therefore not taken seriously in the political process [Hajer et al., 2003, p. 107]. This means that strategies requiring systemic change fail to gain traction, not because they are technically impossible, but because they are defined as such in the political stories.

Transportministeriet explains that the everyday lives of many Danes simply do not fit into a logic where behavioural regulation and other crises are given more weight than personal freedom. A clear demonstration of this fol-
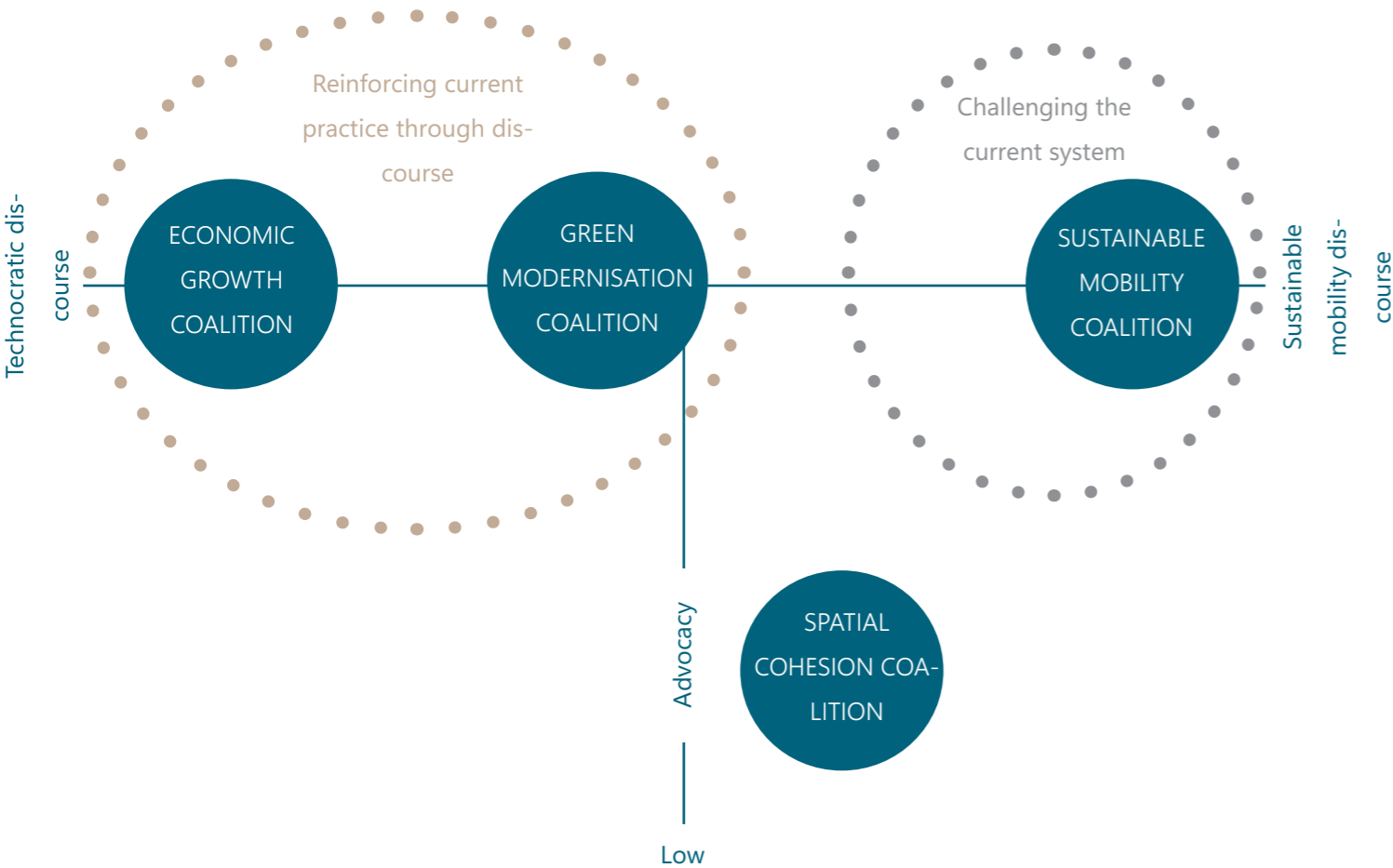

Figure 8.1 Relationship between coalitions | This figure illustrates the coalitions and their positions relative to one another and to the discourses identified in academic literature, technocratic and sustainable.

lows: *"and afterwards, you might have to go to Bilka or another out-of-town shopping centre to shop, and then to the summer house. That is how people live their lives" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* This current mobility tendency partly explains why Transportministeriet resists the idea of a national mobility strategy. Such a strategy would require structural and cross-sectoral thinking, and thereby challenge the way the ministry has traditionally operated. When asked whether the ministry should be more proactive, Heinsen replied: *"We can not be [proactive], when the localisation strategy is what it is" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* By highlighting physical geography as a structural barrier, the ministry avoids taking responsibility and constructs a story in which strategy becomes irrelevant. In this way, the status quo is reinforced. IDA challenges this logic: *"it always ends with, 'I just like driving.' That is always the argument hanging in the air. And as a society, we should be indifferent to that. That is not a serious discussion" - "what one really needs to understand is that it is not about transport for the sake of transport" Schelde [2025d, translated].* These contrasting statements reveal a fundamental discursive tension between maintaining existing patterns and questioning the underlying purpose of mobility itself.

The role of DI and DE is particularly central in maintaining the status quo. As several interviews suggest, this is not simply because of their discursive position, but because they are among the stakeholders with a broad membership base, who all individually have an interest in how infrastructure is shaped - Making DI consistently heard. DI notes: *"if they [Transportministeriet] decide something that causes too many problems for our members, then we have to come running afterwards and complain about it" Hansen [2025, translated].* Yet, DE points out that they cannot decide what

Transportministeriet considers important, and emphasises that sometimes they feel listened to, and other times not [Lübcke, 2025]. This is also echoed in DI: *"We [...] play a significant role in determining what is possible and what is not. Ultimately, it is a political judgement whether this is seen as something that can fulfil a range of political ambitions" Hansen [2025, translated].* Highlighting how the economic growth coalition is in a strong position to shape the direction of mobility policy - but its influence tends to reinforce existing structures instead. As Olsen points out, DI and DE hold significant power in shaping mobility policy: *"if Dansk Industri and Dansk Erhverv fully commit to the fight for a national mobility strategy, then without a doubt, they will have more influence than, for example, CONCITO" Olsen [2025, translated].* While both organisations express openness to change, it is typically framed within the limits of the current paradigm, for example, by calling for improved data or refinements to existing models, rather than questioning whether those models and their underlying assumptions might themselves be part of the problem [Hansen, 2025; Lübcke, 2025]. Within the green modernisation coalition, there is a tendency to understand the green transition in terms of its compatibility with existing economic and institutional priorities. This means that new ideas are only welcomed to the extent that they can be translated into the existing framework. This prioritisation limits the space for proposals that call for more fundamental shifts in how mobility is governed and understood. Their authority contributes to path dependency, where more radical perspectives, struggle to gain traction. Stakeholders often feel marginalised rather than treated as legitimate partners in shaping strategic direction: *"Unfortunately, I do not think we have as much power as we would like" Have [2025e, translated].*

The green modernisation coalition appears to act as a potential middle ground, but in practice it absorbs and neutralises more transformative demands. By incorporating *"green"* elements, such as electrification and technological innovation, without altering the fundamental logics of economic growth, this coalition creates an illusion of change while neglecting deeper systemic shifts: *"It is happening through electrification, and it actually is" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* DE further elaborates: *"[...] when it comes to passenger cars, it seems as though, over time, it is beginning to resolve itself" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This reflects an approach of incremental modernisation rather than radical transformation, which IDA and CONCITO consider necessary. In contrast stands the sustainable mobility coalition, whose discursive position is weaker because it has not been institutionalised. Compared to DI and DE, CONCITO has a small membership base, and its messages are often marginalised as *"idealistic"* or *"unrealistic".* While IDA holds professional credibility and educates a large portion of the knowledge base, it operates within a political culture that favours incremental change. Although KL enjoys strong institutional access and is anchored in its role as the voice of the municipalities, it does not actively promote structural considerations. Its absence from the transformative discourse further weakens efforts to reframe mobility beyond functionality, contributing to its continued marginalisation.

A key dynamic in maintaining the status quo is one in which stakeholders cannot only present strong arguments, but also have access, visibility and institutional legitimacy. Organisations like DE and DI are listened to not necessarily because their proposals are more rational, but because they represent economically powerful interests. However, DI acknowledges, echoing

the barriers identified by IDA and CONCITO, that: *"[...] the existing system we now have is, in itself, an opponent of change" Hansen [2025, translated],* and: *"if you create a methodology, it becomes a mirror of the past. There is a risk that it becomes locked into the present in which it was created" Hansen [2025, translated].* This point is shared across coalitions, as IDA notes: *"one should also be aware that socio-economic analysis, in and of itself, tends to reproduce the existing" Schelde [2025d, translated].* The only stakeholder who explicitly voices the opposite view is Transportministeriet, which frames it as a mistake to revise socio economic methods or the basis for political decisions: *"they are based on scientific principles [...] it is not as though the parameters reflect a political choice, they are determined to the best of our ability" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* Even Transportudvalget questions this assumption: *"We view much of our transport policy and economic planning through numbers - but are those numbers necessarily up to date enough?" Olsen [2025, translated].* This constitutes a structural barrier to more visionary proposals that cannot easily be translated into conventional measures of growth or efficiency.

The discussion shows that although the coalitions differ in their understandings of mobility and intentions, they collectively stabilise the status quo. The economic growth coalition does so explicitly through its discourse, while the green modernisation coalition does so more indirectly by advocating for change in existing practices. The status quo is, therefore, not upheld by a single powerful stakeholder but through a network of storylines and shared discursive understandings. The sustainable mobility coalition advocating for systemic change struggles to break through the dominant institutional and discursive frameworks.

8.2 Revealing discursive change

Stakeholders like CONCITO and IDA, who constitute the sustainable mobility coalition, emphasise the need for transformation, while also expressing frustration with the slow pace of change. As CONCITO notes: *"People say that it might be interesting [...], but from there to actually doing it - that is something else" Have [2025e, translated].* IDA highlights similar contradictions, although there is broad professional consensus on the necessity of change, current policies continue to support car-dependency: *"The state is actively pouring money into increasing car use" Schelde [2025d, translated].* While several stakeholders are becoming more receptive to sustainable mobility framings, the change remains largely rhetorical. There is increasing openness, and professionals are increasingly *"on board"* with the sustainable transition. Nevertheless, as IDA argues, state policies continue to reproduce a technocratic discourse, only now updated to green modernisation language, reinforcing the position of the green modernisation coalition. In practice, the dominant discourse reflects incremental changes rather than a radical shift. Electrification is used to legitimise existing practices, rather than promoting systemic change. As IDA critically observes: *"What if the 20 billion [from electric car registration taxes] had been invested in public transport? [...] Right now, the state is actively pouring money into increasing car use, because tightening measures [...] are not present for fossil fuel cars or are insufficient. If that remains the case, it just means more car use" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Although the need for a mobility transition is widely acknowledged, the continued public investment in private transport over collective alternatives shows that the technocratic discourse remains reinforced, simply layered with *"green"* rhetoric. Despite this, IDA points to a strong and growing consensus among professionals: *"There is a very large understanding among experts that this is the approach we need. It is what is needed, it is what solves the problems" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Dansk Erhverv, in contrast, portrays the shift as incremental. While sustainability has gained traction, it is still embedded within a logic of optimisation and efficiency: *"A to B as quickly and smoothly as possible [...] but with the green element added" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This illustrates a discursive adjustment rather than transformation, where environmental considerations are added to, rather than challenge, existing paradigms. As DE further reflects: *"A lot has happened on the green agenda [...] ten years ago, the focus was mainly on building lots of infrastructure" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This reflects a shift in priorities, where sustainability is increasingly integrated into transport policy. Additionally, CONCITO points to structural changes that suddenly appears: *"All those from Transportudvalget who supported the Infrastructure Plan 2035 [...] have actually left" Have [2025e, translated].* One reason for this, CONCITO suggests, may be generational: *"There is now an understanding that it cannot go on like this [...] they are also much younger" Have [2025e, translated].*

In sum, discursive awareness is increasing, especially among experts and younger politicians. Yet institutional structures and dominant understandings of mobility as an individual right and growth driver continue to shape policy. Though wrapped in *"green"* language, change remains incremental. No fundamental redefinition of mobility was observed; instead, discourse adapts to stabilise existing paradigms under new terms.

8.3 Barriers between coalitions

The discursive landscape surrounding the development of a national mobility strategy in Denmark is divided by distinct discourse-coalitions that reveal barriers to transforming decision-making. These coalitions differ in how they construct mobility, what it should achieve, and how it should evolve within sustainability, economic growth, and social cohesion.

There is a clear disparity between the sustainable mobility coalition and the economic growth coalition. This discursive disparity creates a structural barrier. The economic growth coalition perceives proposals from the sustainable mobility coalition as radical or unrealistic. For instance, Lübcke explicitly states, *"I believe our role is [...] to advocate for not reducing mobility", "put simply, we should not be flying less, we should be flying greener" Lübcke [2025, translated],* reinforcing a position where any perceived restriction is interpreted as a threat to economic growth [Lübcke, 2025], *"of course, it is about the fact that we have companies supplying shops" Lübcke [2025, translated].* Dansk Industri echoes this view, stating: *"we do have an interest in ensuring it benefits Danish businesses, and that it can, as effectively as possible, create jobs and turnover in society, for society" Hansen [2025, translated].* A shared assumption is: *"I definitely think the green organisations see reducing mobility as a route to lowering the climate footprint" Lübcke [2025, translated].*

On the contrary, IDA explicitly rejects DE's claim that others want to reduce mobility, highlighting a misconception and a representation of how stakeholders view each other. IDA emphasises that their goal is not less, but different and more sustainable mobility:

"We actually believe that mobility in Danish society can increase [...] there is no problem with moving around more, as long as it can be done in a CO$_2$-neutral way" Schelde [2025d, translated]. Likewise, CONCITO explains: *"it is not that mobility should not evolve, but it must evolve within these two [climate goals and physical resource limits]" Have [2025e, translated].* At the same time, IDA underlines that they do not defend sunk costs: *"In principle, people can travel as much as they want, but [...] you need to account for that in climate terms, and that is what the others do not really want to deal with. I would say the others are actually defending sunk costs, because their sunk costs are: it must not impact this, or it must not affect that. Frankly, we do not care about that" Schelde [2025d, translated],* critiquing their contrasting position with organisations like DE, who represent member-based interests [Schelde, 2025d].

This mutual misunderstanding reflects a discursive barrier. As a result, both sides tend to interpret the other's intentions through a lens of suspicion, where DE fears others want to restrict freedom: *"That is actually our biggest concern" Lübcke [2025, translated].* Meanwhile, IDA sees DE as defending narrow interests at the expense of systemic change. CONCITO criticises a competing worldview: *"increased mobility [...] comes at a cost, at the expense of something else. It annoys me endlessly when you encounter that kind of straw man [...] and then the usual line: do you want to bring society to a standstill?" Have [2025e, translated].* This lack of shared framing makes collaboration difficult, even when policy goals partially align. While one side assumes consensus, the other sees misrepresentation. These misunderstandings become clear when DE contradicts itself by proposing a solution where mobility increases via the metro, thereby reg-

ulating road behaviour, in contrast to their claim that IDA and CONCITO are too radical in wanting to reduce mobility: *"The more people you get into the metro, the fewer people there are above ground, on the roads, and that frees up capacity" Lübcke [2025, translated]*.

It seems that even though stakeholders from both DI and DE have stated *"I think fundamentally we agree",* they also say: *"on that point we have the diametrically opposite view, because we believe it is perhaps a stretch, but harmful to society, I mean, there are major socioeconomic costs for businesses, and also for citizens, when mobility is reduced" Lübcke [2025, translated]*. DI supports this: *"I think fundamentally we have the same understanding; where we differ is probably the degree and speed of the transition. Some of the demands being raised are quite radical, a fundamental parameter shift that is difficult to adapt to" [Hansen, 2025, translated]*. This view culminates in a comparison: *"You can see what happens when you push the system a bit, like Trump has done, things can spiral out of control. That might seem attractive to some, but for most people, it is just impractical" [Hansen, 2025, translated]*. DI here, frames radical change as destabilising, reinforcing the status quo by portraying systemic transformation as a risk rather than a necessity - thus acting as a barrier to transformative change.

The fundamental difference is evident in IDA's critique of current investments in a purposeless infrastructure project: *"There were no traffic-related reasons to invest in it. It was a random project pulled out of thin air - to call a spade a spade" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. CONCITO supports this critique, pointing out that infrastructure expansion in itself does not create more growth, clearly showing that the funds could have been better spent elsewhere: *"[...] if you take 3. Limfjordforbindelse*

- the region would have seen more growth if they had just received the money directly" Have [2025e, translated]. The sustainable mobility coalition is grounded in the belief that: *"at the most basic level, it is really expensive not to stop and think" Schelde [2025d, translated]*, and: *"You have to think carefully - will we need that infrastructure in 100 years? And there is a lot of infrastructure where the answer is: "no, we will not"" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. This is supported by KL, even though all their storylines are situated within a different coalition: *"We would like to see a process where people sit down and reflect on the kind of development we are heading towards" Johannsen [2025, translated]*. DI's statement about the same infrastructure project that CONCITO critiques, reflects what makes the difference in perspectives especially clear: *"There is also 3. Limfjordforbindelse, [...] creates opportunities for Aalborg to do something different. [...] There are always opportunities you can seize, which can be part of the vision behind building something" Hansen [2025, translated]*. This barrier reflects competing interests and fundamentally different epistemologies: while one coalition sees sustainability as a systemic restructuring, the other treats it as a technical adjustment within existing growth paradigms [Hajer, 1995a, p. 14].

The two coalitions differ in their understanding of what a mobility strategy in Denmark should address. IDA and CONCITO propose solutions based on the view that mobility policy must contribute to solving several simultaneous crises. As IDA puts it: *"[...] crises are sort of queuing up, one on top of the other. So understanding that there are several distinct layers which can be addressed at the same time is incredibly important" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. In this view, a mobility strategy is not just about solving transport problems, but about

enabling broader societal change through goal-oriented planning. Because reduction of CO_2 emissions is a central aim, the sustainable mobility coalition rejects further infrastructure expansion as incompatible with that goal: *"it is about CO_2, and when you make that the headline, the question becomes: how will you reduce it? I mean, a lot of CO_2 is involved in building motorways" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. The difference, therefore, is that the economic growth coalition frames infrastructure expansion as a potential economic driver for other parts of society - an expansion that the sustainable mobility coalition cannot justify. The economic growth coalition, primarily addresses one specific issue: reducing CO_2 emissions. This goal is to be achieved through technological solutions, particularly the electrification of the existing vehicle fleet: *"That is happening through electrification, and it actually is" Heinsen [2025b, translated]*. This approach maintains current mobility and dominant structures, but replaces the underlying technology. In doing so, the climate crisis is treated as an isolated, technical challenge that can be solved without altering fundamental behaviours or mobility logics. They want to address this in a mobility strategy, where: *"mobility reforms need to work better together. How can we better utilise the infrastructure that has already been built or is under construction? So we get a more holistic view of it [...] there is a need for a mobility plan" Lübcke [2025, translated]*. This difference in problem framing is crucial. For the sustainable mobility coalition, electrification alone is insufficient, because it fails to address other embedded problems in the current transport system. However, it is still viewed as a necessary part of the solution: *"of course we need more electric cars" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. This discursive mismatch makes it difficult to reach a shared strategic direction, not just because the two coalitions

suggest different solutions, but because they fundamentally see different problems that the strategy is meant to solve.

On the one hand, Hansen presents the IP35 as a positive political outcome, because it represents a shared understanding and ensures stability: *"First and foremost, we are pleased that there is a political agreement on what to invest in, namely an investment plan. [...] The alternative would be that we had nothing" Hansen [2025, translated]*. This approach values political stability and consensus as ends in themselves and views IP35 as a necessary framework without a national mobility strategy. *"The worst-case scenario for us is that the agreement will be blown up politically" Hansen [2025, translated]*. In contrast, Schelde describes IP35 as a *"catalogue of coincidences"*. Here, the emphasis is on how the plan does not stem from strategic prioritisation based on analysis, climate targets, or societal needs - but rather emerges as the result of political trading: *"[...] the infrastructure plan towards 2035 is essentially a catalogue of coincidences, based on whatever could be voted through" Schelde [2025d, translated]*. This perspective reveals deep frustration with how infrastructure policy in Denmark is often shaped, not by a holistic societal vision, but through compromises between competing interests.

Despite differences, stakeholders such as IDA have recognised the constructive role played by DE and DI in the debate. This acknowledgement suggests that while the divide between coalitions is real, it may not always be explicit. The barrier is often implicit, rooted in discursive framings and underlying assumptions. This may help explain the challenges in aligning on a national strategy - the disagreements are not just about policy, but about competing worldviews [Hajer, 1995a, p. 14].

8.4 Barrierer between stakeholders and Transportministeriet

A central barrier to developing a strategic and sustainable mobility policy in Denmark lies in the tension between Transportministeriet and other stakeholders. The analysis shows, that the absence of a national mobility strategy is not due to disagreement over solutions but instead due to differing understandings of planning, governance, and political rationality. The interviews with stakeholders reveals a discursive and organisational division and siloed planning. Despite differing views and misconceptions, all stakeholders agree on the need for a national mobility strategy.

Transportministeriet creates a barrier towards other stakeholders by delegitimising their demand for a national mobility strategy. When Transportministeriet describes the strategy as an unclear *"slogan"* and expresses doubt about what it actually entails, *"it ends up being on this kind of general slogan level" Heinsen [2025b, translated],* they undermine the content of the message and the professional intentions of the stakeholders. The following remark, *"Is not a national strategy just a way for them to feather their own nest?" Heinsen [2025b, translated],* reinforces this barrier by casting suspicion on stakeholders' motives and reducing their engagement to self-interest: *"It could be Dansk Erhverv pushing for more motorways, and IDA having some idea about trains (futtog) or things like that" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* CONCITO responds to this: *"we have nothing to gain from it. Apart from the fact that, as a country, we get something that is more rational policy" Have [2025e, translated].* Thus, not only is distance created, but also mistrust, which hampers dialogue and makes it difficult to

establish shared understandings. The result is that Transportministeriet distances itself from disruptive discourses that seek to change current practices. As a representative from IDA points out, broad professional consensus calls for strategic direction: *"Yes, it is easy to say [self-interest], then you've shot it down. I can only say that it is a unified professional field that wants a national mobility plan. DI, DE, CONCITO, COWI want it, and many others. So it is not just about self-interest - I would almost say the opposite" Schelde [2025d, translated].*

Some stakeholders have the impression that Transportministeriet holds the following view: *"it is typically Transportministeriet that says, climate policy, that is not us. I mean, we just have to build mobility, just build what people want" Have [2025e, translated].* A pattern also emerges among stakeholders from the sustainable mobility coalition, who states the following perception: *"Transportministeriet [...] is primarily a construction ministry. [...] If you say that the right thing now is not to build, but to optimise what we have, then the task suddenly becomes different, and it is not as fun to go to work. [...] Many organisations think it is more sexy to build things than to operate and optimise things" Have [2025e, translated].* This is supported by IDA, which criticises the socio-economic model and the focus on time: *"Vejdirektoratet always increases the speed by 10 km/h. If you do that, then the socio-economics are almost always guaranteed to be good, because then you arrive earlier, then you are productive, and then you have saved society x billion" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Another stakeholder who supports the critique of Transportministeriet's technocratic discourse is Transportudvalget, which states: *"I perceive Transportministeriet as very conservative in its thinking" Olsen [2025, translated].* Stakeholders view Transportministeriet as conservative

and technocratic, reinforcing the status quo, which in turn creates a distrust to the power and decision-makers.

The "anti-planning" logic described by IDA, reflects a fear of political commitment: *"We [Denmark] have actively dismantled everything that resembled planning of any kind. [...] there is both a lack of regional planning and a complete disconnection from national planning altogether" Schelde [2025d, translated].* IDA points out that this fear is ironically misplaced: *"it is actually a huge opportunity to put a relatively marginalised political area at the centre of the agenda" Schelde [2025d, translated],* highlighting a concern that planning limits flexibility and local autonomy. However, the very act of establishing a national strategy could elevate transport policy from a marginal technical issue to a central political concern. In connection with persuading and changing the current discourse, an anonymous source notes: *"But of course, when there is a Minister of Transport from Venstre who breaks out in hives at the mere mention of the word planning, then it is obviously an uphill battle" Anonymous [2025, translated].* A national strategy would require politicians and civil servants to commit to long-term goals and make their priorities transparent: *"We would like to see a visionary Minister of Transport. But the challenge is that they are all bound by long-term agreements" Have [2025e, translated].* KL similarly notes: *"The Minister thought at one point it was a good idea. I do not know if he was caught off guard" Johannsen [2025, translated].* This becomes less attractive within a political culture characterised by deal-making and a strong emphasis on delivering tangible projects to local electoral district. Long-term commitment is discouraged by a political culture, which focuses on short-term deals and local visible improvements, reinforcing institutional

barriers over transformative change. However, this also reflects a barrier sustained by politicians' assumptions about public expectations.

Transportministeriet acknowledges a significant barrier in the current system, the lack of a national spatial strategy. This contains an implicit critique of municipal autonomy and the role of the market in housing development, which results in car-dependent settlement patterns. It is a rare admission and reveals that Transportministeriet is aware that the current system reproduces car-centred mobility. Yet this recognition is not used as a basis for transformation. Instead, it is used to argue for the status quo: *"if you ask: "Why is Denmark a car-country?", the answer is that it is because Denmark is a detached-house country. it is not more complicated than that" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* Without questioning current practices, the conclusion is that supply and demand are the determining factors: *"some combination of municipal planning activities and market conditions determines the development [...] based on both demand and supply" Heinsen [2025b, translated].* Transportministeriet thereby shifts responsibility. This highlights an institutional path dependency that recognises the problems without having the will to change. This embedded logic is also articulated by the anonymous source: *"A Venstre minister would say that it is the market that controls it, the problem is just that the market does nothave all the insight" Anonymous [2025, translated].* DI, DE, CONCITO and IDA seek a different governance logic, in which the ministry delivers physical projects and facilitates socially relevant mobility goals. But Transportministeriet continues to administer policy as a series of distinct decisions that must be *"executed",* not discussed strategically. KL identifies this as a barrier: *"it has not quite been adopted. They have worked more on*

individual cases" Johannsen [2025, translated]. Their focus on implementation over reflection creates a discursive tension with stakeholders who seek to transform the transport sector, asking *"what we want and what we do not in Denmark" Schelde [2025d, translated].* Transportministeriet maintains these very patterns through its resistance to strategic planning and understanding mobility as an non-political necessity. Recognising barriers does not lead to action, creates tensions between stakeholders and Transportministeriet. It means that even when stakeholders agree on what needs to happen, they face an institutional system that is not necessarily opposed but simply not interested.

From the stakeholders' perspective, Transportministeriet is not simply a closed institution but a selective dialogue partner. Dansk Erhverv highlights that *"on paper, there should be no institutional barriers" Lübcke [2025, translated],* but in practice *"it is difficult because there are many interests to consider. [...] Many have opinions on what the goals, purposes, and success criteria are [...] it is not a political winner" Hansen [2025, translated].* The same is noted by KL, which stresses the lack of political ownership in the field: *"Transportministeriet is very reluctant to say what he wants with this" Johannsen [2025, translated].* When no political party wishes to take strategic ownership of mobility policy, and Transportministeriet does not push for change, a vacuum arises in which politics is reduced to infrastructure projects and technical operations.

8.5 Barriers embedded in the civil service

Several stakeholders in the sustainable mobility coalition point out that much power lies in the civil service structure, where planning practices are embedded in specific methods, norms, and organisational hierarchies.

An interviewee choosing to be anonymous reveals that Heinsen has access to well-established knowledge about effective transport solutions, yet shows no willingness to actively recommend these to the Minister. This passivity is framed as a deliberate choice when concerning expansion of infrastructure, as the anonymous source highlights a framing by Heinsen: *"we can also just see what happens" Anonymous [2025, translated].* From this perspective, this is not simply a neutral decision, but a disclaimer of responsibility: *"I spoke to Jacob Heinsen, and I said, "so, what is the plan? Do you then recommend BRT and super cycle highways and such things, which we know solve the problems". And then he said, "no, we can also just see what happens" [...] Then you are clearly not trying to solve it [...]" Anonymous [2025, translated].* Ministers rely on the civil service for insight and policy advice. But if experts withhold their recommendations or frame them through existing biases, ministers work within a limited view of what's possible: *"I personally think one should recommend to a minister that maybe this is a poor investment to make" Anonymous [2025, translated].* It highlights how civil servants, despite being tasked with informing ministers, avoid pushing for change even when it is evidence-based. An anonymous interviewee explicitly calls this an *"irrational relationship to their own toolbox" Anonymous [2025, translated],* meaning that Transportministeriet has tools and evidence at

its disposal but continues to default to car-centric solutions simply because *"it is just [...] what we are used to" Anonymous [2025, translated].* In doing so, Transportministeriet reinforces the status quo of old patterns and investment priorities. The quote also illustrates an asymmetric relationship between the Minister and the civil service. While elected officials make the final decisions, civil servants control how problems and solutions are framed.

An anonymous interviewee elaborates: *"The barrier is that it is complicated. It requires a minister with solid experience. And that, I must say, is unfortunately rarely the case in the transport field. [...] So it is typically an uninteresting portfolio because there are already so many fixed agreements. [...] It is more difficult to promote your own initiatives compared to other political fields. [...] Another problem is that it is usually not very experienced politicians assigned to this post. On the other hand, there is an extremely strong Permanent Secretary. [...] One must be aware that Jacob Heinsen has outlasted [...] 10 Ministers of Transport. That makes it difficult to manoeuvre. [...] it is not necessarily a drawback to be burdened with knowledge. But one could say that it can be really difficult when you come in as a young minister, [...] and you are facing someone who is probably the most experienced Permanent Secretary in Denmark. He is very skilled, [...] it is just to say, I know who is steering the ship" Anonymous [2025, translated].* This shows and reinforces that the civil service constitutes a central institutional barrier to change in Danish transport policy. It clearly illustrates how the civil service not only assists the minister but often shapes and controls the political space of action, especially in an area like transport, where many agreements constrain freedom of action. The quote emphasises that the political field of transport is often assigned to less experienced politicians, pre-

cisely because it is a *"heavy"* and low-interest area with many locked-in agreements, such as IP35. This makes it difficult for a new minister to leave their mark on policy. At the same time, the Permanent Secretary of Transportministeriet emerges as an experienced and extremely powerful stakeholder who, according to an anonymous source, *"is highly experienced, and there should be no doubt about who holds the real authority within the ministry" Anonymous [2025, translated].* This balance between civil servants and the minister neglects democracy when the civil service effectively defines policy, while the elected minister is reduced to an administrator. Heinsen's many years of experience are used here as a dual image: on the one hand, as an expression of competence, he is *"the most experienced Permanent Secretary in Denmark" Anonymous [2025, translated],* but on the other hand, as an institutional barrier. It becomes clear that extensive experience can be a barrier, not in itself, but because it makes it difficult to open up for new ways of thinking about policy. In practice, this means that the civil service advises the minister and determines what is considered possible or relevant. When a new and inexperienced minister takes over a complex political field with many binding agreements and a strong Permanent Secretary, the civil service sets the agenda. This reduces the minister's role to execution rather than initiation, and that is precisely what an anonymous interviewee points out about Thomas Danielsen's work *"is mostly just about executing IP35" Anonymous [2025, translated].* It can thus be deduced that the civil service in Transportministeriet, particularly through a strong and knowledgeable Permanent Secretary, holds a stabilising role that, in practice, maintains the status quo. The civil service holds knowledge and continuity but uses these resources to filter and limit political rethinking, rather than to open space for

transformation. This makes the internal power relation in the ministry a barrier, even a new minister with great ambitions will find it difficult to shift an agenda that is already largely defined by the embedded discourse of the civil servants.

In doing so, democracy, which DI and DE describe as a quality in Danish transport policy, is neglected. DI states: *"Ultimately, it is a political level that must approve, decide, and uphold. That is how our democracy works" Hansen [2025, translated].* This is recognised as a value also by DE, who states: *"fortunately, we live in a democracy" Lübcke [2025, translated],* meaning that it is elected opinions that are brought into play. DI and DE emphasise democracy as a core value in transport policy, but what they value is being neglected. Democracy is downplayed because non-elected civil servants, in practice, function as a filter and set the direction, without appearing as a visible institutional barrier, precisely because decisions are formally made by politicians, even though the civil service's agenda strongly guide them. This issue is also acknowledged by DE, which states that a national mobility strategy has more political support than from the civil service: *"I actually think there is more political resonance than there might be among civil servants" Lübcke [2025, translated].* DE believes that transformation and a change in discourse must occur through *"the Minister of Transport convincing the civil servants in Transportministeriet and then sitting down with their spokesperson colleagues, that is, the other political parties" Lübcke [2025, translated].* This quote points to an important realisation, that real change in transport policy requires internal conviction within the civil service before political consensus can be achieved. The quote reveals a reversed order of political hierarchy, where the elected representative must

first convince the system from within before political discussions can unfold, which challenges the balance between civil service and politicians. Transportudvalget supports this: *"if the civil service is not on board, then it can all sometimes end up as a package deal that does not really change anything" Olsen [2025, translated].*

8.6 Barriers within political ideologies

Tensions within Transportudvalget and in the relationship with Transportministeriet, particularly between the red and blue blocs, create a discursive divide that continues obstructing consensus on a national mobility strategy. This reflects the theory that epistemology matters, and different understandings of knowledge shape how problems are defined and what kinds of solutions are considered legitimate [Næss, 2015, p. 1230].

Several members of Transportudvalget from left-wing parties, including Socialistisk Folkeparti, Enhedslisten, Radikale Venstre, and Alternativet, have emerged as key voices within the sustainable mobility coalition [Olsen, 2025]. For these parties, mobility policy is not merely about infrastructure but also enabling broader societal goals such as climate mitigation and social equality. A national mobility strategy is an opportunity to promote a more integrated, evidence-based approach to addressing structural challenges in the transport sector [Olsen, 2025]. In contrast, parties such as Venstre, Liberal Alliance, Dansk Folkeparti, and Danmarks Demokraterne generally express scepticism towards strategic planning and central governance [Olsen, 2025]. This opposition is not necessarily rooted in a rejection

of climate goals, but reflects a different understanding of the role of the state. Planning strategies are perceived as potential threats to individual freedom and market autonomy. As one stakeholder notes, *"It becomes highly political, but his [the Minister of Transport's] voters do not live [...] where the transport actually is. He has to think like voters who live way out, where the last crow turned. And that means that the interest in truly addressing the transport issue simply is not there" Schelde [2025d, translated].* This reinforces CONCITO's observation that voter preferences often shape political decisions more than expert consensus.

A representative from the Transportudvalget further explains that it becomes politically advantageous to secure local projects: *"It is a big advantage to be able to say, "we have brought something home to our area". [...] That is the kind of thing a transport spokesperson can present as a victory" Olsen [2025, translated].* In this way, it becomes more important for politicians to deliver visible local results than to support a long-term strategy, despite broad professional consensus on the need for such a plan. Local results are considered a success when they address everyday challenges: *"not to be dismissive, but I think that when you are part of the general public, what matters most is that there i a lot of congestion on this stretch of road" Olsen [2025, translated].* DE, however, believes that: *"Overall, I think many parties can see the logic and the idea in such a mobility plan" Lübcke [2025, translated].* Still, political stakeholders have little urgency to take action, as *"Political and public considerations tend to outweigh purely transport-professional concerns" Olsen [2025, translated].* This lack of will ultimately comes down to perceived necessity, *"That is the thing, whether the parties actually feel that they are standing on a burning platform" Olsen [2025, translated].*

In politics, mobility is often strongly associated with local development, where the car symbolises freedom in decentralised Denmark. This ideological resistance is not only about mobility but also about what kind of society is being imagined. As one interviewee puts it, *"You can be concerned about the climate but believe that electric cars will solve it on their own, and therefore we have not pursued a fundamentally new way of organising transport" [Olsen, 2025].* This reflects a technocratic and incrementalist logic often associated with the political right, favouring marketled innovation over systemic change. The emphasis is on solving problems within the existing model, rather than questioning the model itself. This is further underlined by a stance on state intervention, where governance is seen as something that should follow rather than lead. As another respondent explains, *"A Venstre minister [The minister of transport] will say that it is the market that governs" Schelde [2025d, translated].* From this viewpoint, a national mobility strategy is deemed unnecessary, as it would risk decentralised development.

The role of Transportudvalget itself adds complexity. As a committee, it includes members from across the political spectrum and reflects multiple views, from sustainability-oriented planning advocates to defenders of economic growth and infrastructure expansion. While many members acknowledge the need for structural change, they simultaneously reproduce a political culture that rewards localised results. Several point to the need to *"deliver something to one's region", often in the form of specific projects like new roads or rail lines [Olsen, 2025, translated].* This dynamic shows how political agreements are often based on compromises rather than shared long-term goals. Furthermore, there appears to be a lack of political will to rethink how mobility

is organised fundamentally. Olsen expresses concern that electrification is increasingly perceived as a sufficient solution to the climate challenge, thereby preventing deeper structural reform: *"I can imagine some of the more traditional parties thinking the only problem is that I have not gotten a road built in my home municipality, right? You can be worried about the climate but still think that electric cars will solve it, and that is why we have not pursued a completely new way of organising ourselves" Olsen [2025, translated].* As a result, strategic planning is pushed aside in favour of short-term visibility and winning support from voters. Hajer notes that political problems do not arise on their own, they are shaped by how we talk about them [Hajer, 1993, p. 44]. A national mobility strategy challenges this dynamic by formalising mobility as a systemic and political issue. It forces political stakeholders to take a position and give up power. One stakeholder reflects on this directly, *"My analysis is also that the more you formalise things in a strategy, the more power you give up [...] That is easy enough to say, but then the question becomes: what does that actually mean in practice?" [Have, 2025e, translated].* Thus, resistance to a national strategy is not only about content, but also about the loss of political flexibility.

Therefore, the barrier between political viewpoints is not simply a disagreement over means but a fundamental divide in how mobility policy is understood. For the left, it is an approach to transformation, for the right. As such, the political resistance to a national mobility strategy is also a struggle over who gets to define the problem and thus determine the solution. Until this ideological divide is openly addressed, building cross-party support for a strategy will remain challenging beyond individual cases and symbolic investments.

partial conclusion

The discussion has identified several prominent and interrelated barriers to the implementation of a national mobility strategy centred on sustainability. A key finding concerns how dominant discursive positions stabilise existing planning logics. In particular, the economic growth and green modernisation coalitions reproduce the status quo by integrating green elements into existing paradigms without challenging their underlying assumptions. This form of discursive closure marginalises more transformative proposals by presenting them as idealistic or unrealistic.

A second major barrier lies in institutional path dependency. Planning practices are embedded in established socio-economic models and routines that favour predict-and-provide logics. These structures not only shape what is considered feasible but also reproduce existing priorities. As shown, discourse here functions as more than communication, it constitutes a mechanism of power, shaping what is right to say and legitimate in the political process [Hajer and Versteeg, 2005, p. 176]. This barrier is particularly evident in the role of Transportministeriet, where the civil service appears as a stabilising force. While civil servants possess significant institutional knowledge, interviews suggest that this expertise is often used to reproduce existing logics rather than support change. Even when problems are acknowledged, alternative discourses are filtered out, defined as unfeasible. This illustrates Hajer's point that once a discourse becomes institutionalised, it structures how stakeholders engage with an issue [Hajer, 1995b, p. 45].

In addition, the political field is marked by a discursive divide, particularly between left- and rightleaning parties in Transportudvalget. While some parties support a national strategy as a means for integrated, long-term planning, others see it as a threat to local autonomy and market freedom. These diverging epistemological assumptions prevent alignment between discourse-coalitions.

Thus, the discussion reveals that the absence of a national mobility strategy is not primarily due to a lack of technical solutions or professional consensus. Rather, it results from embedded discursive positions, institutional path dependency, and asymmetries in discursive power, which shape the debate of a national mobility strategy in Denmark.

09

conclusion

This thesis set out to answer the research question: How do distinct discursive positions among central stakeholders shape the debate of national mobility planning in Denmark? Through a critical discourse analytical framework that operationalises Fairclough's three-dimensional model via Hajer's discourse concepts of storylines, discourse-coalitions, and discourse institutionalisation. The project has therefore examined how language reveals powerful discursive positions that shape the debate on a national mobility strategy in Denmark, either by reinforcing or challenging current practices.

The methodological approach of combining a narrative literature review, stakeholder mapping, semi-structured interviews, and critical discourse analysis, proved effective in exploring how distinct discursive positions shape the debate on national mobility planning. The literature review provided a broad theoretical foundation but lacked systematic transparency, which was mitigated through collective source evaluation and assessment. Stakeholder mapping, guided by Mendelow's Matrix and field observations, ensured relevance but excluded otherwise important stakeholders due to time constraints. Interviews offered deep, contextual insights into stakeholder perspectives, though their strategic framing required careful interpretation. The critical discourse method, grounded in Fairclough's framework and operationalised through Hajer's concepts, enabled a systematic analysis of how language constructs meaning and power. Together, the methods has complemented each other, by combining the analysis of both written texts (opinion pieces, LinkedIn posts, and policy documents) and spoken language (interviews), which strengthens and nuances the findings, increasing its validity.

The initial mapping of discursive landscape in academic literature, revealed a conflict between traditional technocratic discourses and emerging sustainable mobility discourses. While sustainable mobility are gaining momentum and increasingly frame the demand for a national mobility strategy, institu-

tions remain reinforced in established planning paradigm that favour infra-structure expansion, economic growth, and quantifiable decision-making. It was essential to examine how storylines reveal the central stakeholders understanding of mobility. These storylines are not neutral descriptions but discursive concepts that reduce complexity to manageable stories, which reinforce or challenge the current practice. The analysis revealed several promoters of the emerging discourse (e.g., CONCITO, IDA, and partially KL), who advocated for a radical change of the status quo. In contrast, resistors (e.g., Dansk Erhverv, DI, Transportministeriet) seeks to adapt the dominant discourse rather than changing practice, hence incremental changes. One stakeholder, (Transportudvalget), was classified as a mediator, as they host a mix of perspectives that reflect political differences. This analysis shows how stakeholders use language strategically to align mobility with particular institutional values, interests, and ideologies.

Building on these storylines, four discourse-coalitions was identified. These illustrate shared meanings across different stakeholders. The sustainable mobility coalition seeks transformative change, the economic growth coalition reinforces status quo, the green modernisation coalition advocates for integrating sustainability into existing paradigms and the spatial cohesion coalition focuses on equality and regional cohesion. These coalitions illustrate how shared understanding of mobility form discursive positions, who legitimise certain social realities. Although these are not formal alliances, they shape how debates unfold and influence which discourses gain momentum. This reflect that power operates not only through institutions, but also through the ability to define problems and determine which responses are considered legitimate.

Finally, the discussion of social practice revealed that discursive positions function as barriers to implementing a national mobility strategy. Especially the growth- and modernisation-oriented coalitions contribute to discursive

closure, where radical alternatives, presented by the sustainable mobility coalition, are dismissed as unrealistic. The continued reinforced technocratic discourse reveals a path dependency, particularly within the civil service of Transportministeriet. The embedded practice filters out sustainability discourses that require behavioural or structural change. This highlights the asymmetry in discursive power, where dominant stakeholders shape not only what is prioritised, but also what is politically feasible. Current practices are reinforced or modernised through incremental changes, due to a complex interplay of institutionalised discourses and structural path dependencies. These are shaped and locked-in by conflicting problem framings, political ideologies, electoral interests, sunk costs, and the stabilising role of the civil service.

The findings show that the debate on national mobility planning in Denmark is not simply about choosing between policy alternatives, it is a discursive landscape of meaning, legitimacy, and direction, which tries to establish new social realities. The absence of a national mobility strategy reflects not a lack of ideas or technical feasibility, but the institutionalisation of technocratic discourses that resist competing and transformative discourses. While sustainable mobility discourses are present and growing, their ability to shape policy remains limited.

The project concludes that distinct discursive positions among central stakeholders shape the mobility debate by reinforcing or challenging the institutional status quo. Through a critical discourse analysis, it becomes clear that radical change in Danish mobility planning requires more than new strategies, it requires a transformation in the mere understanding of mobility which has proved difficult in the current discursive landscape.

10

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