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The project investigates how public transport revival after the 1970s (and especially trams renaissance) involved technological, social, and environmental dilemmas, focusing on three main paths:

- i) the role of public participation and user involvement in influencing the mobility agenda;
- ii) the function of technology in shaping the so-called ecologically-friendly mobility paradigm; and, more widely,
- iii) the struggle between innovation and inertia in the urban landscape.

Beyond numbers, the light rail renaissance emerges as an attractive crossover research field, involving large-scale urban policy, social request for efficient mass transport, and widespread concerns about pollution and traffic (im)mobility. After the first groundbreaking experiences in the 1960s, the success of tramways has mainly been considered as a consequence of environmental issues, such as the oil crisis and urban pollution, benefitting from the new attention to electric mobility. Furthermore, the investigation of the light rail renaissance builds a concept of “environment” which involves physical, social, cultural and ecological aspects: the tramway revival aimed to rebuild a pedestrian-friendly atmosphere, using a pollution-free transport device. This led to a rediscovery of the city as a pleasant (community-oriented) place to live.

Public participation and user involvement have accompanied the tram resurgence in the past decades, seen as fundamental tools in reshaping the city and addressing contemporary challenges. The role of citizens in the transit revival was not only encouraged as a winning strategy for a better environment and ecofriendly mobility, but has been portrayed as a long term vision for a community-oriented society, in and out of Europe. Light rail was thus often conceived as a social catalyst, re-proposing technology as a tool to drive and forge social forces into a new (ecofriendly and somehow communitarian) shape.

However, the light rail revival also demonstrates the tension between innovation and inertia. The implementation was far from being smooth: while Strasburg's "métro léger" system is often touted, by tram supporters, as a dramatic change in the urban landscape, other cities were reluctant to change their setup. This tension appears to be a very fruitful theme, investigating how urban transformations and challenges were often confronted by a resistance to change and innovation, which is fuelled by deep and "unexpected" obduracy.

A further theme in the research agenda is the analysis of how car culture's success has obscured other mobility history tales throughout the twentieth century. While we can certainly speak in terms of a tram revival, we must also address how the tram tracks survived throughout the century in Eastern Europe, in many Swiss and Germany cities, and even in car company towns, such as Turin (FIAT headquarters) and Gothenburg (VOLVO).