



Using instead of owning: the ‘sharing’ megatrend helps electromobility advance

German car manufacturers are at long last rolling out serious electric cars to coincide with the IAA International Motor Show in Frankfurt. But electromobility will only assert itself as a viable technology if it caters to consumers’ rapidly changing needs. The mobility experts at ISOE, Jutta Deffner and Konrad Götz, have been observing striking developments in this respect. The new ‘sharing’ megatrend clearly reveals the ‘using instead of owning’ mindset as that most likely to further the progress of e-mobility.

Electromobility is seen as a milestone in the quest to find future-proof means of getting around, with the latest sales figures and estimates for e-vehicles making for daily headlines in Germany. While the figures themselves are of course significant, the crucial task, according to ISOE analysts Jutta Deffner and Konrad Götz, is to boost the acceptance and attractiveness of e-mobility. A major area of ISOE research is ‘Mobility and urban spaces’, and it is here that the mobility experts have made some highly significant findings.

Results show that people are drawn to e-mobility when it is embedded in flexible usage concepts such as car sharing with a ‘one-way’ option. “There are already several suppliers on the market. Daimler led the way with car2go, and Citroen then followed with Multicity. Others are set to do the same with Free Floating,” says Konrad Götz. The Free Floating concept means that hire cars are no longer stationed on a fixed site but can be used anywhere in the city; the system is coordinated via smartphone. “Anyone can enjoy as much or as little electromobility as they need in order to get from A to B. People see this as an up-to-the-minute solution,” says mobility analyst Götz.

The idea of owning a private car is gradually eroding

A whole new culture of mobility is currently emerging as a result. “Many car drivers are no longer prepared to invest large sums of money in a private car which is going to be parked for most of the time rather than driven,” explains Jutta Deffner. They would much prefer to access a car as and when required. And they would like to combine it with other options such as the bike or public transport. “The conscious decision to use rather than own represents a new megatrend,” says Deffner. ‘Sharing’ is also beginning to appear in other areas such as international home exchange. For Jutta Deffner and Konrad Götz, the fact that today even private cars – from luxury saloons to small vans – are being shared via internet platforms indicates that the idea of owning a private car is gradually eroding.

“This explains why ‘car sharing’ is experiencing a boom like no other automotive business,” concludes Götz. And many people who are keen to lead an eco-friendly everyday life would welcome a car-sharing scheme that deployed low-noise e-cars with certified zero emissions. “Driving with zero emission along with a strong dose of ‘coolness’ in combination with smart options for hiring, using, loading and parking the car all amounts to sustainability without the killjoy factor, and that makes it suitable for everyday use,” sums up the lifestyle researcher.

ISOE – Institute for Social-Ecological Research, Frankfurt am Main

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