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This is the final issue of the journal "World Transport Policy and Practice". We have published for 26 years and covered as many issues that are relevant to sustainable transport as we can think of and in response to the huge number of submissions we receive. If we lived in a world where politicians and other decision-takers seriously engaged with discussion, evidence, data, options and suggestions we would already have a transport system that delivered a zero carbon, zero air pollution, zero death and injury, child friendly, public health promoting outcomes. We do not live in this world. It does not exist.

Our 26 year tally of high quality, globally relevant articles on how to improve transport, mobility and accessibility for the benefit of women and men, children and those of working age, the retired, disabled, unwell, all income groups and the 14 million people who live in poverty in the UK¹ is a resource of unparalleled value and it will continue to be available.

We have decided that after 26 years there is no point in adding to the mass of high quality evidence on why we should re-engineer the totality of transport, mobility and accessibility. We already have more than enough evidence. We must now find ways to work with civil society and decision-making systems to encourage listening, engagement and reaction rather than piling on more information. We must promote paradigm shift.

In this final issue we are delighted to remind our readers and anyone with a serious interest in the way the world works to increase the distances we all travel and the distances over which freight, food and goods travel. In volume 1 number 1 (1995) we ran the now-famous "well-travelled yoghurt pot" story to reveal the reality of the distance maximising economic system that pays no attention to ecological or climate change catastrophe. We have converted distance into a consumer product and hijacked the language of freedom, progress and modernity to justify economically and environmentally inefficient large scale consumption of passenger-kilometres and tonne-kilometres. This is

in essence is the paradigm that currently determines the way we live. High levels of mobility, high levels of distance travelled and large infrastructure projects costing billions of £, \$ and Euros are accepted and largely unchallenged and this paradigm must be challenged and overthrown.

In this final issue of the journal we have chosen to publish a further contribution by two of the clearest and innovative thinkers in sustainable transport, Helmut Holzapfel and Steffi Boege. Just as in the well-travelled yoghurt pot article they identify the core problem we are wrestling with as distance-intensive life styles and the deeply embedded nature of this damaging ideology. They link the enormous problems of climate change to the growing awareness that we are now dealing with equally enormous problems linked to Covid-19 and the likelihood that these problems will be even bigger in the future:

But it is not only the global climate that is suffering damage. In the meantime, it has become clear that the worldwide spread of pathogens and diseases is not only promoted by the extensive destruction of nature. It is further extenuated through growing global dependencies and through the ever more extensive and accelerated transport processes that are used throughout the world. The current dissemination of a virus that we are now experiencing in 2019 and 2020 will certainly not be the last event of this sort, if we do not undertake a range of changes that will diminish the distances on which our everyday life depends.

We recommend that all our readers and those politicians and decision-takers who are prepared to think about the future to ponder on the Holzapfel-Boege analysis and find ways to shift the ways we live, work and function so we can experience a less distance intensive, less resource intensive and less ecologically and environmentally destructive approach to planet maintenance

Finally I would like to put on record my thanks to the editorial team who have sup-

ported this journal for many years. This is not a matter of warm words. They have all been strongly supportive and wonderful to work with and the world is a better place as a result of their contributions to sustainable transport. They are:

Eric Britton, France
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Paul Tranter, Australia

I am also very grateful for the tireless work of Rob Clow in Herefordshire, England for his patient and high quality work in converting submissions into pdf files for uploading to our web site.

John Whitelegg
Editor

Note 1:

<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/13/world/europe/un-extreme-poverty-britain-austerity.html>

<https://www.theguardian.com/society/2018/nov/16/uk-austerity-has-inflicted-great-misery-on-citizens-un-says>

Rushing past the good life: What we lose in our distance-based race to have more - some thoughts on distance, quality of life, the natural world and our common health

Stefanie Böge & Helmut Holzapfel

Particularly in the current situation in connection with the corona crisis that has engulfed the world, it is clear that the way in which our society supplies itself today with technical products and foodstuffs causes numerous problems. While we go about consuming more and more goods, more and more cheaply, from ever more distant locations, ecological burdens, social inequalities and destabilizing dependencies emerge that are increasingly apparent and pronounced. Has this overall development actually improved our lives, or not?

Already in 1995 in the first issue of the journal "World Transport Policy & Practice", a study was published that delineated the first steps towards the development of such distanced-intensive global production chains through the example of the transport that was required for the production of a single strawberry yogurt. This type of development has expanded and accelerated enormously in the succeeding 25 years. The following considerations, which have been updated on an ongoing basis since then, illustrate the extensive disadvantages and drawbacks – and the very meager benefits – deriving from these tendencies.

Today most of the items that we buy – whether they be food products or technical devices – depend on global supply chains. The various transport steps and resultant dependencies that occur with this type of production and consumption are immense.

The history of change in our living conditions and our life styles and in the transport used for our personal locomotion (in automobiles) or for the transport of the goods we consume has had a very concrete impact on local realities. As such, this history is at once the cause and the effect of global changes.

To reduce these negative effects, people have long been called on to "limit" themselves and to "conserve" due to the ecological risks that come with such behav-

iour. And this continues to be the case now in 2020.

However, the following hypotheses show that a more reasonable approach to transport and distance will bring far more advantages than disadvantages – quite apart from staving off ecological catastrophe. If we manage to modify our relationship to the automobile and to the excessive transport of persons and goods, there is much to be gained right now.

1. The distance-based modern life style in itself – even without its negative ecological effects – has brought more disadvantages than benefits. It diminishes our prosperity rather than increasing it.

A clear example of this can be seen in the consumption of food, which in recent years has become more and more globally based. In the USA, the average distance food travels before it is placed on a table to be eaten is 2000 kilometres. Also in Europe, these distances are growing continuously. The transport of imported vegetables for use in Germany consumes three times the energy used for local cultivation, including the operation of greenhouses. As Ivan Illich put it, we are living in a society of modern remote feeding.

While in previous times seasonings such as pepper were necessarily transported long distances and were accordingly expensive, today entirely ordinary food products are transported huge distances and with great effort and expense. Many people in Europe purchase Californian wine or Thai chickens – and almost no one considers the distances that these products have had to travel before they are consumed. Locally produced foods, even when they can be purchased at low cost, often are seen as second choice.

The issue here is not principally one of expense but rather has to do with a modern life style that is thought to possess highly desirable qualities – a life style that depends on distance and the intensive use of energy. A closer examination, however, reveals that beyond a certain level – which has long since been reached and exceeded – these supposedly positive qualities in fact become drawbacks. Mastering dis-

tance – which long ago when pepper was first brought to Europe amounted to a distinctive sort of progress – has now become a senseless extra cost in the production and transport of a product. The jar of yogurt produced in Stuttgart with strawberries from Poland was a subject of study already in the 1990s. Today these distances have grown enormously – and the products have hardly become better as a result of the greater distances travelled in the course of their production. The biggest problem of this distance-intensive life style – as seen in the ever more frequent food quality scandals of recent years – is in the lack of transparency that it causes. These long supply chains make it nearly impossible to know what is happening where in the production process. This results in various contaminations and a diverse range of health risks.

2. Cheap transport brings with it senseless types of competition which lead in turn to further extreme increases in transport distances.

Transport is subsidised worldwide, because it is thought to promote the growth of the economy. Whether the World Bank is supporting road construction in the Third World, or the German government is directing funds to the former regions of East Germany for infrastructure development – it is presumed that this must be improving life in general.

Behind this view is an ideology of global competition that does not recognise distance as a factor at all. The cheapest global provider is chosen – regardless of that provider's location. Typically, large companies are the ones who benefit most from this approach as they put together highly complex and extended production chains with outsourced suppliers. Big business makes use of "low-cost" offers in states with dubious democratic characteristics so as to realise portions of their production process on a more favourable basis – but favourable for whom? For all of us, or rather for the producers themselves?

Almost no one asks about the social and economic conditions in the factories used in such production process. So as to reduce manufacturing costs as much as pos-

sible, a more and more complex division of labour occurs that is spread out around the world. This entails more and more transport and extreme dependencies (examples can be seen in the automobile industry or in the export of waste). The administration of the European Union promotes this type of development often at any price.

By contrast, having higher costs for greater distances and increasing barriers to long-distance transport would strengthen local suppliers, i.e. companies that retain a larger portion of the value creation within their own business. On the one hand, regional economic power would be reinforced through such an approach. On the other hand, the increase of local content in any given product would promote a genuine diversity of solutions and innovations in the end products.

3. These excessive transport processes take freedom and autonomy away from the people and are difficult to reverse - alternatives to the existing culture of "distance-intensive" economies are desperately needed.

Once regional competencies have been lost (for example in the cultivation of locally specific foodstuffs or small-scale locally orientated trade relations), they are very difficult to reinstate. The present extreme global division of labour has made us highly dependent. The advantages of moving away from this type of labour division – which would be possible step by step – must be communicated to the people. Change processes must be made visible and their benefits clearly demonstrated.

Of course, the consumption of local products also entails doing the same in other places as well – a development that Germany – as the "world champion exporter" – might be inclined to question. Do we really want this? Who actually is presenting a picture of a new, locally based reality with reduced dependency on great distances? How would the life in our cities change? What would be different in our consumption of food with shorter distances in the involved processes?

A world of shorter distances would not be one of lower quality and diminished expectations. It is not a matter of going "back to the Stone Age". As a simple point of comparison, the transport intensity for our consumption goods in the 1970s was only half of what it is today, although the quality and the quantity of the goods supplied were at the same level.

4. And (finally) today's distance-intensive life style is not only damaging to the global climate.

Emissions connected with transport are a significant factor that is negatively impacting the global climate. By 2030, CO2 emissions from air freight transport will have reached their highest point of growth, with particularly critical impact on the climate. And the emissions arising from road-based transport of goods are also growing unchecked. A stronger locally and regionally based economy and life style represent the only relevant alternative to moderate these developments and to reduce the overall intensity of transport.

But it is not only the global climate that is suffering damage. In the meantime, it has become clear that the worldwide spread of pathogens and diseases is not only promoted by the extensive destruction of nature. It is further extenuated through growing global dependencies and through the ever more extensive and accelerated transport processes that are used throughout the world. The current dissemination of a virus that we are now experiencing in 2019 and 2020 will certainly not be the last event of this sort, if we do not undertake a range of changes that will diminish the distances on which our everyday life depends.

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The Box

The late delivery of what is less
Than promised, at a higher cost, for what
The arguments and evidence have shown would not
Save time, cut costs, boost growth, but leave the mess

From fossil fuels unchanged, or maybe add to it.
Is infrastructure maybe just a game perverse
In rules, and played between the planners and investors,
For stakes of prized investment and protected profit?

There is a box we cannot think outside,
A mould, a paradigm, which - if we aim
To rectify polluted streets and seas and to reclaim
The climate and the air - needs to be pushed aside.

Norman Fairclough 24 October 2017