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## **Master's Thesis**

M.Sc. Sustainable Development

### **Roadblocks of Polarization**

Mechanisms of Cultural Resistance to a Speed Limit  
on German Highways

**30-06-2023**

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## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisor, Dr. James Patterson, for his invaluable guidance and constructive feedback throughout the entire process of completing my Master's thesis. From our initial meeting, where he compared the thesis journey to a marathon, his insightful words motivated and inspired me to stay focused and persistent. Additionally, I would like to express my immense gratitude to my close friends, Lucie Oelschläger, Moritz Latour and Anna Golubeva, for their helpful feedback and unwavering support. Their encouragement played a crucial role in helping me navigate challenges and maintain momentum throughout this journey. Lastly, I would also like to express my gratitude to the wonderful Academy of Hope for our collaboration that gave me a sense of camaraderie throughout the process.

## Summary

Culture and identity are increasingly recognized as shaping the acceptance of national climate policy and thereby the opportunities, challenges, and dynamics of achieving ambitious climate action. One of the main strands exploring the role of culture and identity in climate action is a perspective that views culture as potentially disruptive to effective climate policy implementation, with the contentious dynamic of polarization as a potential threat to collective climate action. However, the specific mechanisms linking polarization and climate policy resistance remain understudied, despite their inquiry being needed to help understand precisely how cultural resistance to climate policy arises. A particular gap presently exists in the literary canon with respect to the affective, cultural, and societal underpinnings of polarization contributing to opposition towards climate policies that are designed to address automotive emissions and mobility. The research objective of this thesis therefore is to deepen the understanding of the role of culture as a potentially disruptive factor to climate policy implementation in the automotive sector by empirically investigating how theoretically grounded causal mechanisms between polarization and policy resistance manifest in the case of the German highway speed limit opposition, and by drawing implications of those findings for the cultural dimensions of resistance to automotive climate policy more broadly. Three mechanisms are proposed based on existing theory and subsequently empirically studied through a communication-focused application of theory-testing process-tracing. Precisely, the mechanisms' relevance and manifestations are investigated by analyzing the rationales provided in the context of public statements by politicians, media outlets and private citizens through which resistance to the highway speed limit is justified.

The results show that studying causal mechanisms can help generate valuable insights into cultural resistance to climate policy by enabling a focused analysis of the ways in which cultural factors such as polarization might causally contribute to opposition to specific policy measures. In the case of the German speed limit debate, responses to suspicions of untruthful policy intentions and reactions to divergent preferences for optimal levels of governmental behavioral regulation seem to hold most pertinence in explaining how polarization influences policy resistance. The obtained insights thereby particularly indicate that climate policy resistance should be studied in a multi-mechanism way to account for the coexistence of different mechanisms and the complexity of factors contributing to policy responses. Additionally, the fact that some of the empirically observed mechanisms are surprising indicates that cultural dimensions play out in unexpected ways, further enhancing the relevance of their thorough investigation.

The thesis concludes that by delving into the causal mechanisms underlying cultural resistance, potentially using a communication-focused application of process-tracing, researchers and policymakers can enhance their understanding of the dynamics between socio-cultural factors and policy resistance, ultimately contributing to more informed and just approaches to addressing climate change.

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# 1. Introduction

## 1.1 Background & Problem Definition

Culture and identity are increasingly recognized as shaping the acceptance of national climate policy and thereby the opportunities, challenges, and dynamics of achieving ambitious climate action (Patterson, 2022). One of the main strands exploring the role of culture and identity in climate action is a perspective that views culture as potentially disruptive to effective climate policy implementation (Patterson, 2022). This line of thought, most common in sociology and political science, assumes that certain cultural investments, particularly group identities, may clash with climate protection measures, leading to policy resistance among specific groups (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016). In that context, emphasis largely lies on cultural conflict and divisions between climate policy supporters and opponents, highlighting the contentious dynamics of populism and polarization as potential threats to collective climate action (Patterson, 2022). Understanding culture as disruptive or problematic for climate action is therefore valuable when aiming to gain insights into patterns of resistance, particularly in the presence of deep socio-political and cultural divisions (Patterson, 2022).

The introduction of a speed limit on German highways as a measure to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the transport sector recently faced significant resistance and controversy despite its capability to make a substantial contribution towards achieving climate goals, pointing towards the potential role of culture in shaping policy resistance in that particular case. Accounting for about 15% of total CO<sub>2</sub> emissions, road transport represents a promising lever for political interventions aimed at reducing human influence on global climate dynamics (Ritchie, 2020). Particularly, policies targeting automotive mobility and individual transport are one way of reducing greenhouse gases in the transport sector that is repeatedly discussed by national and international policy makers (Chapman, 2007; IPCC, 2022). In Germany, the transport sector is the only sector that did not manage to decrease its emissions since 1990 (Umweltbundesamt, 2022). This is critical, as the Federal Climate Protection Act (KSG) requires yearly greenhouse gas emissions from the transport sector to fall to 85 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub>-equivalent (-48%) by 2030 (KSG, 2019). Additionally, the act demands Germany to become carbon neutral by 2045, which for the transport sector presumably means reducing greenhouse gas emissions to zero (KSG, 2019; Umweltbundesamt, 2022). In a report published in January 2023, Germanys Federal Environment Agency (UBA) estimated that a general speed limit of 120 km/h on German highways, which currently to large parts allow for high-speed driving without a speed limit, could save up to 6.7 million metric tons of CO<sub>2</sub> per year (Schmaus et al., 2023). While it is argued that such a speed limit would be a straightforward, cost-effective and efficient contribution to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transport that can be realized in the short term (Umweltbundesamt, 2023), the debate around the introduction of the policy is highly polarized and strong political and social resistance have so far prevented its implementation (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022a; Jakob, 2021).

Certainly, Germany is not alone with this type of climate policy deadlock. Instead, the dynamics of the German speed limit debate reflect broader trends in current climate policymaking: While climate change is a complex and multifaceted issue where policy solutions require broad-based public support and cooperation across different social groups, debates about climate policy are increasingly characterized by high levels of polarization and conflict, leading to the inability to cooperate and find equitable solutions (Judge et al., 2023; Koudenburg & Kashima, 2021; Roose, 2021). In fact, polarization seems to shape and hinder many current climate and environmental policy debates around the world and in Europe, as for example illustrated by the cases of the farmer protests in the Netherlands or the French yellow vest movement (Bliuc et al., 2015; Hasselaar et al., 2022; Tatham & Peters, 2023). Despite these observable trends and the urgency of implementing climate policy measures, particular mechanisms linking polarization and climate policy resistance remain understudied, in spite of their inquiry being needed to help understand precisely how cultural resistance to climate policy arises.

More broadly, the scientific community has made significant strides in comprehending the role of cultural factors in stymieing climate policy. Recent research has increasingly focused on complex socio-cultural and psychological factors as explanations for policy resistance, delving into the realms of emotion, culture, and social identity (Feola et al., 2019; Fielding & Hornsey, 2016; Patterson, 2022; Wong-Parodi & Feygina, 2021). In this context, polarization has also proven to be a significant factor: The presence of abundant cultural disparities related to values, interests, and dependencies affected by climate policy creates fertile ground for clashes among various groups, acting as catalysts for the formation of polarized factions in which each group strives to safeguard and advance their unique socio-cultural identity and values, making compromise a potentially challenging endeavor (Bliuc et al., 2015). While polarization can thus possibly impede the uptake of policy measures in different ways, current literature remains vague and only provides little empirical insights into the specific mechanisms operating between polarization and policy resistance in the sphere of climate action. Previous work has largely concentrated on political party polarization, with less attention devoted to other potentially relevant spheres of polarization, for instance between distinct territorial, occupational, or generational groups (Chinn et al., 2020; Iyengar et al., 2019; Marcos et al., 2023; Yang et al., 2016). Additionally, only a limited number of scholars have investigated how polarization may influence climate policy resistance through affective dynamics related to stereotypes, bias, and intergroup hostility, despite strong arguments for their relevance for policy responses (Iyengar et al., 2012). Furthermore, almost all research in the field remains descriptive and lacks a targeted focus on the specific functioning of the causal mechanisms linking its key variables polarization and climate policy resistance.

In summary, while there exist quite some theoretical conjectures of how polarization can lead to policy resistance, there are currently few insights into whether these mechanisms have empirical support in the sphere of climate policymaking. A particular gap presently exists in the literary canon with respect to the affective, cultural, and societal underpinnings of polarization contributing to opposition towards climate

policies that are specifically designed to address automotive emissions and mobility. This constitutes an interesting research gap, as automotive hegemony is strongly linked to various cultural and identity-related aspects, and therefore presents an important, but polarization- and resistance-prone lever for political interventions aimed at reducing transport-related emissions (Haas, 2020).

Taking into account this scientific background, there is a need for empirical research that examines the mechanisms linking polarization and resistance to automotive climate policy. Studying the mechanisms present in the representative case of the German speed limit debate offers an excellent opportunity to provide empirical insights that can potentially deepen the understanding of the role and functioning of culture as a disruptive factor to climate policy implementation, especially in the automotive sector. First, the research aim and questions as derived from the previously identified research gap will be presented, followed by a chapter on the theoretical framework, and a section discussing the employed methodology. Subsequently, a brief case description will be provided, after which the research findings will be presented. These findings will then be discussed, and finally, a concluding answer to the research question will be given.

## 1.2 Research Aim & Questions

Based on the observed thematic trends and gaps in academic literature, the research objective of this thesis is to deepen the understanding of the role of culture as a potentially disruptive factor to climate policy implementation in the automotive sector. This is done by empirically investigating how theoretically grounded causal mechanisms between polarization and policy resistance manifest in the case of the German highway speed limit opposition, and by drawing implications of those findings for the cultural dimensions of resistance to automotive climate policy. The investigation of the following central research question will contribute to the achievement of the research aim:

*Through which mechanisms does polarization result in resistance to a speed limit on German highways and what are the implications for automotive climate policy?*

In order to structure the research in a meaningful way, the main research question was divided into four sub-questions, the subsequential examination of which will enable the achievement of the objective of this thesis:

*a. Which causal mechanisms can be theorized through which polarization can result in policy resistance?*

*b. How can the different parts of those mechanisms be operationalized in the context of automotive climate policy?*

*c. Which of the theorized mechanisms are most relevant in explaining resistance to a speed limit on German highways and how do they manifest?*

*d. What are possible implications of those findings for automotive climate policy?*



Figure 1 presents the research framework of this thesis and depicts how the different research steps flow into answering the research questions. The first phase of the research involved a literature review on topic-related theories, including the cultural dimensions of policy resistance, social identity, polarization and process-tracing, to derive initial causal mechanisms through which polarization can result in policy resistance. Here, three causal mechanisms are theorized and subsequently operationalized into an analytical framework. In the second research phase, data was collected systematically from the political, media and community arenas of the German speed limit debate to capture a representation of the diverse aspects shaping cultural resistance on a larger societal scale. Subsequently the data was qualitatively and quantitatively analyzed with the help of NVivo by applying the previously developed analytical framework. In that context multiple lines of evidence were synthesized to investigate which of the theorized mechanism are most likely to explain resistance to a speed limit on German highways. Additionally, multiple sub-mechanisms capturing different manifestations of the theorized mechanisms were identified. In the last research phase, the results from phase two were evaluated by relating them back to the underlying theory, and implications for automotive climate policy were derived with the help of thorough reflections on the results' transferability to other places and policy contexts. Additionally, based on the research insights, policy recommendations are given, the limitations of the work are discussed and directions for future research are proposed.

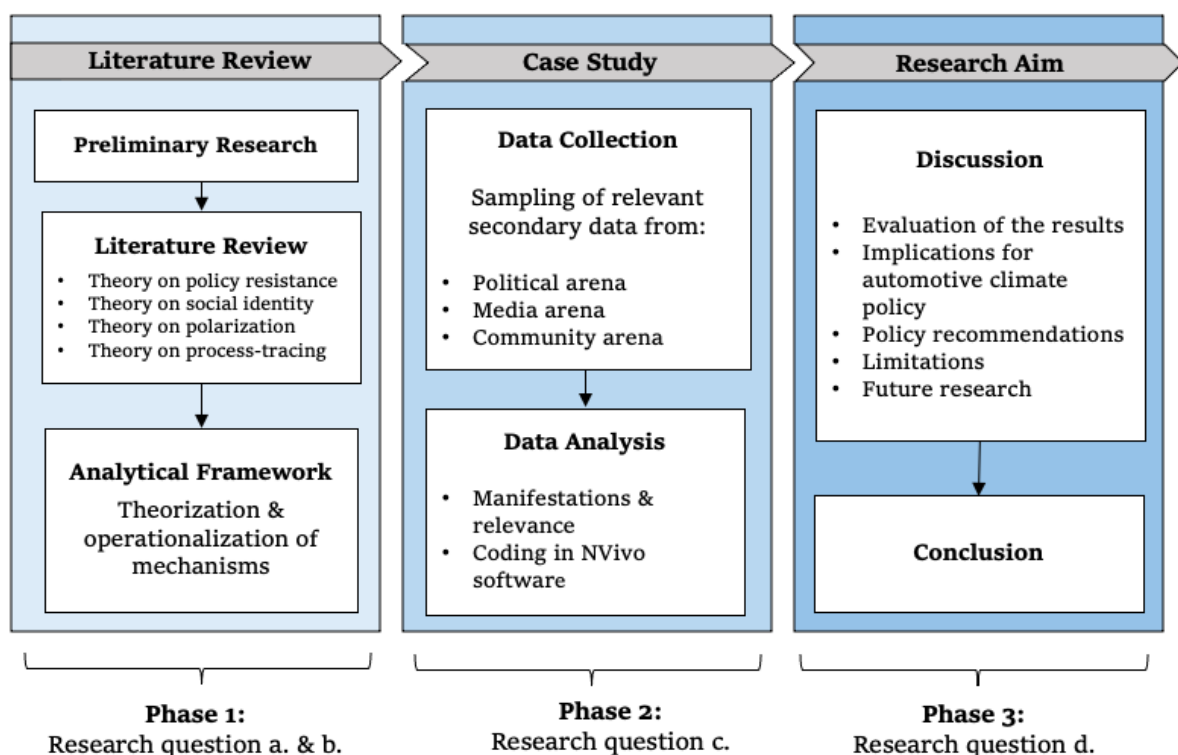


Figure 1. Research framework.

### 1.3 Scientific & Societal Relevance

This thesis feeds into several disciplines of sustainable development research, including social psychology, environmental sociology, and political science. In particular, it contributes to these three disciplines by filling the research gap described in the introduction of this work and thereby helping to better understand the role of culture as a potentially disruptive factor to climate policy implementation by studying the causal relation of polarization and resistance to automotive climate policy. Doing so is important as while there is growing concern about polarization and its wide-ranging consequences in different empirical domains, a key challenge that cuts across the mentioned disciplines is the need to move beyond the descriptive identification of the problem of polarization and instead focus on studying the specific mechanisms through which it may lead to resistance in specific policy cases and contexts. This shift is essential, not only for comprehending the consequences of polarization on climate policy debates and address and mitigate them in a targeted way with more precise attention to the mechanisms involved rather than the application of simplistic solutions like increased knowledge, greater participation, or enhanced political will. By studying mechanisms through a communication-focused application of process-tracing (see *Section 3.1*) this thesis additionally ventures a first foray into an innovative methodological possibility that holds the potential to aid in the study of cultural resistance mechanisms to climate policy.

The societal relevance of this work lies within its contribution to an increased understanding of the social, cultural, and political factors that shape resistance to sustainable development policies, particularly in the context of climate policy in the automotive industry. Here, an increased understanding of the role of polarization in resistance to climate policy is crucial for working towards better inter-group cooperation and the reduction of biases. In that way, more effective and equitable policies, and interventions to mitigate the impacts of climate change can be developed. The insights gained from this thesis are particularly relevant for policy makers that aim to introduce policy measures in the field of automotive restrictions where polarization in the issue area's context is present.

## 2. Theory

The theory section of this thesis starts from the broader theoretical background regarding the cultural dimensions of climate policy resistance and culminates in the specific propositions of three mechanisms that can be theorized to transmit causal forces from polarization to resistance to automotive climate policy. First, foundational work on the cultural dimensions of climate policy resistance is introduced (Section 2.1), followed by an introduction to the relevance of polarization in that context (Section 2.2). Next, the mechanismic<sup>1</sup> ontology of causation (Section 2.3) and the procedure of theory-testing process-tracing (Section 2.4) are introduced, which provides a basis for systematically studying causal mechanisms as aimed for in this thesis. Finally, three mechanisms are proposed through which polarization can be theorized to result in policy resistance, culminating in the conceptual framework underlying this work (Section 2.5).

### 2.1 Cultural Dimensions of Climate Policy Resistance

Policy resistance refers to opposition to a policy or proposed change that impedes its implementation or effectiveness and entails the actions from individuals, groups, or organizations that work against the successful adoption, implementation, or outcomes of a particular policy (Barnes & Prior, 2009). Over the last decade we have seen many instances of the occurrence of resistance to climate policy, capturing the attention and interest of researchers in a desire to delve deeper into understanding the complex underlying factors that contribute to such negative reactions and explore potential solutions to overcome obstacles in the pursuit of effective climate governance. For instance, scholars have studied how concerns regarding large-scale investments in or individualistic preoccupations regarding personal convenience and financial repercussions are related to climate policy opposition (Drews & van den Berg, 2016; Mehleb et al., 2021; Popp, 2010).

More recently, research has additionally started delving into complex socio-political and psychological explanations for climate policy resistance that revolve around the roles of emotion, culture, and identity. By investigating the emotional aspects relevant to climate policy, researchers aim to discern how feelings like fear, anger, hope, or apathy can drive or hinder individuals' acceptance or rejection of climate action (Brosch, 2021; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2013). For example, scholars have focused on how emotional appeals, framing techniques, and communication strategies can effectively shape individuals' support or opposition to climate policy measures to develop more persuasive and impactful messaging strategies that can garner public support for climate action (Morris et al., 2019; Wong-Parodi & Feygina, 2021). In addition to emotion, culture has been recognized as an important factor in understanding individuals' perceptions and responses to climate policy (Adger et al., 2013; Bulkeley et al., 2016; Patterson, 2022). In its broadest sense, culture encompasses the fundamental

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<sup>1</sup> The adjective 'mechanismic' is used by process-tracing scholars to indicate that something relates to theories which explain phenomena in terms of cause and effect. It is a less common version of the word 'mechanistic'.

social framework that gives significance into individuals' relationships, behaviors, and customs and encompasses various elements such as history, language and community, shaping the way people perceive and interact with the world around them (Patterson, 2022). Researchers have in that context delved into the role of cultural values, norms, dependencies, and social identity in influencing attitudes towards climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies (Bulkeley et al., 2016; Patterson, 2022). By studying those factors, scholars often seek to identify cultural and social barriers and enablers that impact climate policy acceptance and thereby assist in possibly developing context-specific approaches that resonate with diverse populations to promote climate action (Hornsey & Fielding, 2020; Patterson, 2022).

To delve a bit deeper into the cultural dimensions of climate policy resistance one must understand that the very heart of these dynamics lies the concept of social identity. Social identity has been defined as the „part of an individual's self-concept, which derives from his [or her] knowledge of his [or her] membership of a social group (or groups) together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Social identification can occur with different types of groups and on different scales, reaching from identification with large scale social categories like age, gender, or ethnicity to identification with interest based, political, occupational, or even friend groups (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016). It is based on the shared characteristics and experiences that define a particular social group and constitutes an important aspect of how individuals perceive themselves and how they interact with the world and others (Tajfel, 1978). Often, social identification is based on formal or informal categories to which one is ascribed by society, meaning that an individual's self-concept is also to a large extent influenced by external societal attributions (Tajfel, 1978). Additionally, power can shape an individual's group affiliation and the extent to which they identify with a particular group, as people with higher social or institutional power may gravitate towards identifying with groups that reinforce and maintain their position of power, while those with lower power may identify with marginalized or disadvantaged groups that share their experiences (Houser & Domokos-Cheng Ham, 2004). As a culturally significant factor, social identity also plays an integral role in shaping people's beliefs, values, and attitudes towards a plethora of issues, including climate change and policy (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016). In particular, based on their social identity, individuals may have varying needs and worldviews that determine their preferences and influence whether they are more or less likely to resist or support certain climate policies, including automotive restrictions (Brewer, 2003; Bulkeley et al., 2016; De Vries, 2012; Fielding & Hornsey, 2016; Haas, 2020; Patterson 2022).

Based on this observation, previous research has addressed how cultural aspects related social identity may influence reactions to climate policies. For instance, a quite large number of studies have shown that conservative and libertarian political identities may lead to resistance to climate policies, such as government regulation or intervention in the economy, or those requiring sacrifices for the common good (Anshelm & Hultman, 2014; Ballew et al., 2020; Funk & Hefferon, 2019; Haas, 2020; Hess & Renner, 2019; Leiserowitz, 2006; McCright & Dunlap, 2011; Nelson, 2019; Unsworth & Fielding, 2014). Furthermore, research has identified that territorial identity can play a role in resistance

to climate policy. For example, strong national identity can lead to resistance to climate policies that are seen as a threat to national economic growth and development (Agius et al., 2020; Daggett, 2018; Schaller & Carius, 2019; Tewksbury, 2021) and local identities can lead to resistance to climate policy due to livelihood dependency in the region, for example, when regions are culturally and economically very tied to certain fossil practices (Sanz-Hernandez, 2020). Additionally, workers in industries that are heavily dependent on fossil fuels, may be more likely to oppose fossil phase-out policies that could threaten their livelihoods, than people without any connection to those industries (Bell & Braun, 2010; Bell & Yorck, 2010). Also, in the specific context of automotive climate policy, the phenomenon of widespread motorization is evident not only in the physical infrastructure that is created but also in the everyday habits and emotional connections of individuals (Sheller, 2004). In that context, the concept of petro-masculinity, a concept that recognizes the significant role that fossil fuels play in shaping and reinforcing patriarchal structures, as well as the cultural meanings and identities associated with them, was recently pointed out as a potential explanatory factor for resistance to climate action in the field of individual transport by car (Agius et al., 2020; Behrensen, 2020; Daggett, 2018; Nelson, 2019).

Of course, while certain social identities might be related to resistance to climate policy, others can foster support thereof, as individuals may perceive climate change policies as nonrestrictive and in-line with their worldviews and cultural context (De Vries, 2012; Fielding & Hornsey, 2016). For instance, based on ideology and concern, individuals who identify as politically left leaning as well as younger people tend to be more supportive of climate policies than older people and conservatives (Ballew et al., 2019). Moreover, studies suggest that individuals who identify as members of certain social groups, such as environmentalists or scientists tend to be more supportive of climate action (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016).

The abundance of cultural disparities concerning values, interests, and dependencies in the realm of climate policy sets the stage for the emergence of polarization dynamics by creating fertile ground for clashes among the involved groups that serve as catalysts for the formation of polarized camps as each group seeks to protect and promote their own identity and values (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016; Patterson, 2022). As investigating the dynamics of polarization therefore has the potential to shed further light on the underlying reasons why certain policies encounter staunch resistance and struggle to gain widespread support, its inquiry is increasingly considered a promising point of study for understanding the challenges faced when attempting to address complex issues like climate change where differences in group-based interests and values are high (Bliuc et al., 2015). The following section will hence elaborate on the current knowledge on the relation of polarization and (climate) policy resistance.

## 2.2 The Role of Polarization

Polarization is generally defined as the process or state in which individuals or groups develop strongly divergent viewpoints, attitudes, or beliefs on a particular issue or set of issues (Judge et al., 2023). It involves a sharp division or separation into distinct,

opposing positions, often characterized by strong emotional intensity and a reduced willingness to consider alternative perspectives and find common ground or compromise (Iyengar et al., 2019; Judge et al. 2023). The phenomenon of polarization is strongly related to culture and often entails heightened tension and conflict, including an "us vs. them" mentality, where individuals perceive the world through the lens of ingroup-outgroup dynamics (Judge et al., 2023; McCoy et al., 2018). It can arise from a spectrum of underlying factors, such as political ideology, values, social identity, cultural worldviews, or media influence and occur in various domains, including media, politics, society, or even interpersonal relationships (De Vries, 2012; Iyengar et al., 2019; Judge et al., 2023; Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Often, it also emerges as a result of political, social, economic, or cultural power struggles between different groups or factions within a society, as powerful entities or individuals may engage in efforts to maintain or expand their power, leading to the exacerbation of divisions and the creation of polarized environments (Houser & Domokos-Cheng Ham, 2004).

As mentioned above, polarization often has a strongly emotional part to it, and people are inclined to consolidate affective polarization for the sake of group distinctiveness and ingroup favorability (Brewer, 1991; Jetten et al., 1997; Tajfel, 1982). Affective polarization refers to the increasing emotional hostility and animosity towards outgroups, resulting in a stronger emotional attachment to one's own group and a growing unwillingness to engage in dialogue and compromise with outgroups (Iyengar et al., 2019). It is usually characterized by a lack of empathy as well as hostility, and distrust towards members of the outgroup and rooted in the fact, that when people identify with a particular social group, their sense of self-worth and self-esteem become closely intertwined with the group's beliefs and values (Iyengar et al., 2019; Tajfel & Turner, 2001). In particular, once individuals identify with a social group they care about, they may derive such a big part of their self-concept from it that they strive for ingroup distinctiveness and superiority to protect and improve the group's image and thereby gain a positive social identity (Brewer, 1991; Ellemers & Haslam, 2012; Jetten et al., 1997). Due to reasons of self-perception, it then becomes imperative for identified individuals to take steps towards elevating their ingroup and, by extension, themselves, while simultaneously distancing themselves from and devaluing outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). Consequently, individuals are more likely to support and gloss over their ingroup's views and reject and devalue opposing opinions and outgroup members, potentially resulting in the rejection of policies proposed by outgroups despite compelling scientific evidence supporting the imperative for action (Esposito et al., 2013; Iyengar et al., 2019).

As previously elaborated, research has consistently shown high levels of polarization on climate issues, with deep divides among individuals and groups regarding their dependencies, beliefs, attitudes, and policy preferences. This is also the case for issues concerning individual transport by car, the field of interest to this work, as automobility constitutes a domain frequently associated with disparities in culturally and politically determined preferences (Haas, 2020). Additionally, research points towards the relevance of the affective dimensions of polarization in the context of climate change debates and indicates the pertinence of high levels of intergroup-hostility and animosity

between different involved groups such as climate change believers and skeptics or political parties (Judge et al., 2023; Tyagi et al., 2020). Given that climate policymaking, including climate policymaking in the automotive sector, frequently occurs within highly polarized contexts, characterized by diverse needs, dependencies, and values as well as intergroup animosity it becomes increasingly important to study how polarization particularly contributes to cultural resistance to climate policy. It is however also important to acknowledge that a certain level of conflict between groups is often likely to be unavoidable when advocating for social change. In fact, a lack of conflict can often even result in an unhealthy state of affairs as it might suggest a complacent acceptance of the status quo, causing stagnation, and impeding progress towards addressing societal challenges and complexities (Fielding & Hornsey, 2016).

Several scholars have made strides in examining various aspects of polarization in the context of climate policy resistance and pointed out how it poses significant challenges to collective problem-solving across all levels of the political landscape (Ferguson et al., 2016; Hacker & Pierson, 2019; Judge et al., 2023). The largest body of research in that field is dedicated to examining political polarization. This research primarily concentrates on the American political system and the divide between Republicans and Democrats, aiming to investigate how the divide in partisan and ideological views influences public support for environmentalism and climate action (Antonio & Brulle, 2011; Dunlap et al., 2001; Dunlap & McCright, 2008). For instance, scholars have found how affective polarization can have the effect of influencing individuals to reject policies solely based on their association with the opposing political party. In their study on psychological barriers to bipartisan public support for climate policy, van Boven et al. (2018) found that Democrats and Republicans were more likely to express agreement with climate policies if they believed the policies originated from their own party. Conversely, they were inclined to oppose climate policies if they perceived them to be originating from the opposing party, regardless of the specific nature of the policies, suggesting that intergroup polarization, particularly negative attitudes towards the opposing party, can lead individuals to make decisions based on the party affiliation behind a climate policy rather than evaluating the policy itself. Other research has focused on the impact of media and framing effects on opposition to climate policy measures in polarized contexts (Bolsen & Shapiro, 2018; Hart et al., 2015; Zhou, 2016) and on how negative stereotypes about certain social groups, such as activists, may reduce social change influence (Bashir et al., 2013; Bergmann, & Ossewaarde, 2020).

These research efforts point towards the realization that understanding the nuanced cultural dynamics of polarization and its causal forces towards policy resistance is essential for devising strategies and foster effective climate policymaking (Bliuc et al., 2015; Patterson, 2022). However, while plenty of research has already pointed towards the potential causal relationship of polarization and policy resistance on a broader level, and some research on different themes of polarization in contexts of climate policy resistance exists, especially with regards to political polarization, current knowledge is fragmented and a more specific and thorough investigation of the particular causal mechanisms linking the two variables in the context of climate policymaking, including in the automotive sector, is yet absent. This is also highlighted by Brosch (2021), who

emphasizes the importance of investigating the specific causal mechanisms that connect affect and resistance to climate policies, which is very relevant in the context of polarization, where individuals' feelings towards outgroups can significantly impact their decision-making processes regarding policy support.

Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual relationship of the independent variable, polarization, and the outcome, resistance to automotive climate policy, linked through causal mechanisms that will subsequently be investigated in the context of this thesis.

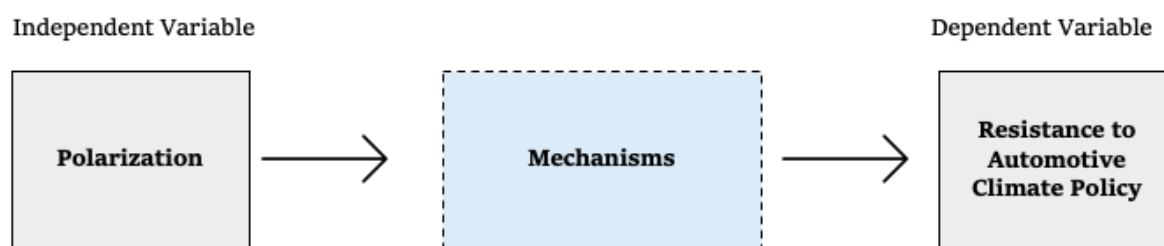


Figure 2. General conceptual framework.

As the aim of this thesis is to obtain a deepened understanding of the causal forces transmitted between polarization and resistance to automotive climate policies, the forthcoming section serves the purpose of laying the theoretical groundwork for studying causal mechanisms.

### 2.3 Mechanismic Ontology of Causation

When studying causal mechanisms as aimed for in this thesis, one must adopt a mechanismic perspective on causation, which focuses on the process through which causal forces are transmitted among interconnected components of a mechanism to produce a certain outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). By studying these causal mechanisms, scholars aim to acquire what Salmon (1998) describes as a deeper level of explanatory knowledge. A key aspect of a mechanismic ontology of causation is the interest in understanding the theoretical process by which a variable X gives rise to an outcome Y, specifically examining the transmission of what can be referred to as causal forces (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Causal mechanism can hence be understood as theoretical frameworks that explain how a system of interrelated parts facilitates the transmission of causal forces from X to Y (Bhaskar, 1978; Bunge, 1997; Bunge, 2004; Glennan, 1996; Glennan, 2002). Leading scholars in the fields of political science and sociology argue that taking the study of causal mechanisms seriously entails adapting a logic of process-tracing and conceptualizing them as a series of interconnected parts consisting of entities engaged in activities, similar to toothed wheels in a machine where movement signifies the transmission of causal forces (Machamer, 2004; Machamer et al., 2000; Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Depending on the theoretical level, entities can be individuals, groups, states, classes, or structural phenomena, the conceptualization of which employs nouns, while activities should be conceptualized in verbs that define the transmitters of causal forces within the mechanism (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Illustratively, each part of a mechanism can be represented as  $(n_n \rightarrow)$ , where  $n_n$



represents the entity  $n$ , and the arrow denotes the activity transmitting causal energy through the mechanism to generate an outcome. The asterisk (\*) symbolizes a logical *and*. Consequently, a complete causal mechanism can be depicted as:

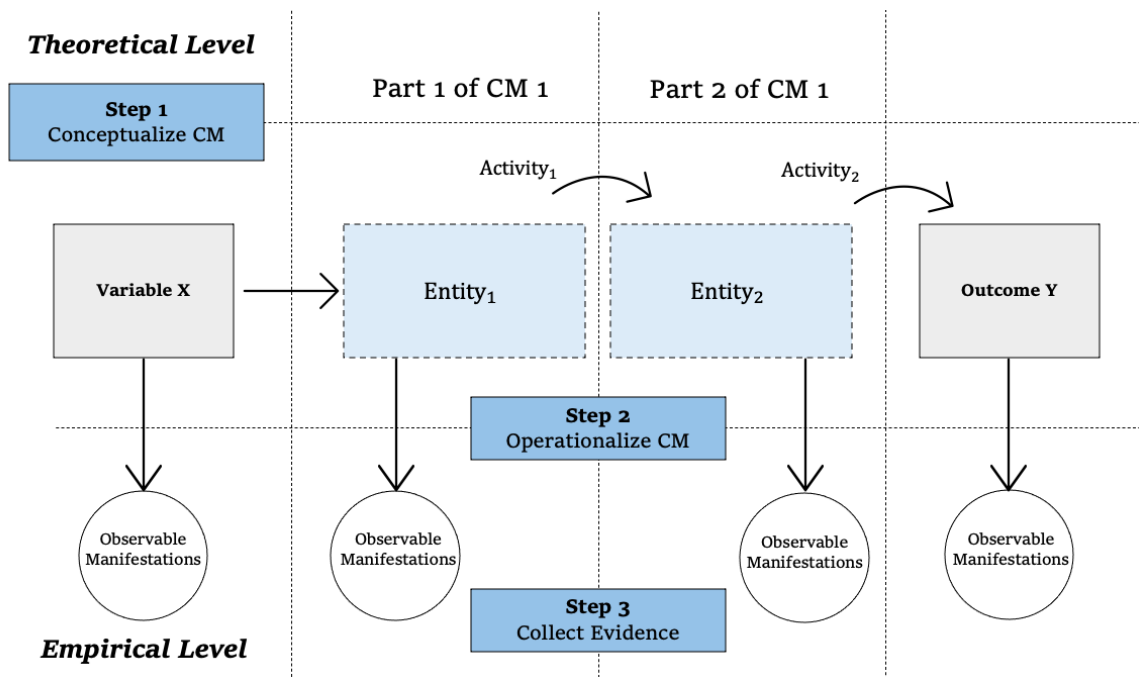
$$X \rightarrow [(n_1 \rightarrow) * (n_2 \rightarrow)] \rightarrow Y$$

This expression signifies that  $X$  transmits causal forces through the mechanism comprising entity 1 and its activity as well as entity 2 and its activity, which collectively contribute to producing outcome  $Y$  (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

It is crucial to note that each individual part of the mechanism alone is insufficient to generate outcome  $Y$  but works only in conjunction with the mechanism's other components (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Additionally, a mechanistic ontology entails the notion that all parts included in the conceptualization of a given causal mechanism must be absolutely necessary for the mechanism to operate, meaning that if one part is missing, it is not possible to assert the existence of the mechanism itself (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). This means, that if it cannot be theoretically argued why a particular part is essential within the causal mechanism and specifically how the associated entity engages in activities that transmit causal forces from  $X$  to  $Y$ , that redundant part should be removed from the mechanisms theoretical model (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

## 2.4 Theory-Testing Process-Tracing

In theory-testing process-tracing a causal mechanism is theorized based on existing literature and it is then examined whether empirical evidence supports the existence of each component of this hypothesized causal mechanism in a specific case (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). *Figure 3*, based on Beach & Pedersen (2013), depicts the stepwise logic of theory-testing process-tracing research. A causal mechanism (CM) is first conceptualized on the theoretical level, disaggregated into entities engaging in activities. Then the mechanism is operationalized by formulating case-specific predictions regarding the expected observable manifestations of each component of the causal mechanism. After that, evidence is collected in the empirical case to allow for within-case inferences to be made regarding whether a theorized mechanism as a whole was present in a case of interest and if it operated as anticipated.



**Figure 3.** Illustration of the stepwise procedure of theory-testing process-tracing adapted from Beach & Pedersen (2013).

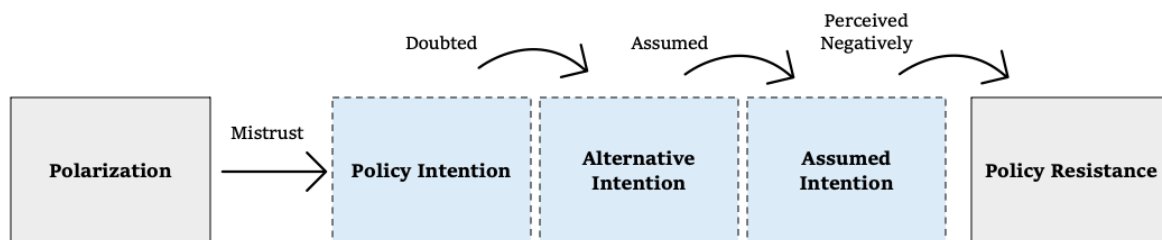
When substantial confirming evidence is found for the presence of every component of a theorized mechanism, one can deduce, with a relative level of certainty, that the mechanism truly exists while if compelling disconfirming evidence emerges for a specific component within a multi-part mechanism, the existence of the entire hypothesized causal mechanism is invalidated (Bunge, 1997; Bunge, 2004). However, as in the complex social world most outcomes are caused by multiple mechanisms exerting their power at the same time, process tracing allows no claims to be made about whether an investigated mechanism was the sole factor leading to an outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). The aim of this work therefore is to identify analytically sufficient causal mechanisms which can explain the observed outcome, recognizing that there may be other co-existing mechanisms that are not being examined.

## 2.5 Conceptualization of Mechanisms

Conceptualization in theory-testing process-tracing uses logical reasoning to formulate a plausible causal mechanism through which X contributes to producing Y, as well as a consideration of the context within which the mechanism is expected to operate (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). The following three mechanisms, disaggregated into a series of parts composed of entities engaging in activities, theorize how polarization can lead to policy resistance. After conducting an extensive review of the relevant literature, these three mechanisms were identified as having the greatest theoretical potential to elucidate how polarization can contribute to climate policy resistance. Empirically investigating how relevant each of these mechanisms is in opposition to a speed limit on German highways and the ways in which those mechanisms specifically manifest can subsequently provide insights that may deepen the understanding of the relevance and functioning of different potential causal explanations for how polarization can lead to political opposition in cases of climate policy that involve automobile restrictions.

## 2.5.1 Mechanism 1: Intention Skepticism

Related to the previously introduced literature on affective polarization and its notions of intergroup animosity, antipathy, and high levels of distrust between social groups, scholars have identified *intention skepticism* as a fundamental mechanism with the potential to offer explanations for how polarization can contribute to policy resistance. Intention skepticism refers to a critical attitude or doubt regarding the true motives behind a particular action, policy, or decision and acts as a cognitive barrier that clouds individual's perception of the true intentions of policy proponents (Iyengar et al., 2019; Lees & Cikara, 2021). Particularly, in societal contexts where affective polarization is rampant, individuals within social groups may develop a profound sense of mistrust towards the intentions of opposing groups with different opinions (Iyengar et al., 2019; Reeder et al., 2005). This distrust in turn can foster the belief that policies proposed or supported by the opposing group are not genuinely aimed at addressing the purported issues, but rather serve ulterior motives and individuals may speculate that the proposed policies are driven by hidden agendas (Esposito et al., 2013; Iyengar et al., 2019; Lees & Cikara, 2021). Due to the high levels of outgroup mistrust and motive attribution asymmetry in polarized contexts, suspected outgroup motives are likely to be perceived as bad or undesirable (Waytz et al., 2014; Reeder et al., 2005). This perception may devalue and delegitimize the proposed measure and reinforces doubts, solidifying opposition and resistance (Iyengar et al., 2019; Lees & Cikara, 2021; Reeder et al., 2005). The mechanism of intention skepticism, that describes the links between these three dynamics (see *Figure 4*), may therefore lead to an outright rejection of the policy at hand, hindering the ability to find common ground and develop and implement effective policies (Iyengar et al., 2019; Lees & Cikara, 2021).



**Figure 4.** *Conceptualization of mechanism 1: Intention skepticism.*

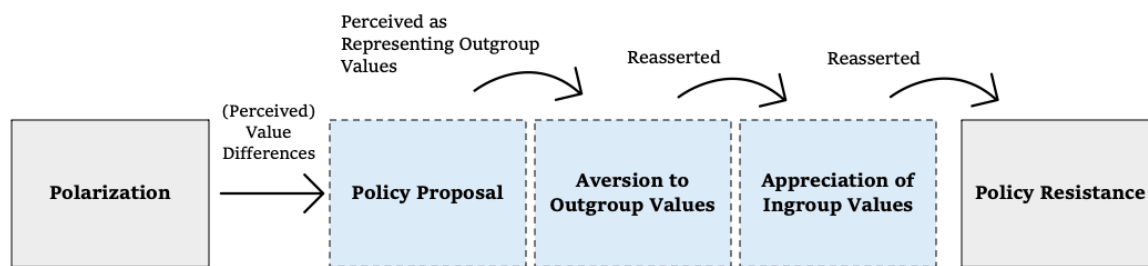
In summary, intention skepticism thus operates as a three-part mechanism, comprising doubt in policy intention, the assumption of alternative intention, and the perception of the assumed alternative intention as negative. All three components are indispensable within the conceptualization of intention skepticism as the absence of any one component weakens the mechanism as a whole, making it unable to exert its causal forces: The doubt in the policy's intention, although a starting point, remains inert without the assumption of an alternative intention. It is the assumption of an alternative motive that breathes life into the doubt, infusing it with greater significance and potential consequences. Likewise, the assumption of alternative intention remains incomplete without its negative perception providing a definitive framework for policy resistance to take root so that the insufficiency of any one component in isolation emphasizes their essentiality within the causal mechanism.

## 2.5.2 Mechanism 2: Value Defense

Another mechanism suggested by theory for how polarization can lead to policy resistance is through *value defense*. When polarization is high, so are differences in group values, and research investigating mass polarization has additionally uncovered that people tend to even overestimate the distance in cultural values between themselves and members of opposing groups (Enders & Armaly, 2019; Nguyen, 2020; Yang et al., 2016). This justified or unjustified perception of value differences may lead to the perception of ideological incompatibility, giving rise to the mechanism of value defense (Lees & Cikara, 2021; López-Rodríguez et al., 2019). When individuals perceive their core values to be incompatible with those of an outgroup proposing a certain policy, cognitive processes and value judgments may come into play, through which policies proposed by an outgroup are categorized based on value associations and evaluated accordingly (Guan et al., 2009; Opatow & Weiss, 2000; Opatow & Brook, 2003).

The first component of this mechanism involves perceiving a policy proposal as representative of outgroup values. In polarized environments, individuals often categorize policies based on the values they associate with specific groups. This is due to the fact that polarization fosters an "us vs. them" mentality, where individuals perceive the world through the lens of ingroup-outgroup dynamics as elaborated upon at the beginning of *Section 2.2* of this theory chapter. Categorizing policies based on associated values can additionally serve as a cognitive shortcut to simplify complex political or social issues: Rather than engaging in in-depth analysis or evaluation of specific policies, individuals rely on their preconceived notions about the values and beliefs held by different groups to quickly and efficiently make decisions, particularly in politically charged environments (Enders & Armaly, 2019; Esposito et al., 2013; Iyengar et al., 2012; Tajfel, 1982). The second component of the mechanism is the reminiscence of the aversion towards the outgroup values that are perceived to be represented by the policy. Once individuals perceive a policy as representing outgroup values, they may reassert a negative attitude or opposition towards those values. This aversion is again highly related to affective polarization and might additionally be fueled by perceived ideological incompatibility and the perception that the outgroup's values are threatening, or contrary to one's own ingroup values (Guan et al., 2009; Iyengar et al., 2012; van Prooijen et al., 2015). Outgroup contempt, the feeling of disdain or disrespect towards members of the opposing political group, can also fuel this dynamic by promoting a sense of superiority towards the other group and their values (Lees & Cikara, 2021). Additionally, anger, the feeling of frustration or powerlessness in response to a perceived value threat, can intensify negative attitudes towards outgroups values (Huber et al., 2015; Webster et al., 2022). The third component revolves around the defense and reassertion of appreciation for ingroup values. Following the aversion towards outgroup values, individuals may feel compelled to reaffirm their commitment and attachment to their own ingroup values as a means to preserve and strengthen the significance of ingroup values and defend them from being overruled in the context of the proposed policy (Tajfel & Turner, 2001; van Prooijen et al., 2015). This reassertion of ingroup values, in turn, may intensify the perceived threat posed by the proposed

policy and cause resistance thereto (Tajfel & Turner, 2001). The mechanism of value defense therefore comprises three integral mechanistic components as conceptualized and presented in *Figure 5*.

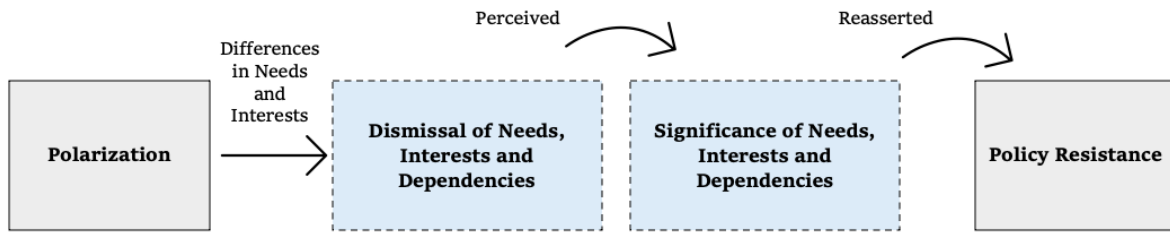


**Figure 5.** Conceptualization of mechanism 2: Value defense.

In summary, the mechanism operates through the interplay of perceiving a policy as representing outgroup values, reasserting the aversion one feels towards those values, and the reassertion of appreciation for ingroup values. All three components are essential within the mechanism of perceived value threats as each component builds upon the previous one and amplifies the effects of the others, culminating in policy resistance.

### 2.5.3 Mechanism 3: Needs, Interests & Dependencies Reassessment

The last mechanism that is theorized within the context of this work to emit causal forces from polarization to policy resistance is the *reassessment of needs, interests, and dependencies*. In polarized contexts, people often have juxtaposed needs, interests, and dependencies influences by their culture and social identity (Hornsey & Fielding, 2016). This poses a risk of certain needs and interests being harmed when a particular policy clashes directly with people’s everyday lives, creating a sense of injustice or dismissal that has the potential to fuel political volatility (Patterson, 2022). This perception is likely to arise due to the often very diverse cultural and identity-based needs and dependencies within polarized environments causing individuals to more easily feel marginalized or overlooked in the context of certain policies and attribute ignorance to outgroups (Barnett et al., 2021; Patterson, 2022; Sammut et al., 2015). In the second component of the mechanism, the reassertion of the significance of one's needs, interests, and dependencies, individuals respond to the perceived dismissal by emphasizing the importance and relevance of those aspects to their identity, for instance by highlight the negative consequences or implications of neglecting or disregarding these vital aspects. Particularly, when individuals find themselves in policy setting where they feel like conflicting viewpoints dominate, they may feel compelled to emphasize and reaffirm their own needs, interests, and dependencies to defend and protect their identity, interest and stake in the issue at hand and demand recognition and dignity (Bell & York, 2010; Fukuyama, 2018). The mechanism therefore consists of two components, generating causal forces from polarization to policy resistance as illustrated in *Figure 6*.



**Figure 6.** *Conceptualization of mechanism 3: Needs, interests, and dependencies reassessment.*

Just as with the previous mechanisms discussed, both components of this mechanism are essential for the generation of policy resistance. It is the combination of perceiving the dismissal and the subsequent reassertion of the significance of needs, interests and dependencies that fuels the resistance, solidifying opposition to the policy. In fact, the two components might even be considered to have a reciprocal relationship in the perception of dismissal is likely to trigger the reassertion of the significance of needs and dependencies, and the reassertion reversely intensifies the perception of dismissal. While this reinforcing cycle may even amplify resistance and strengthen opposition to the policy, the mechanistic components are analytically assumed to act as a causal chain in the first instance causing the initial policy resistance and are therefore theorized as such. In summary, the mechanism of perceived dismissal of needs and dependencies operates through two interdependent components: the perception of dismissal and the subsequent reassertion of the significance of needs and dependencies which together generate causal forces that contribute to policy resistance.

## 2.5.4 Conceptual Framework

Figure 7 represents the conceptual framework underlying this thesis. The three previously proposed mechanisms of *intention skepticism*, *value threats* and *needs, interests and dependencies reassessment* are theorized to emit causal forces leading from polarization to resistance to automotive climate policy. In the context of the following chapter on methods, those three mechanisms will be operationalized so that subsequently their individual manifestations and comparative relevance in the context of the empirical case can be investigated to draw implications for the relationship of polarization and resistance to automotive climate policy.

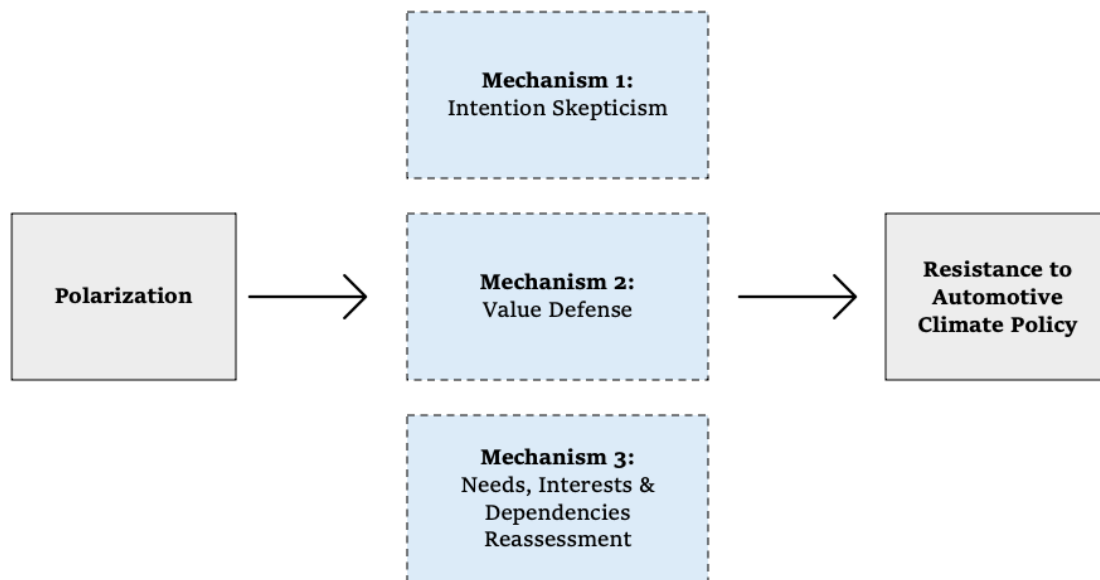


Figure 7. Specific conceptual framework.

### 3. Methodology

This chapter gives further insights into the methodological approach that this thesis follows. While the general procedure of theory-testing process-tracing was already theoretically introduced in the previous chapter and three mechanisms have been proposed through which polarization can be theorized to lead to resistance to automotive climate policy, the aim of this methods-chapter is to provide insights into the practical process through which the theorized mechanisms' manifestations and comparative relevance will be investigated within the chosen empirical case. First, the previously theorized mechanisms are operationalized and further insights into the general research method are provided (Section 3.1), followed by a justification of the case selection (Section 3.2). After that an in-depth description of the approach for data collection is provided (Section 3.3), followed by an explanation of the data analysis process (Section 3.4). Lastly, ethical considerations are discussed (Section 3.5).

#### 3.1 Operationalization of Mechanisms

The operationalization of the theorized mechanisms necessitates scrutinizing their tangible empirical traces by formulating case-specific predictions regarding the expected observable manifestations of each component of the causal mechanism (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Through empirical investigations, one can then make inferences regarding whether available evidence speaks for or against the theorized mechanism as an explanation for the given phenomenon (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). The operationalization of mechanisms can vary in strength and is commonly assessed based on two dimensions: certainty and uniqueness (van Evera, 1997). Uniqueness refers to whether the evidence found increases our confidence in the existence of a specific part of the mechanism when compared to plausible alternatives and certainty pertains to the inferences we can draw when the predicted evidence is not found (van Evera, 1997). The most desirable scenario is a doubly decisive operationalization where we exhibit high levels of both certainty and uniqueness. In such cases, if the evidence is absent, our confidence in the mechanism's validity is reduced, and simultaneously one can effectively distinguish between supporting evidence and alternative explanations (van Evera, 1997). However, it is often challenging in real-world social science research to formulate predictions that enable doubly decisive operationalization as accessing and obtaining the necessary empirical evidence of such quality is typically very difficult (Beach & Pedersen, 2013).

Process-tracing scholars in their operationalization of theorized mechanisms often focus on more quantitative evidence such as statistical patterns or the temporal and spatial chronology of events when investigating their presence (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). However, culture, and particularly cultural aspects related to polarization, are to a large extent created and shared through societal communication which serves as the medium through which human interaction takes place (Bonvillain, 2019). In fact, through communication and language, individuals express information about their personal identities, perceptions of the world, and their roles within it (Bonvillain, 2019).



Departing from the traditional mode of operationalizing mechanisms in theory-testing process tracing, it was therefore deemed most useful to venture into the rhetoric domain for operationalizing the theorized mechanisms and conduct qualitative research based on multiple sources of secondary data. Particularly, the theorized mechanisms were studied through investigating the rationales provided in the context of public statements in which resistance to the highway speed limit is justified. This approach was deemed useful for several reasons. Firstly, when analyzing phenomena that are represented and manifested discursively, such as polarization, it is logical to draw on textual data that offer insights, arguments, and perspectives related to the subject matter. By analyzing these sources, it becomes possible to delve into the discursive aspects of the phenomenon under investigation, unraveling the underlying meanings, framing, and narratives shaping the topic in society (Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). As mentioned before, this is particularly relevant in the context of studying mechanisms related to culture, as cultural dynamics are intricately tied to language, discourse, and communication practices (Bonvillain, 2019). Secondly, the objective of capturing the situation and large-scale trends across German society requires a broad and cross-sectional reach, for which secondary data analysis is highly suitable as it allows accessing a diverse range and high quantity of sources that span different regions, demographics, and time periods (Corti, 2008; Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Lastly, the desire to investigate multiple arenas of debate as aimed for in this work necessitates suitable ways to gain insights into these different arenas. Secondary data analysis offers a flexible approach to explore the three arenas of interest to the research topic due to strong data availability in the form of parliamentary debates, partisan statements, media articles, and online social communication in which opposition to the speed limit is expressed.

The communication-focused operationalization of the theorized mechanisms in terms of public statements contained in secondary data is additionally founded upon the assumption that by studying the rationales provided by individuals resisting the highway speed limit, it is possible to uncover evidence indicative of the mechanisms that underlie their decision-making processes. Particularly, to capture large-scale societal trends, statements from the three arenas of debate were considered: the media arena, the political arena, and the community arena comprising ordinary citizens (Judge et al., 2023). While this operationalization is of course not accurately doubly decisive, it can generally be considered to contain significant levels of uniqueness and certainty. For one, the existence of justifications offered to explain decision-making processes can, if aligned with the theorized functioning of a certain mechanism, serve as unique indications of the presence and relevance of that mechanism, especially if those justifications occur in large quantities within the analyzed data. Due to the central role of communication for the formation and transmission of culture, it is highly improbable that cultural justifications of resistance aligned with a particular mechanism would be put forth in large quantities if that mechanism did not contribute in any way to the resistance at hand (Bonvillain, 2019). In fact, even if one assumes that these opinions are presented solely with the intention to influence others without them reflecting the true thoughts of the people stating them, their presence can reveal important insights regarding polarization and its effect on climate policy resistance. The mechanistic

logics presented in those statements may additionally ultimately determine what parts of society perceive as true and consequently shape decision-making processes when it comes to supporting or opposing a particular policy. Additionally, the justifications provided by individuals who resist the highway speed limit also carry a certain level of certainty. If certain public justifications that contain elements of the theorized mechanism are absent, it is unlikely that the mechanism holds significant relevance in explaining policy resistance. This again is due to the fact that public justifications and communication reflect the cultural reasoning and motivations behind individuals' resistance to a policy, meaning that if the specific elements that are expected to be associated with the mechanism are missing from the public justifications, it suggests that those cultural elements may not be influential or significant in driving the resistance (Bonvillain, 2019).

*Table 1* contains this work's analytical framework by providing an operationalization of the theorized mechanisms into coding categories for the expected observable manifestations of each component of the causal mechanism in the analyzed data. In the presence of the first mechanism, *intention skepticism*, we should expect to see evidence in terms of expressions that imply doubt regarding whether the speed limit is genuinely intended to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and combat climate change, assumed alternative intentions and aversion to those intentions. In the presence of the second theorized mechanism, *value defense*, resistance-justifications in which individuals imply the speed limit to be representing the values of its supporters, express aversion to those values and reassert positive emotions appreciation to their own values, that are perceived to be threatened by policy would serve as evidence for that mechanism's presence. The last mechanism, *needs, interests and dependencies reassessment*, is likely to be present under evidence in the form of expressions that imply a perceived dismissal of the needs, interests, and dependencies of certain groups as well as a reasserting of positive emotions and appreciation to those needs, interests, and dependencies.

**Table 1.** Analytical framework.

<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Component</b>	<b>Coding Category</b>	<b>Example</b>
<b>Intention Skepticism</b>	Policy intention brought forth by its proponents doubted.	Expressions that imply doubt regarding whether the policy is genuinely intended to reduce CO <sub>2</sub> emissions and combat climate change.	„Justifying it with lower CO <sub>2</sub> emissions doesn't convince me.“
	Alternative Intention assumed.	Expressions that imply policy supporters to have a different intention than reducing CO <sub>2</sub> emissions.	„The speed limit is a symbolic issue.“
	Assumed alternative intention perceived negatively.	Expressions that imply negative emotions towards the intention that policy supporters are assumed to hold with the policy.	„When you've spent your life as a business economist solving problems, the thought of symbolic politics gives you pimples“
<b>Value Defense</b>	Policy proposal perceived as representing outgroup values.	Expressions that imply the policy to be representing the values of its supporters.	„Everywhere they want to tax, regulate, prescribe, prohibit.“
	Outgroup values averted.	Expressions that imply negative emotions towards those values.	“And what a pathetic view of humanity is behind it!”
	Appreciation of ingroup values reasserted.	Expressions that assert positive emotions and appreciation to own values, that are perceived to be threatened by the policy.	“Maturity means that citizens can make free and self-determined decisions in which the state does not interfere.”
<b>Needs, Interests &amp; Dependencies Reassessment</b>	Dismissal of needs, interests, and dependencies perceived.	Expressions that imply a perceived dismissal of the needs, interests and dependencies of certain groups.	“The FFF kids and their parents don't know the life of the temporary and factory workers. They don't have to drive hundreds of kilometers every weekend.”
	Significance of needs, interests and dependencies reasserted.	Expressions that assert positive emotions and appreciation to those needs, interests and dependencies.	“How many people can even carve out the nearly 20% increase in travel time resulting from the speed limit from their scarce free time? “

### 3.2 Case Selection

Case studies are an appropriate research approach when aiming to generate concrete, contextual knowledge on particular issues and phenomena (Gerring, 2004; Yin, 2009). This research applies a single case design in which through the thorough, in-depth analysis of a single representative case, empirical insights into the potentially disruptive causal mechanisms through which polarization can lead to resistance to automotive climate policy are aimed to be generated (Bryman, 2018).

The debate on the German speed limit was deliberately chosen for this purpose as the case provides a good context for addressing the research question of this work and its investigation may generate relevant insights for better understanding the cultural dynamics of automotive climate policy resistance. First, Germany has a high cultural and economic connection with automobility and represents a liberal democratic country in which social and political resistance to automotive climate policy is generally high (Haas, 2020; Kunze, 2022). Therefore, Germany presents an intriguing context for scholarly inquiry of the topic of interest as it may exemplify how specific cultural mechanisms can be disruptive to automotive climate policymaking. Additionally, polarization in Germany has been on the rise in recent years and while the German society may not be polarized to the same extent as the American society and party affiliations may not be sharply divided into camps, the supporters of certain parties often stand at opposing poles, a characteristic prevalent in many liberal democracies (Roose, 2021). Particularly relevant for the selection of Germany as an empirical context additionally is that within the realm of contentious topics that trigger fierce political discussions and exacerbate polarization, climate protection stands out in Germany and several other countries. A recent study conducted from 2009 to 2020 revealed that in the context of German climate policy, support for extreme positions has experienced a notable increase (Roose, 2021). This highlights how the deepening divide and growing polarization surrounding climate-related issues in Germany reflects a broader trend observed in liberal democracies worldwide from which valuable insights might be gained. The selection of the speed limit debate as a particular policy context was made because of its representativeness of an automotive climate policy that currently faces strong opposition and its tie to cultural factors (Kunze, 2022). In fact, more than a third of the German population opposes a speed limit on German highways and several parties in the German parliament are blocking its introduction despite its potential to make a substantial contribution towards achieving climate goals (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022a; Jakob, 2021). This is relevant as in process tracing the presence of both, the independent variable X (polarization) and the outcome Y (policy resistance) is crucial for the hypothesized causal mechanism to be present per theory (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). Therefore, it only makes sense to examine whether a hypothesized causal mechanism existed in a case when we already know beforehand that it could theoretically exist due to the presence of both, X and Y. The German speed limit debate is therefore highly suitable for the investigation of causal mechanisms linking polarization and automotive climate policy resistance. It additionally offers high data availability and accessibility in terms of issue-related parliamentary debates, partisan statements, media coverage and online societal exchange.

### 3.3 Data Collection

When analyzing secondary data, it is first necessary to determine which data should be collected from which sources and why (Flick, 2018; Verschuren & Doorewaard, 2010). Beach & Pedersen (2013) emphasize that in process-tracing the choice of data sources should not be determined by random sampling but be specifically targeted at obtaining the evidence needed to gain relevant insights into the presence of the theorized mechanisms. Therefore, for this research the method of purposive criterion sampling was used to identify and collect the relevant data (Bryman, 2018). To ensure the broadest possible insights into the presence of the theorized mechanisms in the case of the German highway speed limit debate, three arenas of opposition were selected for the analysis, from each of which different types of data were collected from different sources. In the following, the data collection for the media arena (section 3.3.1), the political arena (section 3.3.1) and the community arena (section 3.3.3) will be explained and justified. These three arenas represent the main sites where opposition to the speed limit is publicly articulated and studying them therefore aims to provide insights into large-scale societal trends of cultural speed limit resistance.

For each of these arenas, data from the timeframe between June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2021, and March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, was collected. This timeframe was chosen based on the increased discourse quantity and quality in the said period. An examination of the speed limits' media coverage over time revealed that while the issue had periodically garnered some attention over the past decade, this attention was largely fleeting and sporadic and discussions were primarily focused on its potential impacts in the context of traffic safety. The proposal to impose a highway speed limit as a means of lowering CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from the transport sector first gained significant traction during the lead-up to the 2021 federal elections, when it became the subject of increasingly intense scrutiny and deliberation. The topic was then temporarily set aside following the formation of the government due to the binding coalition agreement in which an initial consensus was reached on the non-implementation of a highway speed limit (Bundesregierung, 2021). However, the debate subsequently reemerged onto the discursive stage in early 2022, triggered by negotiations on an emergency package of immediate climate measures as Germany failed to meet its climate targets for the transport sector in 2021 as well as the energy crisis induced by the Ukraine war (TAZ, 2022). The speed limit debate then continued throughout most of 2022 with a new referendum in fall and was further fueled in January 2023 by a new UBA study on the effectiveness of a potential highway speed limit (Schmaus et al., 2023). Although the discussion continues to be fervently debated even beyond March 10<sup>th</sup>, 2023, this date has been designated as the final cutoff point for practical purposes in the context of this work.

#### 3.3.1 The Media Arena

Media content is often used as a data source for secondary data analysis because through media information is communicated to a wider audience, making it a relevant data stream for studying societal dynamics and cultural discourses (Hodges et al., 2008).

When analyzing media data, it is particularly important to pay careful attention to which sources are used and how they are sampled to avoid biases (Mikos, 2018). For the research in this Master's thesis, it was decided to source data from digital newspaper articles as they are easily accessible and can be obtained from a wide range of online databases and archives, facilitating the collection and analysis of large volumes of data from different sources and time periods (Corti, 2018). Additionally, newspaper articles usually cover a wide range of perspectives, ideas and ideologies, providing a rich source of data for the context of this research (Fowler, 1991). In the course of this work, online articles from four major newspapers of national importance that represent the main media opponents of a speed limit on German highways were collected. These four newspapers were deliberately chosen because, while they all oppose a speed limit on highways, they differ in their argumentation, reporting style and audience. The coverage of these different media strands aims to provide as comprehensive an account as possible of the presence and different manifestations of the theorized causal mechanisms in the case of resistance to a speed limit on German highways.

The first newspaper that data was collected from is *Bild*, whose digital version *Bild.de* is the most visited news site in Germany (similarweb, 2023). The newspaper is known for appealing to its readers preferably, but not exclusively, with light entertainment, gossip and scandal reports, while conveying a dramatized world view fixated on sensation (Arnold, 2013; Brichta, 2010). While *Bild's* opinionated rather than factual style, as well as its tendency to simplify, polarize, and sensationalize, is subject to frequent criticism, its analysis is highly relevant in the context of this research because it suggests interesting insights into the theorized causal mechanisms and because the newspaper additionally has the highest reach in Germany (Arnold, 2013; Brichta, 2010; similarweb, 2023). The second newspaper that data was collected from is *Welt*, another newspaper with a digital version of large national importance. *Welt* is not a tabloid newspaper like *Bild*. Instead, the magazine is considered to be part of the bourgeois-conservative spectrum and has a clearly liberal stance on economic policy as well as a predominantly older audience, which makes it a relevant focus of analysis for this research that gives hope for different relevant insights (Donsbach et al., 2015). It has two digital strands, *Welt Online* and *Die Welt*, both of which were used for sourcing relevant articles. Additionally, the newspaper *Focus* was included, which has a conservative to liberal-conservative political positioning, and alongside *bild.de*, it is one of Germany's largest online news distributors (Donsbach et al., 2015; Statista, 2023). As a consequence of the newspaper's marginally more moderate political stance, one can anticipate different aspects of polarization being relevant in influencing policy resistance. The last newspaper deemed relevant for the data collection is the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ)*. The newspaper is classified as center-right or liberal-conservative, but traditionally has a larger spectrum of opinion within its editorial staff than the other three newspapers (Donsbach et al., 2015). Because of this greater diversity of opinion and even more central political positioning, different and potentially challenging or contradictory insights into the role of polarization in bringing about policy resistance are expected by taking this newspaper into account.

For each of these four magazines, a search for all articles on the topic of the highway speed limit in the selected time frame of analysis was conducted. The selection of articles for analysis was predicated upon the sampling criterion of accessibility - that is, each article had to be freely available in an online repository - as well as the screening criteria for relevant data, as presented in *Table 2*. These questions were applied uniformly throughout the data collection, encompassing the two other arenas of the debate as well.

**Table 2.** *Screening criteria for relevant data*

Sampling Criterion	Screening Criteria
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Relevance</b></p> <p style="text-align: center;">Refers to whether the statement/article/post is potentially relevant for answering the research questions.</p>	1. Does the statement/article/post deal with the speed limit on German highways?
	2. Does the statement/article/post express opposition to the speed limit?
	3. Does the statement/article/post contain rationales on the decision-making process for opposing the speed limit?

*Table 3* provides an overview of the search volume and the number of articles that were selected per newspaper, which amounted to a total of 238 articles. Except for the *FAZ* articles, all articles were searched for and downloaded via Lexis Uni. Due to accessibility, the *FAZ* articles had to be derived directly from the *FAZ* digital repository. A complete list of all selected articles, including original title, translated title, authors and date of publication is attached in *Appendix 1*. The fact that only roughly one-sixth of the initial search volume of 1447 articles remained after sampling can be attributed to several factors. Firstly, some articles were obscured behind paywalls or were no longer available online, thus rendering them inaccessible. Furthermore, only the search term "speed limit" was employed, to avoid potentially overlooking relevant articles by adding additional filters. However, this also meant that numerous irrelevant articles were included in the initial search volume, such as those addressing speed limits within urban areas, speed limits in a different context, such as traffic accidents, or articles that did not meet the threshold of relevance for the other sampling questions.

**Table 3.** *Initial media search volume and number of selected articles.*

Search Term	Time Frame	Newspaper	Search Volume	After Sampling
"Tempolimit"	01.06.2021 – 10.03.2023	Bild.de	218	37
		Die Welt	115	52
		Welt Online	714	80
		FAZ	311	38
		Focus	89	31
		<b>Total</b>	<b>1447</b>	<b>238</b>

### 3.3.2 The Political Arena

Given that the speed limit debate is largely blocked by political actors, the examination of intergroup conflict within the realm of political opposition is also of utmost significance to this research. As data for the political arena, it was decided to focus on parliamentary debates, written party statements and oral public statements given by politicians. By triangulating the data from these three sources, including both semi-public communication between different parties (parliamentary debates) as well as open communication with the public and voters (oral and written statements), the aim was to obtain as diverse insights as possible into the various context-specific manifestations of the theorized mechanisms in the political arena of the speed limit debate.

Parliamentary debates were chosen as relevant data, because these often deal with significant political and social issues in depth, and the language used in these debates can provide a window into the prevailing attitudes, knowledge and beliefs of the time (Abercrombie & Batista-Navarro, 2020; van Dijk, 2003). The source of these debates are so-called plenary minutes, verbatim transcripts of a parliamentary session. These minutes are uploaded and archived on the website of the German Bundestag after each parliamentary session (Deutscher Bundestag, n.d.). In this database, again, a search for all plenary minutes on the topic of the speed limit (“Tempolimit”) in the selected time frame of analysis was conducted, resulting in a search volume of 28 plenary minutes. To sample the relevant statements from those minutes, the sampling questions for relevance presented in *Table 2* were again applied. After sampling, passages from 20 of the initial 28 parliamentary debates were included in the analysis, an overview of which can be found in *Appendix 2*.

To gain more comprehensive insight into how polarization likely contributes to political resistance to a speed limit on German highways, it was however deemed necessary to not only analyze parliamentary debates, but also take into account public statements made by politicians or political parties. While parliamentary debates are an important source of information on how lawmakers think and act, they are primarily a form of inside communication, focused on convincing and exchanging with fellow politicians and not necessarily aimed at the public or potential voters (Edelmann, 1985). To supplement the information obtained from parliamentary debates and understand political resistance to the speed limit more broadly, it was therefore decided to also collect and analyze statements that are used as means of communicating with the public and for shaping public opinion. Politicians are often careful about what they say in public and how they say it, as they are aware of the potential impact their words can have on the public's perception of them and their policies (Leifeld, 2017). They may tailor their statements to appeal to specific groups or demographics, such as using language that is more appealing to certain voters or emphasizing certain policy positions that are important to certain constituencies (Charteris-Black, 2018; Stier et al., 2018). For this reason, public statements by politicians can be expected to provide additional interesting insights that are different from the insights gained from the parliamentary debates.



The first type of public statements that was collected were written party statements on the speed limit. This data for one included the electoral programs of the main speed limit opposing political parties before the federal election of 2021, namely the *Christian Democratic/Social Union of Germany* (CDU/CSU), the *Alternative for Germany* (AfD) and the *Free Democratic Party* (FDP). The speed limit was one of the campaign issues of the election and analyzing how the political parties communicated their stance on this issue in a written form can provide valuable insights for this research. The electoral programs were downloaded from the *Manifesto Project*, a cross-national academic initiative that aims to systematically analyze political party manifestos from different countries around the world (Lehmann et al., 2022). Furthermore, an advisory recommendation from the Transport Committee on the speed limit motion posed by the Left Party was analyzed, in which the individual parties explained their rejection or support of the speed limit (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022b). However, written party statements are a rather concise and static type of data, appealing to as many groups as possible. Therefore, additionally, public statements made by single politicians, e.g., in interviews with journalists, were collected. These types of oral public statements can reveal the political calculation of politicians and provide an understanding of how they appeal to their constituents (Leifeld, 2017). Oral statements of single politicians were chosen as data over additional written party communication as they can provide a more nuanced and complete understanding of politicians' views and positions and offer additional context and information that can be helpful in analyzing politicians' arguments and reasoning for their speed limit opposition (Leifeld, 2017).

The population for the sampling of these statements were all oral public statements made by German politicians advocating against a speed limit on German highways in the chosen timeframe of analysis. From this population, the most relevant data was sampled through purposive sampling by selecting statements based on two criteria: The relevance of the politician to the topic and data accessibility. The identification of the most relevant politicians in resistance to the German highway speed-limit was done by a mixed approach of identifying which politicians speak and act for their party with regards to the transport sector and related policies and by identifying politicians who have been mentioned or quoted in articles related to the topic. This was done by, while coding the media articles, documenting all resistant politicians that were mentioned with regards to the speed limit. As the data also had to be accessible, the data collection method for this sampling procedure involved searching for videos and audio files in various sources, including different online media repositories as well as polit-X, a German website for political monitoring (Polit-X, n.d.). The search terms included "Speed Limit" as well the respective politicians' names. The sampling resulted in a total of 22 oral public statements by 9 different politicians, an overview of which can be found in *Appendix 3. Table 4* provides an overview of the initial volume of political data and the number of selected documents per data type.

**Table 4.** Initial volume of political data and number of selected documents.

Data Type	Timeframe	Search Terms	Search Volume	After Sampling
<b>Plenary Minutes</b>	01.06.2021 – 10.03.2023	„Tempolimit“	28	20
<b>Electoral Programs</b>		n.a.	3	3
<b>Resolutions</b>		„Tempolimit“	1	1
<b>Oral Public Statements</b>		„Tempolimit“ + politician’s name	46	22

### 3.3.3 The Community Arena

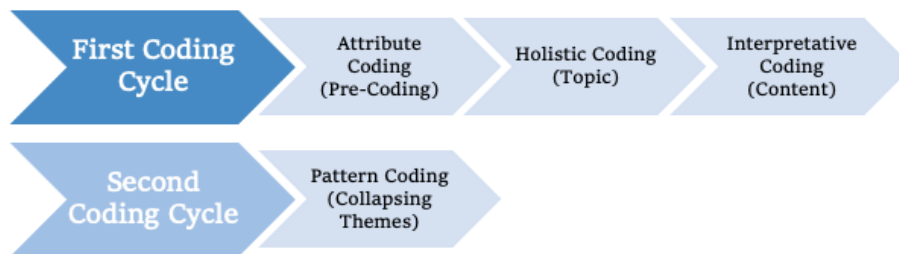
To complement the insights from the political and media arenas of the debate with insights from the community arena and include perspectives from private individuals, data was additionally collected from an online social forum in which public opposition to the speed limit is exercised. Using data from online forums has several advantages, including their dynamic nature in which people can interact with each other (Smedley & Coulson, 2021), a higher diversity of voices as opposed to media articles (Bouchard, 2016; Holtz et al., 2012) as well as anonymity, which may encourage people to express their true opinions and beliefs more openly, without fear of social repercussions (Holtz et al., 2012). On February 5, 2023, there was a talk show on the topic of the speed limit on the public German television under which private individuals were able discuss the speed limit anonymously in a topic-related forum (Das Erste, 2023). This forum was identified as a relevant data source for this research. It has a volume of 1393 posts which were made in relation to the talk show between February 5, 2023, and February 7, 2023. Data was collected from this forum by sampling the posts based on their relevance using the questions shown in *Table 2*. In the end, 232 forum posts were used for the analysis as presented in *Table 5*.

**Table 5.** Initial forum volume and number of selected posts.

Source	Timeframe of Posts	Initial Volume	After Sampling
<b>Forum:</b> Car or train, speed or limit - is the traffic turnaround stuck in traffic jams? (Das Erste, 2023)	03.02.2023 – 07.02.2023	1393	232

### 3.4 Data Analysis

The analytical approach for testing the presence and identifying the manifestations of the theorized mechanisms rests on the coding of text segments of the collected data in NVivo. The coding followed a two-cycled abductive approach building on Reynolds' (2019) coding approach, which was adjusted to the specific topical focus of this research. *Figure 8* depicts the coding process that was followed. The first coding cycle started with *attribute coding*, in which descriptive attributes of the collected data, including title, publication date and type of data were noted in an Excel code-sheet (Saldaña, 2013). After that, *holistic coding* was applied, in which the data source's overall topic was captured in Excel (Reynolds, 2019; Saldaña, 2013). In the following, the qualitative analysis software NVivo was utilized to identify sentences, phrases, expressions or discourse fragments as distinct codes (Hilal & Alabri, 2013; Reynolds, 2019; Wong, 2008). This was done through *interpretative coding*, that applied the framework for analyzing the presence of the three theorized mechanisms as presented in *Table 3*. While this framework was constructed based on the theoretical background of the topic (see *Section 2*), the scrutiny undertaken was not confined solely to the pre-established codes but executed with a willingness to additionally consider novel and pertinent insights that emerged from analyzing the data. After that followed the second coding cycle, in which specific patterns and trends across the codes were identified through *pattern coding* (Reynolds, 2019). In this step, the first cycle codes were synthesized under umbrella codes that represent emerging manifestations of the theorized mechanisms in resistance to a speed limit on German highways.



**Figure 8.** Coding approach adjusted from Reynolds (2019).

In order to draw implications regarding the actual presence and comparative relevance of the theorized mechanisms and their manifestations, the specific evidence found was additionally evaluated based on its strength in predicting the mechanism's presence, its relevance across the arenas of analysis as well as the frequency in which evidence for a certain mechanism's presence was found in the analyzed data.

### 3.5 Ethical Considerations

Even though the data used for this research only consists of public statements, a reflection about ethical issues related to data collection and handling is necessary with regards to the data obtained from the online forum. From an ethical point of view, it could be argued that communication in online forums is private and should therefore not be used for research purposes without informed consent (Holtz et al., 2012). However, the forum under consideration is completely public. Holtz et al. (2012) argue that the open accessibility of forums justifies the consideration of communication within such forums as public behavior, which is intended to be regarded by as many other people as possible, making their analysis less of an ethical concern. Additionally, the privacy of none of the users will be compromised more than necessary by anonymizing all data to avoid the possibility of identification (Holtz et al., 2012; Israel & Hay, 2006).

## 4. Case Description

To ensure a comprehensive understanding of the specific empirical case under investigation, it is essential to present a case description including the contextual and historical background in which it unfolds (Yin, 2009). The following concise depiction of the case and context of the German highway speed limit debate is therefore not only intended to set the stage by furnishing the requisite background knowledge but also aimed at serving as a guiding thread that prepares the readers for the subsequent sections of the study, enabling a coherent and informed understanding of the case under investigation (Yin, 2009).

Contextually, it is relevant to point out that Germany has a rich automotive heritage and a long history of engineering excellence and craftsmanship in the automotive industry. Being the birthplace of renowned automobile manufacturers such as Mercedes-Benz, BMW, Audi, and Volkswagen who are globally recognized for their engineering prowess, safety, and cutting-edge technology in the automotive sector, the automotive industry plays a significant role in Germany's economy. In fact, the car industry is one of the country's key industries that provides employment and generates substantial revenue: In 2021, Germany ranked as the sixth-largest producer of passenger cars worldwide, with a total production of 3.31 million vehicles (Statista Research Department, 2023). It additionally is commonly argued that the presence of major car manufacturers, along with related suppliers and service providers, has created a strong automotive culture deeply ingrained in German society (see e.g., Staples, 2019).

In addition, Germany has a well-developed infrastructure and extensive highway network that allows for high-speed driving without a speed limit, a feature that has become synonymous with the country's automotive culture (Kunze, 2022). The fact that the German highway is renowned worldwide for its sections with no speed limits, which has contributed to a particular fascination with cars and driving in the country, also lies at the heart of the speed limit debate (Kunze, 2022). Furthermore, Germany has a relatively high rate of car ownership, and many Germans have a personal attachment to their vehicles as cars are often seen as a symbol of status, independence, and personal

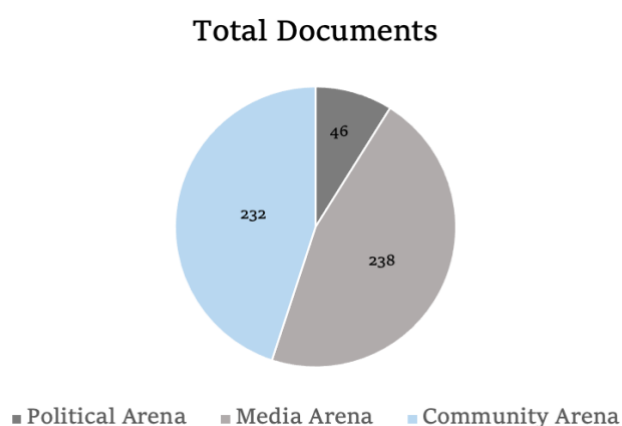
freedom (Haas, 2020, Sachs, 1992). Car enthusiast, clubs and lobby organizations are prevalent in Germany, organizing events, exhibitions, and gatherings that foster a sense of community and shared passion for automobiles (Cudny, 2018).

Lastly, it is notable that different stakeholders hold divergent opinions and interests regarding the implementation of a speed limit. Environmentalists and safety advocates argue in favor of stricter regulations to reduce emissions and enhance road safety, and particularly the emission saving argument has gained increasing attention in the previous years (Umweltbundesamt, 2023). In contrast, opponents, including for instance some automobile industry representatives and certain sections of the public, view the policy as undesirable and Germany's political landscape plays a crucial role in shaping the speed limit debate. Various political parties have differing stances on the issue, reflecting their priorities and policy agendas (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022a). While the Green Party, the Left Party and the Social Democratic Parties advertise for the positive environmental effects of the implementation of a speed limit as part of broader climate policy objectives, the right-wing populist AfD generally advocates for maintaining the status quo and CDU and FDP officially oppose the speed limit by promoting alternative measures based on the market economy such as carbon pricing and technological solutions (Deutscher Bundestag, 2022a).

## 5. Results

### 5.1 Profile Data Overview

In total, the analysis included  $n=516$  documents, from the three arenas in which resistance to the highway speed limit is expressed. *Figure 9* visualizes the total number of documents per arena that were included in the final analysis in the form of a pie chart. While less data was analyzed from the political arena than for the other two arenas, the content there was richer and more detailed than in the other spheres, as the politicians engaged in more precise justifications of their and their party's resistance to the highway speed limit, mostly without digressing or first explain the context. In that way sufficient insights could still be gained from the political arena despite the lower quantity of data.



**Figure 9.** Total number of analyzed documents per arena.

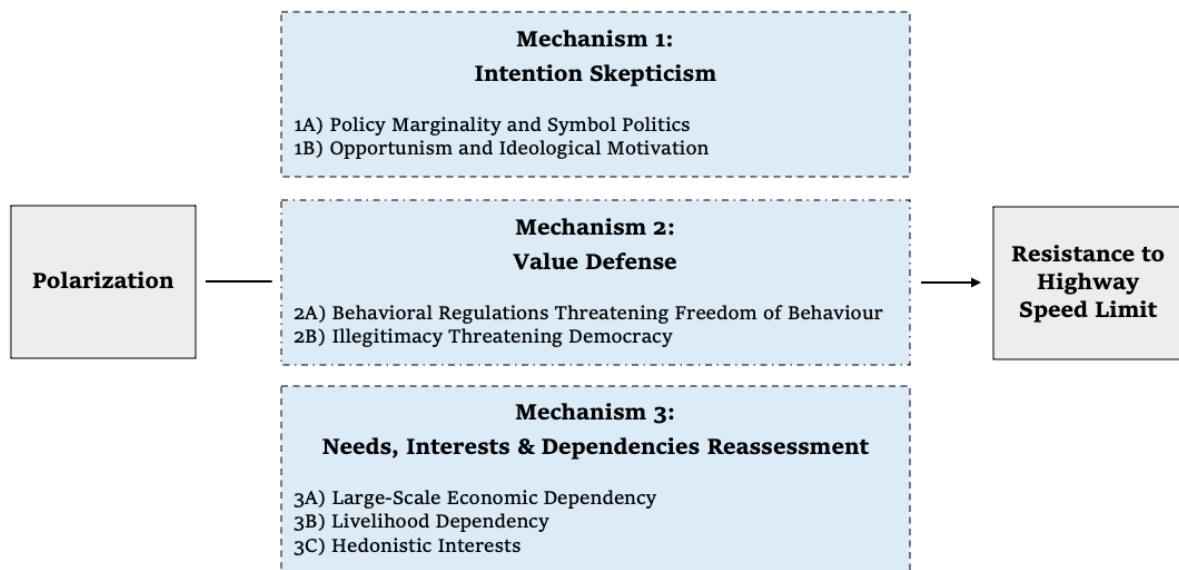
*Table 6* provides additional information by indicating the analyzed data types per arena and providing information on the average length of analyzed text. Since only the relevant passages of the oral statements by politicians were transcribed, it should be noted that although the word count of the oral statements is shorter than that of the newspaper articles, the information is more compressed and denser. For the plenary minutes and electoral, the wordcount also only refers to the relevant passages that were included in the analysis.

**Table 6.** Data overview.

Arena	Data Type	Number	Average Word Count
<b>Media Arena</b>	Newspaper Articles	238	800
<b>Community Arena</b>	Forum Posts	232	120
<b>Political Arena</b>	Plenary Minutes	20	500
	Electoral Programs	3	500
	Resolution	1	1000
	Oral Public Statements	22	350
<b>Total</b>		<b>516</b>	<b>458 (Total: 236,240)</b>

## 5.2 Mechanisms

In total, seven distinct manifestations of the three hypothesized mechanisms were identified within the analyzed data that appear to be relevant for explaining polarization-induced resistance to the speed limit on German highways. For each of the first two theorized mechanisms, two different manifestations were observed (1A;1B & 2A;2B), while for the third theorized mechanism three relevant manifestations were identified (3A;3B;3C). *Figure 10* provides an overview of the observed manifestations of each of the three theorized mechanisms. To provide for additional transparency, the NVivo codebook is attached in *Appendix 4*.



*Figure 10.* Overview of identified manifestations of the mechanisms.

In the following, the empirical manifestations of each of the mechanisms will be presented in detail, followed by a final sub-section with take-away messages that specifically compares all the insights and draws implications for the mechanisms' comparative relevance within the investigated case.

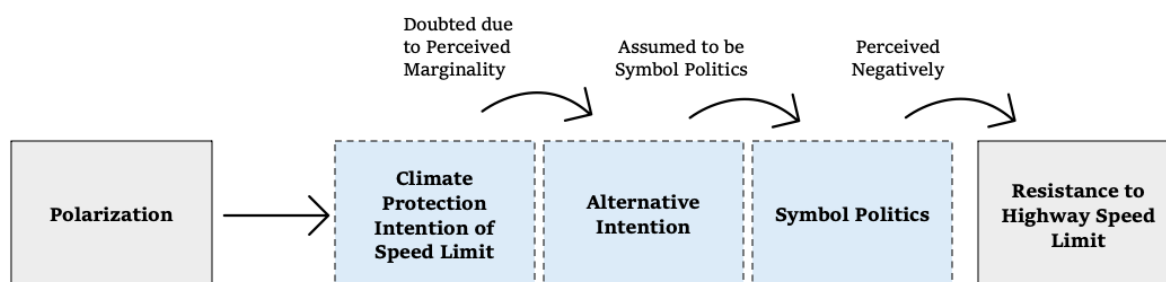
## 5.2.1 Mechanism 1: Intention Skepticism

Within the analyzed data, evidence for the presence of two different manifestations of the first theorized mechanism was identified, in which causal forces from polarization to policy resistance are transmitted through the climate protection intention of the speed limit being doubted in its genuineness and alternative, negatively perceived intentions being assumed.

### 1A) Policy Marginality and Symbol Politics

*“The question should not be how we can best demonstrate our climate innocence to the world: Bringing forward the phase-out of coal, speed limits, and bans on internal combustion vehicles or short-haul routes are pure symbolic politics with no appreciable benefit for the global climate.” (Köhler, 2021)*

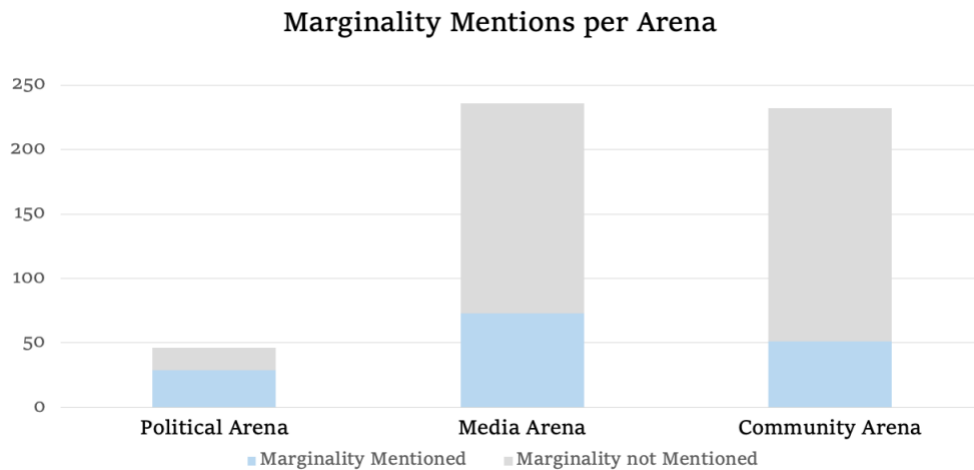
The first and most common manifestation of intention skepticism that was found within the empirical case is the combination of a perceived marginality of the climate protection potential of the highway speed limit together with the perception of it being a simply symbolic proposal. The general logic underlying this mechanism is illustrated in *Figure 11*, which, together with the introductory quote from the newspaper *Die Welt*, illustrates the mechanistic logic of this variant of the first theorized mechanism.



**Figure 11.** Mechanism 1A.

Evidence indicating that the CO<sub>2</sub>-saving intention of the highway speed limit is doubted due to its perceived marginality is strong and frequent. In fact, the framing of the speed limit's impact as being marginal and thus disregarding the gravity of climate change constitutes one of the most mentioned reasons for policy resistance that was found in 32% of the analyzed data files. It is also extensively alluded to across all three arenas of analysis, including media and political communication, as well as community exchange in the online forum. Notably, within the political arena, more than 60% of all analyzed data sources refer to the marginality of the policy. *Figure 12* visually illustrates the proportion of sources referencing marginality relative to the overall number of data sources examined within each arena.





**Figure 12.** *Proportion of sources referencing marginality.*

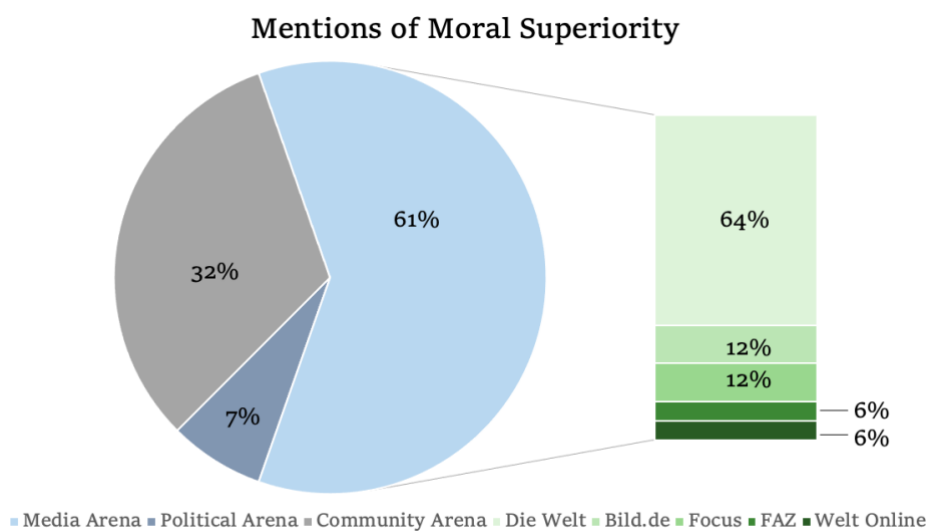
Common framings of the speed limit for example depict the proposed measure as *trivial, useless, peripheral, or ludicrous*. Often the mention of marginality is directly linked to emphasis of the policy’s low CO<sub>2</sub>-saving potential and minimal effectiveness, especially when compared to market-based measures, such as CO<sub>2</sub>-certificate trading. As illustrated by the following quote from the newspaper *Bild*, the perception of marginality of the speed limit seems to be further reinforced in direct comparison to the CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and climate protection efforts of other countries, leading opponents to believe that implementing a speed limit is inadequate and inconsequential in the face of such a complex, large-scale and extensive problem:

*„Apart from the paternalism of the citizens, what most of these initiatives have in common is that Germany is supposed to save the world. That is not only presumptuous. It will also not succeed.“ (Schuler, 2022)*

Moreover, certain elements of the policy’s design seem to raise doubts about its efficacy in targeting CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the future, such as concerns related to the rise of electromobility. Quite frequently, the perceived illogicality of the speed limit was highlighted by emphasizing that restricting electric cars to any maximum speed would not effectively contribute to improving the climate, as electric cars neither emit CO<sub>2</sub> nor can achieve high speeds without draining their batteries significantly. Interestingly, within the analyzed data, this argumentation was however mainly used to frame the speed limit as unnecessary in political and media communication; in the community arena, there was not a single comment on this issue. Despite the prevalence of certain arguments in specific spheres, it can be said that the general frequency, distribution, and diversity of evidence indicating the presence of the first part of the mechanism is quite high, suggesting that portions of the population may indeed doubt the CO<sub>2</sub>-saving intention of speed limit due to its perceived marginality.

Building on this perceived marginality, the data additionally contains quite strong evidence for a widespread view of the speed limit as a performative or symbolic gesture aimed at creating the appearance of addressing climate change while neglecting more comprehensive and effective strategies. Generally, symbol politics refers to the utilization of symbolic gestures, actions, or policies by political actors to convey specific

messages, shape public perception, or signal alignment with certain values or groups (Klatch, 1988). It emphasizes the symbolic meaning or imagery associated with political actions rather than their substantive policy impact (Klatch, 1988). The notion of the speed limit being of solely symbolic character was again distributed across all three arenas of analysis. In addition, the speed limit was specifically framed as a symbolic representation of the “*moral correctness*” of its supporters. In 5% of the analyzed cases, the view of the speed limit as a means of its proponents to assert moral superiority and judge those who dismiss the speed limit as morally inferior or irresponsible is expressed. In the analysis, it was noticeable that the bourgeois-conservative newspaper *Die Welt* in particular utilized this framing in its articles: *Figure 13* represents the breakdown of mentions of moral superiority. As can be seen, it is most present in the media arena, with 64% of the mentions there coming from *Die Welt*.



**Figure 13.** *Distribution of mentions of moral superiority.*

The perception of speed limit proponents’ moral superiority seems to be accompanied with both the belief that the policy is driven by a desire to control and dictate proper behavior based on a specific moral framework but also by perceptions of virtue signaling, the public display of moral or ethical values to gain social approval or signal one's own moral superiority. This can be exemplarily illustrated by the newspaper framings of the Greens having “*morally intense and arrogantly preachy tone*” (Schmid, 2021) or the perception of a “*moral posturing of the Green Youth*” (Poschardt, 2022a). Additionally, as represented in the introductory quote to this chapter, the perception of moral virtue signaling vis-a-vis other countries was observed as well.

The analyzed data additionally provides strong evidence for the last part of the first theorized mechanisms presence, as it quite clearly suggests that the alternative assumed intent, symbol politics, is perceived negatively. First, there seems to be the perception of it causing an inappropriate diversion of attention, resources, and time. There exists the framing that the speed limit, with its solely symbolic character, shifts the focus away from concrete and practical solutions, preventing the allocation of adequate resources and efforts towards implementing substantive policies and addressing the actual needs

of the people, as the following statements from the newspaper *Die Welt* and an anonymous forum user exemplify:

*“There is a fear among many entrepreneurs in the country, a fear that the parliamentary election campaign will see a lot of discussion about peripheral issues such as a general speed limit on highways, but little about how exactly Germany will have to be transformed by 2030 to cope with digitization and stricter targets for future CO<sub>2</sub> emissions.”* (Seibel, 2021)

*“When you've spent your life as a business administrator solving problems, the thought of symbol politics gives you pimples. Also, you tackle the biggest problems first and don't dwell on the small stuff.”* – Anonymous Forum User

Additionally, the notion that the policy seeks to convey virtue or a message is met with a negative reception, as it implies a dismissal of the policy's genuine intention to tackle underlying problems and foster substantial transformation, which is perceived as superficial. This is well illustrated by the following statement contained in a *Welt Online* article:

*“But the actions of politicians and such inconsistent symbolic decisions lead to disenchantment with politics. I could just as well say that I turn off the lights at night when I sleep to protect the climate.”* (Schwilden, 2022)

Furthermore, the symbolic aspect of signaling moral superiority tends to be received unfavorably, particularly because opponents frame themselves as being regarded as inferior, judged, or morally lacking, generating negative emotions, and fostering a sense of resentment, as illustrated by the following *Bild* quote:

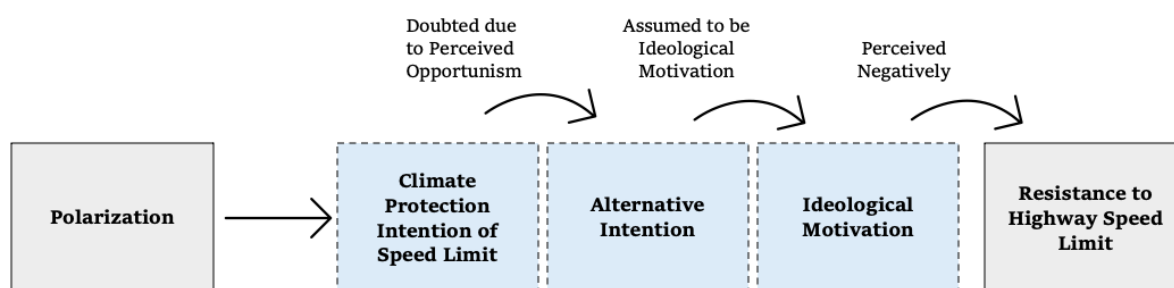
*“Behind this apparently lies a view of humanity that basically regards citizens as speeding, egomaniacal idiots who have to justify themselves if they live in freedom.”*  
(Schuler, 2022)

In summary, it can be stated that there is ample evidence in the analyzed data for the existence of all three mechanismic components underlying intention skepticism, manifested in the perceived marginality of the highway speed limits' climate protection potential, along with the perception of it being merely a symbolic proposal. Particularly striking is the prevalence of this framing in all three arenas of analysis as well as its high number of mentions, highlighting its likely relevance. It is noteworthy that the more specific perception of moral superiority, however, is most common in the bourgeois-conservative newspaper *Die Welt* which might suggest that this narrative is mainly driven by one involved entity and may not represent a large-scale societal perception.

## 1B) Opportunism and Ideological Motivation

*„We can see right now that there is no consensus in science about the reduction potentials and that it depends on the political orientation which figures are given and how the discussion is influenced. [...] This alone shows that it's not about CO<sub>2</sub> savings, it's about the culture war against the car.“ (Deutschlandkurier, 2023)*

A second common manifestation of intention skepticism that was found in the empirical case is the combination of perceived opportunism in pushing forward the speed limit together with the perception of it instead being proposed due to ideological motives, including a culture war against individual mobility, which is perceived as negative. The general logic underlying this mechanism is illustrated by *Figure 14* and the exemplary quote derived from an oral statement by the transport policy spokesman of the AfD, Dirk Spaniel, made for the conservative tabloid Deutschlandkurier.



**Figure 14.** Mechanism 1B.

Opportunism generally refers to the practice of taking advantage of opportunities or situations for personal gain or advantage (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-a). The analyzed data indicates the perception of the proponents of the speed limit taking every opportunity and line of argumentation they can to push the policy on the political agenda. Opportunism was mentioned directly in a total of 7% of cases, however, again with a significantly lower representation in the online forum than in the media and political arena. The framing was particularly prevalent when the speed limit was given increased discussion space in the context of the energy crisis triggered by the Ukraine war. In fact, about 50% of the statements directly pertaining to opportunism refer to the perceived instrumentalization of the wartime to push the policy on the political agenda, such as the following statement made in *Die Welt*:

*“The really disturbing thing is that the environmental movements and the left-green milieu are cleverly using these current crisis-ridden weeks to push for total traffic calming - to demobilize us.” (Doll, 2022)*

The suspicions on opportunism are additionally underpinned by the apparent perception that speed limit proponents are manipulating or distorting information to strengthen their position rather than being genuinely interested in addressing climate change. In fact, the perception of opportunism seems to be accompanied with significant doubts in the speed limit proponents' scientific integrity, applied measures and methods as well

as assumptions in calculating the policy's CO<sub>2</sub>-saving potential. Many of the analyzed data sources along all three arenas of debate express accusations of scientific corruption, the seriousness of which is additionally underlined by the fact that some political opponents commissioned and carried out their own counter-studies to the UBA speed limit study in attempts to disprove the environmental agency's calculations (Focus, 2023a). This distrust is particularly evident in many comments questioning whether studies of the policy's climate protection potential were intentionally designed or conducted to support the speed limit proponents' desired outcome or policy agenda. The data indicates that proponents are perceived to be cherry-picking information that supports their predetermined policy goals, rather than engaging in a robust and open-minded analysis of the situation. For example, the transport policy spokesman of the FDP, Bernd Reuther, accuses the UBA of unserious work and states: *"Our expert opinion clearly shows that the UBA study is unscientific and deliberately misleading."* (Focus, 2023a). The perceived intentional ignorance or suppression of information that contradicts the supporters desired narrative seems to further contribute to these doubts. For example, one forum user states:

*"Furthermore, calculations were made based on the 2018 data when there were even fewer electric cars. I no longer expect honest answers from a government agency led by the Greens."* – Anonymous Forum User

Additionally, perceived outgroup hypocrisy, a common dynamic of intergroup conflict seems to play a significant role in shaping perceptions of opportunism in the speed limit debate. Outgroup hypocrisy is relevant for opportunism as it points towards the exploitation of situations for personal advantage rather than acting out of genuine conviction (Cambridge Dictionary, n.d.-b). Within the analyzed data, the most prevalent evidence for perceived hypocrisy are attributions of inconsistent behavior, where individuals frame speed limit supporters as acting in ways that they see as incongruent with their stated beliefs, evoking skepticism and doubt about their true motives and intentions. In particular, two types of perceived outgroup hypocrisy were observed in the empirical case. The first one is the *cheater framing*, in which it is implied that someone who stands for climate protection and truly favors the speed limit for its CO<sub>2</sub>-saving potential shouldn't be doing certain climate-damaging things. For example, in the forum one user asks: *"Will the Greens then finally fly less?"*, and in a *Die Welt* newspaper article it is stated that Green politicians are hypocritical because *"Anyone who rejects longer operating times for nuclear power plants [...] cannot demand a speed limit in the same breath."* (Vetter, 2022). The other observed version is the *pretender framing*, in which the believe is expressed, that someone who does or stands for certain climate-damaging things shouldn't be in favor of the speed limit. For example, the newspaper *FAZ* embeds the fact that the German Formula 1 driver Sebastian Vettel advocates for a speed limit with the following words:

*"On the one hand, he jets around the world for his job as a Formula 1 racing driver, on the other hand, he stands up for issues such as sustainability and climate protection. That's a tightrope walk, that after all is also about credibility."* (Wittershagen, 2021)

In line with the second component of intention skepticism, evidence additionally indicates that the existing perception of opportunism not only undermines trust in the policy's climate protection intention, but that the speed limit is additionally perceived as being instrumentalized to achieve other political or ideological goals. The perception of ideological motivation is commonly mentioned across all three analyzed arenas of debate. For example, after the publication of the 2023 UBA study on the CO<sub>2</sub>-saving potential of a highway speed limit, the German tabloid *Bild* writes:

*„The Greens in particular were pleased with the sensational figures from the office, as they have been looking for a way to push through speed limits on German highways for years.“* (Bockenheimer, 2023)

The data also indicates a widespread perception of a culture war against cars or individual mobility to be part of the supporter's ideological motivation, entailing the framing that there is a deliberate effort to challenge or limit the dominance of car culture and instead promote alternative modes of transportation. In line with the more general notion of perceived ideological motivation, this framing runs through all three discourse arenas. Numerous statements frame the speed limit as part of a *war*, *fight* or *attack* on victimized drivers, as illustrated by the exemplary statements of the AfD's transport policy spokesman Dirk Spaniel and an anonymous forum user:

*“Behind this demand is not the desire for energy savings, but the ideologically blinded fight of the Greens against the internal combustion engine in particular and individual mobility in general”* (Spaniel, 2022)

*“I suspect the theme is to pursue the Green agenda of fighting the car.”*  
– Anonymous Forum User

Serving as evidence for the presence of the third part of the theorized mechanism, data indicates negative feelings towards the supposed ideological motivation of the speed limit, including the perceived culture war against individual mobility. First, it is said to lead to a lack of rationality and critical thinking as it may result in ignoring or dismissing evidence or alternative viewpoints. Additionally, speed limit opponents frame the perceived ideological motivation of the policy's proponents to cause a neglect of practical considerations by prioritizing abstract principles or ideological purity. The following three statements, two from the newspaper *Die Welt* and one from the online forum, are aimed at illustrating this line of argumentation:

*“The crisis of science is also that the right morality has replaced the original or wise thought.”* (Poschardt, 2022b)

*„The federal government must finally return to its course of pragmatism.“*  
(Vetter, 2022)

*“Ideologically driven, there is no longer a distinction between sense and nonsense.“*  
– Anonymous Forum User

In summary, it can be stated that there is considerable evidence in the analyzed data for the existence of the mechanism of intention skepticism, manifested as perceived opportunism along with averted ideological motivation. However, while in all arenas of the debate ideological motivation is assumed and perceived negatively, opportunism is explicitly mentioned mainly in the political and media arenas, representing the weakest link for drawing inferences regarding the actual existence of the whole causal mechanism on a larger societal scale. With regards to the proportion of mechanism-relevant statements contained in all analyzed files, this mechanism still includes much evidence, but the total percentage of references made in the analyzed data is slightly lower than for mechanism 1A (35% as compared to 39%).

### **Evidence: Alternative Hypotheses**

While plenty of evidence was found for the two previously presented mechanisms through which existing doubt in the climate protection intention of speed limit proponents together with the assumption of alternative, negative motives foster policy resistance, it is vital to also provide a concise description of the evidence that points towards the opposite perception of truthful intentions. By being transparent about all research insights and including evidence for alternative mechanisms, this research aims for a comprehensive analysis, that moves towards simplification by focusing on the theoretically predetermined mechanisms only. The approach additionally allows making final assumptions regarding the considered mechanisms' relevance for truly explaining resistance to the speed limit as opposed to other potential causes. The following insights into climate change skepticism and congruence skepticism may be seen as alternative evidence against the mechanism of intention skepticism.

### ***Climate Change Skepticism***

Generally, climate change skepticism and denial encompass the rejection, disregard, or unwarranted skepticism of the scientific consensus on the pace and magnitude of global warming, its importance, and its correlation with human activities (Jacques, 2012). Within the scope of the analyzed data, evidence indicates that some opponents perceive the speed limit as unnecessary due to initial doubts about the existence of climate change or the ability of humans to address it. This perspective was unsurprisingly most prevalent in the expressions of AfD, Germany's currently most prominent right-wing populist party renowned for its skepticism towards anthropogenic climate change. In their 2021 election program, AfD for instance states:

*"The climate cannot have any guaranteed protection as postulated by humans, let alone be inherently capable of protection."* (AfD, 2021a, p. 173)

Despite the fact that about 16% of the German population are skeptical of human made climate change (Steentjes et al., 2017), climate skepticism was not expressed in the statements or electoral programs of the other analyzed parties, nor in any of the analyzed newspaper articles. Further sporadic evidence for climate change skepticism was solely found within the forum, however, only 3.5% of the total analyzed forum posts

expressed climate skepticism. Of those, one user for example questioned the necessity of climate protection measures like a speed limit by highlighting the historical adaptability of both nature and humans to changing climatic conditions while others expressed their doubt in human activities influencing climate change at all.

While climate skepticism can, of course, contribute to resistance to climate protection measures (see e.g., Cann & Raymond, 2018; Engels et al., 2013; Schaller & Carius, 2019), its relevance for the mechanism under investigation crystalized to be rather low. Despite research having shown that a subset of climate skeptics may subscribe to conspiracy theories, suggesting that the overwhelming scientific consensus on climate change is a result of deliberate deception or manipulation by scientists, governments, or international organizations, and that climate policy truthfully serves other motives (Douglas & Sutton, 2015; Uscinski et al., 2017), no direct connection between expressions of climate skepticism and untruthful motive perceptions could be found within the analyzed data. Instead, the available evidence indicates that climate change skeptics that express their opposition to the German highway speed limit most probably consider speed limit supporters to be genuinely misinformed rather than deceitful. This is for example indicated by the following forum statement, in which a user frames climate action as something its supporters *believe* in:

*“Because they believe they [...] have to do something for the climate, which changes without humans being able to change anything about it anyway.”*

- Anonymous Forum User

Hence, climate skeptics' doubts of intentions in the case of the German speed limit most probably lie not in the truthfulness of its motives but in the more general usefulness of measures driven by misguided intentions of tackling climate change. Of course, it is however also possible that some of those who doubt the honesty of the intention (see previous section) are also climate change deniers but have not expressed this directly within the analyzed data.

### ***Congruence Skepticism***

Congruence skeptics do not question anthropogenic climate change and the intention to tackle it, but instead perceive the methods suggested to address it as unaligned with the underlying problem and the intention to work towards solving that problem. Within the analyzed data, ample evidence suggests that many people do not doubt the sincerity of the intentions; their doubts mainly revolve around the effectiveness of the chosen means, primarily due to a perceived lack of speed limit supporters' capability to make the right policy choices rather than their dishonesty.

This is represented by the fact, that a significant body of evidence includes framings of stupidity and ignorance among speed limit supporters, which is used to emphasize the belief in the policy's inappropriateness. For instance, one *Focus* article criticizes climate activists advocating for the highway speed limit, stating, „*The [...] absolutely justified concerns of the climate activists have unfortunately brought to light their complete*



*stupidity*“ (Focus, 2023b) and the perceived ignorance and lack of knowledge of speed limit supporters is additionally underpinned by evidence questioning the particular qualification of certain individuals advocating for the speed limit. Especially in the forum, many posts emphasize the unsuitability of certain politicians to make decisions in traffic policy by pointing to their lack of technical and subject-specific education and their unsuitability because of them being “*dropouts*” or “*social scientists*”. To delve deeper into the justifications given for the assumed lack of intelligence, it is notable to mention that the analyzed data suggests a widespread perception of speed limit supporters displaying ignorance towards numerous pertinent facts that render the speed limit an unsuitable policy instrument for addressing climate change. Evidence indicates that there is the perception of limited opportunities for speeding on German highways, a fact that is perceived to be disregarded by speed limit supporters who are seen as detached from the realities of everyday life and driving. Additionally, the evidence suggests a perception that speed limit supporters are oblivious to possible negative side effects of implementing such measures, including economic ramifications, increased reliance on air travel or heightened accident risks resulting from monotonous driving speeds.

Building on this, the analyzed data additionally indicates that speed limit proponents are viewed as having a preference for simplistic and outdated policy solutions. Certain opponents frame the speed limit as a policy from another century, in which its proponents didn’t want to think progressively, made it easy for themselves, and therefore came up with something backwards. Especially in political party communication, these arguments are often used to frame one’s own party as particularly modern, innovative, and technologically advanced as opposed to the speed limit supporting political parties’ old-fashionedness. The subsequent quotations from various parties and their representatives serve to exemplify the collective, cross-party framing of speed limit proponents embodying simplicity, indolence, and antiquated thinking.

*“This has nothing to do with serious and contemporary transport policy but reflects the Green transport policy of the 1980s.” (AfD, 2021b)*

*“This is more of an instrument of the 1980s and does not provide an answer to the challenges of the future.” - Markus Söder [CSU] (Marktspiegel, 2021)*

*“Speed limits, diesel or motorcycle bans are neither progressive nor sustainable.”  
(FDP, 2021)*

However, since this category also does not include distrust of the intentions of speed limit supporters, it does not count as evidence for the presence of the first mechanism, although it includes many other interesting aspects regarding the relationship between polarization and policy resistance.

## Summary Mechanism 1

In summary, in the case of the German speed limit, evidence suggests that the presence of the first theorized mechanism is relatively probable in two manifestations, namely doubts about the policy's efficacy together with perceptions of symbolism leading to policy resistance as well as doubts arising from concerns regarding opportunism together with suspicions of bias or hidden ideological agendas. While these two manifestations of the first theorized mechanism were most common, other motives were suspected as well. For instance, a few cases mentioned the potential of monetary motives which refer to motives driven by the desire to achieve financial gain or economic benefits, and others referred to that the speed limit possibly being driven by its proponents' jealousy or envy of those able to drive fast cars. However, these alternative assumed motivations seemed to be of less relevance than the two other manifestations that were discussed in detail, as they were mentioned only in a small number of cases. It is also notable to point out that the presented alternative evidence suggests that in quite some cases of policy resistance, the intention of the speed limit is in fact not doubted, but that there instead exists a more general doubt about climate change or the congruence of the chosen means. Since various mechanisms causing resistance to the speed limit can coexist, these alternative possibilities do not exclude the possible existence of the first theorized mechanism. However, they can be considered to slightly diminish its relevance in comparison to other explanations on a larger societal scale.

### 5.2.3 Mechanism 2: Value Defense

For the second theorized mechanism, evidence for the presence of two different manifestations was identified within the analyzed data, in which causal forces from polarization to policy resistance are transmitted. This time, they take the shape of value defense, as the proposed policy is perceived as being representative of the unappreciated values of another group that are seemingly incompatible with and therefore threatening to one's own values.

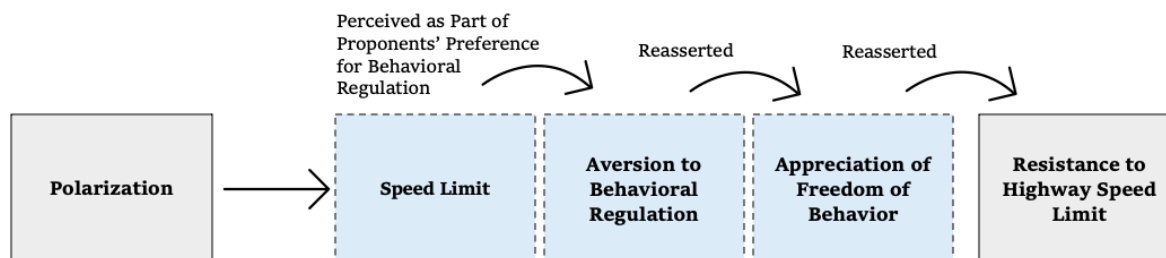
#### **2A) Behavioral Regulations threatening Freedom of Behavior**

*„The Englishman loves freedom like his lawful wife. The Frenchman like his bride. The German like his tiresome old grandmother. The lament is legend. But Heine did not suspect that with German eco-ideologists freedom must be killed even on the last inch.“*

(Weimer, 2022)

The first and most common manifestation of value defense for which evidence was found within the empirical case is the perception of the speed limit being a part of its proponents' unappreciated preference for behavioral regulations threatening appreciated freedom of behavior. In fact, overall, the highest number of evidence was found for the presence of this mechanistic manifestation. The general logic underlying this mechanism is again illustrated by the introductory quote, this time derived from a

*Focus* article, as well as by *Figure 15*, which depicts the mechanistic logic of this variant of the second theorized mechanism.



**Figure 15.** *Mechanism 2A.*

Plenty of evidence within the analyzed data suggests that the calls for a speed limit are perceived as being part of speed limit supporters' general appreciation of regulating behavior, paternalization and strong government. Particularly, the data indicates that both environmentalists' and leftists' prioritization of regulations like the speed limit are perceived as a representation of their prohibitionist ideology by those who hold a more libertarian perspective that values limited government intervention. The following examples from two newspaper articles published in *Focus* and *Die Welt* illustrate this line of thought:

*„Everywhere they want to tax, regulate, prescribe, prohibit. The trend is to leave nothing to the discretion of the individual. Even when we are already half suffocated by bureaucracy, the eco-social supernanny has one more rule, one more warning, one more regulatory authority prepared.“* (Weimer, 2022)

*“Or to those who, against solid evidence, call for a speed limit simply because it would be another rule to follow - and to which others could be ordered to adhere.”*

(Schneider, 2022)

Measured in terms of the share of mentions in the total number of data analyzed, the relevance of this framing is again particularly high in political communication. The data additionally indicates that the automotive sector seems to take a placeholder position for the values of liberty and emancipation as it is for example framed in an *FAZ* article as a *"domain of skill, freedom and individual responsibility"* (Thomann, 2022). Therefore, by threatening this particular domain, the speed limit seems to be perceived as especially representative of a threat to the positive values associated with the use of cars and individual transportation. Some of the analyzed data sources additionally point towards the speed limit being perceived as part of a broader *woke trend*, a conglomerate of social and environmental policies aimed at regulating individuals' freedom of behavior. In particular, the analysis revealed that the speed limit is often mentioned in lists with these other *woke* topics, trivializing or belittling them by labeling them as trendy or unnecessary, as exemplified by the following three quotes from *Focus* and *Die Welt* articles:

*“The speed limit has become a symbol of progressive-ecological trendsetters.”*  
(Focus, 2021a)

*“Their know-it-all repertoire knows dozens of prohibitions and enemy images - from fireplaces to cruise ships, from schnitzel to beer.”* (Weimer, 2022)

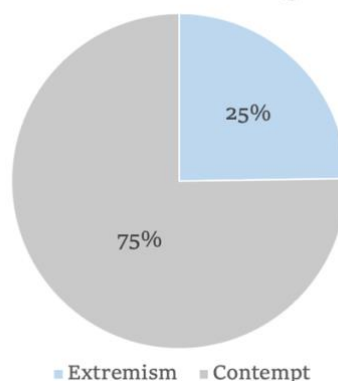
*“The coordinates of sensible politics are consistently shifted - and the Greens profit from this, because their climate, corona, speed limit, gender or whatever agendas are virtually referred to as having no alternative.”* (Poschardt, 2022a)

Within the analyzed data, many opponents quite directly express their aversion to the previously described values that are framed to be represented by a speed limit and the incompatibility. For one, there seems to be a disdain for perceived *“nanny state”* policies, which are framed to undermine personal responsibility, treat citizens as incapable of making informed choices and mock their maturity by imposing restrictions on their behavior. This perception is commonly mentioned across all arenas of analysis and almost 10% of the newspaper articles and more than one third of the oral public statements by politicians emphasized the ignorance of citizen maturity. For example, the newspaper *Welt Online* quotes Secretary of the Interior Joachim Herrmann (CSU) with the following words:

*“Apparently, the Greens distrust the personal responsibility and common sense of drivers. Every citizen should decide for themselves whether and how they want to make their contribution.”* - (Welt Online, 2022)

Interestingly, there are strong differences in how aversion to government preference for behavior regulation is negatively evaluated. Plenty of statements refer to the extremity of the speed limit as a part of these regulations and negatively frame them as representations of *prohibition idealization, populism, statism, totalitarianism or even dictatorship*. While these designations may appear somewhat intimidating and signal a certain level of threat, a larger number of statements indicate contempt and disdain towards the speed limit proponents perceived preference for behavioral regulation, inducing a certain superiority over those values. *Figure 16* shows the proportionality of these two expressions of negative feelings toward behavioral regulation.

Aversion to Behavioral Regulation



**Figure 16.** Proportion of expressions of behavioral regulation.

As contempt appears to be the leading manifestation here, it is interesting to dive deeper into the specific forms of its expression. First, there exists the notion of supporting governmental regulations like the speed limit as being representative of the negatively connotated characteristics of *boringness*, *conformity* and *weakness*. The ascriptions of boringness often intertwine with the framing that individuals advocating for governmental regulations like the speed limit strive for an idyllic world devoid of excitement. They insinuate a vision where the pursuit of sustainability and adherence to rules create a seemingly monotonous existence, reminiscent of a fictional utopia akin to the peaceful village of Bullerbü, as illustrated by the following quotes from an *FAZ* article and a forum post:

*„A real fight for the climate would look different. In fact, this is about an ideology of renunciation and a more boring life.“* (Bernau, 2022a)

*“For me, these "turnaround ideas" are completely absurd and of Green illusory Bullerbü-mindset.”* – Anonymous Forum User

This goes hand in hand with framings of conformity, where a preference for governmental regulations like the speed limit is seen as an act of conforming to societal norms and expectations. For example, one of the analyzed *Die Welt* newspaper articles delves into the concept of *normopaths* put forth by psychoanalyst Hans-Joachim Maaz in his renowned work ‘Das falsche Leben’<sup>2</sup>. The article, in its exploration of supporters of governmental regulations such as the speed limit, aptly quotes the esteemed psychoanalyst, emphasizing his perspective on the matter:

*"A normopath is always normal and adapted, his behavior overcorrect and overconforming. The compulsiveness with which he conforms to expectations, however, reveals that he leads a false, a fake life. It is not only he who is sick, but above all the society in which he lives and to which he submits to the pressure to conform.“*  
(Schneider, 2022)

Perceived weakness also seems to be very much linked to contempt. For example, there is the notion of the younger climate generation that is in support of the speed limit as effeminate and overemotional, as the following quote in an article published by *Die Welt* illustrates:

*„It is a coercion that is as gentle as it is penetrating, which fits a social character that in everyday life prefers to talk about how this or that "feels" to them, that considers "perceived dangers" to be more important than real ones, and that has only the phrase "I feel that" left for the articulation of sympathy.“* (Klaue, 2022)

Another aspect of expressed contempt relates to governmental behavioral regulations being seen as old-fashioned and simplistic. This perception was already elaborated on in the context of the first mechanism, when congruence skepticism was introduced.

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<sup>2</sup> The title of Maaz’ Book ‘Das falsche Leben’ translates to ‘The Fake Life’.

However, it is worthwhile to note this framing again in the current context, as simplicity and old-fashionedness are generally negatively associated. Furthermore, within some of the analyzed data, the speed limit is framed as a manifestation of envy and resentment towards freedom, suggesting that individuals who support regulations are driven by a sense of jealousy towards those who possess and enjoy greater personal freedom and harbor ill will towards them. The underlying implication is that regulations are seen as a means to curtail the liberties enjoyed by others.

In many cases within the analyzed data, this aversion to governmental regulation of behavioral freedom, which many opponents of the speed limit seem to see represented in the policy, goes hand in hand with a positive emphasis and highlighting of their own preference for freedom of behavior which is framed as being threatened by the implementation of a speed limit. In particular, many of the opponents of the speed limit emphasize their appreciation of the responsibility of citizens and their striving for freedom and its relevance for democracy as opposed to behavioral regulation. The incompatibility of these two preferences is directly mentioned in many of the sources analyzed, among others in articles published by the newspapers *Die Welt* and *Focus*:

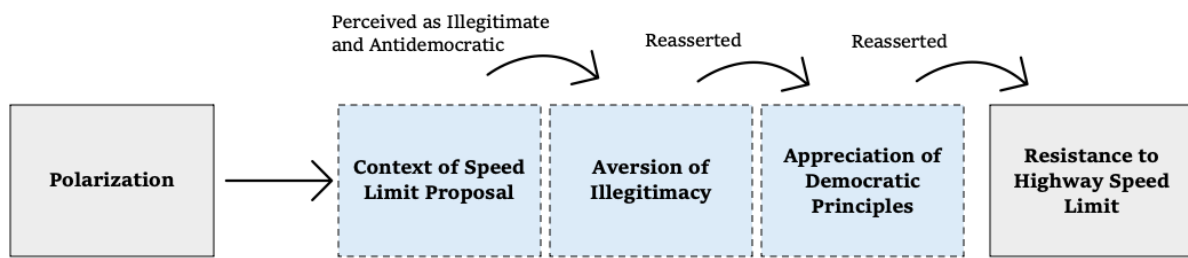
*“For me, maturity means that citizens can make free and self-determined decisions in which the state does not interfere, provided they do not harm the freedom of others. The state should not see itself as an educator. That is not its task.”* (Schneider, 2021)

*“In a democracy, it is exactly the other way around that a state power has to justify well why it restricts the freedoms of its citizens. But that is hardly possible with a total speed limit.”* (Weimer, 2022)

In conclusion, it can be confidently stated that this mechanism is most likely highly relevant, given its frequent mention across all three spheres of analysis. Of particular interest is the observation that the aversion to behavioral regulation is closely linked to the expression of contempt towards the associated ideology and values. The notions of dullness, weakness, and simplicity directly oppose the positive associations asserted to freedom and the ability to make individual decisions.

## **2B) Illegitimacy threatening Democracy**

Another, less common manifestation of value defense that was found within the empirical case is the perception of the illegitimacy of the context in which the speed limit is proposed presenting a threat to democracy, as visualized in *Figure 17*. Illegitimacy refers to the lack or absence of legitimacy and therefore signifies a situation where a government, ruler, or political authority is considered to lack the rightful or lawful authority to govern or exercise power (Biermann & Gupta, 2011; Patterson, 2023). In particular, two distinct variations of this logic were observed, within the context of the German speed limit debate, so that no overall introductory quote is provided in this section.



**Figure 17.** Mechanism 2B.

Firstly, there exists a framing that suggests a perceived media dominance or Zeitgeist of left-green ideologies in the context for the speed limit proposal, which is perceived to be leading to a one-sided, biased discussion of the policy. It appeared in 7% of the cases along all three arenas of analysis. Often, this framing is accompanied by the notion of a general illegitimate overrepresentation of left and green topics, politicians, and agendas in the media, coupled with a perceived disregard for alternative perspectives. According to some speed limit opponents, this combination poses a threat to democracy by shaping public discourse and limiting the range of ideas and information available to citizens. For instance, plenty of the forum posts that were directly related to the “Anne Will” talk show, express concerns about a perceived illegitimate overrepresentation of green politicians in the group of guests, which is framed as a danger to democracy, emphasizing the belief that as usual alternative viewpoints on issues like the speed limit are being ignored. It appears that this perceived illegitimate dominance of certain viewpoints entails a perceived imbalance of power and limited representation of diverse political views, fostering the perception of marginalization or suppression of alternative perspectives and thereby impeding the democratic ideal of robust and inclusive deliberation. One forum user for example states:

*“It was not a balanced discussion group. Two Greens were sitting there. But we know that from Anne Will...”* – Anonymous Forum User

Additionally, several statements within the analyzed data associate this dynamic with attributions of propaganda, which the media is perceived to be falling for, as for example stated by one of the forum users:

*“It is strange how quickly and uncritically our media and part of our political elite adopt green propaganda phrases.”* – Anonymous Forum User

In other cases, the perceived dominance or Zeitgeist of left-green ideologies is directly connected to a perceived hate or ignorance of libertarianism, as illustrated by the following quote from a *Die Welt* article that frames two wide-ranging magazines to be fawning over the green economy and climate minister while neglecting libertarian positions:

*„Libertarian politicians have a particularly hard time in terms of attention economy. While "Spiegel" and "Die Zeit" have a race to find the most cuddly Robert Habeck cover story (is he perhaps the messiah after all?), liberals are often only touched with a pair of pincers.“* (Schneider, 2022)

Building on these lines of argumentation, the disagreement to the speed limit then entails a framing of standing up for democratic principles by opposing a policy proposal that is perceived to arise from an undemocratic discussion and by fighting for a system where all opinions are genuinely considered and respected, as represented in the following forum post:

*“I would like to see the full political spectrum covered in the selection of guests [...] and not just the agenda of a 14.8% party. We have a center-right majority in the country - our democracy requires that this be taken into account.”* – Anonymous Forum User

The strength of this line of evidence is additionally underlined by the results of a 2020 study on polarization in Germany which discovered that individuals who consistently prioritize economic growth over climate protection often feel that their opinions are not adequately represented in public media, express dissatisfaction with democracy and experience a greater sense of exclusion due to their viewpoints (Roose, 2021).

The second variant of this mechanisms’ manifestation is particularly concerned with the climate activists of the activist group “Last Generation” which are currently widely promoting a speed limit on German highways through protest actions that mainly involve roadblocks and gluing-actions (Bernau, 2022a). Here, the illegitimacy ascriptions do not refer to media representation of viewpoints but to the policy proposals’ context in terms of the actions, means and demands of the activist group. This framing has again no relevance within the forum but concentrates more in the media and political arenas. The fact that it was mentioned only in about 3% of the analyzed files could first make it seem peripheral, however, given that the protests began to emerge more prominently from early 2023 onwards, it is noteworthy to mention that this manifestation of the second mechanism is relatively new. Considering this short duration of its relevance, it in fact has already garnered a relatively substantial number of mentions. Especially among the newspaper articles, the concern of the group questioning and threatening values of democracy was expressed within a quite large group of data. The main issue raised here is that the protesters, on the one hand, engage in civil disobedience in the form of criminal acts in order to achieve their goals, and that the group, on the other hand, is seen as anti-democratic because they are perceived to try and *force* the politicians to act faster in tackling climate change. This perceived coercion or extortion through civil disobedience is seen as an illegitimate exercise of power. For example, the newspaper *Bild* cites the German Federal Minister of Justice, Marco Buschmann (CSU) with the words:

*“In a democratic state governed by the rule of law, you don't go out and push your own agenda against the law. [...] In a democracy, you also don't try to blackmail governments or parliaments by saying, 'We will now continue to commit crimes if you don't do what we tell you to do!'”* (Nyary, 2022)

Additionally, an *FAZ* newspaper article states that: *“Global warming is not a reason for civil resistance. Civil disobedience is legitimate only in a state of injustice.”* (Hank, 2022). In the context of parliamentary debates and public statements by politicians, this



framing is also relevant as represented by the following two examples from FDP politicians:

*"After all, the "Last Generation" just shows that they don't care about democratic decision-making processes at all." - Wolfgang Kubicki  
(Deutscher Bundestag, 2022c, p.8852)*

*"But I have a good tip for you: Instead of gluing and disrupting events, how about you found a party and look for democratic majorities for your position. That's how we do democracy." - Christian Lindner (FDP, 2023)*

Furthermore, the actions and intentions of the "Last Generation" are not only described as illegitimate, but politicians who have shown a willingness to cooperate, negotiate or even talk with the group, also receive this assessment, and are sometimes even framed as being corrupt, as in the following *FAZ* article:

*"If local politicians are of the opinion that the federal government is doing too little for climate protection, then they should exert pressure via their parties, the Association of Cities and Towns and the public. But in doing so, they should not refer to actors who are not democratically legitimized and commit crimes. [...] Following the anti-corruption organization Transparency International, democratically elected politicians must avoid the appearance that their decisions can be bought. These rules against corruption can also be applied against extortion." (Trautsch, 2023)*

Overall, here again the resistance to a speed limit therefore entails a framing of standing up for appreciated democratic principles, this time through opposing a policy proposal that is perceived to represent the will of a group that is seen as anti-democratic and their demands as illegitimate and extortionate.

In conclusion, there appear to be two variations of perceived illegitimacy that pose a threat to democracy within the context of resistance against a highway speed limit. The perception of a left-green media dominance is prevalent across all three arenas of analysis, while the framing of the activist group "Last Generation" as a threat to democracy through their extortion of politicians in the form of criminal acts was only observed in the media and political spheres. In terms of overall relevance, both of these manifestations together exhibit less prominence in the discourse compared to Mechanism 2A (9% as compared to 41%), yet they still seem to possess a certain degree of causal influence with regards to arriving at resistance to the proposed speed limit. Particularly the illegitimacy framings relating to the activist-group "Last Generation" seem to just recently have gained momentum in justifying resistance to the highway speed limit.

### **Alternative Evidence**

Alternative evidence lowering the potential relevance of the second hypothesized mechanism would entail indications suggesting the compatibility of values of speed limit

supporters and opponents. Yet, upon scrutinizing the analyzed data, no statements were found that explicitly expressed or justified resistance to a highway speed limit by highlighting this value compatibility. This absence of alternative evidence, however, should not come as a surprise, for it would not be a fruitful line of argument or logical reasoning to oppose the implementation of a speed limit on such grounds. Nevertheless, the lack of mention regarding the perception of value compatibility does not necessarily negate its existence. In fact, one could speculate that in cases where value defense is not raised as a point of resistance, values threats may indeed not be assumed or considered relevant in the context of the speed limit.

### **Summary Mechanism 2**

In summary, in the case of the German speed limit, evidence suggests that the presence of the second theorized mechanism is relatively probable in two manifestations, namely perceptions of behavioral regulations threatening appreciated freedom of behavior as well as perceived illegitimacy threatening democracy. The opponents of the speed limit here frame themselves as defenders of their cherished values of personal freedom and democracy, and the resistance against the speed limit appears to be an act of safeguarding these values. Particularly, the first manifestation, the conflict between behavioral regulation and the behavioral freedom, can be attributed a certain level of relevance due to its frequent mentions, but activist perceptions recently seem to also gain explanatory power for speed limit opposition.

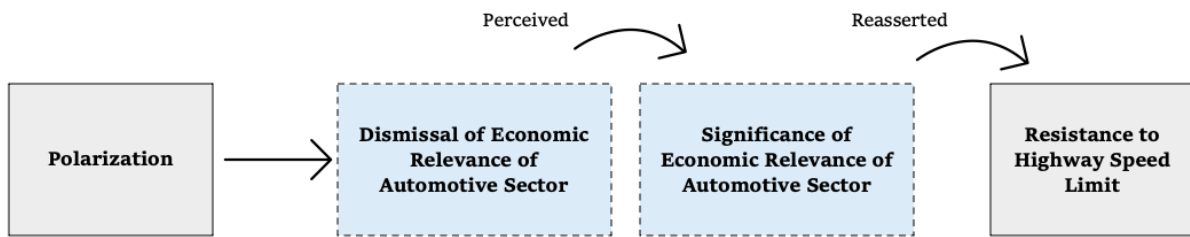
### **5.2.3 Mechanism 3: Needs, Interests & Dependencies Reassessment**

Lastly, evidence for the presence of three common manifestations of the third theorized mechanism was identified within the analyzed data, in which causal forces from polarization to policy resistance are transmitted through reactions to a perceived dismissal or ignorance of certain needs, interests or dependencies together with the reasserting of significance to those needs, interests and dependencies.

#### **3A) Large-Scale Economic Dependency**

*“It is also forgotten that automobility was one of the pillars of prosperity in the last 60-70(!) years. With the demonization of the car, we are one step further towards the deindustrialization of Germany and Western Europe!” – Anonymous Forum User*

The first quite clear manifestation of needs, interests and dependencies reassessment that was found within the empirical case is the perception of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the large-scale relevance of Germany’s automotive sector for the country’s economy, together with a positive significance being reattached to that economic relevance. *Figure 18* visually represents the mechanism, and the exemplary quote at the beginning of this section illustrates its logic.



**Figure 18.** Mechanism 3A.

The analyzed data suggests the perception of highway speed limit proponents as dismissing the necessity to demonstrate the prowess of German automotive engineering, potentially affecting the industry's reputation and marketability and thus job security and overall economic relevance. In particular, the results suggest a perception of the speed limit as a threat to the country's reputation for technological innovation, engineering excellence and forward-thinking, that is dismissed by its proponents. The framing was notably prevalent in the economic liberal newspaper *FAZ*; however, it also garnered frequent mentions in the forum exchange. The following quotes of *FAZ*-interviews, one with a luxury car dealer and one with a car lobbyist, illustrate the risk to the automotive sector that are perceived to be dismissed by speed limit proponents:

*"Unlike the Americans, our cars are designed for high speeds. Our cars are characterized by the fact that they are safe even at high speeds. Engineers often spend years working on this to achieve this quality. If we get a speed limit, then I'm afraid that this level will drop."* (Jürigs, 2022)

*"Until now, the German car industry had clear unique selling points. There was also the lack of a speed limit for the highways, which gave Americans, for example, the feeling that they could experience a bit of driving in Germany with a high-powered car from Germany."* (Piller, 2021)

Within the analyzed data, the automotive industry is then reasserted as a major catalyst for prosperity that is vulnerable to the potential economic damages caused by the aforementioned culture war against automobiles, which the highway speed limit is perceived to be a part of. Plenty of statements point out the past, present and future economic dependency of Germany's wealth to the automotive industry as well as the high number of jobs attached to that sector. The following quotes from *FAZ* and *Focus* articles as well as a forum post illustrate this narrative:

*"And I think the decision against the limit is even important in terms of industrial policy. The automotive industry is still one of the leading industries in our country."*  
(Meck & Tuna, 2022)

*"Simply because the automotive industry and everything that goes with it generate huge revenues for our country and many jobs, from which a large part of our population lives."* – Anonymous Forum User

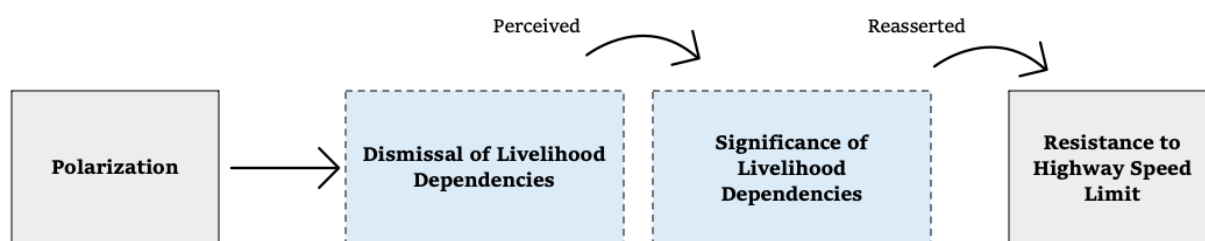
*“It is therefore not youth movements, speed limits and meat consumption that German climate and energy policy should focus on. The prerequisite for climate policy is that the basis of the German economy is preserved. This is still a medium-sized industry, which in turn depends on high-performance corporations. The car, steel and chemical industries are in the spotlight here.” (von Altenbockum, 2021)*

Overall, the framing that portrays the speed limit as a threat to Germany's extensive reliance on the automotive sector appeared only in 5% of the analyzed documents. In comparison to other mechanisms, it therefore seems to possess relatively low relevance in explaining the resistance against a speed limit on German highways. It additionally seemed to be especially relevant in the market-liberal newspaper *FAZ*, indicating that it might not be of larger societal concern beyond spheres with particularly high levels of economic interest.

### 3B) Livelihood Dependency

*“For example, when a shift worker quickly drives across the highway to her mother in need of care to put her to bed. Or when the salesman drives home late at night after a long day at work to see his family again. Or when the labor pains come at night and the expectant parents rush to the hospital. That's real life, for which speed ideologists have neither a keen eye nor a heart.” (Weimer, 2022)*

A second manifestation of perceived needs, interests, and dependencies reassessment that was found within the empirical case is the framing of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the various factors and resources upon which individuals or communities rely on for their sustenance and well-being, together with a positive significance reasserted to those dependencies as visually represented in *Figure 19* and illustrated by the introductory quote derived from an article published by the newspaper *Focus*.



**Figure 19.** Mechanism 3B.

Within the analyzed data, 17% of the cases contain evidence pointing towards the significance of a perceived disregard or dismissal of livelihood dependencies. In particular, groups like the urban society, climate activists, non-drivers or the political elite are framed to be ignorant and dismissive of the dependencies of other, opposing social groups. The results additionally indicate that in some cases, speed limit advocates are even seen as willfully disregarding the low acceptance of the speed limit that is said to exist within those societal groups. For example, the president of an automobile club, Michael Haberland, tells *Focus*:

*“Above all, those who are directly affected must be heard. For example, if there is a discussion about making helmets compulsory for cyclists - which I personally reject - cyclists should be asked first and foremost. Cyclists, especially those without a driver's license, don't need to have a say in the speed limit issue.”* (Focus, 2021b)

The following statements by car lobbyist Hildegard Müller in an *FAZ* interview and a forum user provide additional insights into this line of thought:

*“Ideas have to be adapted to people's living situations. And you certainly can't use the Berlin view to talk about the situation in all of Germany, and certainly not in rural areas.”* (Piller, 2021)

*“The FFF kids and their parents don't know the life of the temporary and factory workers. They don't have to drive hundreds of kilometers every weekend.”*  
– Anonymous Forum User

Interestingly, the particular emphasis on dependency on time savings achieved through fast driving was not very widespread in the analyzed data, despite the fact that slower driving is the primary livelihood-influencing effect of the speed limit. Only 15% of the total mentions of livelihood dependency frame peoples' livelihoods as being dependent on driving fast on highways, as for instance in the following two oral statements by politicians:

*“How many people can even carve out the nearly 20% increase in travel time resulting from the speed limit from their meager free time? [...] We do not want to set off CO<sub>2</sub> savings against the precious lifetime of the people in this country.”* - Dirk Spaniel [Afd]  
(Deutschlandkurier, 2023)

*“We are a very large country and unlike [...] the Netherlands where you can get from A to B quickly even at lower speeds, that is not the case here.”* – Bernd Reuther [FDP]  
(DPD, 2203)

The social groups, whose dependencies are most pointed out in this context and specified in detail are families, commuters and the rural population, for which time is presented as something especially valuable and precious. These groups are described to be particularly dependent on getting around the country fast, as illustrated by the following exemplary statements from an *FAZ* article and an interview with CDU politician Michael Sack for *Welt Online*:

*“The country is vast, the distances long, and commuters therefore spend a lot of time in their cars.”* (Welt Online, 2021)

*“But it doesn't hurt either, does it? Of course, it does. Everyone who occasionally drives from Kassel to Dortmund after an evening appointment, from Hanover to Magdeburg or from Regensburg to Nuremberg knows that. It's true that speeding doesn't usually save much time. But at off-peak times, high speed on the autobahn quickly saves half an hour*

*or a whole hour of travel time. That can make the difference between having to spend the night at the other location and being able to keep the appointment at all. Time is scarce, especially in families where both parents work - speed makes things easier."*

(Bernau, 2022b)

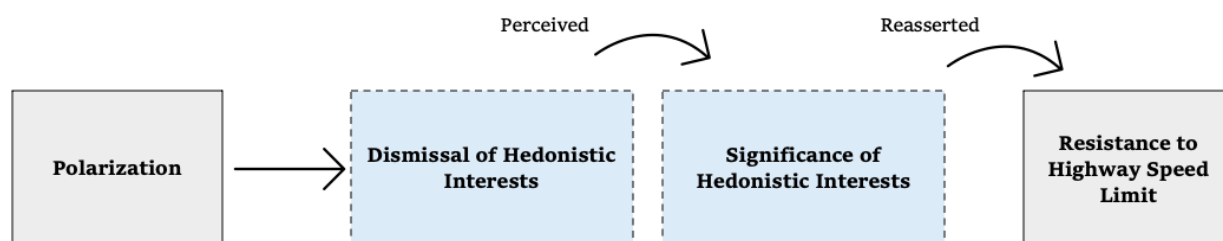
Among the examined data, instead of focusing on time-savings in particular, more sources highlight the broader interdependence of people's livelihoods and cars, meaning that they do not pertain directly to the issue of reducing driving speeds in the context of expressing their aversion to the speed limit. The majority of these statements were made within the context of the expressed perception of a culture war against cars and individual transport, of which the speed limit is perceived to be a component (see also Mechanism 1B). They mostly refer to dependencies in terms of flexibility or security and quite frequently express criticism of the public transport system as being inadequate to replace these dependencies.

In conclusion, what is particularly intriguing about this quite frequently observed mechanism is that, despite the primary effect of the speed limit being a reduction in driving speed, there is often an emphasis on broader dependencies on automobiles that are not directly related to driving speed. The perceived attribution of actual relevance to fast driving, in fact, appears to be relatively low. The fact that more general, and topically unrelated car-dependencies are mentioned so frequently when resistance to a speed limit is expressed substantiates the argumentative relevance of the speed limit being perceived as part of a culture war against automobiles and individual transport and its effects.

### 3C) Hedonistic Interests

*"So, is this the end of self-determination and self-realization, hedonism and the fun society?"* (Tuma, 2021)

Lastly, some evidence indicates the perception of the speed limit proposal representing a dismissal of hedonistic interests, including the exercise of passions and the presentation of status together with a positive significance attached to those hedonistic interests. *Figure 20* and the illustrative introductory quote from the newspaper *Focus* represent the logic underlying this mechanism.



*Figure 20. Mechanism 3C.*

Evidence for the presence of this mechanism was found only in 3% of the analyzed cases, with particularly outstanding frequency in the *FAZ* as almost 30% of the relevant evidence for a perceived dismissal of hedonistic interests can be found within that specific newspapers' articles. First, there exists a framing of the speed limit threatening the passions of car-enthusiasts, who experience feelings of joy and fulfillment in pursuing their passion and driving fast, as exemplified by the following forum and *FAZ* quotations:

*“As long as there are cars that have a lot of horsepower, then I am no different than the many who also experience an absolute highlight. Even though, I know that this is not right, the feeling is worth more!”* – Anonymous Forum User

*“Those who see the car not only as a means of transport, but choose one with character, experience a feast for the senses.”* (Appel, 2021)

Additionally, a few statements connect speeding and the showing off of the capacities of one's fast car to a representation of status. For example, a young man in an interview with the *FAZ* states that sitting in a nice car, accelerating and listening to the engine is not only his passion, but also a sign that he has made it, that he belongs and a way of proving to others what he works so hard for (Witzeck, 2022).

Mostly, when resistance to the speed limit on German highways is justified by pointing out hedonistic interests, those hedonistic interests are then asserted as valid and mostly positive. In particular, as the following two quotations from the forum illustrate, there exists a framing in which the dismissal of those hedonistic preferences by the part of society that advocates for the speed limit is interpreted as a clear lack of understanding for the positively framed diversity of individual interests and passions that have all right to include speeding:

*“A hobby or passion is something you either understand or you don't. It can hardly be explained to an outsider. For one person it's the fulfillment of his life, for another it's pure bullshit. The sound of a comfortable combustion engine is for many only noise, for some music.”* – Anonymous Forum User

*“There's no doubt that driving fast, preferably in conjunction with the right sound, has its appeal. One runs marathons and experiences feelings of happiness, the other sits in the cold water and becomes happy and a third needs a fast car or bike.”*  
– Anonymous Forum User

Although there is relatively limited quantitative evidence for the presence of this mechanism, it should be noted that the fact that these expressions appear at all in justifications for policy resistance against the speed limit strongly suggests its existence. This is the case primarily because the argumentative strength of hedonistic interests seems to be perceived as not particularly robust, and therefore likely does not find widespread resonance in public discourse on the speed limit. Especially the first of the previous two comments indicates that hedonistic interests are perceived as something

that lacks societal acceptance, and hence is unlikely to be frequently raised as a standalone argument against the speed limit. Therefore, it can be assumed that the appreciation of hedonistic interests and a perceived threat thereto may play a more significant societal role overall than what is represented within the specific analyzed data.

### **Alternative Evidence**

Alternative evidence pointing away from the third hypothesized mechanism would entail indications suggesting the perception that speed limit proponents take into account all relevant needs, dependencies and interests of different social groups. Similar to the second theorized mechanism, upon scrutinizing the analyzed data, no statements were found that explicitly expressed or justified resistance to a highway speed limit by invoking this appreciation of needs and dependencies.

### **Summary Mechanism 3**

In summary, in the case of the German speed limit, evidence suggests the presence of the third theorized mechanism in three manifestations of different relevance, namely perceived dismissal of Germany's large-scale economic dependency on the automotive sector, dismissal of livelihood dependencies and dismissal of hedonistic interests. A very interesting finding is constituted by the fact that while livelihood dependencies are frequently reasserted significance with the analyzed data, the actual dependency on fast driving seems to be less relevant compared to the emphasis on broader dependencies on automobiles in other areas, aligning with the perceived culture war against automobiles. While the other two manifestations of the third mechanism receive fewer overall mentions and could therefore be considered less relevant in explaining the resistance against the speed limit on German highways, it is notable that the fact that hedonistic interests are mentioned despite the perceived lack of their understanding indicates the potentially high relevance of this mechanism even in the face of the low quantity of evidence for it within the analyzed data. It is additionally worthwhile to point out that in a few cases, the country-level cultural dependency or value of fast driving in Germany is mentioned, indicating the presence of a fourth variation of the third mechanism in which people would feel German national culture as under threat by the speed limit. Here, speeding is for example described as something "*iconic for Germany*", a "*German cultural asset*" or a "*cultural characteristic*" of Germany as a nation. However, these descriptions do not go any deeper and are only found in a small section of the data analyzed, which is why they aren't elaborated on further in the context of this work.



### 5.3 Result Take-Aways

This section is aimed at providing a concise summary of the most important and intriguing findings, accompanied by some data targeted at providing an overview of the potential comparative relevance of the different mechanisms for explaining resistance to the German highway speed limit. *Table 7* provides an insight into the total number of files containing evidence for each of the mechanism's manifestations as well as the percentage of analyzed files containing that specific evidence. As some files contained evidence for multiple mechanisms, the sum of the individual percentages exceeds 100%.

*Table 7. References per mechanism.*

	<b>Mechanism</b>	<b>Files</b>	<b>% of Total Files</b>
<b>1A</b>	Policy Marginality and Symbol Politics	203	39%
<b>1B</b>	Opportunism and Ideological Motivation	182	35%
<b>2A</b>	Behavioral Regulation threatening Freedom of Behavior	211	41%
<b>2B</b>	Illegitimacy threatening Democracy	47	9%
<b>3A</b>	Large-Scale Economic Dependency	26	5%
<b>3B</b>	Livelihood Dependency	90	17%
<b>3C</b>	Hedonistic Interests	17	3%

Among the three mechanisms investigated, the mechanistic manifestations 1A, 1B and 2A contain the highest quantity of references across the analyzed data. This observation indicates the prominence of those manifestations and suggests that they may play a more significant role in explaining how polarization potentially leads to resistance to the German speed limit compared to the other mechanisms. Moreover, they are all present in all arenas of analysis, however with direct framings of opportunism and the fear of behavioral regulations threatening freedom of behavior being less relevant in the community than in the political and media arenas. Additionally, the fact that the perceived dismissal of hedonistic interests is mentioned despite its perceived argumentative weakness indicates the potential relevance of mechanism 3C beyond the analyzed data.

A very revealing insight is the prevalence of two distinct forms of intention skepticism within the context of resistance to the German highway speed limit. These forms include perceived policy marginality, coupled with suspicions of symbol politics, and perceived opportunism, accompanied by suspicions of ideological motivation. The prominence of these manifestations underscores the general relevance of the overarching mechanism of intention skepticism, as evidenced by the high number of files containing evidence for its presence. However, it is important to note that counter evidence exists, indicating that segments of society do not doubt the CO<sub>2</sub>-saving intention of the speed limit. This highlights the coexistence of different mechanisms and the complexity of factors contributing to policy resistance. Furthermore, the mechanism through which a feeling of behavioral regulation threatening appreciated freedom can lead to policy resistance emerged as highly significant, with the highest overall number of files containing

evidence for its presence. The data indicates that many individuals seem to perceive the car as a domain of freedom of behavior, and they view the speed limit as a direct targeting of this freedom. The contempt towards the preference for behavioral regulation was particularly noteworthy in that context.

Among the other mechanisms, livelihood dependency was the most widespread in terms of its presence, suggesting that the resistance against the speed limit extends beyond individual driving behavior to encompass broader dependencies on the automotive sector and related livelihoods. This finding was accompanied with the notion of a perceived culture war against automobiles, where the implications of automotive climate policy extend far beyond the act of driving itself. Lastly, activist perceptions seem to become more and more relevant in resistance to the speed limit on German highways.

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1 Evaluation of the Results

First and foremost, the conducted analysis illustrates that studying causal mechanisms can be a great way of obtaining explanatory knowledge on cultural resistance to climate policy. The study allowed the purposive and structured analysis and comparison of the relevance of various ways in which polarization is likely to contribute to resistance to the German highway speed limit and the results provide insights into which manifestations of the theorized mechanisms seemingly play a more significant role in the case. Thereby, the findings of this work do not only largely support but also notably expand upon the previous research in the field, indicating the potential of studying causal mechanisms for helping to generate valuable insights into culture as potentially disruptive to climate policy implementation. To illustrate this argument, the following three paragraphs reflect on the scientific contribution of the key substantive results of this work and their implications for the related theory:

For one, the fact that the mechanistic manifestations 1A, 1B, and 2A likely play the most significant role in explaining resistance to the speed limit compared to the other mechanisms aligns with previous work that emphasizes the importance of affective outgroup perceptions like intention skepticism as well as concerns about behavioral regulations threatening freedom of behavior in policy resistance contexts (e.g., Lees & Cikara, 2021; Hess & Renner, 2019). However, while previous research emphasizes the role of skepticism and distrust in shaping cultural resistance to environmental policies on a descriptive level (see e.g., Iyengar et al., 2019; Judge et al., 2023) little research had so far directly linked polarization-induced intention skepticism to its more specific causal manifestations of perceived opportunism or perceived symbol politics that were identified within the context of this work (for exception see e.g., Beniers & Dul, 2007). The insights therefore point towards the relevance of disentangling mechanisms into their specific manifestations to understand exactly how causal forces are transmitted.

Furthermore, knowledge about how polarization between groups with different preferences for optimal levels of behavioral regulation can contribute to policy resistance was exacerbated. The facts that individuals perceive the car as a domain of freedom of behavior, and that the speed limit is seen as a direct infringement upon this freedom, resonate with Germany's high car-dependency as well as previous research on the symbolic and emotional significance attached to cars and the resistance evoked by policies perceived as limiting individual liberties (Haas, 2020). Plenty of evidence was found within the analyzed empirical case for certain parts of the population perceiving the highway speed limit as an unnecessary government restriction on personal freedom, and it is widely argued that individuals should have the liberty to drive at any speed they deem appropriate, assuming they are responsible for their own actions and the potential consequences. These findings are well aligned with previous research on how libertarian or conservative ideologies that emphasize limited government intervention in personal affairs and advocate for individual freedom and autonomy are likely to cause resistance to climate policy that targets the freedom of individual behavior (Ballew et al., 2020; Funk & Hefferon, 2019; Haas, 2020; Leiserowitz, 2006; Nelson, 2019; Smith & Leiserowitz, 2013). Many of the prevalent statements in the empirical case can additionally be related to theories of how ecomodernism can lead to resistance to policies that involve behavioral regulation as ecomodernists empathizes technological, market-based solutions and believe that by adopting more advanced and efficient technologies and practices, it is possible to decouple economic development from environmental degradation and resource depletion, allowing for both ecological preservation and human prosperity (Anshelm & Hultman, 2014; Daggett, 2018). The generated insights however expand on those more descriptive previous works by highlighting the affective dimensions of how preferences for low levels of behavioral regulation can causally lead to climate policy resistance. Particularly, the findings suggest that the imposition of a speed limit is perceived as a paternalistic approach that undermines citizens' maturity and judgment, implying that people are incapable of making responsible decisions without external regulation and thereby triggering resistance through emotional responses more than sole aversion to regulations.

In that context, further insights were gained regarding the effect of contempt towards values of certain groups, especially towards perceived preferences for behavioral regulation. While previous studies have for instance pointed out the relevance of contempt towards climate activists and their preferences in climate policy resistance (Bashir et al., 2013; Bergmann, & Ossewaarde, 2020), little research has so far focused on the role of contempt towards broader values or ideologies in the context of climate policy resistance. This is meaningful as the attributions of weakness and boringness of speed limit supporters found within the empirical case as well as the perception of the presence of a woke trend can be well related to the concept of petro-masculinity, which had recently been put forth by Daggett (2018). The findings in that context align with the theory of climate policy resistance potentially representing a response to the perceived threats posed to the dominant position of men and to traditional forms of masculinity by the rise of environmentalism, as well as movements for gender and social equality, highlighting the relevance of further research in that field (Daggett, 2018).

Coming back to the broader level, the results additionally indicate that policy resistance should be studied in a multi-mechanism way to allow for a comprehensive examination of the various factors and dynamics that can contribute to policy responses. Aligned with the theory, evidence for manifestations for all three of the theorized mechanisms was found, pointing towards the potential relevance of all of them within the considered case. Additionally, the presence of the counter evidence indicating segments of society that do not doubt the CO<sub>2</sub>-saving intention of the speed limit highlights the coexistence of different mechanisms and the complexity of factors contributing to policy resistance, as recognized by scholars pointing out the multidimensionality of cultural resistance phenomena (Bulkeley et al., 2016; Patterson, 2022). Given the diverse interests and stakes concerning automotive mobility in Germany, this finding additionally corresponds to the country's distinctive characteristics, circumstances, and dynamics. One of the most intriguing findings of this thesis is that within the studied empirical case, the present mechanisms notably not only seem to coexist but even partly complement each other. Particularly, the case-specific manifestations of certain mechanistic components were found to be relevant for different mechanisms. For example, the perception of a culture war against cars seems to shape both the perceived ideological motivation of speed limit supporters in the context of intention skepticism as well as the perception of a threat to certain livelihood dependencies. Also, the perceived old-fashionedness and simplicity of the policy was relevant for congruence skepticism as well as for the aversion towards behavioral regulations. Thus, by considering multiple mechanisms and taking into account their overlaps, researchers can gain a more nuanced understanding of the complex interplay between individual, societal, and cultural factors that influence resistance to climate policy.

Additionally, it is worth noting that the study emphasizes the importance of paying careful attention to nuanced evidence to draw conclusions about the relevance of certain mechanisms. For instance, the evidence for the presence of Mechanism 3C, the struggle to preserve hedonistic interests, has proven to be a strong indicator that this mechanism could play a larger role despite its relatively low frequency. Also, the fact that quite a few mechanisms were less mentioned in the community arena compared to the political and media arenas is relevant in that context. It resonates with studies that highlight the role of media framing and political discourse in shaping public opinion and policy agendas, as media outlets and political actors are argued to have the power to set the agenda by determining which issues receive attention by prioritizing certain topics based on their own interests, ideologies, or perceived audience preferences (Boydston, 2013; McCombs & Shaw, 1972; Walgrave & Aelst, 2006). In fact, political actors may particularly focus on certain issues that align with their policy objectives and electoral strategies regardless of actual citizen concerns (Dragu & Fan, 2016; McCombs & Shaw, 1972). Additionally, there is often a symbiotic relationship between media and politics, where political actors use media channels to disseminate their messages and gain public support, causing that political discourse often finds its way into media coverage, and media outlets may rely on political actors for information and quotes (Boydston, 2013). This interplay between media and politics can lead to a higher level of alignment in the perspectives presented in those spheres and influence the informative value of certain evidence regarding the relevance of certain mechanisms on a larger-societal scale.

Lastly, the surprising and unexpected relevance and irrelevance of certain mechanisms suggests that cultural dimensions of policy resistance may manifest themselves in unforeseen ways. For example, the fact that little evidence was found for German national culture to specifically be under threat by a highway speed limit is surprising as Germany is often associated with a historically strong country-level cultural connection to cars (see also *Section 4*). Therefore, one could have expected to see that a policy aiming to restrict individual car usage, such as a speed limit, is perceived as a particular threat to German national culture. The absence of frequent evidence suggesting such a perceived threat challenges this assumption. While possible explanations for the absence of evidence regarding the threat to German national culture could include that the way the issue is framed and discussed in public discourse may not emphasize or evoke those concerns explicitly, with other aspects overshadowing the national cultural aspects within policy resistance arguments, it is also possible that this finding indicates that German national culture is just not so rigidly tied to car-related aspects that the speed limit would be perceived as a threat thereto. Another example is the unexpected prevalence of perceived threats to livelihood dependency unrelated to driving fast. This finding underscores the broader societal reasons for opposition to the speed limit, which go beyond dependence on speeding and instead include dependence on the automotive sector more broadly. The finding is most likely strongly related to the prevalence of a perceived culture war against cars, due to which the speed limit is perceived as part of a larger policy agenda that has potentially far-reaching effects on livelihoods and shall thus be prevented.

In summary, the results show that studying mechanisms of resistance is important because it can help generate valuable insights into cultural resistance to climate policy by enabling a focused analysis of the ways in which cultural factors such as polarization can contribute to resistance against specific measures, allowing for a better understanding of which mechanisms are particularly influential. The obtained insights additionally indicate that resistance should be studied in a multi-mechanism way to account for the coexistence of different mechanisms and the complexity of factors contributing to policy resistance. In doing so, it becomes necessary to pay careful attention to nuanced evidence to be able to draw conclusions about the potential relevance of certain mechanisms. Lastly, the fact that some mechanisms are surprising or unexpected indicates that cultural dimensions play out in unexpected ways, further enhancing the relevance of their investigation.

## 6.2 Implications for Automotive Climate Policy

The insights derived from this research offer a valuable empirical exploration that may help to enhance the broader understanding of the causal mechanisms at play between polarization and resistance to automotive climate policy. To draw implications for what the case specific findings might mean more broadly, reflections regarding their transferability to other cases and contexts are needed.

First, it is relevant to consider the transferability to other places, transcending the German context. While studying the German context provided several valuable insights, one might argue that it does not capture the full spectrum of factors and dynamics at play in other countries or regions and that the factors most relevant in Germany may not help to explain resistance to speeding regulations in other places. By discussing the transferability of the findings to other geographical contexts, nuances and variations that might exist in different sociopolitical and cultural settings can be explored, enriching the understanding of the broader phenomenon.

Certainly, the cultural factors influencing speed limit resistance in Germany are unique, but they are likely to also have universal implications for countries that are similarly experiencing polarization and disputes regarding governmental regulations targeting driving behavior and speed. The strong intertwinement of Germany's economy with the automotive sector makes it a distinctive case, and it can be expected that this might affect transferability to other contexts where the economic dependence on the automotive industry is weaker. Additionally, several other factors such as Germany's automotive heritage, driving culture, engineering excellence, and enthusiasm for cars as elaborated on in the case description contribute to the country constituting a unique sociopolitical context. These factors might particularly influence how strong cultural resistance to policies targeting automotive mobility turns out, and one might suspect that they also influence which mechanisms are most relevant. However, the mechanisms that were identified as most crucial for transmitting causal forces from polarization to speed limit resistance in the German case interestingly do not seem to be intensely tied to those country-specific factors. For example, the relevance of national cultural identity did not seem to be particularly relevant in causing policy resistance while others such as intention skepticism caused by distrust towards policy proponents and the prioritization of little government regulation seemed to hold more pertinence. This may indicate that the cultural mechanisms through which polarization can lead to resistance to regulations on driving behavior, like speed limits, may tend to be more universal and apply to other liberal democracies experiencing polarization along similar groups as well as outgroup distrust and disputes regarding optimum levels of governmental regulation.

In that context, it is worth noting that the reduction of the daytime speed limit to 100 km/h in the Netherlands in March 2020 seemed to face less resistance compared to Germany despite it being referred to as a 'rotten' measure by its own implementers (Deutsche Welle, 2020). Various factors can be speculated as the cause, pointing towards the relevance of contextual factors for shaping cultural resistance mechanisms. For one, the policy was initiated by the ruling party, Volkspartij voor Vrijheid en Democratie (VVD), which is a conservative-liberal party known for usually advocating market liberal economic policies and national liberal to conservative domestic policies (parlement.com, n.d.). The fact that the policy proposal was not coming from the left or green political spectrum and didn't face strong resistance could potentially highlight the significance of affective political polarization for policy resistance (Boven et al., 2018). However, the context of the speed limit introduction was different as well: In the Netherlands, the reduction of the speed limit was primarily aimed at addressing

nitrogen emissions rather than climate protection, which could have influenced the perception of the policy measure and made it more tangible. Furthermore, the government had already launched a program to construct 75,000 new apartments by the end of 2020 to alleviate the housing shortage and as construction activities also release nitrogen compounds and halting the program was not an option cuts had to be made in other areas (Deutsche Welle, 2020). The seeming inevitability of the measure could therefore also have contributed to its acceptance. These reflections indicate that the findings of this work can potentially inform policymakers in other countries who have introduced new speed limits or are considering it about potential cultural causes of policy resistance; however, country specific circumstances should be considered and carefully evaluated.

Additionally, to draw broader implications it is needed to discuss the transferability of the findings to other forms of policy targeting automotive mobility. Particularly, it is essential to determine how the case-specific findings can be extrapolated to other policy domains related to automotive climate or environmental policies, like those targeting electric mobility or infrastructure changes, to extend the relevance and impact of this research beyond a singular policy issue and identify commonalities and shared underlying factors that may drive resistance or hinder policy implementation on a broader scale. This is useful as in most other countries, such as the US and all other European countries, speed limits are already stricter than in Germany and therefore other climate protection measures in the automotive sector may have a higher relevance on the political agenda.

The insights gained from studying the speed limit debate and its cultural dimensions not only shed light on the dynamics of resistance to speeding regulations but also have the potential to be transferred to other policy areas within the realm of climate and environmental policies, particularly in the automotive sector. Generally, it is plausible to expect that the findings can be transferred to these other policy areas as the demands and reactions of individuals towards various policies of the same domain are likely to exhibit similar patterns and associations. Consequently, the insights from studying the speed limit debate can shed light on the dynamics at play in different policy contexts within the realm of policies regulating mobility by car. This is underlined by one very relevant finding of this work which is the fact that the specifically investigated policy is perceived as part of a larger culture war against cars. Like the speed limit debate, other automotive policies may also become entangled in broader cultural narratives, particularly a perceived culture war against cars, where policies are seen as emblematic battles within larger societal conflicts. Additionally, building on the findings one can reasonably assume that the insights are likely transferrable to other cases where automotive climate and environmental policies are perceived to have marginal impact and solely symbolic or ideological value or largely rely on behavioral regulation. Lastly, even if these similarities are not given and concrete mechanisms can't be transferred, the meaningful insights of this work revealed that other realms of climate or environmental policy transcending automotive regulations could significantly gain from considering cultural factors when aiming to understand policy resistance as they may manifest themselves in unforeseen ways.

In summary, the findings of this research offer valuable implications for better understanding cultural resistance to automotive climate policy. While Germany's unique characteristics in terms of its historic, economic, and cultural dependency on cars make it a distinctive case, the mechanisms that were identified as most important can potentially apply to plenty other regional contexts as well. Moreover, the transferability of the findings to other policy areas targeting automotive mobility is plausible, particularly when behavioral regulation policies are perceived to be a part of a culture war against individual mobility by car or seen as mainly containing symbolic or ideational value. Furthermore, the insightful examination of cultural dimensions of resistance in the context of the German highway speed limit suggests that other areas of climate or environmental policy could greatly benefit from considering cultural resistance factors.

### 6.3 Policy Recommendations

Based on the results obtained, several recommendations for policymakers can be derived. However, it must be noted that integrating aspects of culture and identity into public policy generally poses challenges in the context of climate policymaking as losses of community and sense of place cannot be easily compensated or influenced (Adger et al., 2013). Nevertheless, policymakers can strive to find a balance between addressing climate change and simultaneously considering cultural needs and values as well as intergroup dynamics.

#### **Investigating Relevant Mechanismic Manifestations:**

Given their prominence and significance in explaining resistance to the German speed limit, policymakers could as a starting point investigate which of the mechanismic manifestations linking polarization and policy resistance identified within the studied case hold the potential to play a significant role within their particular policy context. By doing so, policymakers can gain a better understanding of the underlying mechanisms driving resistance in their specific case and tailor their strategies to address these specific challenges, ultimately leading to more effective and targeted policy interventions.

#### **Addressing Intention Skepticism:**

If forms of intention skepticism are recognized as potentially relevant, perceptions of policy marginality, suspicions of symbol politics, perceived opportunism, and suspicions of ideological motivation could be addressed through transparent and credible communication strategies, emphasizing genuine policy intentions, as well as through the provision of convincing evidence to counter doubts and skepticism. In that way, policymakers can potentially foster trust, enhance public understanding, and mitigate resistance by effectively conveying their motives and demonstrating the honest intentions of their policy decisions.



### **Engaging with Freedom of Behavior Concerns:**

In cases where the perception of behavioral regulation threatening freedom of behavior is recognized as potentially driving policy resistance, it might be essential to engage with the public and highlight the broader societal benefits of the policy, while addressing the concerns of those who perceive the car as a domain of freedom, potentially by promoting and facilitating alternative forms of transportation that offer flexibility and freedom of choice. By doing so, policymakers can potentially alleviate resistance by demonstrating the compatibility of the policy with individual freedom, promoting sustainable transportation options, and ensuring that the transition to alternative modes of transportation is accompanied by a sense of empowerment and choice for individuals.

### **Addressing Activist Perceptions:**

Policymakers should also be particularly aware of the growing relevance of activist perceptions in resistance to automotive climate policy. When politicians face a situation where climate activists advocating for certain policies are perceived negatively or as a threat to democracy, but they still desire to cooperate and engage in exchange with them, it might become crucial to communicate openly and transparently with both activists and the broader public, clearly articulating the intentions, objectives, and constraints of policy decisions and address concerns by providing evidence-based information and explaining the rationale behind policy choices in which activists were involved. In that way, policymakers can foster constructive dialogue, bridge the gap between different perspectives, and establish a foundation for collaborative efforts that aim to address climate challenges while showing their respect for democratic principles and the legitimacy of public engagement.

### **Supporting Just Transitions:**

It is also relevant to particularly acknowledge the widespread presence of livelihood dependency and the perception of a culture war against automobiles. Here, it might become necessary to develop policies that support affected communities and industries, providing alternative livelihood opportunities and ensuring a just transition where people feel heard and helped rather than attacked and dismissed. This could be done by acknowledging the significance of allowing communities to define their own identity and offering tangible assistance for endeavors that preserve or revive their sense of self (Patterson, 2022). By doing so, policymakers can potentially mitigate resistance by addressing the concerns and livelihood dependencies of affected communities, fostering a sense of inclusivity, and supporting just transition towards sustainable practices.

In summary, these policy recommendations all aim to address the challenges posed by the different relevant mechanisms identified and may thereby help create an environment conducive to understanding, dialogue, and constructive engagement in shaping climate and environmental policies, primarily in the automotive sector.

## 6.4 Limitations

The procedure of theory-testing process-tracing as applied in the context of this thesis has been very useful for gaining insights into the causal mechanisms at play between polarization and resistance to automotive climate policy; however, the methodological approach also has several limitations.

First and foremost, it must be noted that, as in most social science research, subjectivity and bias of the researcher most likely influenced the results of this research project to some extent (Rwegoshora, 2016). In theory-testing process-tracing, subjectivity and bias may for instance shape the concrete conceptualization of mechanisms into entities engaging in activities, as well as the data collection process and the interpretation of collected evidence (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). This is particularly relevant when venturing into the sphere of the interpretation of communication and its cultural meanings, as was done in the context of the conducted research. To nevertheless ensure robust research findings, this thesis applied different strategies for enhancing credibility and plausibility as suggested by Gorup (2019). First, through the analysis of alternative evidence, it was ensured that the research encompasses unexpected outcomes, and the comparison of the findings to existing work helped evaluating the results. Additionally, through the provision of open and critical reflection, along with transparent reporting, it was aimed to enhance plausibility, and through extensive methodology documentation and the use of direct quotations to illustrate how the original data was interpreted, readers are enabled to evaluate the applied analytical method.

Another limitation of the methodology applied concerns data representativeness, as despite the careful triangulation of data from different spheres and sources, the thesis may have limitations in capturing the full range of perspectives and factors influencing policy resistance in the case of the German speed limit debate. For instance, during the analysis of the data from the online forum, various clues indicated that the individuals discussing the speed limit there were likely of older age. This conclusion was drawn from the prevalence of names and aliases that are more commonly associated with older generations, as well as the writing style of the individuals participating in the exchange. However, while the demographics of the forum participants may skew towards an older generation, it does not necessarily invalidate the conclusions drawn from the analysis. Older individuals possess valuable perspectives and experiences related to the topic at hand and their insights may be based on a longer period of driving experience or a historical understanding of the issue. Additionally, the insights from the forum were in many ways aligned with the insights from the other two spheres of analysis, meaning that their contributions are likely applicable to the broader discussion. One must however note that in the cases where certain evidence for a mechanism was more common in the political and media arenas of analysis, one should investigate if the seeming prevalence in media and political communication in comparison to more community exchange is something that is applicable to younger generations as well or if these themes are potentially just less relevant for older generations.

The application of process-tracing methods is additionally limited in testing the necessity of a mechanism, as no counterfactual scenarios which explore what would have happened in the absence of polarization are part of the analysis. This means that process tracing allows no claims to be made about whether an investigated mechanism was the sole factor leading to an outcome (Beach & Pedersen, 2013). To examine the overall necessity of a mechanism as a cause of a particular phenomenon, one would have to turn to cross-case comparative methods.

## 6.5 Future Research

Several ideas for future research emerge from the research insights of this thesis as well as from the previously discussed limitations.

First and foremost, the research findings align with previous works in highlighting the potential significance of studying the cultural dimensions of climate policy resistance due to its seemingly relevant role in shaping policy support or rejection. Neglecting these dimensions can lead to several consequences, such as a disregard of significant factors contributing to resistance when ambitious climate policies directly clash with peoples' daily lives, fostering a sense of injustice among individuals or groups that may fuel political volatility, and potentially triggering political resistance or backlash against climate policies (Patterson, 2022; Patterson, 2023). Future research should thus further investigate this complex and versatile dimension of climate policy resistance.

Secondly, the use of process-tracing as a research approach appeared suitable for studying the relevance of different theorized causal mechanisms and future studies could benefit from also employing this specific method to gain a deeper understanding of how individuals and groups develop resistance to specific climate policies. Particularly, the innovative operationalization of the theorized mechanisms by looking at communication and public resistance-justifications has proven highly valuable for investigating cultural resistance. As this approach aligns with the rhetoric and language-based dimensions of culture and polarization, it enabled a deeper comprehension of how the way individuals convey ideas, beliefs, and values is related to culture. The applied approach thus expands the methodological toolkit of process-tracing by emphasizing the importance of language and communication in the study of causal mechanisms in the ideational domain. Future research could therefore explore new methodologies and techniques that effectively capture the dynamic and evolving connection of culture and communication, strategically integrating interdisciplinary perspectives, such as sociolinguistics and discourse analysis into process-tracing.

More incentives for further research also arise from the broader methodological limitations of process-tracing. As the application of process-tracing methods is generally limited in testing the necessity of a mechanism it could be combined with alternative cross-case comparative methods to examine the overall necessity of the investigated cultural mechanisms as a cause of policy resistance. Additionally, conducting longitudinal studies could shed light on the dynamic relationship between polarization

and policy resistance over time. This approach would provide insights into temporal patterns and changes in the mechanisms involved.

The results of this work additionally point towards more content-specific opportunities for further research. For instance, researchers could in the future delve into understanding why exactly certain climate mitigation policies in the automotive sector are perceived as ideological or symbolic and explore ways to prevent such perceptions. Communication scholars could additionally examine how climate action communication and framing interacts with polarization. Thereby they could help employ informed communication strategies that go beyond simply improving the public understanding of science and instead focus on transforming intergroup relations and fostering collaboration to build support for mitigation policies that target individual transport by car. Moreover, the discovery that the speed limit is seen as a component of a broader culture war against automobiles, coupled with individuals' inclination to express their overall reliance on cars extending beyond merely driving fast on highways when opposing the speed limit, presents intriguing avenues for research. It invites investigation into how specific policies can potentially evoke expectations of future policies within the same realm and generate a fear of an imagined future. Studying how this anticipation may potentially lead to the perception of greater cultural costs or burdens may help gain relevant insights into culture war perceptions and policy resistance.

To encapsulate the core findings and key takeaways of this work the following concluding section again consolidates the essential insights and implications derived from the preceding analysis.

## 7. Conclusion

The conducted research aimed to deepen the understanding of the role of culture as a potentially disruptive factor to climate policy implementation in the automotive sector. By empirically investigating the manifestations of theoretically grounded causal mechanisms between polarization and policy resistance in the context of opposition to the German highway speed limit, valuable insights were gained for understanding the origins of cultural resistance to automotive climate policy. The main research question, *“Through which mechanisms does polarization result in resistance to a speed limit on German highways and what are the implications for automotive climate policy?”* was addressed through this investigation.

Overall, the analysis revealed that in the case of opposition to the German speed limit various mechanisms between polarization and policy resistance coexisted and some were interconnected to a certain extent. Among the most prevalent mechanisms was the perception of a threat to behavioral freedom, which stemmed from the perceived imposition of behavioral regulations that were believed to be favored by supporters of the speed limit. Additionally, two forms of intention skepticism seemed to be relevant, reflecting suspicions of negatively perceived motives behind the policy. Another notable

finding was constituted by the perception of a culture war against cars, which held relevance across different mechanisms and pointed towards the relevance of investigating how specific policies can potentially evoke expectations of future policies within the same realm and generate a fear of an imagined future.

These findings suggest the potential significance of the above-mentioned mechanisms while underscoring the complexity of factors contributing to resistance against climate policies in culturally charged spheres that target individual behavior, livelihoods, and values. As the mechanisms that seem to hold most relevance in explaining how polarization can contribute to resistance to automotive climate policy are not very specific to the sociopolitical and cultural context of Germany, they are likely to be to some extent transferrable to similar policy contexts. Policymakers can aim to consider the various mechanisms identified and try to foster an atmosphere that promotes comprehension, dialogue, and constructive involvement when shaping climate policies within the automotive sector. The findings also inform the broader field of cultural resistance research by highlighting the potential of communication-focused approaches of process-tracing and demonstrating how investigating mechanisms through those approaches can potentially provide a more nuanced understanding of the relationships between cultural phenomena, such as polarization and policy resistance.

In conclusion, this thesis sheds light on key mechanisms through which polarization can lead to resistance to automotive climate policies. The findings emphasize the presence of multiple interconnected mechanisms and the complex nature of cultural resistance in relation to climate policy implementation. By delving into the causal mechanisms underlying cultural resistance, potentially using a communication-focused version of process-tracing, researchers and policymakers can enhance their understanding of the dynamics between socio-cultural factors and policy resistance, ultimately contributing to more informed and just approaches to addressing climate change.

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## Appendix 1: Newspaper Articles Overview

### Overview Articles: Bild.de

German Title	Title Translation	Author(s)	Date
Großes Interview mit dem CDU-Chef; Laschet verrät seine Kanzler-Pläne	Major interview with CDU leader; Laschet reveals his chancellor-plans	A. Hellemann, R. Eichinger	12.06.21
BILD checkt die Wahlprogramme der Kanzlerkandidaten; Was ihre Parteien mit dem Auto vorhaben	BILD checks the election programs of the chancellor candidates; What their parties plan to do with the car	R. Wildberg, R. Schuderer	03.09.21
Klima, Rente, Wohnen; Bittere Wahrheiten im Wahlkampf, die die Parteien am liebsten verschweigen	Climate, pensions, housing; bitter truths in the election campaign that the parties prefer to conceal	T. Block	19.09.21
KOMMENTAR: Das Tempo-Limit ist sinnlos	COMMENT: The speed limit is pointless	R. Schuler	29.09.21
AUSGERECHNET EIN FORMEL-1-FAHRER: Vettel will Tempolimit für Deutschland	OF ALL A FORMULA 1 DRIVER: Vettel wants speed limit for Germany	n.a.	08.10.21
FÜR TEMPOLIMIT AUS UMWELTGRÜNDEN: Wie glaubwürdig ist Vettel?	FOR TEMPOLIMIT FOR ENVIRONMENTAL REASONS: How credible is Vettel?	M. Milewski, T. Kollmar, S. Rulle, R. Schuler	09.10.21
„IGNORANT“, „PURE IDEOLOGIE“: Automobilclub wettert gegen Grünen-Angriff auf das Auto	IGNORANT, "PURE IDEOLOGY": automobile club rages against Green attack on car	N. Aswas, F. Kain	30.10.21
Sie ist die Frau gegen Stau; Erstes Interview mit Verkehrsministerin Ina Brandes	She is the woman against traffic jams; First interview with Transport Minister Ina Brandes	P. Poensgen	20.12.21
Energiesparen mit Plasberg; Lindner besteht auf seinem Tank-Rabatt	Saving energy with Plasberg; Lindner insists on his fuel discount	J. Nyary	22.03.22
KOMMENTAR: Hört auf, uns zu bevormunden!	COMMENTARY: Stop patronizing us!	R. Schuler	29.03.22
ENTWICKLUNGSMINISTER IN FORDERT WEGEN UKRAINE-KRIEG: Deutsche sollen weniger Fleisch essen! Außerdem drohen uns Tempolimit und Fahrverzicht	DEVELOPMENT MINISTER DEMANDS AGAINST UKRAINE WAR: Germans should eat less meat! We are also threatened with speed limits and driving restrictions	R. Schuler, J. Schäfer	29.03.22

Putin-Krieg; Baden-Württemberger pessimistisch wie nie	Putin war; Baden-Württemberg residents more pessimistic than ever	n.a.	06.04.22
Neuer ADAC-Chef exklusiv; "Die Akzeptanz für ein Tempolimit wird größer werden"	New ADAC boss exclusive; "Acceptance of a speed limit will increase".	D. Puskepeleitis	25.04.22
Putins Krieg in "Hart aber fair"; Nato-General Ramms sagt Sieg der Ukraine voraus	Putin's War in "Hart aber fair"; NATO General Ramms Predicts Victory for Ukraine	J. Nyary	26.04.22
Rentner kämpft für Tempo 110 auf der Autobahn; Schleich dich, Dreirad-Manni!	Pensioner fights for speed 110 on the highway; Sneak up, tricycle Manni!	T. Kindel	12.05.22
Krisen-Talk bei Illner; Lindner sieht Chancen für neuen Wohlstand	Crisis talk at Illner; Lindner sees opportunities for new prosperity	J. Nyary	13.05.22
Heil bei Maischberger; Lambrecht als Ministerin? Eine gute Sache!	Heil at Maischberger; Lambrecht as Minister? A good thing!	J. Nyary	26.05.22
Weil der Tankrabatt floppt!; SPD droht mit Fahrverbot	Because the fuel discount flops!; SPD threatens with driving ban	J. C. Bockenheimer	13.06.22
OBERSTER BRUMMI-FAHRER IN BILD: „Umweltaktivisten gehen uns fürchterlich auf die Nerven“	TOP TRUCKER IN BILD: "Environmental activists get on our nerves terribly".	N. Harbusch, J. W. Schäfer	18.06.22
Wegen drohender Energie-Notlage; Jetzt auch Unions-Politiker für Tempolimit	Due to looming energy emergency; Now also Union politicians for speed limit	K. Mößbauer	16.07.22
Nein zum Kernkraft-Kuh-Handel; FDP lehnt Tempolimit-Deal ab	No to nuclear power deal; FDP rejects speed limit deal	P. Fabian	18.07.22
130 km/h auf Autobahnen; Union zofft über Tempolimit	130 km/h on highways; Union bickers over speed limit	N. Harbuch, K. Mössbauer	19.07.22
Krawall-Talk bei Anne Will; Grünen-Politikerin überrascht bei Atomkraft	Riot talk on Anne Will; Green politician surprises on nuclear power	J. Nyary	25.07.22
Kult-Reporter Ebel zum Vettel-Abgang; "Irgendwas zwischen Entführung und Verhaftung"	Cult reporter Ebel on Vettel departure; "Something between kidnapping and arrest".	K. Ebel	31.07.22
Sommerinterview mit FDP-Chef; Steigen Sie bald auf Haschisch um, Herr Hagen?	Summer interview with FDP leader; Are you switching to hashish soon, Mr. Hagen?	W. Ranft	22.08.22



"Quarks" twittert Quark; WDR-Magazin blamiert sich mit falscher Sprit-Formel	Quarks tweets rubbish; WDR magazine embarrasses itself with false fuel formula	M. Bassewitz, F. Piatov	14.09.22
VW LÄSST KLIMA- CHAOTEN IM DUNKELN SITZEN: Erst kleben, dann jammern	VW LETS CLIMATE CHAOTS SIT IN THE DARK: First glue, then whine	R. Schuderer	24.10.22
"Wir müssen umdenken"; Audi-Chef will teilweise aufs Auto verzichten	We have to rethink; Audi boss wants to partially abandon cars	n.a.	26.10.22
ER WETTET GEGEN SEIN COMEBACK: Wird Vettel Klima-Kleber?	HE BETS AGAINST HIS COMEBACK: Will Vettel be a climate gluer?	M. Milewski, H. Uhl	18.11.22
SIXT SPRICHT VON MISSBRAUCH: Klima- Extremisten fahren mit dem Mietwagen zur Blockade	SIXT SPEAKS OF ABUSE: Climate extremists drive to blockade in rental car	S. Jost	18.11.22
CSU-MINISTER BEI ANNE WILL: Die Klima-Kleber kommen aus ganz Europa	CSU-MINISTER ON ANNE WILL: Climate gluers come from all over Europe	J. Nyary	21.11.22
Bald Ampel-Streit um Tempolimit?; Über dieses Papier ärgern sich Lindner und Scholz grün	Soon dispute over speed limit?; Lindner and Scholz are angry about this paper	J. W. Schäfer, N. Aswad	12.01.23
Klima als Religionsersatz?; Lützerath-Zoff bei Maischberger	Climate as a Substitute for Religion?; Lützerath-Fight at Maischberger	J. Nyary	12.01.23
Klima-Talk bei "Hart aber fair"; So Luisa war Klamroths dritte Sendung	Climate talk on "Hart aber fair"; So Luisa was Klamroth's third show	J. Nyary	31.01.23
PROFESSOR ERHEBT SCHWEREN VORWURF: Bestellten die Grünen eine Studie zum Tempolimit?	PROFESSOR RAISES SERIOUS ACCUSATION: Did the Greens order a study on the speed limit?	J. Bockenheimer	31.01.23
Klima-Aktivisten kleben sich in Düsseldorf auf Straße fest	Climate activists glue themselves to street in Dusseldorf	B. Sack	06.02.23
Auftragsarbeit für die Grünen? Forscher zerpflücken Studie zum Tempolimit	Commissioned work for the Greens? Researchers pick apart speed limit study	J. C. Bockenheimer	27.02.23

## Overview Articles: Die Welt

German Title	Title Translation	Author(s)	Date
SPD-Unternehmer widersprechen ihrem Kanzlerkandidaten; Das Wirtschaftsforum der Partei wirbt für eine stärkere Rolle des Staates sowie für steuerliche Zugeständnisse und Förderung der Aktie	SPD entrepreneurs contradict their chancellor candidate; the party's business forum promotes a stronger role for the state as well as tax concessions and support for shares	K. Seibel	03.06.21
Mit diesem Trick wollte die SPD das Tempolimit doch noch durchdrücken; Union war überrumpelt: Bei den Klimapakt-Verhandlungen fand sich überraschend eine Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzung auf Autobahnen im Entwurf des Finanzresorts	With this trick, the SPD wanted to push through the speed limit after all; the CDU/CSU was caught off guard: During the climate pact negotiations, a speed limit on highways was surprisingly included in the draft of the Finance Ministry.	N. Doll	19.06.21
Vettels Beitrag ist ehrenwert	Vettel's contribution is honorable	L. Wiegemann	28.06.21
"Autos den Platz wegnehmen"; Die Frage, wie wir uns in Zukunft fortbewegen werden, beschäftigt die Gesellschaft.	Taking space away from cars; The question of how we will get around in the future is a preoccupation of society.	J. Klauth	09.07.21
"Frauen den Mut geben, Gas zu geben"; Laura-Marie Geissler gewinnt im Porsche-Cup Rennen - als einzige Frau. Trotzdem mag sie Greta Thunberg	Giving women the courage to step on the gas; Laura-Marie Geissler wins Porsche Cup races-as the only woman. Nevertheless, she likes Greta Thunberg	U. Poschardt	14.08.21
Worst Case Rot-Rot-Grün	Worst Case Red-Red-Green	U. Poschardt	03.09.21
Polemisch, laut - aber Inhalte. Der "Vierkampf" war das bessere "Triell"	Polemical, loud - but content. The "Vierkampf" was the better "Triell"	M. Kamann	15.09.21
Rechnung mit Lücken; Ist das Tempolimit wirklich kostenloser Klimaschutz? Ein Gutachten weckt Zweifel	Bill with gaps; Is the speed limit really costless climate protection? An expert opinion raises doubts	D. Wetzell	21.09.21
Bester Klimaschützer ist die Marktwirtschaft	The best climate protector is the market economy	L. Köhler	23.09.21
71 Prozent der Deutschen für ein Tempolimit; Mehrheit der Vielfahrer ist laut Umfrage dagegen	71 percent of Germans in favor of a speed limit; majority of frequent drivers are against it, according to survey	B. Nicolai	27.09.21

Plötzlich ist das Tempolimit ganz nah; In der Verkehrspolitik sind die Positionen der Grünen und FDP nur schwer vereinbar.	Suddenly the speed limit is very close; In traffic policy, the positions of the Greens and FDP are difficult to reconcile.	P. Vetter	29.09.21
"Tempo 150 halte ich wirklich nicht für eine sinnvolle Idee"; Grünen-Verkehrspolitiker Oliver Krischer erklärt, wo er mögliche Kompromisse bei den Sondierungen sieht	I really don't think 150 km/h is a sensible idea; Green transport politician Oliver Krischer explains where he sees possible compromises in the exploratory talks	P. Vetter	30.09.21
Was die FDP jetzt einbringen muss	What the FDP must now bring in	U. Poschardt	30.09.21
Die Demokratie braucht keine Migrantquoten	Democracy does not need migrant quotas	A. Schneider	04.10.21
Stefan Aust zur politischen Lage	Stefan Aust on the political situation	S. Aust, J. Lauterbach	04.10.21
Grünen-Lieblinge: Höhere Steuern und Tempolimit; Mehr als die Hälfte der Deutschen will Ampel	Green Party favorites: Higher taxes and speed limit; More than half of Germans want the Red-Yellow-Green Coalition	F. Schindler	08.10.21
"Autobahnen mit Abstand die sichersten Straßen"; SPD und Grüne wollen ein Tempolimit. Verkehrspsychologe Fastenmeier sagt, warum er das aus wissenschaftlicher Sicht ablehnt	Motorways by far the safest roads; SPD and Greens want a speed limit. Traffic psychologist Fastenmeier says why he rejects this from a scientific point of view	K. Culina	08.10.21
Das kann eine echte Reformregierung werden	This can become a real reform government	U. Poschardt	18.10.21
"Ich gönne den Deutschen das Schnellfahren"; EU-Klimakommissar Frans Timmermans über Orbans Bedenken, die Gefahr von Gelbwesten-Protesten in Europa und kulturelle deutsche Besonderheiten	I don't begrudge the Germans speeding; EU Climate Commissioner Frans Timmermans on Orbans concerns, the danger of yellow vest protests in Europe and cultural German characteristics	T. Filges, G. Schwung	29.10.21
Den größten Ärger gibt es bei grünen Kernanliegen; Am Mittwoch sollen die Arbeitsgruppen der Ampel-Parteien Ergebnisse vorlegen.	The biggest trouble is over core Green concerns; on Wednesday, the working groups of the Government parties are to present results.	N. Doll, C. Malzahn, T. Jungholt	09.11.21
Gegen die Romantisierung von Verzicht; Die erste grüne Regierungsbeteiligung	Opposing the romanticization of renunciation; The first	R. Alexander	12.11.21

seit 16 Jahren löst Enttäuschungen bei den Fans der Ökopartei aus.	Green government participation in 16 years triggers disappointment among fans of the eco-party.		
"Wer Tempolimit als unwichtig belächelt, steht nicht auf Boden der Realität"; Die neue Chefin der Jungen Liberalen stellt ihre grundsätzlichen Positionen vor	Who laughs at speed limit as unimportant, does not stand on ground of the reality; The new chief of the boys liberals presents its fundamental positions	A. Schneider	15.11.21
Im hohen Ton der Prediger; Bei den Gesprächen über die Ampel wirken die Grünen nur wie die drittstärkste Kraft.	In the high tone of the preachers; In the talks about the Government, the Greens only seem like the third strongest force.	T. Schmid	18.11.21
Der Liberale als Staatsfeind; Bei ihrer Mission, die deutsche Corona-Politik gegen Kritik zu immunisieren, haben die Medien nach dem Stammtisch und den Esoterik einen weiteren Feind ausgemacht: Den Liberalen.	The liberal as enemy of the state; In their mission to immunize German Corona politics against criticism, the media have identified another enemy after the Stammtisch and esotericism: the liberal.	M. Klaue	10.12.21
Verboten; Das langweiligste Buch des Jahres heißt "Verbot und Verzicht" - und erscheint, man glaubt es kaum, in der traditionsreichen Edition Suhrkamp	Forbidden; The most boring book of the year is called "Verbot und Verzicht" (Prohibition and Renunciation) - and, believe it or not, it is published by the tradition-rich Edition Suhrkamp.	U. Poschardt	11.03.22
Mit Tempolimit gegen Putin; Jeder Euro, der für Öl und Gas nach Russland fließt, finanziert Putins Angriffskrieg gegen die Ukraine. Das ist unerträglich. Doch die sehr deutsche Debatte um die stark steigenden Benzinpreise ist es ebenfalls.	With speed limit against Putin; Every euro that flows to Russia for oil and gas finances Putin's war of aggression against Ukraine. That is intolerable. But so is the very German debate about soaring gasoline prices.	A. Schneider	14.03.22
Klimaschützer nutzen den Krieg für ihre Verkehrswende	Climate activists use the war for their traffic turnaround	N. Doll	13.05.22
Zippert zappt	Zippert zaps	H. Zippert	17.05.22
Den Eliten von morgen wird das Land fremd; Neben der Merz-CDU stehen nach der	Tomorrow's elites will be strangers to the country; in addition to the Merz	U. Poschardt	17.05.22

NRW-Wahl vor allem die Grünen stark da. Auch weil ihre Bundesspitze gerade viel richtig macht. Nur: Mit grüner Ideologie lässt sich künftiger Wohlstand nicht finanzieren.	CDU, the Greens in particular are in a strong position after the North Rhine-Westphalia elections. That's partly because their federal leadership is doing a lot of things right. The only problem is that future prosperity cannot be financed with Green ideology.		
ADAC verbreitert sein Geschäftsmodell; Verein mit 21 Millionen Mitgliedern befindet sich im Umbruch.	ADAC broadens its business model; association with 21 million members is in a state of upheaval.	G. Hegmann	23.05.22
Windräder-Planwirtschaft	Wind turbines planned economy	U. Poschardt	10.06.22
Tempo 130 - jetzt beginnt das Umdenken in der CDU	Speed 130 - now the rethinking begins in the CDU	U. Exner, H. Croll, K. Frigelj	30.06.22
"Unser Geschäftsmodell kommt an seine Grenzen"; Die jüngsten Zahlen zur deutschen Wirtschaft sind erschütternd.	Our business model is reaching its limits; The latest figures on the German economy are staggering.	U. Poschardt	06.07.22
Es ist Zeit für einen Ampel-Deal	It's time for a government deal	L. Hofmeier	18.07.22
"Bild als Koalition nicht gut"; Die Regierungspartner ringen um Hilfen für Gaskunden, AKW-Laufzeitverlängerung und Tempolimit.	Image as coalition not good; Government partners wrestle over aid for gas customers, nuclear power plant lifetime extension and speed limit.	N. Doll	18.07.22
Auf dem Land ist das 9-Euro-Ticket kein Erfolg Bilanz der Rabattaktion zeigt Defizite des Nahverkehr	On the countryside, the 9-euro ticket is not a success Balance of the discount campaign shows deficits of local transport	M. Kamann	30.08.22
Habecks Symbolpolitik	Habeck's symbolic policy	P. Vetter	25.07.22
Zippert zappt	Zippert zaps	H. Zippert	05.08.22
Die FDP, allein auf weiter Flur; Die Ampel zerfällt in zwei Lager.	The FDP, alone in the field; The government is splitting into two camps.	T. Jungholt, C. Malzahn	19.08.22
Glückwunsch, Herr Baum	Congratulations, Mr. Baum	U. Poschardt	22.08.22
In der Tempo-Falle	In the speed trap	J. P. Friedrich	25.08.22
Die Herrschaft der Angepassten; Die meisten Deutschen leben in fast	The rule of the conformists; Most Germans live according to	A. Schneider	05.09.22

zwanghafter Weise regelkonform.	the rules in an almost obsessive way.		
Lindner muss hart bleiben	Lindner must stand firm	F. Zimmerer	18.10.22
Hier klebe ich, ich kann nicht anders!; Museen sind zunehmend die Schauplätze von Klimaprotesten.	Here I stick, I can't help it!; museums are increasingly the sites of climate protests.	M. Klaue	25.10.22
Die EKD macht langsamer	The EKD slows down	L. Wiegelmann	11.11.22
"Verzweifelter Versuch der Anbiederung an eine Bewegung"	Desperate attempt to pander to a movement.	F. Schindler	16.11.22
Selbstbetrug bei der Energiewende	Self-deception in the energy transition	M. Fabricius	05.01.23
Grüne starten Frontalangriff auf Wissing; Scharfe Kritik am Agieren des Verkehrsministers	Greens launch frontal attack on Wissing; harsh criticism of transport minister's actions	M. Kamann	13.01.23
Klima-Aktivisten nahmen vergangenes Jahr 900.000 Euro ein; Die "Letzte Generation" hat einen Jahresbericht veröffentlicht.	Climate activists earned 900,000 euros last year; The Last Generation published an annual report.	L. Pfahler	17.01.23
Zweifel an Studie zu Geschwindigkeitslimit; Laut Umweltbundesamt spart Tempo 120 auf Autobahnen mehr CO ein. Aber die Daten werfen Fragen auf	Doubts about speed limit study; According to the Federal Environment Agency, 120 km/h on highways saves more CO. But the data raise questions	P. Vetter, B. Fuest	06.02.23
Deal mit "Letzter Generation" stößt auf Kritik; Vorwurf der Naivität gegen Hannover-OB Onay (Grüne)	Deal with "last generation" meets with criticism; accusation of naivety against Hannover-OB Onay (Greens)	M. Leubecher	27.02.23
Atomdebatte rührt an Grünen-Identität; In der Verteidigungspolitik hat die Partei bemerkenswerte Wandlungen	Nuclear debate touches on Green identity; On defense policy, party has remarkable transformations	M. Kamann	10.8.222

**Overview Articles: FAZ**

<b>German Title</b>	<b>Title Translation</b>	<b>Author(s)</b>	<b>Date</b>
Die Zukunft der Automobilindustrie: Mit Auto lebt Deutschland besser	The future of the automotive industry: Germany lives better with cars	H. Appel	28.07.21
Wahlkampf und Klimaschutz: Bloß nicht die Wähler verprellen	Election campaign and climate protection: Don't alienate voters	E. Lohse	12.08.21
Einspruch Exklusiv: Mehr Staat im Dienst der Selbstbestimmung?	Einspruch Exklusiv: More State in the Service of Self-Determination?	I. Bilgen	03.09.21
Was zu tun ist: Als der Strom noch aus der Steckdose kam	What to do: When electricity still came from the socket	J. von Altenbockum	04.09.21
Verkehrspolitik der Parteien: Vollgas oder Lastenrad	Transport policy of the parties: full throttle or cargo bike	J. Pennekamp	08.09.21
FDP-Erfolg bei Jungwählern: Unser Lehrer Christian Lindner	FDP success with young voters: Our teacher Christian Lindner	U. Ebbinghaus	04.10.21
Tempolimit in Deutschland: Vorbild Vettel	Speed limit in Germany: Vettel as a role model	M. Wittershagen	08.10.21
Verhandlungen über Koalition. Spannung garantiert	Negotiations on coalition. Tension guaranteed	M. Wehner	18.10.21
Verhandlungen über Koalition. Beim Klima hat die Ampel noch Gesprächsbedarf	Negotiations on coalition. The traffic light coalition still needs to talk about the climate	A. Nefzger	19.10.21
Psychologie der Straße: Warum die Verkehrswende scheitert	Psychology of the road: Why the traffic turnaround is failing	A. Frey	24.10.21
Verkehr, Tempolimit, Autobahn: Mein Maserati fährt 310	Traffic, speed, highway: My Maserati goes 310	E. Reents	03.11.21
VDA-Präsidentin im Interview: "Das Tempolimit ist ein völlig überhöhtes Symbol"	VDA president in interview: "The speed limit is a completely exaggerated symbol".	T. Piller	07.12.21
Neuer Verkehrsminister: Wie Volker Wissings Verkehrswende aussehen soll	New transport minister: What Volker Wissing's transport turnaround should look like	C. Budras	09.01.22
Das Auto: Eine deutsche Liebe	The car: A German romance	M. Gropp	11.01.22
Volker Wissing: Die Agenda des neuen Verkehrsministers	Volker Wissing: The agenda of the new transport minister	U. Ebbinghaus	28.01.22
Autobahn: Ärger ohne Tempolimit	Freeway: Trouble without speed limit	P. Bernau	10.04.22

Debatte um Verzicht: Angst frisst Wohlstand auf	Renunciation debate: Fear eats away at prosperity	M. Mühl, E. Witzeck	15.04.22
Stellantis-Chef im Interview: Chinesische Fabriken liefern bessere Qualität als Opel	Stellantis boss in interview: Chinese factories deliver better quality than Opel	M. Theurer	03.06.22
Das Versändnis von Freiheit: Welche Werte sind uns wichtig	The concept of freedom: What values are important to us?	H. Staun	05.07.22
Laufzeiten gegen Tempolimit? Der Atomkraft-Deal den (fast) keiner wollte	Lifetimes vs. speed limit? The nuclear power deal that (almost) nobody wanted	P. Carstens, M. Wehner	19.07.22
Jüngere von FDP enttäuscht: Was heißt eigentlich noch liberal?	Younger people disappointed by FDP: What does liberal still mean?	O. Goergi	02.10.22
Luxusfahrzeuge: Schöne Autos als Passion	Luxury cars: Beautiful cars as a passion	A. Jürgs	11.10.22
Lob des Autofahrens: Auch auf dem Beifahrersitz kann es nett sein	In praise of driving: It can be nice in the passenger seat, too	J. Thomann	09.11.22
Letzte Generation: Wahrer Klimaschutz geht anders	Last generation: True climate protection works differently	P. Bernau	13.11.22
Letzte Generation: Wie radikal darf Klimakampf sein?	Last Generation: How Radical Is Climate Action Allowed to Be?	M. Jaeger, E. Lohse	12.12.22
Hanks Welt: Die Klimakleber machen es falsch	Hank's world: Climate change deniers are doing it wrong	R. Hank	12.12.22
Statussymbole: Mein Auto meine Welt	Status symbols: My car my world	E. Witzeck	20.12.22
Evangelischer Landesbischof: "Woelki sollte Konsequenzen ziehen"	Protestant regional bishop: "Woelki should draw consequences".	R. Bingener, R. Soldt	23.12.22
Streit über Atomkraft. Warum Wissing Streit riskiert	Controversy over nuclear power. Why Wissing risks dispute	C. Budras, C. Geinitz	03.01.23
Verkehr in Deutschland: Ohne das Auto wird es nicht gehen	Transport in Germany: It won't work without the car	C. Budras	12.01.23
Beschränkungen von Arbeitgeber: Kommt das Tempolimit für den Dienstwagen?	Employer restrictions: Is the company car speed limit coming?	K. Brügger	22.01.23
Klimaschutz: Autofahren muss teurer werden	Climate protection: Driving must become more expensive	C. Budras	27.01.23



Hubert Aiwanger: Bayerns Rethorische Schneekanone	Hubert Aiwanger: Bavaria's Rethoric Snow Cannon	T. Frasch	28.01.23
Bundesverfassungsrichterin: Vollbremsung von Freiheit ist zu vermeiden	Federal Constitutional Court judge: full braking of freedom must be avoided	K. Gelinsky	19.02.23
Audi-Chef im Gespräch: „Für die Elektromobilität müssen alle ihre Hausaufgaben machen“	Audi boss in conversation: "Everyone has to do their homework for electromobility".	M. Theurer	24.02.23
Schlusslicht: Eiskalt abserviert	Bringing up the rear: Dumped ice-cold	M. Spehr	26.02.23
Zwei neue Gutachten: Abrechnung mit dem Tempolimit	Two new expert opinions: Settling the score with the speed limit	A. Vangelista	05.03.23
Letzte Generation: Marburger fauler Deal mit den Klimaklebern	Last generation: Marburger lazy deal with climate stickers	M. Trautsch	08.03.23

### Overview Articles: Focus

German Title	Title Translation	Author(s)	Date
Ottmar Edenhofer im Interview - Klimaforscher: Tempolimit oder Verbrenner-Verbot sind für Klimaschutz nicht notwendig	Ottmar Edenhofer in the interview - climatic researcher: Speed limit or combustion vehicle prohibition are not necessary for climatic protection	n.a.	02.06.21
Klima-Diskussion: FDP-Chef: CO2-Obergrenze, aber kein Elektro-Zwang und kein Tempolimit	Climate discussion: FDP leader: CO2 cap, but no electric compulsion and no speed limit	n.a.	28.07.21
52 Prozent dafür Studien zeigen: Mehrheit will Tempolimit - doch betroffen wäre kaum jemand	52 percent in favor Studies show: Majority wants speed limit - but hardly anyone would be affected	n.a.	14.09.21
"Ein guter Kompromiss": Auf Autobahnen und in Wohngebieten: VW spricht sich für Tempolimit aus	A good compromise: on highways and in residential areas: VW advocates speed limit	n.a.	14.09.21
Umstrittenes Thema: Mehrheit der Autofahrerinnen und Autofahrer lehnt Autobahn-Tempolimit ab	Controversial issue: majority of motorists reject highway speed limit	n.a.	22.09.21
Der Meinungsüberblick powered by Buzzard Sollte es	The opinion overview powered by Buzzard Should there be	n.a.	08.10.21

ein Tempolimit auf deutschen Autobahnen geben?	a speed limit on German highways?		
Verkehrspolitik der Ampel: Grüne können auch ohne Verbote: Warum Deutschland kein Tempolimit braucht	Government policy: Greens can also do without bans: Why Germany doesn't need a speed limit	S. Viehmann	28.10.21
LIBERALE; Wohin geht die FDP?	LIBERALS; Where is the FDP going?	T. Tuma	28.12.21
MOBILITÄT; „Porsche baut Sportwagen, keine Schlafwagen"	MOBILITY; „Porsche builds sports cars, not sleeping cars".	G. Meck, T. Tuna	19.02.22
„Parteilpolitische Ideologie“: Grünen-Chefin wagt neuen Tempolimit-Vorstoß - und erntet sofort Kritik aus der FDP	Party-political ideology: Green Party leader dares new speed limit proposal - and immediately earns criticism from FDP	n.a.	02.04.22
Heillose Ideologen über Gräbern	Heilless ideologues over graves	Georg Meck	20.04.22
Der schwarze Kanal; Die Enden des Hufeisens	The black channel; The ends of the horseshoe	J. Fleischhauer	21.05.22
Tempo 100 oder 130 geplant: „Wird ohne Effekt bleiben“: Autoclub zerpfückt Tempolimit	Speed limit 100 or 130 planned: "Will remain without effect": car club picks apart speed limit	n.a.	21.05.22
In der Realität gibt es bereits das Tempolimit, doch das reicht Öko-Ideologen nicht	In reality, the speed limit already exists, but that's not enough for eco-ideologists	W. Weimer	30.05.22
Duesmann will Tempolimit und autofreie Tage: Audi-Chef setzt jetzt voll auf den grünen Bremsklotz	Duesmann wants speed limit and car-free days: Audi boss now fully committed to the green brake pad	S. Viehmann	26.10.22
„Wir müssen umdenken“: Audi-Chef will autofreie Tage und Tempolimit in Deutschland	We have to rethink: Audi boss wants car-free days and speed limit in Germany	n.a.	26.10.22
Söder über Tempolimits: „Für den Klimawandel nicht die entscheidende Lösung“	Söder on speed limits: "Not the decisive solution for climate change".	n.a.	21.12.22
„Außer ideologischen Gründen gibt es keine Argumente gegen ein Tempolimit“	Apart from ideological reasons, there are no arguments against a speed limit	H. Von Strößenreuther	09.01.23
Tempo-Limit: Verfassungsgericht schafft klare Verhältnisse	Speed limit: Constitutional court creates clear conditions	n.a.	18.01.23

Tempo 130 gehört in die Mottenkiste	Speed 130 belongs in the mothballs	H. Von Strößenreuther	21.01.23
Tempo 130 gehört in die Mottenkiste, es macht unsere Autobahnen nicht sicherer	Speed 130 belongs in mothballs, it does not make our highways safer	C. Ploß	23.01.23
Braucht es Politik oder Technik? Ist ein Tempolimit die Rettung fürs Klima? „Hart aber fair“ im Faktencheck	Does it need politics or technology? Is a speed limit the salvation for the climate? "Hart aber fair" fact check	F. Reiter	01.02.23
„Anne Will“ im Tickerprotokoll „Das kann’s doch nicht sein“, klagt der zunehmend fassungslose Journalist	Anne Will in the ticker log "This can't be it," complains the increasingly stunned journalist	n.a.	05.02.23
Ärger über Klima-Aktivisten, „Lasst uns endlich in Ruhe“ - „Ich muss zur Arbeit, um meine Kinder zu ernähren“	Anger about climate activists "Leave us alone already" - "I have to go to work to feed my children"	n.a.	06.02.23
„Glanzstück grüner Doppelmoral“ Bis auf eine Ausnahme bisher kein Tempolimit bei Dienstfahrten von Bundesministerien	Piece of green double standards With one exception, no speed limit for official journeys by federal ministries to date	n.a.	09.02.23
FDP-Gutachten wirft Amt „Irreführung“ vor Tempolimit würde sechsmal weniger CO2 einsparen als angenommen	FDP expert opinion accuses office of "misleading "Speed limit would save six times less CO2 than assumed	n.a.	26.02.23
Interne Stragiepapire der „Letzten Generation“ Klima-Kleber wollen auf Autobahnen radikal ausbremsen	Internal stragy papers of the "Last Generation "Climate stickers want to radically slow down on highways	n.a.	26.02.23
Daten werfen Fragen auf. Mit seltsamen Tricks rechnet sich das Umweltbundesamt das Tempolimit schön	Data raises questions. The Federal Environment Agency uses strange tricks to make the speed limit look good	J. Meiners	27.02.23
Die Ideen von Habecks Vordenkerin sind in Deutschland völlig fehl am Platz	The ideas of Habeck's mastermind are completely out of place in Germany	G. Steingart	01.03.23
„Sie machen daraus einen Glaubenskrieg“ Lanz-Runde nimmt FDP-Mann in den	You're turning it into a religious war Lanz round takes FDP man in	n.a.	03.03.23

Schwitzkasten - der reagiert trotzig	a headlock - he reacts defiantly		
Interview mit Verkehrsforscher Giulio Mattioli, „Deutschland baut mehr als andere Länder - das ist ein Problem“	Interview with transport researcher Giulio Mattioli "Germany builds more than other countries - that's a problem".	F. Reiter	09.03.23

### Overview Articles: Welt Online

German Title	Title Translation	Author(s)	Date
Wahlprogramm der Grünen; Bei Klima, Tempolimit und Enteignungen droht Baerbock ein Linksruck	Green Party election program; Baerbock threatens a shift to the left on climate, speed limit and expropriations	S. Beug	11.06.21
Klimaschutz; Mit diesem Trick wollte die SPD das Tempolimit doch noch durchdrücken	Climate protection; SPD wanted to push through the speed limit after all with this trick	N. Doll	18.06.21
Klima-Debatte; Laschet findet pauschales Tempolimit von 130 "unlogisch"	Climate debate; Laschet considers general speed limit of 130 "illogical"	n.a.	05.07.21
Laschet gegen Tempolimit 130: "Unlogisch"	Laschet against speed limit 130: "Illogical"	n.a.	05.07.21
WELT Mobilitätsgipfel; "E-Mobilität ist keine Verzichtserklärung, sondern macht Spaß"	WORLD Mobility Summit; "E-mobility is not a renunciation, but fun".	J. Klauth	09.07.21
Scheuer lehnt Tempolimit ab; "Ein politisches Kampfinstrument, für manche sogar ein Fetisch"	Scheuer rejects speed limit; "A political fighting tool, for some even a fetish"	n.a.	12.07.21
Tempolimit; Was hat Geschwindigkeit mit Freiheit zu tun?	Speed limit; What does speed have to do with freedom?	A. Posener	19.07.21
Lindner auf Sommertour: Staat bei Kernaufgaben unzuverlässig	Lindner on summer tour: State unreliable in core tasks	n.a.	26.07.21
Die meisten fahren freiwillig langsam; Ohne Tempolimit auf der Autobahn	Most drive slow voluntarily; Without speed limit on the highway	n.a.	14.09.21
Allensbach-Umfrage; Freiheitsgefühl der Deutschen nimmt deutlich ab	Allensbach Survey; Germans' Sense of Freedom Declines Significantly	L. Hofmeier	23.08.21

Unabhängigkeit ist das Wichtigste; Grafik: Auto bleibt wichtig	Independence is the most important thing; Graphic: Car remains important	n.a.	10.09.21
Mobilität: Sack und Schwesig einig beim Thema Auto	Mobility: Sack and Schwesig agree on car issue	n.a.	15.09.21
CSU-Generalsekretär: Grüne schieben Klimaschutz nur vor	CSU Secretary General: Greens are only pushing climate protection	n.a.	16.09.21
Tempolimit, E-Auto, Wärmepumpe; Die wahren Kosten der Öko-Verbote	Speed limit, e-car, heat pump; The true cost of eco-bans	D. Wetzel	21.09.21
130 auf der Autobahn?; Die Deutschen entdecken ihre Vorliebe für das Tempolimit	130 on the highway?; Germans discover their preference for the speed limit	B. Nicolai	22.09.21
Gastbeitrag; Der beste Klimaschützer ist die Marktwirtschaft	Guest article; The best climate protector is the market economy	L. Köhler	22.09.21
Nach der Bundestagswahl; Plötzlich ist das Tempolimit ganz nah	After the Bundestag election; Suddenly the speed limit is very near	P. Vetter	29.09.21
Oliver Krischer; Tempolimit 150? "Halte ich nun wirklich nicht für eine sinnvolle Idee"	Oliver Krischer; Speed limit 150? "I really don't think it's a sensible idea".	P. Vetter	30.09.21
Koalitionsverhandlungen; Tempolimit? Autoindustrie fordert "intelligentere Lösungen"	Coalition negotiations; speed limit? Auto industry calls for "smarter solutions"	D. Zwick	02.10.21
Formel 1; Umweltschutz, Tempolimit - wie glaubwürdig ist Vettel?	Formula 1; environmental protection, speed limit - how credible is Vettel?	M. Milewski	09.10.21
Auf dem Weg zur Ampel; Das kann wirklich eine moderne Reformregierung werden	On the way to a traffic light; this can really become a modern reform government	U. Poschardt	15.10.21
Ampel bis Weihnachten? "Tempolimit nicht durchsetzbar"	Government by Christmas? "Speed limit not enforceable"	n.a.	19.10.21
Pro & Contra; Wird Deutschland Andi Scheuer vermissen?	Pro & Con; Will Germany miss Andi Scheuer?	T. Blanken	09.11.21
Glaubwürdigkeit; Für Deutsche Umwelthilfe droht Grünen bei Tempolimit Mövenpick-Moment	Credibility; For German Environmental Aid, speed limit threatens	n.a.	10.11.21

	Greens with Mövenpick moment		
Audi-Chef: E-Motor wie "natürliches Tempolimit"	Audi boss: E-motor like "natural speed limit"	n.a.	03.12.21
Ängste in Deutschland; "Die Politik defensiv, das System überbürokratisiert und innovationsfeindlich"	Fears in Germany; "Politics defensive, system over-bureaucratized and hostile to innovation"	N. Doll	14.01.22
Ermittlungen gegen Raser auf A2: Diskussion um Tempolimit	Investigations against speeders on A2: discussion about speed limit	n.a.	24.01.22
Automobilclub; Vom Tempolimit-Gegner zur Radfahrer-Lobby - Der erstaunliche Wandel des ADAC	Automobile Club; From Speed Limit Opponent to Cyclist Lobby - The Astonishing Change of the ADAC	D. Zwick	21.02.22
CO2-Bilanz; Das Klimaschutzgesetz verlangt etwas, das nicht zu leisten ist	CO2 balance; The climate protection law requires something that cannot be achieved	D. Wetzel	16.03.22
FDP-Fraktionschef Vogt kontert Heinold-Vorstoß	FDP parliamentary group leader Vogt counters Heinold advance	n.a.	19.03.22
Pro und Contra; Brauchen wir jetzt ein Tempolimit?	Pros and cons; Do we need a speed limit now?	E. M. Kogel	22.03.22
Anke Rehlinger; Eines hat die neue starke SPD-Frau mit "Saar-Napoleon" Lafontaine gemeinsam	Anke Rehlinger; the new strong SPD woman has one thing in common with "Saar-Napoleon" Lafontaine	K. Frigelj	27.03.22
Dauerbrenner-Debatte Tempolimit nimmt wieder Fahrt auf	Enduring debate speed limit regains momentum	n.a.	01.04.22
Grüne fordern dreimonatiges Tempolimit wegen Ukrainekriegs	Greens demand three-month speed limit because of Ukraine war	n.a.	01.04.22
Energie-Debatte; Grünen-Chefin Ricarda Lang fordert befristetes Tempolimit - FDP lehnt Vorstoß ab	Energy debate; Green Party leader Ricarda Lang calls for temporary speed limit - FDP rejects proposal	n.a.	03.04.22

Tempolimit und Fleisch: Lindner gegen Diskussion in Krise	Speed limit and meat: Lindner against discussion in crisis	n.a.	03.04.22
Verkehrsminister; Wissing lehnt Tempolimit weiter ab - wegen Schildermangel	Minister of Transport; Wissing continues to reject speed limit - due to lack of signs	n.a.	06.04.22
Umfrage: Menschen wegen Krieg pessimistisch wie nie zuvor	Survey: People more pessimistic about war than ever before	n.a.	06.04.22
FDP attackiert Grüne und SPD im Streit um Tempolimit	FDP attacks Greens and SPD in dispute over speed limit	n.a.	13.04.22
Umfrage; Mehrheit der Deutschen für Tempolimit auf Autobahnen	Survey; majority of Germans in favor of speed limit on highways	n.a.	17.04.22
Krieg in der Ukraine; Türkei sperrt Luftraum für russische Flugzeuge auf dem Weg nach Syrien	Krieg in der Ukraine; Türkei sperrt Luftraum für russische Flugzeuge auf dem Weg nach Syrien	C. Vorbrüggen	24.04.22
Energiekrise durch Russland; Hier instrumentalisieren Klimaschützer den Krieg für ihre Verkehrswende	Energy crisis caused by Russia; Here, climate activists instrumentalize the war for their transport turnaround	N. Doll	12.05.22
Virales Pasta-Rezept im Test; Wie schlimm schmecken Spaghetti Hawaii wirklich?	Viral pasta recipe put to the test; How bad does Spaghetti Hawaii really taste?	D. Stein	22.05.22
"Irrationale nationale Fetische"; Klimaforscher vergleicht Schusswaffen-Einschränkungen mit Tempolimit	Irrational national fetishes; climate scientist compares firearms restrictions to speed limits	n.a.	26.05.22
Chatgesetz; Die EU-Kommission bedroht unsere Freiheit im Netz	Chat Law; The EU Commission Threatens Our Freedom on the Net	A. C. Riedel	31.05.22
Konflikt mit der FDP; Esken sieht "große Unterschiede" innerhalb der Ampel-Koalition	Conflict with FDP; Esken sees "major differences" within coalition	n.a.	13.06.22
Energiekrise; Tempo 130 - jetzt beginnt das Umdenken in der Union	Energy crisis; Speed 130 - now the rethinking begins in the Union	U. Exner	29.06.22

Söder und Kretschmann warnen vor Energiekrise	Söder and Kretschmann warn of energy crisis	n.a.	30.06.22
Energieknappheit; "Das Bild, das wir derzeit als Koalition abgeben, ist nicht gut"	Energy shortage; "The image we currently project as a coalition is not good"	N. Doll	17.07.22
Fraktionschef Dürr; AKW-Laufzeitverlängerung gegen Tempolimit? FDP lehnt "Kuhandel" ab	Parliamentary group leader Dürr; nuclear power plant lifetime extension against speed limit? FDP rejects trade	n.a.	18.07.22
CDU-Generalsekretär Dierks gegen Tempolimit	CDU Secretary General Dierks against speed limit	n.a.	18.07.22
Streit um Tempolimit in der CDU	Dispute over speed limit in the CDU	n.a.	22.07.22
CDU-Chef im ZDF; Merz rechnet fest mit AKW-Laufzeitverlängerung bis Jahresende	CDU leader on ZDF; Merz firmly expects nuclear power plant lifetimes to be extended by the end of the year	n.a.	24.07.22
"Anne Will"; Wer ist denn nun schuld am Gas-Elend?	Anne Will; Who is to blame for the gas misery?	K. Fillies	25.07.22
Öko-Pendeln und im ÖPNV abhängen; 5x: Ideen für eine Mobilitätswende	Eco-commuting and hanging out in public transport; 5x: Ideas for a mobility turnaround.	n.a.	19.08.22
Mobilität; Auf dem Land ist das 9-Euro-Ticket kein Erfolg. Was folgt daraus?	Mobility; In rural areas, the 9-euro ticket is not a success. What follows from this?	M. Kamann	29.08.22
Spannungen in der Ampel; "Die Grünen haben eine Neigung, die Dinge immer wieder neu zu diskutieren"	Government Tensions ; "The Greens have a tendency to discuss things over and over again"	n.a.	02.10.22
CDU-Fraktionschef: Tempolimit nicht Kern-DNA der CDU	CDU faction leader: speed limit not core DNA of the CDU	n.a.	10.10.22
Nach grünem Parteitagsbeschluss; Nun muss sich FDP-Chef Lindner an seinem eigenen Satz messen lassen	After Green Party Conference Decision; Now FDP Leader Lindner Must Be Measured by His Own Word	F. Zimmerer	17.10.22



Audi-Chef offen für autofreie Tage und Tempolimit	Audi boss open to car-free days and speed limit	n.a.	27.10.22
EKD-Tempolimit-Beschluss; Ökumene der verschiedenen Geschwindigkeiten	EKD speed limit decision; ecumenism of different speeds	L. Wiegelmann	10.11.22
Geschwindigkeitsbegrenzungen ; Lindner lehnt Tempolimit nach EKD-Vorstoß weiter ab	Speed limits; Lindner continues to reject speed limit after EKD proposal	n.a.	10.11.22
Kritik an Klima-Symbolpolitik; "Ich könnte genauso gut sagen, ich mache beim Schlafen das Licht fürs Klima aus"	Criticism of climate symbol policy; "I might as well say I turn off the lights for climate when I sleep"	F. Schwilden	11.11.22
FDP-Vize; "Sonst haben wir ein fundamentales Problem" - Kubicki fordert Disziplin von SPD und Grünen	FDP Vice President; "Otherwise we have a fundamental problem" - Kubicki calls for discipline from SPD and Greens	n.a.	22.11.22
Social Media; Politik der kurzen Sätze - für Liberale ist das eine Herausforderung	Social media; politics of short sentences - a challenge for liberals	L. Steinkopf	02.12.22
Winfried Kretschmann; "2023 ist der Kipppunkt für den deutschen Wohlstand"	Winfried Kretschmann; "2023 is the tipping point for German prosperity".	n.a.	02.01.23
Verfehlte Klimaziele; Die deutsche Energiewende ist bestimmt von Realitätsverweigerung	Missed climate targets; The German energy transition is determined by a denial of reality	M. Fabricius	05.01.23
Ärger in der Ampel; Jetzt starten die Grünen ihren Frontalangriff auf den Verkehrsminister	Trouble in the Government; now the Greens are launching their frontal attack on the transport minister	M. Kamann	12.01.23
Karlsruhe; Verfassungsbeschwerde für Einführung von Tempolimit abgewiesen	Karlsruhe; constitutional complaint for introduction of speed limit rejected	n.a.	17.01.23
Verkehrsminister; "Müssen dringend gegensteuern" - Wissing warnt vor Überlastung der Straßen	Transport Minister; "Must urgently take countermeasures" - Wissing warns of road congestion	n.a.	22.01.23

FDP-Fraktionsvize Köhler; "Der Autobahnausbau hat mit den Klimazielen gar nichts zu tun"	FDP parliamentary group vice-chairman Köhler; "Motorway expansion has nothing at all to do with climate targets".	n.a.	26.01.23
Verkehrswende und Klimaschutz; VW-Chef Blume bekräftigt Ablehnung eines Tempolimits in Deutschland	Traffic turnaround and climate protection; VW boss Blume reiterates rejection of a speed limit in Germany	U. Poschardt	28.01.23
"Hart aber fair"; "Das ist undemokratisch", schleudert der FDP-Mann der Klimaaktivistin entgegen	Hart aber fair; "This is undemocratic," hurls FDP man at climate activist	L. Nischelwitzer	31.01.23
Verkehrspolitik bei "Anne Will"; "Völlig illusorisch zu glauben, dass das ohne Individualverkehr möglich wäre"	Transport policy on "Anne Will"; "Completely illusory to believe that this would be possible without individual transport".	D. Lippe	06.02.23
Umweltbundesamt; Was an der Studie zum Tempolimit zweifeln lässt	Federal Environment Agency; What casts doubt on the speed limit study	P. Vetter	15.02.23
CO2 reduzieren; Umweltministerium zahlt 200.000 Euro für Tempolimit-Studie	Reduce CO2; Environment Ministry pays 200,000 euros for speed limit study	P. Vetter	25.02.23
Raser auf der A2: Erneut Diskussion um Tempolimit	Speeders on the A2: renewed discussion about speed limit	n.a.	24.01.22
Deal mit "Letzter Generation"; "Naiv und gefährlich, wenn einzelne Kommunen dieser Erpressung jetzt nachgeben"	Deal with "Last Generation"; "Naïve and dangerous for individual municipalities to now give in"	M. Leubecher	26.02.23
CDU-Landeschef kritisiert Forderungen des Umweltbundesamtes	CDU state leader criticizes demands of the Federal Environment Agency	n.a.	04.11.21
"Letzte Generation"; Aktivisten blockieren Rollfeld in München - Wissing verurteilt "kriminelle Machenschaften"	Last generation; activists block tarmac in Munich - Wissing condemns "criminal machinations"	n.a.	08.12.22

## Appendix 2: Parliamentary Debates Overview

Minute No.	Session	Date	Relevant Pages
19/236	236. Session	24.06.21	30590, 30643
19/239	239. Session	07.09.21	31120
20/11	11. Session	13.01.22	664-665
20/23	23. Session	22.03.22	1839
20/29	29. Session	08.04.22	2583-2584
20/30	30. Session	27.04.22	2639; 2649-2650
20/31	31. Session	28.04.22	2742
20/34	34. Session	12.05.22	3177-3178
20/37	37. Session	19.05.22	3599
20/39	39. Session	31.05.22	3864
20/47	47. Session	07.07.22	4982
20/52	52. Session	09.09.22	5633
20/57	57. Session	29.09.22	6240
20/62	62. Session	19.10.22	6950
20/68	68. Session	22.11.22	7963
20/70	70. Session	24.11.22	8220
20/74	74. Session	02.12.22	8852-8854
20/79	79. Session	19.01.23	9406
20/82	82. Session	26.01.23	9839
20/85	85. Session	09.02.23	10086-10087; 10075

## Appendix 3: Public Statements by Politicians Overview

Politician	Party	Position	Date	Access Link
<b>Dirk Spaniel</b>	AfD	Transport policy spokesman of the AfD	01.05.22	<a href="https://deutschlandkurier.de/2022/05/tempolimit-doppelte-gaskosten-waffenlieferungen-twitter-uebernahme-ein-wochenrueckblick-von-dirk-spaniel-afd/">https://deutschlandkurier.de/2022/05/tempolimit-doppelte-gaskosten-waffenlieferungen-twitter-uebernahme-ein-wochenrueckblick-von-dirk-spaniel-afd/</a>
<b>Dirk Spaniel</b>	AfD	Transport policy spokesman of the AfD	07.03.23	<a href="https://deutschlandkurier.de/2023/03/tempolimit-und-abgasnorm-kulturkampf-um-das-auto-ein-wochenrueckblick-des-afd-bundestagsabgeordneten-dirk-spaniel/">https://deutschlandkurier.de/2023/03/tempolimit-und-abgasnorm-kulturkampf-um-das-auto-ein-wochenrueckblick-des-afd-bundestagsabgeordneten-dirk-spaniel/</a>
<b>Dirk Spaniel</b>	AfD	Transport policy spokesman of the AfD	21.05.22	<a href="https://deutschlandkurier.de/2022/05/die-bundesregierung-schickaniert-und-taesch-t-die-waehler-ein-wochenrueckblick-des-afd-bundestagsabgeordneten-dirk-spaniel/">https://deutschlandkurier.de/2022/05/die-bundesregierung-schickaniert-und-taesch-t-die-waehler-ein-wochenrueckblick-des-afd-bundestagsabgeordneten-dirk-spaniel/</a>
<b>Dirk Spaniel</b>	AfD	Transport policy spokesman of the AfD	01.07.22	<a href="https://afdbundestag.de/dirk-spaniel-tempolimit-ist-fuer-afd-fraktion-nicht-verhandelbar/">https://afdbundestag.de/dirk-spaniel-tempolimit-ist-fuer-afd-fraktion-nicht-verhandelbar/</a>
<b>Dirk Spaniel</b>	AfD	Transport policy spokesman of the AfD	04.04.22	<a href="https://www.afd-thueringen.de/thuringen-2/2022/04/dirk-spaniel-voruebergehendes-tempolimit-ist-taeschungsmanoever/">https://www.afd-thueringen.de/thuringen-2/2022/04/dirk-spaniel-voruebergehendes-tempolimit-ist-taeschungsmanoever/</a>
<b>Joachim Paul</b>	AfD	Federal Board Member	07.10.21	<a href="https://www.afd.de/joachim-paul-tempolimit-forderung-fuer-autobahnen-ist-linksgruene-ideologie-aus-der-mottenkiste/">https://www.afd.de/joachim-paul-tempolimit-forderung-fuer-autobahnen-ist-linksgruene-ideologie-aus-der-mottenkiste/</a>
<b>Friedrich Merz</b>	CDU	Chairman of the Christian Democratic Union	24.06.22	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhoOH6bJDeU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XhoOH6bJDeU</a>
<b>Thomas Bareiß</b>	CDU	Transport policy spokesman of the CDU	01.04.22	<a href="https://www.cducusu.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/ampelstreit-ums-tempolimit-sorgt-fuer-verwirrung-und-verunsicherung">https://www.cducusu.de/presse/pressemitteilungen/ampelstreit-ums-tempolimit-sorgt-fuer-verwirrung-und-verunsicherung</a>
<b>Thomas Bareiß</b>	CDU	Transport policy spokesman of the CDU	06.03.23	<a href="https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/CDU-Politiker-Bareiss-Es-gibt-kein-gutes-Argument-fuer-ein-Tempolimit,audio1375336.html">https://www.ndr.de/nachrichten/info/CDU-Politiker-Bareiss-Es-gibt-kein-gutes-Argument-fuer-ein-Tempolimit,audio1375336.html</a>
<b>Markus Söder</b>	CSU	Chairman of the Christian Social Union	27.07.21	<a href="https://www.marktspiegel.de/bayern/c-lokales/tempo-130-gruene-moral-hass-und-hetze-und-mehr_a72509">https://www.marktspiegel.de/bayern/c-lokales/tempo-130-gruene-moral-hass-und-hetze-und-mehr_a72509</a>
<b>Markus Söder</b>	CSU	Chairman of the Christian Social Union	05.04.23	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qMw4Y5W5-s">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1qMw4Y5W5-s</a>
<b>Christian Lindner</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Finance	13.02.22	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwTbdgkjH8Y">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QwTbdgkjH8Y</a>
<b>Christian Lindner</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Finance	09.11.22	<a href="https://open.spotify.com/episode/68qupqKuPV835njlgawidr?si=f177b233dofd434f">https://open.spotify.com/episode/68qupqKuPV835njlgawidr?si=f177b233dofd434f</a>
<b>Volker Wissing</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Affairs	23.04.22	<a href="https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDIAvw7gKRU">https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SDIAvw7gKRU</a>

<b>Volker Wissing</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Affairs	22.02.23	<a href="https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/wissing-strassenverkehr-klimaschutz-100.html">https://www.zdf.de/nachrichten/politik/wissing-strassenverkehr-klimaschutz-100.html</a>
<b>Bernd Reuther</b>	FDP	Transport policy spokesman of the FDP	07.03.23	<a href="https://dpd-driversradio.de/news/interview-zu-klimaschutz-gutachten-mit-verkehrspolitischen-sprecher-der-fdp">https://dpd-driversradio.de/news/interview-zu-klimaschutz-gutachten-mit-verkehrspolitischen-sprecher-der-fdp</a>
<b>Bernd Reuther</b>	FDP	Transport policy spokesman of the FDP	14.01.23	<a href="https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/verkehr-hinkt-beim-klimaschutz-hinterher-interview-mit-bernd-reuther-fdp-dlf-69df336f-100.html">https://www.deutschlandfunk.de/verkehr-hinkt-beim-klimaschutz-hinterher-interview-mit-bernd-reuther-fdp-dlf-69df336f-100.html</a>
<b>Volker Wissing</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Transport and Digital Affairs	16.04.22	<a href="https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/wissing-interview-deutschland-wird-keine-fluechtenden-aus-der-ukraine">https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/wissing-interview-deutschland-wird-keine-fluechtenden-aus-der-ukraine</a>
<b>Christian Lindner</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Finance	06.01.23	<a href="https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-rede-auf-dem-dreikoenigstreffen-2023">https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-rede-auf-dem-dreikoenigstreffen-2023</a>
<b>Johannes Vogel</b>	FDP	Deputy Chairman of the FDP	17.05.22	<a href="https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/vogel-interview-fuer-wirtschaftswachstum-und-solide-finanzen-wird-es-auf-die-fdp">https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/vogel-interview-fuer-wirtschaftswachstum-und-solide-finanzen-wird-es-auf-die-fdp</a>
<b>Christian Lindner</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Finance	13.03.22	<a href="https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-interview-wir-lassen-die-menschen-mit-steigenden-belastungen-nicht-allein">https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-interview-wir-lassen-die-menschen-mit-steigenden-belastungen-nicht-allein</a>
<b>Christian Lindner</b>	FDP	Federal Minister of Finance	06.01.22	<a href="https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-rede-auf-dem-dreikoenigstreffen-2022">https://www.fdp.de/pressemitteilung/lindner-rede-auf-dem-dreikoenigstreffen-2022</a>

## Appendix 4: Code Book

Code	Description	Files	Refs
<b>M1 Intention Skepticism</b>	Claim about the CO <sub>2</sub> -saving intention of the speed limit not being genuine with a negatively perceived alternative intention assumed.	383	977
Alternative Evidence: Climate Change Skepticism	Expressions that imply the rejection, disregard, or unwarranted skepticism of the scientific consensus on the pace and magnitude of global warming, its importance, and its correlation with human activities.	10	14
Alternative Evidence: Congruence Skepticism	Expressions that imply the speed limit to be the wrong means to tackle climate change.	130	172
Ignorance	Expressions that frame the fact that the speed limit is the wrong means to tackle climate change to be caused by a lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness of its proponents.	76	101
Negative Side Effects	Expressions that imply that speed limit proponents are ignorant of potential side-effects of a highway speed limit.	28	36
No speeding anyways	Expressions that imply that speed limit proponents are ignorant of the fact that there are enough speed limits already or that only few people drive fast anyways.	51	65
Old-fashioned	Expressions that frame the fact that the speed limit is the wrong means to tackle climate change to be caused by it being a measure that is outdated, antiquated, or no longer in line with contemporary trends, styles, or practices.	8	10
Simplicity	Expressions that frame the fact that the speed limit is the wrong means to tackle climate change to be caused by it being a measure that lacks depth, sophistication, or complexity.	14	17
Stupidity	Expressions that imply speed limit proponents to lack rationality, common sense, or knowledge.	40	44
M1 Intention Skepticism	Claim about the CO <sub>2</sub> -saving intention of the speed limit not being genuine with a negatively perceived alternative intention assumed.	324	791
1A Marginality x Symbol Politics	Expressions that imply a perceived marginality of the highway speed limits climate protection potential together with the perception of it being a simply symbolic proposal.	203	456

Marginality	Expressions that imply speed limit to be a marginal topic when it comes to fighting climate change.	163	364
Comparison Other Methods	Expressions that attribute the speed limits marginality to its low effectiveness compared to other measures.	31	42
Germany vs. Other Countries	Expressions that attribute the speed limits marginality to the fact that Germany can't do anything against the global problem of climate change for which other countries are more relevant.	19	20
Low CO <sub>2</sub> -savings	Expressions that attribute the marginality of the speed limit to the potential CO <sub>2</sub> -savings of a speed limit being low.	41	51
Role of E-Mobility	Expressions that attribute the marginality of the speed limit to the bright future of E-Mobility.	19	23
Symbol Politics	Expressions that imply that the speed limit is of simply symbolic character.	69	92
Moral Superiority	Expressions that imply a perceived moral superiority of speed limit proponents.	28	42
1B Opportunism x Ideological Motivation	Expressions that imply perceived opportunism in pushing forward the speed limit together with the perception of it instead being proposed due to ideological motives which is perceived as negative.	182	317
Ideological Motivation	Expressions that imply speed limit proponent behavior to motivated purely by ideology.	66	85
Culture War against Cars	Expressions that imply a perceived culture war against cars or individual transport incl. use of terminology and rhetoric used in the context of war or military operations.	40	48
Opportunism	Expressions that imply speed limit proponents to be taking advantage of circumstances to push their ideology on others.	132	232
Scientific corruption	Expressions that imply that speed limit proponents manipulate, fabricate, or misrepresent data or findings to promote the speed limit.	50	94
Supporter Hypocrisy	Expressions that imply that speed limit proponents have double standards in their behavior, attitudes, or beliefs in terms of:	53	69
Cheater framing	Expressions that imply that someone who is in favor of the speed limit shouldn't be doing a certain unsustainable thing.	39	44

Pretender framing	Expressions that imply that someone who does/thinks/stands for a certain unsustainable thing shouldn't be in favor of the speed limit.	14	25
Ukraine War Specific	Expressions that specifically connect the perceived opportunism to the speed limit proponents instrumentalizing the Ukraine war to push their agenda.	20	24
Alternative Intentions	Expressions that imply the speed limit to be motivated by intentions other than the two main assumptions.	17	18
Jealousy	Expressions that imply speed limit proponents to be motivated by discontent or resentment towards speed limit opponents due to their possessions, qualities, or achievements and to desire them for oneself.	5	5
Monetary	Expressions that imply the motives of speed limit proponents to be monetary.	12	13
<b>M2 Perceived Value Threats</b>	Claim about the speed limit being representative of the unappreciated values of another group that are seemingly incompatible with and opposed to one's own values.	236	521
2A Regulation x Freedom	Expressions that imply the perception of the speed limit being a part of its proponents unappreciated preference for behavioral regulations threatening appreciated freedom of behavior.	211	401
Aversion to Regulation	Expressions that imply aversion to the outgroups' perceived preference for regulating behavior.	120	182
Citizens' Maturity	Expressions that justify aversion to regulations like the speed limit by pointing out that German citizens are capable of deciding things for themselves.	42	51
Contempt	Expressions that imply a feeling or attitude of disdain, scorn, or disrespect towards behavioral regulations.	63	99
Boringness	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation indicates a lack of originality or excitement.	7	7
Conformity	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation involves adhering to established social norms, values, and expectations.	14	25
Jealousy	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation is motivated by discontent or resentment towards speed limit opponents due to their possessions, qualities, or achievements and the desire to possess them oneself.	6	6



Laziness	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation is caused by a lack of motivation to engage in work, exert effort, or take action.	2	3
Old-fashioned	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation is outdated, antiquated, or no longer in line with contemporary trends, styles, or practices.	7	9
Simplicity	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation is caused by a lack of depth, sophistication, or complexity.	14	17
Weakness	Expressions that imply that being in favor of behavioral regulation is caused by a lack of emotional, character-related strength.	26	32
Outgroup Extremism	Expressions that imply that behavioral regulation as perceived to be prioritized by speed limit proponents is extreme.	25	32
Behavioral Regulations	Expressions that imply that speed limit is a part of the speed limit supporters' general appreciation of regulating behavior, paternalization and strong government.	60	85
Woke Trend	Expressions that imply speed limit to be part of a set of "woke" policy agenda.	18	18
Freedom of Behavior as Positive	Expressions that imply appreciated of the freedom of behavior that is perceived as threatened.	63	72
Incompatibility	Expressions that imply the preferences for behavioral regulation and freedom of behavior to be unable to exist, function, or work together harmoniously due to fundamental differences, conflicting attributes, or incompatible qualities.	48	62
2B Illegitimacy x Democracy	Expressions that imply the perception of the illegitimacy of the context in which the speed limit is proposed presenting a threat to democracy.	47	120
Activism	Expressions that imply the activist group "Last Generation" to be a threat to democracy through their extortion of politicians.	17	40
Green Dominance	Expressions that imply the (media) dominance of speed limit supporters to be a threat to democracy through its perceived illegitimacy.	34	80
Hate of Liberalism	Expressions that imply the green dominance to be accompanied by an extreme feeling of hostility, animosity, or strong aversion towards liberalism.	4	10
Propaganda	Expressions that imply the green dominance to be accompanied by the	16	16

	dissemination of information, ideas, or opinions, with the intention of influencing or manipulating public opinion, attitudes, beliefs, or behaviors.		
<b>M3 Perceived Dismissal of Needs, Interests and Dependencies</b>	Claim about the speed limit presenting a dismissal of certain needs, interests and dependencies which are asserted a positive significance.	125	215
3A Large-Scale Economic Dependency	Expressions that imply the perception of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the large-scale economic relevance of Germany's automotive sector for the country's economy, together with a positive significance attached to that economic relevance.	26	74
Dismissal of Economic Relevance	Expressions that imply the perception of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the large-scale economic relevance of Germany's automotive sector.	15	17
Economic Relevance as Positive	Expressions that attach a positive significance to the large-scale economic relevance of Germany's automotive sector for the country's economy.	14	20
3B Livelihood Dependency	Expressions that imply the perception of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the various factors and resources upon which individuals or communities rely for their economic sustenance and well-being.	90	113
Dismissal of Livelihood Dependency	Expressions that imply the perception of the speed limit representing a dismissal of the livelihood dependencies of certain social groups.	59	71
Dismissal of Low Acceptance	Expressions that imply that speed limit proponents are dismissive of the fact that there therefore is little acceptance for a speed limit among those groups.	10	12
Livelihood dependent on Speeding	Expressions that imply the livelihood dependency of certain social groups on speeding.	37	45
Saving Time as Positive	Expressions that attach a positive significance to the timesaving achieved by the absence of a speed limit.	13	17
3C Hedonistic Interests	Expressions that imply a perceived dismissal of pleasure, enjoyment, or gratification together with a positive significance attached to those hedonistic interests.	17	22
3D Large-Scale Cultural Dependency	Expressions that imply the dismissal of country-level cultural heritage, practices, traditions, values, and beliefs related to fast driving in Germany.	6	6