

How to foster the links between transport, human nature and sustainable development

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Ladies and gentlemen,

as the president of the European Federation for Transport and Environment T&E I like to welcome you to this sub-plenary track "environment" of the Velomondial 2000 conference here in Amsterdam.

The European Federation for Transport and Environment T&E is Europe's primary non-governmental organisation campaigning on a Europe wide level for an environmentally responsible approach to transport. It was founded 10 years ago, it is based in Brussels with 5 professionals and has at present 37 member organisations covering 20 countries. It is the umbrella of national organisations, including public transport user groups, environmental organisations and the European environmental transport organisations – the so called "Verkehrs-Clubs". These organisations in all have several million individual members. T&E closely monitors developments in European transport policy and submits responses on all major papers and proposals from the European Commission. T&E frequently publishes reports on important issues in the field of transport and the environment and also carries out research projects. T&E fosters the obvious links between transport and environment.

The new movement for the environment in Europe is now thirty years old, the transport-and-environment movement 20 years, "sustainability" as definition of the only way to human survival on earth 15 (Brundtland report), our European umbrella T&E 10: And still many people have not yet understood the unique importance of one very specific and most important technical tool for survival: The bike !

The bike has a very unique character much more unique as many other technical inventions: It solves the main dilemmas of human nature and sustainable development. That will say: It is getting TRANSPORT closer to the requirements of sustainability and getting PEOPLE closer to the requirements of sustainability. Because it is taking in account the human nature - as well. So it fosters the links between transport, human nature and sustainable development.

The dilemma of sustainable development is the fact that it should be environmentally sound AND socially equitable AND economically viable.

Let's have a closer look at the three corners of this triangle from the bike's point of view:

1.) Economically viable

Bikes contribute to cheaper transport, for the people, for companies and for the government. It is – for instance – one of the cheapest ways to bring new permanent users to public transport. That makes public transport more profitable, cheaper, more people use it, so it's getting cheaper for the government and for the people.

As an employer getting your employees riding a bike from home to your company and back, providing them nice covered bike parkings and a shower, you can reduce your parking space and your employees are healthier, less absent and more productive.

The bike needs about 12 x less road space per person travelling one mile than the cars - roughly the same as busses (10 x) and trains (16 x) following a scientifically based publication from the European Commission. So less investment from the government side for roads. That will say it needs less public space, less public environment. 50 % of the car rides are less than 5 km long, 30 % less than 3 km – optimal distances for the bike.

And finally it is cheaper for the people. As a daily bike user you are spending only about half of the money for all together: A season card for public transport, a good bike, being a member of a car sharing organisation and sometimes even rent a taxi.

And the bike doesn't make noise, it doesn't pollute the air and doesn't kill people: So it doesn't damage human health, but – in the contrary – keeps you fit and healthy. So you keep your own and other people's health costs down. - New results of scientific research have even shown, that inside towns on roads with cars and cyclists the concentration of air pollution within the cars is higher than for the cyclists.

These are as well reasons why bikes are

2.) Socially equitable

As nearly everybody can afford a bike, the bike brings social justice and democracy to transport. In my country (Switzerland) there are roughly the same amount of cars like people living. But about 25 % of the households have no car, in the big towns up to 50 %. The bike for most of these households is of utmost importance for mobility.

The bike brings democracy to speed, too. The famous social scientist Ivan Illich 25 years ago has made the following calculations: When calculating your speed take in account all the working hours you need for earning the money you need for buying your vehicle and keeping it running. Then the bike is the fastest vehicle.

3.) Environmentally sound

And it's environmentally sound. It doesn't damage the climate and the environment by air pollution, by burning fuel (except your thirst) and by noise. When once the bike is braking down its parts are easy to reuse or to recycle. Producing a car needs 300'000 m³ of fresh water, needs the same amount of energy like the car uses during its first two years on the road, and it needs 20 x more primary matter resources than its own weight. A bike is hundred times less heavy: Make the calculation !

An its future oriented. It's easy to educate the young generation to get used to environmentally sound travelling. Instead of taking your children by car to school, then to the horse riding lesson, then to the swimming pool - teach them how to move themselves in the public space, how to behave as a transport participant, how to become independent.

We know from new scientific studies, that these children are more self-reliant, are better pupils, are growing up more independently and finally – when grown up - are stronger in managing their own life and find their way.

- So the bike solves the dilemma of sustainable development: It is environmentally sound AND socially equitable AND economically viable.
- And what about the dilemma of human nature, between egoism AND altruism, between need AND greed, between discretion AND prestige ?

The bike fulfils many needs of human beings to a low price, in consideration of the needs of nature, the environment and the other human beings.

It can gives you relaxing sundays and holidays, everybody can see you in public, it gives you speed on your daily trips, it gives you a good conscience as the bike does neither harm anybody nor nature and environment.

The bicycle - when replacing cars on the road – is the best way to sustainability as a whole, as today's transport system is the largest contributor to non-sustainability.

But why do we know all that since long a time and the situation is not changing faster ? We didn't foster too much the following 7 aspects:

What we urgently need are:

1. Masses of bikes !

Not a single bike here and there, for exceptional transport needs, only for Sunday trips, for young people not yet being allowed to drive a car or for poor people who can not afford it. The bike must become the broadly used daily mass transport vehicle for medium-sized distances, as public transport for the long trips and your own feet for the short ones. – From the bike to masses of bikes !

2. Prestige to the bike !

Romano Prodi and Margot Wallström not only cycling for a nice picture for the European car free day, but doing that 250 working days a year. It must become broadly accepted or even most welcomed to arrive to a government reception by bike, to a wedding ceremony, to an important business meeting.

3. Brain for the bike !

What I am telling you here is in my brain, it is in most of your brains, it is in many of the 1000 people's brains being present at this conference. But there are thousands of important decision

makers and educators in our society who still need the bicycle injection, especially in China, where the traditional bicycle masses are actually being forced to make way for cars.

4. Education to the bike !

A biking school creates a new transport culture for the future. A biking family educates biking children for the future. A biking company makes an important step to sustainable economy.

5. Links for the bike !

Good links to public transport, when changing to the faster mode. - Either to take the bike along, as you can see on this picture.

Or - to park your vehicle - a covered, supervised and organised place, lighted up by night. That means big bicycle stations as you can find them in this pioneering country, the Netherlands. And an appropriate tariff system combined with your ticket or season card.

When changing to the slower mode – becoming a pedestrian – you need a well arranged place in front of the doors of houses, shops, ministries, theatres and cinemas, sports clubs and schools.

Again protected from rain, nicely organised, lighted up by night and supervised in an appropriate way.

6. Safety for the bike !

The bike needs an environment to develop its full set of advantages. And its weakest point is its vulnerability by much faster vehicles. Reducing maximum speed to 30 km/h for all vehicles involved is by far the cheapest and best remedy, in town centres even down to 5 km/h the natural speed of pedestrians.

7. Space for the bike !

Not everywhere you can mix the modes of transport including bicycles when reducing speed: Here the bike needs more space, it needs special links, special lanes, special tracks to make it profit from its speed and to protect it from faster vehicles.

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YOUR TASK FOR THE COMING THREE DAYS:

The bike – as we have seen – saves everything: It saves money, it saves lives, it saves environment and resources, space and noise, it even educates to saving all these things, it makes you faster, richer, independent, healthy and self-reliant.

Please find out in the coming three days, how to put this sentence into the brains and the hearts of the important people in this society: The finance ministers, the town planners, the parents of children, the media people, the parliamentarians, the teachers and professors, the railway and public transport directors, the industry managers and share-holders, the stock exchangers, the architects and engineers shaping public space, the boy scout leaders, the image designers of Nike and Coca-Cola.

So your task for the coming three days is obvious:

Find out how to foster the links between the nature of human brain, of human hearts and the money bag in his pocket – in favour of masses of bicycles for sustainable transport, which is the most important factor of sustainable development.

In other words : How to sell the bike, how to sell masses of bikes.