

CITIZEN

Cityzine about
people and places

VOLUME TOPICS

- # Let's not give up cars, let's give up the feeling that they are needed everywhere.
- # Giving out reflective tapes won't stop pedestrians and cyclists fearing for their lives
- # Poet Buddeus: A proper bike trip is like a temporary exile from routine
- # How can CYCLE UP! bring change to the city's streets?

Why don't we cycle?

What is holding us back and how do we overcome the mental and physical barriers around cycling? A special cycling edition about why we need more people on bikes.





CYCLE UP! connects artists, decision-makers and communities who care about our climate in order to find creative ideas and solutions to bring more bicycles to our streets.

Join us to find creative solutions, tailored to local contexts, to advocate for more bikes in our cities. We do so by connecting communities and artists with local decision-makers in creative ways to demand better infrastructure and safety in Poland, Slovakia, Czechia, Estonia and Germany.

We wish to increase the appeal of cycling as a regular means of transport, so we offer opportunities for direct collaboration with local municipalities, urban practitioners and diverse community organisations.

CYCLE UP! is an interdisciplinary network of people who care about the same issues but will tackle them from different perspectives. This cityzine is co-created by us.

The full content of this Volume of CTZN and events by us and our partners can be followed on our website:



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Project name: Harness the power of artistic creative expression to promote the bicycle as a carbon-neutral, sustainable and safe means of transport. Project number: 101098882



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Dropping my son off at school in Bratislava one morning, I was surprised by a surge in the number of bicycles parked outside – though a little annoyed that we could not find a space for his bike. As commuter-cyclists, we are still in the minority in a city where the number of cars per inhabitant has almost doubled over the past decade* and the cycle-path network is patchy. I greeted the headteacher with enthusiasm, commenting how fantastic it was to see such a dramatic change. “Well, it is the International Day of Clean Air!” she replied. The children had heard about the day from their teachers and took matters into their own hands, sharing the news at home. As anyone with a seven-year-old will concur, there is usually very little information one can extract from them about what happened at school on any given day. But it was clear that the children were keen to participate in this challenge. And their parents had followed suit.

This anecdote illustrates the power of change led by children. Change gets harder to embrace the older and more set in our ways we get, especially in complex systems with multiple interdependencies, like cities. To fix one problem, we need to look at and heal the whole ‘self’. As an architect dedicated to public spaces, but also as a mum, I believe that creating more equitable cities that support our health and wellbeing starts with safe and inclusive mobility. Not just as a means of getting from A to B, but as a way of bringing a sense of joy to our day-to-day life in cities, getting to know our environment and attuning us to others around us. When we compare our Central European cities to Copenhagen or Amsterdam, we might easily get disheartened. But if we look at where we’ve got to already, instead of where we aren’t yet, we can see green shoots and even small miracles in the most unexpected places.

I am truly excited that the first printed edition of CTZN magazine is dedicated to how we can overcome mental and physical barriers when it comes to urban cycling. This topic touches on so many aspects of the complex city organism – from improving air quality through to healthy development of children and a prospering local



Petra Marko
Guest editor,
CTZN magazine
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CYCLE UP!
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economy. We have asked not just urbanists and green mobility experts, but also artists, mums, seniors, organisations and municipalities to share their experiences and inspiration on how cycling can become a force for positive change in our cities – and how it already is. On the following pages, you can browse and dive deeper into interviews, essays, articles and visual stories all the way from Prague through to Košice. We spoke to those spearheading bottom-up initiatives, those who engage in policy change at city or government level, and those who simply seek and live the poetry of a bike ride on a day-to-day basis.

The resulting tapestry of this issue covers topics including how a citizen initiative fixing old bikes helps vulnerable communities in Košice; why it is important to consider women’s perspectives when it comes to urban cycling; how Poznaň put cycling in their public policy; how school streets in Prague and child-friendly urbanism in Bratislava are gaining momentum;

why Prešov is the cycling mecca of eastern Slovakia; and a lot more!

Chapeau! to the efforts and achievements of everyone mentioned in this issue.

Enjoy the ride!

*Ministry of Environment of the Slovak Republic, 2021.
(<https://www.teraz.sk/slovensko/pocet-aut-na-slovensku-stale-rastie/727376-clanok.html>)

Cycling makes everything better

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.
Illustration author: Kristína Uhráková, Pressink



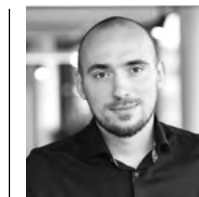
Why don't we cycle?

Let them talk, those spearheading bottom-up initiatives, those who engage in policy change at city or government level, or those who simply seek and live the poetry of a bike ride on a day-to-day basis.

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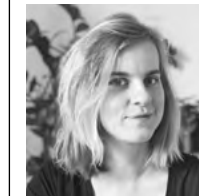
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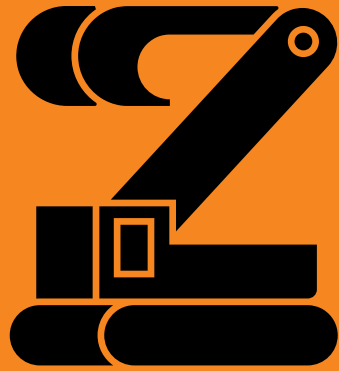


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You can also find CTZN online. Each volume provides a thematic and comprehensive in-depth look at sustainable cities, lively communities, inclusive planning. CTZN offers timeless interviews, expert articles, columns, and examples of best practices. Browse through previous volumes at ctzn.punkt.sk and follow us on social media for information about our events.



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Sleeping places
Why is it important to densify the city by revitalising brownfield sites? How to do this with respect to the needs of its residents, sustainability and historic preservation?



Volume 2
Markets as a phenomenon
What is the potential of markets in the city? How do they build communities, animate public space or support the local economy? Can we measure their value?



Volume 3
The city and the river
The Danube is close but surprisingly unrecognised. How can Bratislava residents and tourists use it?



Volume 4
How can we live here?
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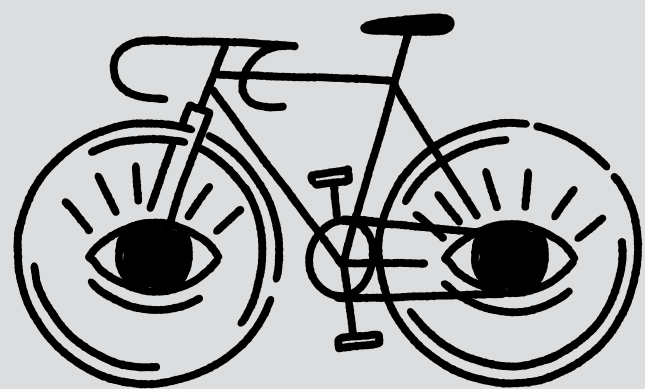
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How can CYCLE UP! bring a change to the city streets?

We asked six architects, urbanists, project participants and organisers about how to change the behaviour of undecided cyclists and pedestrians and get them on bikes.



Adele Newman
from the Goethe-Institut Czech Republic which is the lead partner of the CYCLE UP! project.

"In the next four years, we will be raising awareness about the needs of cyclists, the necessity of their safety, and better infrastructure through art, residential programmes, workshops and conferences. We want the citizens and various communities to have a better communication line with the city and we want them to feel that they have a tool to help them ask the local politicians for better urban infrastructure. Local 'decision makers' will gain instruments that will enable them



Roelof Wittink,
longstanding Director of the Dutch Cycling Embassy and the foundation Interface for Cycling Expertise.

"We have supported cycling politics in

to talk with their voters and colleagues about the importance of sustainable urban mobility."

countries all over the world. Among the members of the Dutch Cycling Embassy are governments, cycling groups, consulting companies and university experts. In cooperation with them, we have developed contacts with people abroad who wish to support cycling. In Bogota, together with Mayor Enrique Penalos, an urbanist and very capable politician, we have helped build 300 kilometres of cycling lanes within three years. I read about the Bratislava mayor in the magazine The Economist and I must say he reminds me of him by his understanding of public space and strategic decision-making."



Illah van Oijen,
Creative Director, NGO Punkt

"During preparation for the workshop Warm Data Lab for CYCLE UP!, I realised that the feeling of freedom in my life is deeply connected to cycling. The project CYCLE UP! is a pan-European laboratory where together we observe and try new things. I am particularly looking forward to the residential programme where we will accompany artists

creating in diverse genres with a single question: How can art help people create a closer bond with cycling?"



Petra Marko,
curator of the project CYCLE UP!

"CYCLE UP! is trying to open the theme of cycling transportation to the widest possible range of people who do not belong to hardcore motorists but are somewhere in between. For the most part, they would like to be part of the change, but they do not consider the current infrastructure still safe enough to begin cycling around Bratislava. And yet, this city has strong potential to become a 15-minute city where one can serve their own daily needs afoot, by public transport,



Martin Radoš
from the cycling workshop Werkstatt

"Last autumn, we launched cycling academy for girls, where we teach them from the ground up how to care about their bike, diagnose it, change the tyre, lift the seat, but also how to change the chain, so that they are independent both on a trip and in the city. It is a pity



Piotr Sikora,
Chair of Curator Commission of the international pan-European project CYCLE UP!

"Art has a kind of soft power, an added magical value that can change the way we think about everyday problems. I truly believe that CYCLE UP! could provide space for a certain type of art that works as an instrument of social change."

that the community of 'technicians' is unnecessarily male because the general opinion is that women are not interested in this activity."

children are unlikely to get out of their housing estate until late age and will not be able to dream about how they could live differently.



The more diverse people on different bicycles there are in the streets and on the roads, the safer they will become for the weakest ones. Otherwise, some

Freedom of Movement for People from Segregated Locations by Cyklodobro

In Košice summer cinema Úsmev (Smile), it has become an annual tradition. Before the start of the summer season, the cinema, in one of the charming Košice courtyards, gets occupied not by an audience, but by bicycles.

Authors:
Zuzana Révészová and
Viktória Mravčáková

The authors are members of
the civil association Spolka.

Photos:
Matúš Dorčák



"We share our knowledge and skills. It is a great meditation full of manual effort, dirty hands, torn gloves, and black oil. It is never a highly emotional strain, it is a leisure activity and relaxing. Even if we break something, nothing bad happens. The only thing that can go wrong is that we will have one bike less."

In the auditorium, the bicycles are aligned according to type and degree of wear. Bicycles are everywhere you look. Electronic music from LPs is playing. I greet Teo, a famous Košice sign painter and DJ. On the podium, there are two bicycles raised in stands. On one of them, Jake, an Englishman who moved here five years ago, is spinning the wheels. I have been fascinated by the simplicity of bicycle mechanics for many years. Although bicycle technology is refining and getting more complicated, it is common practice to use basic equipment that could still be repaired.

*Photos from workshop
Cyklodobre: Matúš Dorčák*

In 2023, Jake and Teo, Adrian, Matúš, Antoine, Juraj, and another ten or so volunteers organised the fifth year of the Cyklodobre (Cycle-Goodness) event. Similar activity is held in many countries all over the world. And yet, Cyklodobre has its specific local atmosphere. It reacts to the insufficient local

cycling infrastructure. Moreover, it draws attention to spatial isolation of some social groups. The enchanting atmosphere of the city centre courtyards is in contrast to the many segregated locations and dangerous roads around them.

According to the city's Concept for Elimination of Homelessness, Košice has 13 segregated locations. They are in the suburbs or within its inner and poorly accessible peripheries. In them you can find self-built huts, sheds, hangars, or blocks of flats in bad condition. Apart from the fact that the condition of these homes is often risky for their inhabitants (whether due to their technical condition or the vicinity of industrial or other environmental burdens), these quarters are typically segregated from the city, for example by an expressway or other huge obstacle. Collisions between pedestrians and fast-moving cars are quite frequent because there is no proper access for pedestrians – there are no crossings, no pavements, no paved surfaces, or any adequate city transport services. Although spatial segregation is not the only issue that the people living in segregated locations have to struggle with on a daily basis, it affects their everyday life to a great extent – going to school or work, arranging common activities, and free movement in general.

How to Give Away a Bunch of Bicycles?

Cyklodobro was first realised in 2019. "It occurred to us when Ján Gálik from the cultural centre Klub posted an ad on social media that he had a lot of bicycles and if there was anybody who could make use of them. So we decided to make the bikes work again and then give them away," says Juraj, who is responsible for the event production. In the past years, the event was always held at the weekend and in May. It starts with the announcement of bicycle collection, which lasts for one week. The collection takes place at the venue or certain collection spots, from where the bicycles are then transported to one place.

"We addressed city boroughs to help us collect the bikes, which we then collected and took to the central place. From time to time there appears a local hero from a municipality outside of Košice. The mayor of Vinné announced a collection on the local radio and they brought about thirty bikes. This happened also in municipality Lúčka nearby Stropkov, from where came 20 bikes," states Juraj. Adrián says that their activity is not fully understood at the first contact: "People mostly don't understand it, but then they come to enjoy it and tell it to their friends, and so the collection is growing. Sometimes we even took pictures of the donor with the bike for personal contact with the bike and later we told them where the bike had gone to. They knew where it ended up and whom it made happy."

Why do people throw bicycles away? "The first reason is surely that using a bike for daily travelling is not very attractive in Košice. The city of Košice is more accessible to cars than cyclists or pedestrians. People are not motivated to use bicycles, so they only gather dust, or they break down, or get damaged, and so they have no motivation to repair them and continue to use them," says Juraj. Adrián adds: "There is a strong car-centric influence, which has an impact on people. They choose the car as the most effective means of transport. And they make it unpleasant for the others – whether by noise, air pollution, dust, or fatal accidents on roads." Besides that, there is fashion. Juraj explains: "There are types of people who think that mountain bikes of the 1990s are terribly out of fashion and they will not ride ugly and old bikes. It is absolutely not true that they are ugly or outdated."

People gathered around Cyklodobro are mostly connected by motivation, not just technical skills. "We are not experienced mechanics. Except for Adrián, who used to work as a serviceman in Decathlon. You need skilled people at hand, you need tools and spare



In combination with non-functional and relatively costly public transport, which excludes many places on the map of the serviced areas, fast transport by bicycle becomes a question of not only spatial but also social mobility. It means a possibility to go to work, to a part-time job, or to get cheaper food from a supermarket.

parts. And we have found those skilled people through friendships," adds Juraj and continues:

"We are not able to service more than half of the bikes that we get. It is also because we don't have any permanent place. The time limit of one weekend is too harsh. We have to manage everything in the time allotted. The frames could be renewed, damaged threads could be cut anew, often we miss important spare parts that we would have to order, but we lack both spatial and time capacities. For that one prolonged weekend we try to get as much human capacity as possible, tools and spare parts, too. We set up the assembly stations, each one takes some bikes according to their own abilities, and we repair. If somebody doesn't know how, there is always one person who

can help. We share our knowledge and skills. During repair works, I am extremely uncontrolled. It is a great meditation full of manual effort, dirty hands, torn gloves, and black oil. It is never a highly emotional strain, it is a leisure activity and relaxing. Even if we break something, nothing bad happens. The only thing that can go wrong is that we will have one bike less that we could give to somebody. And that is not a heavy burden, so it is free. Nobody keeps you against your will," he says.

In those five years, they have repaired and handed over more than 100 bicycles. Selected organisations then distribute them to their clients. Bicycles from Cyklodobro are used for example by clients of the non-profit organisation Oáza, foundation Nadácia Dedo,



and ETP Slovensko in Košice, or the Centre of Home and Family in Michalovce and Vranov nad Topľou. The key to selection of cooperating organisations is that they must have somebody to hand who can help with simple maintenance of the bicycles. A long-term goal of Cyklodobro is not only to give away bicycles but also to pass on skills connected to their maintenance. This year, the volunteers have organised several workshops focusing on bicycle repairing – changing the inner tube, mending breaks or the chain. Several of them were also attended by people who are direct addresses of Cyklodobro.

The Bicycle as Free Movement

It is wintertime and me and Matúš are walking down a snow-covered

housing estate. Matúš has been visiting Luník IX as a volunteer and mentor for three years now. Apart from that, he is an active cyclist. So, together with an ETP Slovensko community worker, a Belgian called Antoin, they have another activity in common – cycling. "We try to alter the children we address, so that as many of them as possible get to cycle. We choose the route. We try to combine it to make it safe, but at the same time to ride on roads at least for some part of it to teach them how to behave in traffic," he says.

Luník IX is a housing estate built in the 1980s. In his publication *Luník IX – zdroj rómskeho ghetta (Luník IX – Birth of a Roma Ghetto)*, historian Ondrej Ficeri describes how race segregation was an intentional strategy of public policy

at that time. In every flat there usually live several family branches. The lack of a housing policy for the city rids young families of the possibility to move somewhere else, so the only possibility is to stay with relatives or build a hut in one of the nearby settlements. As of today, the estate is spatially separated from the city – among others by an expressway of the city bypass. To people coming to Košice from abroad, the housing estate is reminiscent of segregated American settlements separated by transport, which were a concentration of poverty of mostly non-white citizens.

Matúš explains how they deal with spatial barriers of cycling trips: "If one wants to get out of Luník IX, it is difficult to use a road because there is that four-lane one. It is

Cyklodobro (CycleGoodness)

Cyklodobro was first realised in 2019. In five years, they have repaired and handed over more than 100 bicycles. Similar activity is held in many countries all over the world. And yet, Cyklodobro has its specific local atmosphere. It reacts to the insufficient local cycling infrastructure. Moreover, it draws attention to spatial isolation of some social groups.

extremely dangerous given the responsibility we have for those children. You can only use pavements, in the direction of Terasa (note: Košice housing estate), across a neighbourhood of family houses called by Košice people the ‘millionaires quarter’. The second option is through Luník VIII, from where one can get to the city centre. The farthest we have gone is Jazero (note: Košice housing estate ‘Lake’ on the south side of the city, with a lake). We went from the centre along the river Hornád. This trip I did with the older ones. They liked it very much, they bombard me even now, in wintertime, but to service bikes in winter is difficult.”

Antoin evaluates the cycling potential at Luník IX cautiously: “We lent bikes to people when they needed to go to work. For two months, in summer, for a part-time job... it’s happened about two times. For them the storing is difficult. Where do you put a bicycle when you do not even have space in the flat? On the street? Impossible. Only with those who have a balcony can you see some bicycles. But when someone lives on the sixth floor and has to carry the bike up it is a big barrier.” The bicycle becomes another thing that you must take care of and store, which is difficult for many of them. Another factor limiting higher usage of cycling transportation in Luník IX according to Antoin is the housing estate’s location behind a dangerous four-lane road, which deters many of them from cycling.

Juraj, one of the co-founders of Cyklodobre, explains his motivation to organise this event: “One of the essential human needs is movement. If you cannot afford public transportation, you will move on foot.” He mentions another important thing – saving time. “To travel by bike is much faster and more effective than afoot.”

“Providing bikes to people who need them would give them better possibilities of movement around the city,” notes Englishman Jake,

who has contributed to Cyklodobre and who perceives the situation on Košice buses and trams very sensitively. “I often use public transport and every day I get to see how the driver kicks out of the bus a group of Roma children – in cold, rain, sun. At present, we have a problem with the financial situation in the transport company, we don’t have enough drivers and functional vehicles, timetables are being reduced or the buses skip, so there are less possibilities to travel to less frequented parts of the city.” Reduction of the frequency of connections, which for now run permanently in the ‘holidays’ regime, has the biggest impact on the already poorly serviced locations, such as for example Luník IX, where there is currently only one single bus line with a one-hour frequency. Other segregated locations, from which many have a character of informal settlements, are quite far from the public transport stops.

Instrument of Self-confidence

Matúš says that the youth should have a feeling of self-confidence that they are able to move around the city and are a part of it, that they are not excluded in that way and dependent on the public transport, which is there only to be formally provided. “I would like them to see that value doesn’t necessarily have to be to buy an old car, but that a bike can be of help, too. Not everything can be taken care of on a bike, and the infrastructure is challenging as well. But it can partially help.”

Unfortunately, Luník IX is not the only problematic area of low-income groups. Bicycles from Cyklodobre also help people from the shelter for homeless people, Oáza in Bernátovce, or individuals living in peripheral areas of the city, for whom buying a bicycle is unimaginable compared to their other expenses.

Štefan and his family live in one of the garden colonies in the southern part of the city. Although his wife works and he takes care of

I would like them to see that value doesn’t necessarily have to be to buy an old car, but that a bike can be of help, too. Not everything



can be taken care of on a bike, and the infrastructure is challenging as well. But it can partially help.

their youngest child, they cannot afford to rent a flat – the market prices are too high and social flats are extremely inaccessible. For him, the bicycle is a way of quickly getting to the shop or of arranging something. “It is my right hand. All children can already ride a bike,” he says.

According to Mrs Fedorová, who works in Oáza, the bicycle is an invaluable aid for all who are in good enough physical condition. “They can go to the shop or the post office.” She adds one experience that surprised her: “One winter day I went to the post office to Valalík (note: the nearest municipality) and I wanted to take one family by car. One girl told me she didn’t mind the cold and did not need a ride. She was used to going by bicycle and it was more comfortable for her than by car.”

In combination with non-functional and relatively costly public transport, which excludes many places on the map of the serviced areas, fast transport by bicycle becomes a question of not only spatial but also social mobility. It means a possibility to go to work, to a part-time job, or to get cheaper food from a supermarket. It means to not be dependent on system solutions that create barriers. The light movement and joy of freedom on a bicycle is like being in space, but for free and with minimal costs. Not thinking of the fact that in the eyes of society we are clients or consumers. It thus becomes part of a long-term emancipation fight for essential human rights – the freedom of movement. Unfortunately, this attitude is not unique in our context. In their review of the literature on availability of cycling and on how it could have emancipating potential, Portuguese researchers Isabel Cunha and Cecília Silva conclude that construction of cycling infrastructure across the world prevails in rich and privileged neighbourhoods, and so it does not involve disadvantaged or vulnerable groups of the population.

Children enjoying their repaired bikes.
Photo: Spolka



Care Ethics and Machine

The bicycle is by its nature a very simple mechanism. However, it requires a certain level of knowledge to be maintained and functioning. In the current sustainability trend, this knowledge can make a major difference in deciding whether you will set the bike aside as immobile or you will buy a new one. "I think that many non-cyclists are deterred by a ride on a poorly maintained bicycle," says Jake about his own experience. "They have a dry or skipping chain, worn-out cassette, brakes that don't work correctly. Many of these problems could be solved by simple, regular maintenance." The

key to long life of a bicycle is its regular maintenance, which can be learned easily, says Antoine. "I can repair a lot by myself; some things we repair with children. Sometimes we need a more professional repair because we have old bikes. That's when we turn to professional support because those are such mistakes that don't occur very often. It is not worth learning it. When you don't do it regularly, you forget it anyway." The trend of new and modern has penetrated into services, too, and so it could be problematic to find partnership cooperations that would understand that sometimes it is necessary to find low-cost solutions that

do not require buying expensive bicycles or components: "In some services they look at it like: such a damaged one is not worth repairing, that it is better to throw it away and buy a new one. But we don't have that luxury." Repairing and maintenance are not only a necessity faced by those who cannot afford something new but also a way to approach the world with more consideration and sustainability. Regular maintenance can also decrease our impact on planetary sources. Through reuse and care we can contribute to a more environmentally friendly attitude. The environmental aspect of cycling, i.e. travelling without

emissions, is, of course, another symbolic contribution of the bicycle as an icon of sustainability and reusability.

A Bicycle to Every Family

When thinking about urban infrastructure, the needs of people who simply cannot afford to move around the city are often not considered. They cannot buy a bus ticket for one Euro, let alone keep a car alive. Planning of safe infrastructure is crucial also for these people, and a target group or addressees should occur in the minds of politicians when planning routes, since it could make a difference in the ability

to combine care for children with work, care for the house, going to the post office, or going to the shops for food.

Despite that, we should not forget, as already mentioned by Mrs Fedorová from the non-profit organisation Oáza, that the bicycle creates opportunities mainly for those people who are physically fit. Poverty or life in segregated locations is often connected with accessibility to healthcare, which negatively influences the health condition of many. The bicycle is thus not for everybody, so we cannot do without systemic solutions that would improve conditions for

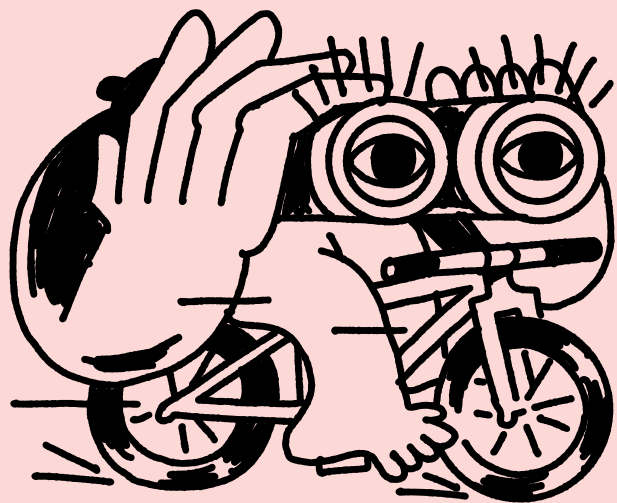
Illustration:
Jozef Glaba

pedestrians, public transport, and which would eliminate barriers of spatial (and other) segregation. Moreover, in a predominantly car-based culture, cyclists are more sensitive to risk. In collisions they are more vulnerable, and in the eyes of the majority they 'are in the way' of cars on their splendid and non-threatened fluent drive. It would be lovely if the societal image of cycling did not get stuck on perfect muscular bodies and smooth aerodynamics of racers. In many places, where one can still feel safe, the bicycle is an instrument of not only older women and men for doing a bigger shop. The more diverse people on different

bicycles there are in the streets and on the roads, the safer they will become for the weakest ones. Otherwise, some children are unlikely to get out of their housing estate until late age and will not be able to dream about how they could live differently.

Cyklovízia 2030: Czechia is ensuring a safe and complex cycling infrastructure for all

Even though the Czech Republic has almost 5,000 kilometres of cycle routes and roads with cycling measures, daily commuting to work on a bicycle is for the most part complicated and stressful. The network of cycling infrastructure is not interconnected, and the main cycling routes often end up at a heavily frequented first-class road or in a field.



Author:

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Illustration:

Jozef Glaba

Why Is It Necessary to Support Cycling Transport?

Compared to other modes of transport, cycling has many advantages: it promotes health and prevents many diseases, it produces de facto zero emissions of substances harmful to health (for example, in the European Union, the average life expectancy is 11 months lower due to transport pollution!), and reduces noise pollution. It is also space-saving for operations and parking. Moreover, it can be effectively combined with other modes of transportation, especially pedestrian and public transport. This all makes cycling an ideal mode of transport, mainly for short and medium distances and for urban and suburban environments.

In Western Europe, it is common that every fourth journey (the Netherlands, Institute for Transport Policy Analysis) is made on bicycle and both physical health and life satisfaction is higher than in Central Europe.

Even though the Czech Republic has almost 5,000 kilometres of cycle routes and roads with cycling measures, daily commuting for work on bicycle is for the most part

complicated and stressful. The network of cycling infrastructure is not interconnected, the main cycling routes often end up at a frequented first-class road or in a field. For that reason, it is understandable that cycling transport in the Czech Republic is far from fulfilling its potential and many possible users prefer car transportation.

Cyklovízia Project Links Stakeholders and Identifies Crisis Spots

A solution to this issue was presented by the project Cyklovízia 2030. It is a set of measures aimed at establishing a safe traffic network not only for cyclists but also for other modern means. Its vision is to create a complex network of secure main and regional connecting cycle routes and interconnect all municipalities with enlarged jurisdictions.

The principal project bearer is the association Partnerstvo pre mestskú mobilitu (Partnership for Urban Mobility), unifying approximately 100 municipalities, regions, and other trade union organisations and Asociácia krajov Českej republiky (Association of Regions of the Czech Republic). Their representatives make up

a workgroup of regional and urban cycling coordinators, politicians and other officers led by Jaroslav Martinek, National Cycling Coordinator. Apart from national working meetings and trainings, they organise coordination meetings in all regions.

Cyklovízia aims to create a connecting network for cyclists, which operates similar to road transport, and which enables the following:

- Take into account the transportation needs of inhabitants and ensure the establishment of a traffic space for active mobility within cities or in their surroundings.
- Support a multimodal traffic system thanks to connections to public transport stops.
- Provide a safe traffic space in urbanistically intense directions from district metropolises to regional centres.
- Reflect the routing of the main long-distance cycling routes (the purpose is to make such adjustments that the long-distance cycling route satisfies the traffic needs of the inhabitants of the particular area).

Current Status and Identified System Barriers

The essence of interconnection of the entire cycling network and occurrence of non-transparent and dangerous spaces mainly lies in structural and legislative aspects:

- Cycling tracks fall under local communication owned and administered by municipalities. During planning, it is necessary to bear in mind the overall



↓ The bridge over Bečva in the municipality Ústí with the participation of Jozef Suchánek, Governor of the Olomouc Region, and Michal Zách, Deputy Regional Governor for Transport. Source: Olomouc Region and Archive of Municipality Ústí



throughput of the catchment area network across the borders of municipalities. This requires both complex coordination and financing.

- Despite national strategic documents, municipalities have diverse priorities and possibilities of financing, which creates an extremely demanding environment for new construction at the 6,000 municipalities.
- Drawing subsidies is unreasonably restricted. For example, many cycle routes go through forest pathways or paved roads with a ban on motor vehicles. At this moment, it is not possible to draw finances for them in the standard way.
- Conflicting places require approvals from many local actors (police, ministry of internal affairs, department of transport, etc.), which reflect personal viewpoints.
- No cycle tracks are created (such as for example in Germany) at building of line constructions (highways, drainage basins), because it would include paying rent for the use of the land.
- Current parking minimums promote vehicle transport and artificially create a dominant mode of transportation.

↑ Jaroslav Martinek – National Cycling Coordinator of the Czech Republic at the ceremonial opening of a connection on the cycle route Bečva. The project communication offers special cycling wear for coordinators with creative patterns from the UAX workshop. Photo: author unknown



Aim of Czech Project CYKLOVIZE 2030

The aim of the project is to increase safety of cyclists, pedestrians and motorists through the creation of a complex and safe transport network for pedestrians and cyclists under the name CYKLOVIZE 2030. This vision can be carried out thanks to European, national, regional, and other sources, which are cumulatively planned up to 17 billion Czech Crowns. The project wants to motivate municipalities to prepare solutions that can help eliminate accident sites, realise new cycle corridors, and present solutions that will inspire re-marking or complete cancellation of unsuitable cycle routes leading to busy roads.

Photo: Andrej Ištók



Solutions Stand on Four Pillars

The above-mentioned shortcomings can be systematically addressed by creating a strong peloton of stakeholders, which would have both political and executive powers (see “Cyklovízia bearers”). The workgroup of specialists and cycling coordinators across Czechia operates on four primary points:

- 1 Elaboration of methodology for assessment of safety of cycle communications.
- 2 Optimisation of backbone routes and identification of risk spots at backbone routes and selected corridors along the first- and second-class roads through the portal stavbycyklo.cz.
- 3 Draft measures for elimination of these spots based on the work of the Commission for Coordination of Development of Infrastructure for Active Mobility, created by the Ministry of Transport of the Czech Republic (together with other organisations).
- 4 Emphasis on medialisation and presentation of particular outcomes.

“The Netherlands is often considered a country with ideal conditions for cycling. However, like you have hills, we have headwinds. In the end, the decisive role is played by infrastructure and human factors. From this point of view, Czechia has a great potential for cycling.” says Daan Huising, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Czech Republic.



Working meeting of cycling coordinators at an educational seminar in the grounds of the Dutch embassy, in the presence of the Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in the Czech Republic Daan Huising and expert on cycling planning Ruben Loendersloot. Photo: Jitka Vrtalová

How Does It Look in Practice?

A wonderful demonstration of a successful outcome is the creation of a 2.7-kilometre-long connection and cycling bridge on the cycle route Bečva. At one of the most beautiful cycle routes in the Czech Republic, with an overall length of 153 kilometres, part of the route between the city Hranice and Moravou and municipality Ústí was missing. Until summer last year, people had to bypass this section – first over a considerable altitude difference, then on a frequented expressway. Following

the opening of the connection, the entire cycle route is safe and suitable both for daily commuting to work and recreational activities of families with children.

Planned and implemented projects are medialised and presented in summary at the platform www.citychangers.cz, which attempts to connect the project with ambassadors – citizens and politicians advocating for particular improvements.

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.

Illustration author: Kristína Uhráková, Pressink



More butts on bikes!



Why We Need More Women Cyclists

Views from the streets of Bratislava, together with some figures from an older census of cyclists carried out by *Cyklokoalícia*, say that the most frequent bike riders are fast-transiting men. But where are the female cyclists?

Author:
Zora Kalka Pauliniová

The author combines her role as an architect and facilitator in the city development and creation of public spaces. Every day you can meet her on her bicycle and with a camera in the streets of Bratislava, documenting what she is doing.

Photos:
Zora Kalka Pauliniová
Illah van Oijen
Marek Jančúch

Illustrations used in this article are from CYCLE UP! International Poster Competition 2024.

Authors:
p.26.: Monika Litwa
p. 28: Auguste Sturlyte



The topic of ‘women on bikes’ is an important yet unexplored issue in Slovakia. “Traffic represents up to one third of greenhouse gases emissions of the largest cities of the world and is also the biggest source of toxic air pollution. To lower these emissions, we must increase the numbers of cyclists, which means we must get more women on bicycles,” writes Tiffany Lam, a famous activist and researcher of urban policies devoted to understanding the differences between the genders in cycling and closing the gender gap.[2]. Besides combatting climate change, cycling transportation helps solve congestion, increased emissions, bad air quality, and safety on roads. Women could thus become a crucial part of the solution. But why is the ratio of men and women on bicycles still significantly to our disadvantage?

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Do men have a different perception of danger than women, which results in lower numbers of women on bicycles? How are social roles and specifics of various target groups reflected in the creation of cycle routes? Why do local governments or the state often plan as if there were no women on bicycles or there should be none?

I Am a Woman and I Ride a Bicycle

I am a woman, a senior and a cyclist. Until I turned 50, I had not had a bicycle of my own. When I was a child, I did not get a bicycle, unlike my brother, and it was only much later that I could borrow an old Favorit, which we had found in the cellar. I did not know I had to push the brake when somebody was riding opposite me. When the chain fell, I could not put it back. And it is quite unclear to me how

I could have made a bicycle trip to Devín and back on a one-gear Eska bicycle (also a borrowed one). When after many years I set off for a family cycling trip with my children, I rode all the way on the lowest gear because I did not know I could change it. Incomprehensible? For me too – when I look back.

Today, I ride all day long and almost all year long. In rain, wind, light or darkness, in the city or outside of it. I cycle on tiled paths or



Author of the article, Zora Pauliniová at Dobrý trh 2024, Photo: Marek Jančúch

asphalt roads, on slippery leaves. I have experience with ice-crusted roads or slush. I have fallen off and have been run over by a car twice.

Today, I can ride defensively and perceive many stimuli at once. However, I can see that my feelings are permeated by the fact that I am a person nobody has taught to ride. Issues of safety and comfort are very important and that is why I choose the streets I ride. If possible, I avoid riding on roads with

cars and observe how the cycle lanes are slowly getting better. Unfortunately, not everywhere and not fast enough.

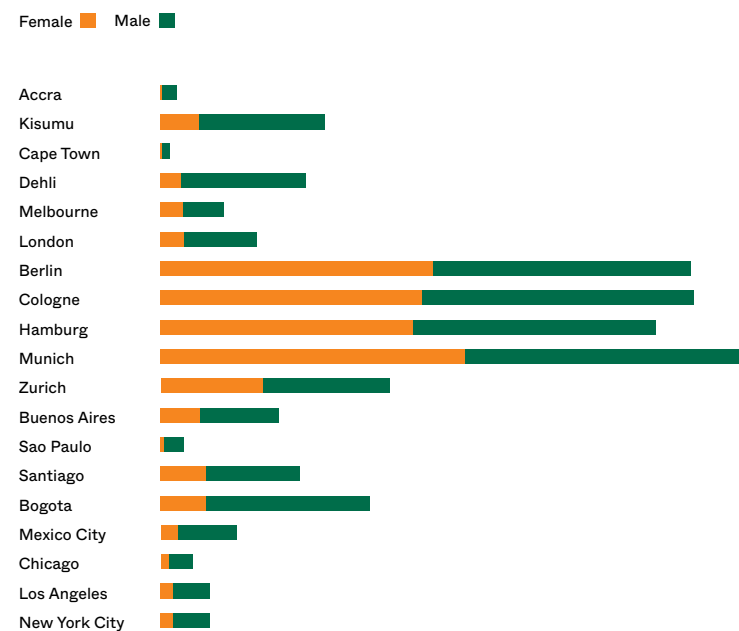
What Influences the Ratio of Cycling Men and Women?

“The difference in numbers of male cyclists and female cyclists is one of the most straightforward pieces of evidence of gender inequality in traffic, especially in cities and areas with low numbers of cyclists,” says Sophia Willmes,

Differences in cycling by gender

Gender differences in cycling in big cities. In some cities (Denmark, the Netherlands, Germany), the percentage share of men and women is balanced, but in other cities it is not so [3].

Many cities are missing in the survey, such as Copenhagen, where 50% of bicycle travellers are women. [4] Source: ResearchGate [5]



editor of the Buycycle blog. Data showing the differences in numbers of male and female cyclists demand an enquiry into the reasons. Studies have shown [6] that women travel on bicycles less frequently than men, that they are generally more cautious and ride less in environments they consider risky. This gender difference persists across different countries.

Countries perceived as most safe for cyclists (the Netherlands, Denmark and Germany) have high levels of cycling infrastructure and a high number of people on bicycles [9],[10]. The number of fatal bicycle accidents per billion kilometres travelled is the lowest in these countries (15.9 in Denmark and 17.6 in the Netherlands) compared to countries such as France and Great Britain, where cycling is less common. Data at the same time shows that in countries with developed cycling infrastructure, the share of women and men on bicycles is balanced.

Gender Inequality and What Influences It

One of the factors often mentioned as a reason for gender inequality is physical abilities, which are different in women and men, and which can influence their capability to cope with traffic situations.

Another factor is personal experience and perception of risk. Men and women can react differently to traffic environments, including traffic density and speed, or behaviour of other road users. Women who have experienced harassment on the streets can be more sensitive to risks of riding a bicycle after dark, at night, or in non-open spaces.

Another significant factor is availability, quality and design of the cycling infrastructure. We often see a network of cycle pathways copying the city's main traffic corridors or integration of cycle routes into the main traffic flow, which can deter mainly women.

Also crucial are social and cultural factors, including social norms.

It is probable that we expect different behaviour from men than from women. Gender differences in perception of risks and social roles of women are, according to blogger and cyclist Sophie Willmes, the most crucial factors influencing gender inequality. How do they manifest themselves in practice?

Women often travel differently than men, mainly due to their social responsibilities, such as, for example, caring for children or relatives, and performing household duties. They spend much more time on these activities than men [11]; they have different needs and different traffic patterns. They make use of 'road chaining', where they travel more complex journeys using more means of transportation, combining more destinations within one journey. They often prefer less frequented routes or times outside the peak hours.

A 2021 study on the safety of cycling infrastructure confirmed that segregated cycle lanes relate to significant improvement of safety of people on bicycles [14]. The discussion on different perceptions of safety in men and women was enriched by a 2023 study by the Czech association Automat [13], in which more than 1,200 respondents evaluated 16 cycling infrastructure measures on roads.

The resulting report by Michal Šindelář revealed that perception of safety and popularity is for the most part influenced by the type of measure. On a scale evaluating the feeling of safety from 1 to 10, in first place by a large margin was a structurally segregated cycle lane, followed by separate cycle lane, picto corridor, and situation without any measures in last place. The research also investigated the differences in perception of infrastructure by gender. It turned out that the 'worse' the measure was evaluated, the bigger difference there was in perception in men and women, and the feeling of danger increased in women. Segregated cycle lanes were perceived by the majority of people as very

A new generation having experience with cycling transportation is growing up. Photo: Zora Pauliniová



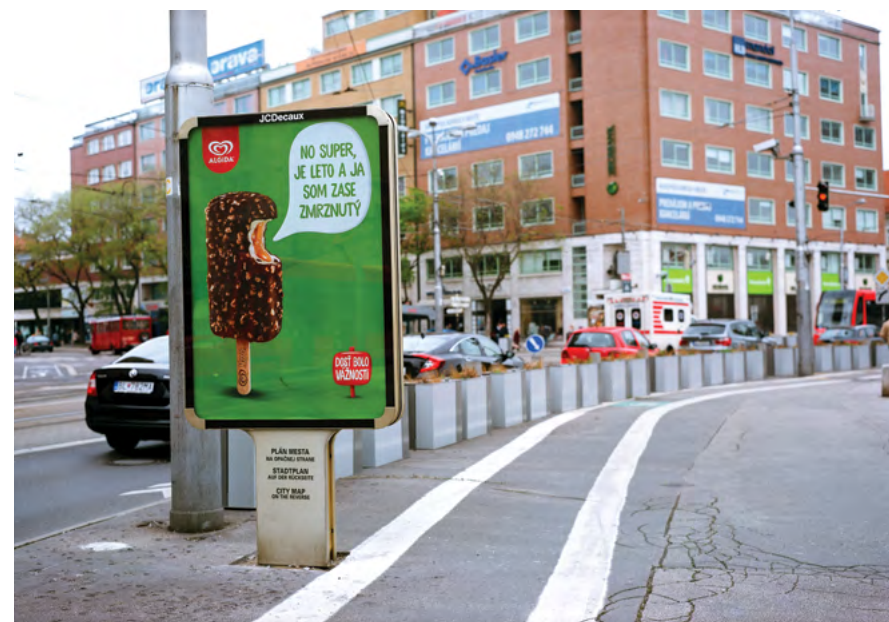
Mother accompanying her children on the way from school. Photo: Zora Pauliniová



Who would dare to use such a cycle lane? Example from Bratislava: street Ul. 29. augusta. Such situations can be experienced on Špitálska, Mýtna, Radlinského, or other streets. Photo: Zora Pauliniová



A cumulative barrier on the route shows that even though the law enables it, children with parents are not taken into consideration. The sad fact is these changes were part of a project aimed at bringing greater safety and comfort to the location. Photo: Illah van Oijen

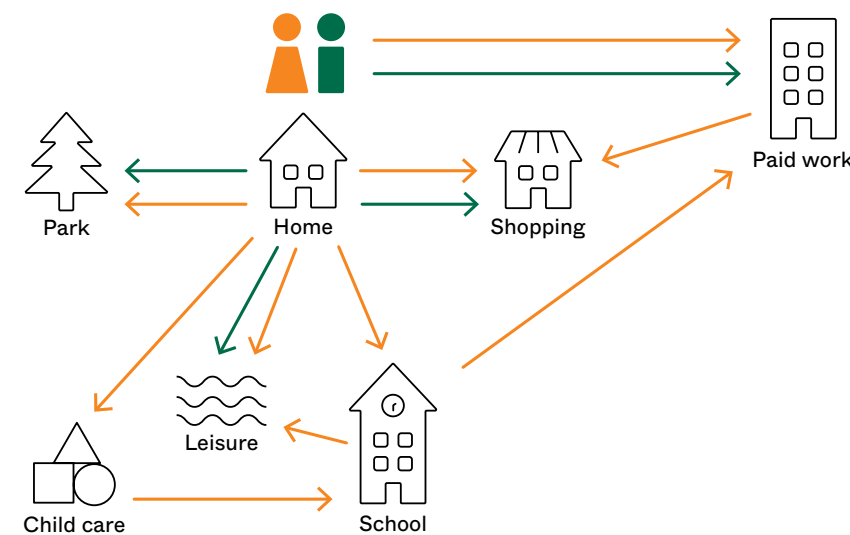


Instead of a safe ride on a separated cycle track, the solution forces parents with children or seniors to ride in the stream of cars on the road. Photo: Illah van Oijen

Mobility of women

Women travel different routes than men. Not due to their personal preferences but following particular duties that result from their social roles. It is a mobility of care [12].

	Women 30-39 years	Men 30-39 years
Paid work	30 %	50 %
Care work	20 %	7 %
Leisure	24 %	21 %
Shopping	15 %	13 %
Other	11 %	9 %



If the cycle lanes on Vajanského were not protected by the concrete kerbstones, they would very probably never be used by parents with children. Example from Bratislava, Vajanského nábrežie. Photo: Zora Pauliniová



Public spaces near schools have been dedicated to flowerpots and safer crossings. However, it is possible that due to pressure from the public, the space will turn back to parking usage.

safe and the difference in perception in men and women was minimal. More detailed information can be found on the website of Automat [15] and in the research report itself [16].

Let's Give Space Back to People

Looking at the cycling infrastructure in Bratislava, it sometimes seems as if the opinions of women were not considered during the planning stage. Female cyclists remain in the blind spot of planners and decision-makers,

and become invisible due to various reasons.

Apart from several politically bold-er steps (introduction of parking policy, construction of cycle lanes on Vajanského nábrežie), Bratislava continues to prepare and implement dangerous cycle lanes that are narrowly integrated in the traffic flow, and female cyclists then often find themselves squeezed between parked and moving cars. It is hard to imagine that a mother with children or an older cycling couple would be riding down such a cycle lane.

However, there is one current city activity that deserves praise, which is aimed at creating safe spaces for children – City for Children [17]. It is about planning with regard to children, for example by creating forecourts before schools, which eliminate the space for cars and reorganise the space in favour of the more vulnerable road users.

Calming down streets, narrowing lanes for cars, comfortable barrier-free crossings, incorporating greenery into asphalt fields, or

ridding pavements of parked cars does not provide safety to children only, but also takes into account the mobility of women, parents or older adults and improves conditions for cycling.

We Are Building Safe and Effective Cycling Infrastructure

During the pandemic, many European cities quickly introduced cycling measures, which proved their worth, and so the local governments have kept them as permanent ones. In places where

the cities did not introduce such measures, an overall change in traffic and cycling infrastructure is still necessary, which would be friendly and highly secure for the vulnerable groups and which would primarily link the cycle routes to an integrated network.

The situation will not be solved if the measures are primarily focused on solving individual car traffic. We do not have enough finance, time or physical space to first build park-and-ride schemes or collective garages, to construct

ring roads or tunnels, and only then to focus on cycle routes [18]. It is necessary to start with them immediately.

Higher visibility of male cyclists in streets, who ride the main routes even in peak hours more often than women, is reflected in the construction of cycle routes copying the main traffic thoroughfares of the city. However, at the same time it is necessary to build interconnected cycle routes, which will cover shorter destinations, such as kindergartens, parks and playgrounds, shops and services, and which together with barrier-free measures will make the city permeable to cycling women. If the cycling infrastructure is meant to be inclusive, it should contain protected cycle lanes, but also safe intersections or raised pedestrian crossings.

It is also necessary to improve lighting and marking, reduce speed limits for motor vehicles, and introduce traffic calming, which would not only reduce the

risk and severity of accidents but also of emissions in the air. Some measures in favour of women often require only minor interventions that will significantly improve the situation.

Planning With Women

Those who plan and decide must understand how women and other vulnerable groups function within the cycling traffic.

In our city, there is no information about how many of the cycling people are women. We do not have studies that explore the specifics of female cycling compared to the male one. We do not even hear voices of experts or politicians that such investigations are necessary.

If mayors, urbanists and road users consider an average cyclist to be an average man, it is not surprising that there are still fewer cycling women than men. And it would only suffice to take the opinions and needs of women into consideration [19].

Safety by gender, median and its comparison by gender (women/men share)

More detailed information on these research results can be found on the website of Automat [15] and in the research report [16].

	Median		Median share (women/men)
	Man	Woman	
Segregated cycle lane	8.62	8.43	98 %
Dedicated cycle lane + 2	7.54	7.56	100 %
Dedicated cycle lane + 1	7.11	6.66	94 %
Separate cycle lane + 2	6.50	6.52	100 %
Separate cycle lane + 1	6.01	5.50	92 %
Separate cycle lane + 1 + park.	5.82	5.44	94 %
Dedicated cycle lane + 1 + park.	5.66	5.23	93 %
Separate cycle lane 1 + 1	5.40	4.71	87 %
Picto 1 + 1	4.14	3.40	82 %
Picto + 1	4.13	3.26	79 %
Picto + 1 + park.	3.72	3.31	89 %
Without 1 + 1	3.16	2.21	70 %
Without + 2	3.06	1.97	64 %
Without + 1	3.07	1.87	61 %
Without + 1 + park.	2.84	1.92	68 %
Tailback without possibility to overtake	2.77	1.65	59 %

Women should be involved in the process of planning in both the mapping of needs and various stages of decision-making, not only in investment projects but also in the creation of strategies, concepts and other public policies.

We could use public meetings and workshops, surveys and questionnaires, cooperation with local organisations, planning of terrain, but also testing of temporary solutions. The local government can offer even more instruments, such as participation of inhabitants in commissions or citizens' councils, or their engagement in the evaluation of tenders.

An important role in public engagement in decision-making can be played by associations, civil societies and non-profit organisations, which promote the topics of gender equality, safety and inclusion, and attempt to achieve them through lobbying of politicians (such as Cyklokoalícia or Znepokojené matky), and also through engagement on the level of communities and raising awareness through diverse activities (cycling rides Critical Mass and Kidical Mass, activities of Cyklokuchyňa).

We Got Used to Cars in the Streets. Let's Change it...

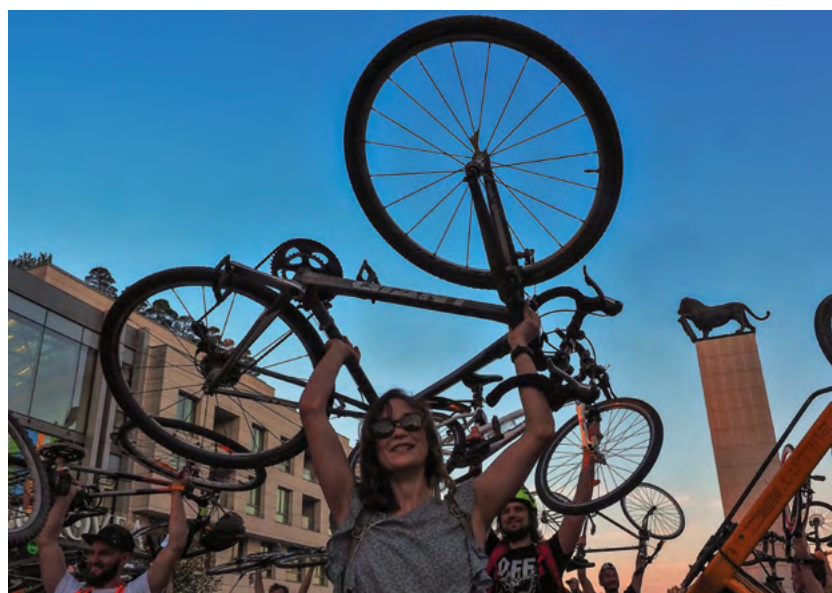
When I get on my bicycle, the entire city opens up for me. I start my journey in front of my house and park my bicycle where I need to, since there is an increasing number of bicycle stands in the city. I ride every day. I do not mind the cold at all – the movement on the bike and good gear are sufficient protection. During the summer heat, I can choose a pace that lets the air fan me pleasantly.

I love cycling counter-directions, which enable me to weave through the city and get quickly to where I need to. I enjoy pedestrian zones with the option of bike entry, the separated screened-off cycle track on Blumentálska, comfortable Starý most, but also riding along

Attractive actions involving various organisations and initiatives (Znepokojené matky, Cyklokoalícia, Critical Mass) can help attract the public's attention to the topic of cycling transport.

For more than 13 years, the initiative Critical Mass has been organising monthly cycling rides with the aim to raise awareness of cycling people on the streets of Bratislava. Photo: Zora Pauliniová

Whole-day programme offered by non-profit organisations. Cyklokoalícia and Znepokojené matky at the autumn festival Živé Račko. Photo: Zora Pauliniová



Those who plan and decide must understand how women and other vulnerable groups function within the cycling traffic.

shared pavements towards Rača, or the cycle lanes to Petržalka along Chorvátske rameno. When I cross the centre, I greet couriers I know or my friends, and when I am not in a hurry I stop for a quick chat.

I feel sorry for the oldest and longest counter-direction track on Sibírska, which families with children started to use as a promenade from the housing estate towards the park on Račianske námestie, but which was cancelled at the turn of the years 2023/2024 due to parking cars. I am afraid of 'black holes' at intersections lacking safety cycle crossings, I fear riding down cycle lanes squeezed between parked and moving cars, and I marvel at how easily people have got used to areas of parked cars that can be seen everywhere due to the long-year absence of a parking policy. The city was overwhelmed not only by cars but also by long-held beliefs, thanks to which many people cannot even imagine better solutions in favour of pedestrians and cyclists.

And so, I hope that those who are now conducting heated discussions will understand that as a cyclist I am only asking for what I am entitled to, and I believe that it is also in favour of other women, better streets and a friendlier city.

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Do you know what you see? Write!

What does the cityscape tell us about the cultural, historical and personal value public space plays in our society? "Do you know what you see?" invites you to share your personal story, a memory, a (historical) fact, or anything you think is worth mentioning.



Do you know what you see? is a regular column by Illah van Oijen on the CTZN website. A complex visual anthropology of public spaces by asking people for their stories about places.



Lessons learned from the mecca of urban cycling

The first bike lane in Denmark was established in 1892 along the esplanade in Copenhagen. Fast forward to the 21st century and in 2020, Copenhagen had a whopping 386 km of bike paths, making navigating the city a pleasant and safe experience. In contrast, the first bike paths in Poland weren't established in Poznań until 42 years after the first ones in Denmark. What lessons can Polish and other central European cities learn from the Danish capital?

Author:
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The author is an urbanist, business developer and podcaster

From the seat of a bike courier

I am not writing this article and sharing recommendations solely because I live in Copenhagen, am an urbanist promoting sustainable solutions, or bike daily. I am writing it from the perspective of someone who has ridden thousands of kilometres on the Copenhagen bike lanes as a bicycle courier during the pandemic. I had this experience exactly at the beginning of the pandemic when most people stayed indoors, restaurants were closed, and one of the few ways of getting food was to order it online with door-to-door delivery. I write it from the perspective of someone who has biked in Warsaw and Krakow. Although it has become safer to cycle around, there is still a lot of work to be done.

Not the only place on Earth where cycling is popular, but...

Copenhagen is a city where more than 1.2 million kilometres are cycled daily, with its all-time highest

numbers accounting for 62% of all citizens commuting to work, school or university by bicycle. To illustrate the city's dominance in worldwide bicycle statistics, it is useful to note that almost as many people commute by bicycle in greater Copenhagen as in the entire United States.

While Copenhagen is not the only place on Earth where cycling is popular, it has received significant attention for its bicycle culture in the last 15–20 years. Much of this attention can be credited to Michael Colville-Andersen, a journalist and urbanist who began photographing biking citizens and posting photos of them on a blog in 2006. Over the years, his photo cycling blog, "Bicycle Chic", gained traction, contributing to the expansion of Copenhagen's reputation as the cycling city. Colville-Andersen posted thousands of photos showcasing cyclists in elegant clothes, high heels, cycling with large Christmas trees, musical instruments, or transporting whole families in cargo bikes. He also coined the famous

Photo:
Marcin Wojciech Zebrowski in the streets of Copenhagen

term 'Copenhagenise' meaning to apply Copenhagen mobility rules to other cities.

Today, Copenhagen actively promotes sustainable mobility, encouraging residents to limit car use and opt for more eco-friendly means of transportation. Cycling is not just a way to commute to work here – it is a lifestyle. It also demonstrates equality, as both interns or student workers and CEOs of the same company often arrive at work by bike. Social or status differences seem to disappear when everyone embraces this easy-to-use and practical mode of transportation. One of the key factors favouring the popularity of bicycles in Copenhagen is the compactness of the city. Residents can reach almost anywhere on two wheels in just 15 minutes, making cycling an incredibly efficient means of transportation. The city has also invested substantial resources in expanding cycling infrastructure. From an urban planning standpoint, the integration of



cycling lanes and bike-sharing programmes enhances overall transportation networks. Well-designed cycling infrastructure offers a more inclusive and interconnected city, facilitating easier navigation for cyclists. Copenhagen serves as a great example and a case study.

Cycling evolution of Copenhagen and Central Europe region

Copenhagen's cycling success didn't come overnight. The city's journey reflects the evolution of urban transportation. Back in 1890, there were 2,500 bicycles in the city, but within 17 years, that figure had skyrocketed to 80,000. Bicycle usage steadily grew over the following decades, peaking during periods like the Second World War when petrol was expensive and strictly rationed, making cycling the primary mode of transportation in Copenhagen.

However, everything changed in the 1950s and 1960s with the decline in utility cycling due to

Well-designed cycling infrastructure offers a more inclusive and interconnected city, facilitating easier navigation for cyclists. Copenhagen serves as a great example and a case study.

the rise in car ownership and the prioritisation of motor vehicles in road construction. This led to decreased cycling safety and a shocking drop in cycling modal share to just 10% by the early 1970s. Then, during the 1970s and 1980s, the energy crisis hit again, contributing to a new environmental movement and cycling renaissance. Car-free Sundays were introduced to conserve oil reserves, allowing cyclists to hit the streets again. Grassroots movements and protests, such as those by the Danish Cyclists Federation and the 'White Crosses' action, demanded better

cycling infrastructure and safety. These efforts, coupled with national planning reforms, led to the normalisation of separate cycle tracks in the early 1980s, despite initial resistance to alternative cycling routes on quiet residential streets.

The success of Copenhagen's cycling culture lies in the prioritisation of functionality and traffic safety in infrastructure development. While Denmark is known for stylish architectural designs, practical considerations significantly shape the urban landscape. Danish road rules, grounded in

simple and logical principles, foster a shared understanding among road users. Elements such as elevated bike lanes, traffic signs and road markings are expressions of this logical framework.

Since the late 1990s, when the city began its monitoring system, cycling in Copenhagen has been steadily rising again. By 2004, it reached 41%, and by 2010, it hit 50% for residents living within the city limits. The practical necessity of creating a cycling-friendly urban landscape, emphasising functionality and traffic safety in infrastructure design, has resulted in Copenhagen establishing itself as a bicycle mecca.

The first bike paths in Poland were established in Poznań, but significantly later than in Copenhagen, appearing 42 years afterward. Approximately 34 km of new bike lanes were approved in 1934 in Poznań, with plans for a network totalling around 70 km. In the 1950s, bike paths were also created in Krakow's Nowa Huta. However, substantial developments occurred after 1989. Poznań took the lead in making cycling a part of public policy, with the city council adopting a resolution on bike paths in 1991.

Krakow followed in 1993, incorporating cycling into its first transport policy, aiming for a substantial increase in the share of cycling in overall travel. In the late 1990s, other cities, like Warsaw and Łódź, opted for transport policies, but they were less specific and ambitious in setting measurable goals. Unfortunately, many of these policies remained on paper and were never implemented. Yet, bikes were still in the public domain, particularly in smaller towns or rural areas, where cycling was a primary mode of transportation due to its ease, affordability and convenience.

Although Polish cities are now undergoing a bike renaissance, there arise some questions: Have they become more or less bike-friendly? What lessons can they learn from Copenhagen's approach?

What can be applied to Polish cities?

I recently spent a couple of days in the Polish capital, Warsaw. While on a cycling trip, I heard parents repeatedly cautioning their children to be careful of approaching bicycles. I heard phrases like 'Watch out, bikes coming!' several times. It struck me how parents emphasised the need to be cautious near bike lanes, as if bikes were dangerous and rapidly approaching threats ready to wreak havoc. The sad truth is that people sometimes cycle or use electric scooters on pavements. In some parts of the city, where there are dedicated bicycle lanes, they might be complicated to navigate, with unexpected turns or even stops without warning. I also cannot recall a cycle path in Krakow or Warsaw that would be elevated compared to the level of the car lane. Nor is it lower than the pavements are.

I could not help myself but compare it to Denmark, where I did not recall hearing any similar warnings. In Copenhagen, cycling is deeply ingrained in the culture. Children are often transported in cargo bikes or plastic seats attached to bicycles, creating a more relaxed and integrated biking experience from a young age. Children are often immersed in the cycling culture from the get-go, and from early years, they bravely join the endless flows of cyclists on the bicycle lanes. They would often cycle on the right side, close to the curb, following the rule of leaving the left side free for overtaking.

What can the citizens of Warsaw learn from that? I think it's essential to transform the perception of bicycles. Instead of treating them as potential dangers, we should acknowledge them as a normal and safe mode of transport. But there will be no growth in bicycle usage without the infrastructure. On a positive note, the Warsaw city council has been investing in infrastructure and has reached more than 700 km of cycling infrastructure. This seems like a significant

Acknowledging the importance of responsible cycling behaviour, infrastructure development efforts to ensure everyone, including or rather especially drivers, adapts to this new reality.



Biking lanes in Warsaw, Photo: Marcin Wojciech Zebrowski

amount compared to 'only' 385 km in Copenhagen, but Warsaw is also four times larger than Copenhagen. The city of Warsaw has been measuring bicycle traffic since 2014, and the numbers are increasing. More people are opting for the bicycle as their daily means of transportation to work or school. The measurements taken in 2022 during the morning rush hour are significantly higher than in previous years. There were over 37% more cyclists registered than in 2021 and over 58% more than in 2020. It is particularly interesting that the numbers grew tremendously compared to the year when the pandemic started. The results from 2022 can be explained by people returning to offices and finding new, easier and healthier ways to commute. But similarly to Copenhagen in the 1970s, it was the record-high fuel prices that might have encouraged some people to choose the bicycle over the car.

But biking is also on the rise in smaller Polish cities. One specific town is following Copenhagen's example and branding itself as pedestrian and cyclist friendly. The town of Pleszew gained international recognition by claiming to

be the first Polish 15-minute city. This innovative concept aims to create a city where essential facilities and services can be easily accessible within a maximum of 15 minutes on foot, by bicycle or by public transport.

Pleszew, a small urban-rural municipality in southern Greater Poland, 92 km from Poznań, the city where the first Polish cycle lanes were built, has embraced the concept of the 15-minute city as a response to the challenges of depopulation and attracting residents back to the city. The idea is to make various functions of the city, such as schools, shops, offices, clinics, cultural institutions, and sports and recreation venues, easily accessible within a short distance to enhance the quality of life for its residents. Pleszew used to be a typical example of a smaller, provincial town. Since the 1990s, additional parking spaces for ubiquitous cars have appeared on the roads, and even more frequently on pavements, while streets themselves have been maximally widened. The priority was, of course, the car.

Arkadiusz Ptak, the Mayor of Pleszew, emphasises that the transformation of a town's brand does not need to be a huge burden for the budget. According to Ptak, an investment of about 20,000 zloty (4,500 EUR) in the promotional campaign is a relatively small amount, like in the case of Michael Colville-Andersen's photographs of cyclists, which transformed Copenhagen's brand almost for free. Another lesson learned from Copenhagen is that, where possible, bicycle traffic is separated from both the car and pedestrian traffic, emphasising the crucial role of proper infrastructure. More often, space for cyclists is allocated from the existing road lane. This is also done 'at the expense' of parking spaces, which is not received well by car users. This car-owner-cyclist antagonism is well-known in many cities worldwide. During replacement of sewer and water infrastructure, roads are narrowed, thus creating designated spaces for cyclists. The small size gives

→ Comparison of sizes, population and cycling paths length

Source: GUS/DST portalkomunalny.pl/krakow-posiada-235-km-sciezek-i-tras-rowerowych-ma-byc-jej-jeszcze-wiecej-408269/

	Warsaw	Copenhagen	Kraków	Pleszew
Area (km ²)	517.2	179.8	327	13.38
Population (2017)	1.765.000	602.481	766.000	17.500
Cycling paths (km)	735	385	235	37.8

the town an advantage, allowing for smooth cooperation between all road authorities. Initially, mistakes were made, mainly related to using pavement bricks for road and bike path construction, but now, only red asphalt is used.

A new perspective from the bike rider's seat

So how can Polish, and Central European cities, apply some of the things learned from Copenhagen? During the pandemic, bicycles re-emerged as a key means of transportation, gaining a new level of popularity worldwide. While public bike-sharing systems, such as Veturilo in Warsaw, faced temporary closures during lockdowns, causing controversy, in other places, like New York, the use of public bicycles increased as people turned to cycling as a safe mode of transportation. The authorities in Berlin declared the measures taken so far a success and presented an official document regulating new dimensions for bicycle paths during the pandemic. In New Zealand, pavements were expanded to allow pedestrians to maintain distance, and in Bogota, 76 kilometres of new bicycle lanes were opened overnight. This dichotomy will be the most crucial factor in determining which Polish cities will become new bicycle heaven and which will remain car-oriented.

It's worth noting that also in Poland, the pandemic has changed people's perspectives on cycling,

potentially leading to long-term consequences for the development of bike-friendly cities and shifts in societal transportation habits. Acknowledging the importance of responsible cycling behaviour, infrastructure development should be accompanied by educational efforts to ensure everyone, including or rather especially drivers, adapts to this new reality.

The focus should shift from a wary approach to bicycles to a shared responsibility for navigating and coexisting with cycling infrastructure. Warsaw and other Polish cities will not become the next Copenhagen overnight. Spoiler alert: they will never become a second Copenhagen and they never should. But with ongoing infrastructure improvements and a cultural shift towards embracing cycling, Polish and other Central European cities can become more bike-friendly and enjoyable for everyone.



A poet: A bike trip is like a temporary exile from routine

“The bicycle can be perceived also as a musical instrument of movement because you use it to interpret the landscape’s musical score. I associate cities like Prague, Berlin, or Krakow with cascades of various rustles and precious moments of silence. It is reminiscent of a minimalistic piece of music, in which susurrations sometimes builds up to noise,” says Ondřej Buddeus, Czech writer, poet, translator, and university pedagogue at the Academy of Fine Arts in Prague. He is also a passionate cyclist, for whom constructing bikes is a form of meditation.

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Photos:
Michal Ureš

Let us start nostalgically. Do you remember your first bike ride?

Yes, I remember that moment. The sudden feeling of balance in your own hands and the risk of falling, which then does not come. There were a lot of emotions in that moment. Fear and insecurity, but at the same time, joy and pride in keeping my balance and at the same time controlling a machine that is big and quite heavy. Such moments lodge in the memory well. The first bike ride is at the same time like a small, symbolic emancipation. Suddenly, you leave behind the parent who helped you not to fall, and then they only support you from a distance or call out: 'Brake! Brake!' When I sometimes give a lecture on cycling, I ask the audience who remembers their first ride. Generally, it is about half of the room.

Most people go to a shop to buy a bike. But you construct them, not only for yourself but also for your friends. What does such a process involve? And what does it bring you?

It is like a standard hobby for me; I wouldn't want it to be my job. Constructing a bike involves more diverse pleasures. I browse Internet marketplaces and search for spare parts with potential, from which I construct the bicycles. It is often somewhat procrastinated fun, but at the same time, I get to meet a lot of people who have a similar passion and whom I would never meet – from bricklayers to university professors. Another joy of it is to assemble the collected parts. None of them has any meaning alone, by itself. Only when I put it all together is there a genially simple, accurate machine standing in front of me, which transforms my physical power and mental condition into kinetic energy. Only such a thing through the use of which arise manifold experiences and true endorphins are released.

This is a complexity that fascinates me. When I construct bikes, inside I am very calm, concentrated, full-empty. It is a form of meditation to me, just as the ride afterwards is a mobile meditation. And



The bicycle is an interpretive instrument of the landscape – urban or open-air.
Photo: Michal Ureš

since I construct more bikes than I ride, the ready machine often ends up with some of my friends, or their friends. And then, after some time, they send a message: 'I'm on a trip, it is fantastic. Thanks, greetings!', and attach a photo. This multiplies the joy.

You are a poet and writer. How does cycling inspire you in your creative work?

For a long time, I thought that moving around the countryside on a bike would be a suitable tool for some thinking. Then I had to admit that it is not so. Because riding a bike, unlike walking, is after all connected with higher physical intensity, and thanks to speed also requires greater vigilance to avoid collisions, and so I actually don't think of anything. I simply am, I breathe, feel myself and everything around me. Therefore, mobile meditation.

I have found out that people look for the move that does them good and through which they find relief from everyday life. Therefore, it makes no sense to recommend swimming, persuade somebody to ride a bike or to do yoga. Each person needs different physical flow, a different type of physical choreography according to the dynamics of their personality. One likes the unpredictable move of the ball in a collective play; others prefer water that keeps them afloat and which they can swim across. Each move has another level of meaning, some symbolic dynamics. When you are riding a bike, you are constantly moving forward, to keep the balance, and you leave everything behind.

You are escaping reality, but at the same time, you are coming back to it because you are making an imaginary circle. On a proper trip I feel like it is a temporary exile from routine. And it actually works like that even when I go by bike to work. Even a short journey can be a journey to oneself when the person is entirely in it. And there is no other way when being on a bike because inattention can lead to a collision.

When you then come home from cycling, do you reflect this ride in your creative work? Does it bring you any stimulus?

The bicycle is an interpretive instrument of the landscape – urban or open-air. An instrument of how to experience it physically, how to touch it, how to tune in to it. I've found out that all those years in which I have been travelling by bike, my sensitivity to the city has increased. On my routine routes, I notice small changes for better or worse; my assessment of both safe and dangerous situations has improved. I am better at reading the street interactions. Through your body you arrive at a vision of what you wish the city to look like and you can see just as well where its potential is used or neglected, or where the design is explicitly hostile to the inhabitants. When I was travelling around the city by public transport, which comfortably isolates you from the city, I did not perceive anything like that. This disregard of the city is doubled in the car – you only read the street and the traffic in it. The surrounding behind the window of a transportation means is approximately as close as on the computer monitor. When cycling or walking, this isolation does not exist. If such an experience influences my authorial work, then only indirectly. When you are reading a good book, you are in it as much as you are in the surrounding: you enter it, you go through it, you stop. It is a space of signs, which does not delimit itself only by its content, form, stylistics, narrative strategy or metaphorical qualities – that is only a text infrastructure. It delimits itself by whether you find yourself in it while crossing it and whether such a journey, although to an immeasurable extent, becomes part of your experience.

How can we get more people on bikes? What would have to change to make more people use them? Have you got any tips on how to motivate people to move?

The answer is simple. In the moment, the bicycle ride becomes safe, practical, and to a certain



Book Je to jízda: O svobodě na kole ve městě i krajině (It is a Ride: About freedom on a bike in the city and the countryside) Ondřej Buddeus (ed.), kol. Pásek 2021

extent economical time and money-wise. The fact that the city operates well is clear from whether you can see women and children riding in it. For example, in Prague, where I live, the streets were dominated by cyclists for many years due to the intense traffic situation. The situation is, however, changing, and I think it is getting better. This city is still not for children. The fact that in Prague, with a population of one million, there are once per week in warm months 200,000 people riding a bike indicates the potential that cycling transportation would have if there was cycling infrastructure like that in, for example, Krakow or Berlin. When during COVID-19 many European cities built safe cycling routes basically overnight and the transport calmed, much more people started to ride. The



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pandemic is fortunately over. But since, according to statistics, the majority of travels in the city are within 4–6 kilometres, the bicycle is still a logical choice. In the congested city traffic, it is not slower than a car or public transport; you travel from door to door, and when it standardly has wheels with gears, hilly terrain is a minor problem. Moreover, you can get off any time. Sometimes you hear the argument that Prague is not Amsterdam. But Amsterdam of the 1970s looked worse from the point of view of the traffic situation for non-motorised transportation than Prague does today. Change is possible.

Have you got any life hacks for beginner cyclists? For example, a bicycle saddle with a depression for women?

A saddle with a cut-out or a depression is essential for female cycling. Since its beginnings in the 19th century, the bicycle industry has been focused mainly on men and considered performance measures. The 'philosophy' of what a bicycle is followed this. Although a female frame that

could be ridden in a skirt was created, the anatomic differences between men and women were rebuffed by one large simplification: comfortable means soft and wide. And so, a saddle was recommended to women, which is not at all comfortable for a ride longer than 20 minutes. This problem, which basically deters half of the population, has fortunately become the past. But only recently.

I think that anyone who wants to ride within a city in similar conditions to Prague, where there is some infrastructure but it is not connected or logical, should find their own routes. Such ones where you feel safe, and which are less busy. It is safer and more convenient, even though it could mean a short detour. If somebody wants to set off on a bike and comes straight to a frequented conjunction, they will surely be shocked. However, this can be prevented. In Prague, it is often pleasant to combine your own route with hopping on the underground for one part of it – for example, in case the weather gets bad.

Other tips and tricks? Do not ride close to doors of parked cars because someone can swing them open. Cross the rails as diagonally as possible to prevent the wheels to stuck in. Avoid the



glass containers in the most respectful arc possible – there are shards around. It is very important not to hurry up mentally! In urban environments hurrying equals arriving only a couple of minutes sooner.

Other tips and tricks? Do not ride close to doors of parked cars because someone can swing them open. Cross the rails as diagonally as possible to prevent the wheels getting stuck in. Avoid the glass containers in the most respectful arc possible – there are shards around. It is very important not to hurry up mentally! In urban environments, hurrying equals arriving only a couple of minutes sooner. Spare yourself the stress, higher risk and unnecessary emotions. One essential rule: when the situation is not clear, for example at a complicated conjunction, get off your bike and turn into a pedestrian. As a cyclist, you play a specific role in the street theatre, in which you have the advantage of speed, comparable to car transport, but at the same time, you can turn it into a pedestrian one, which is a priority in terms of safety in the city.

So, what does Prague sound like? I refer to an essay of Ján Vitvar and Adela Kudlová from the book *Je to jazda (It is a Ride)*, which you edited, where they wrote that from the bicycle saddle you can best find out how the city 'sounds'.

The bicycle can be perceived also as a musical instrument of movement, because you use it to interpret the landscape's musical score. I associate cities like Prague, Berlin or Krakow with cascades of various rustles and precious moments of silence. It is reminiscent of a minimalistic piece of music, in which susurrations sometimes builds up to noise. Such is the contrast between the expressway on the bridge Nuselský most, which I cross every day, and the silence that 'pours out' of the gate to the garden Katarínska záhrada, which I go past on my way. Prague is acoustically the most beautiful on Sunday morning. You can hear the birds and you know that there used to be a forest here once. As Jindřich Janíček, with whom I am now preparing a children's book on cycling, says: the city is not loud; loud are the cars.

Are there any cases of good practice in Prague? Has anything improved in recent years?

When you are riding a bike, you are constantly moving forward, to keep the balance, and you leave everything behind. You are escaping the reality, but at the same time, you are coming back to it because you are making an imaginary circle. On a proper trip I feel like it is a temporary exile from the routine.



When some larger communication is being repaired, they at least construct cycling lanes. An optimal solution is, of course, complete separation of cyclists from cars. A good trend is cycling two-ways in less hectic places, where both drivers and cyclists must somehow interact amicably, which makes more sense in the city than maintaining an artificial conflict on frequented communications. Prague has well-operating pathways along the river. The main change, however, is that in more pleasant months of the year, a critical number of cyclists appear on the roads and Prague has become safer because people have got somehow used to each other in the traffic. Many drivers are cyclists themselves, although they would not ride within the city. I see more respect in the streets. Fifteen years ago, riding a bike was an adrenaline sport; today it is not anymore.

Scandinavian countries are often held up as examples of good practices. When we look at Central and Eastern Europe, have you come across examples of good practices?

I mentioned Krakow. It connects the new with the very old city. It is traversed by a logical network of cycling paths. Apart from the main ones, there is a good system of cycling two-ways and one can get really anywhere on a bike. Polish people, like the Czechs, enjoy cycling, and the Krakow surroundings adjusted to it.

And in the Czech Republic?

There is probably no city with a perfect infrastructure, and so in Czechia it works best in places with an urban cycling tradition across generations. Nymburg, Pardubice... here they have been riding bicycles since forever.

Does contemporary art reflect the interconnection of cycling with a sustainable lifestyle?

The bicycle is one of the motifs appearing in art and it is possible to even observe a certain tradition of its depiction. Although you can mention artists from Duchamp to Aj Wej-wej, or Lhoták to Kinter in

our territory, the bicycle is mainly a motif or material for another type of expression. If you ask the question like this, very few artists would relate to it, because it puts art into the role of illustration for a necessary change, which is environmental and at the end political. And although there is environmental and political art, it does not want to be an illustration. That's why I would answer this question with 'not quite'. But among contemporary artists, there are many who reflect and articulate the necessity of changes in the relationship between society and nature, and the sources we take from it. Environmental awareness and attention paid to ecological traces that art leaves behind is high nowadays. Many artists refuse to fly to exhibitions abroad and they choose to travel by train. Thus, they engage in a civic way and leave free space to artistic practice. I guess many of them ride bicycles.

Searching for Cycling Stories

Magazine CTZN × students of Bratislava's Academy of Fine Arts



How can documentary photographers reflect sustainability and sustainable mobility? What stories can they tell about the relationship of Slovaks to bicycles and cycling? And how to transform storytelling which could motivate people to

change to bikes into photo documentary work?

The Academy of Fine Arts students from the Department of Photography and New Media have undertaken to find and tell these stories.

For the ctzn platform, they made a series of photos related to the topic of the first issue of the CTZN magazine *CYCLE UP!*, as part of their semestral works under the leadership of pedagogue and photographer Boris Németh.

Have a look at stories of four selected students who talk about their close ones and bicycles.



Emma Kassay

I get anywhere I want.

*I don't need anybody but my bike
which will spend time with me and
take me to*

*All places. I get on and go where
I need to.*





Lukáš Páterek
*On bikes we travel
On bikes we ride
On bikes we sit
On bikes we plant*

*Evidence of my mom
Two bikes...*

*She used the unused
And with time it has
all overgrown
Grew together
Outside, at home
And both are still
standing here.*



Linda Olejárová

The series of photos maps one day with my father, a former cyclist. He got into cycling through his older brother, who was a successful Slovak cyclist. The series is a look at a former sportsman in the age when he nostalgically reminisces of the

vital times. When competition prizes were mostly bags, sleeping bags, sports equipment, cut glass vases, and of course, a medal and a diploma. Today, his cycling is connected with pub culture. With his colleagues in the pub, cycling is constantly present – whether in the

form of a debate or by watching the Tour de France on the mobile phone or on the LCD television, or through books lent to him by a regular who is a librarian.



Na cyklochodníku v okolí Popradu, v poradi stredná športová škola, kušli ktorej zmenili čast cyklochodníka na kombinovanú pre cyklistov a chodcov bez oddelenia pruhov



Posed na starom bicykli, oblečený do starých rodových košeľ, starý bicykel som si postavil v 90-tych rokoch. Sam, napr. na rám bicykla som si kúpil z maľovanej trubky a dal ho pospájkovať na moju mieru, súčiastky prevažne Shimano dokúpené a namontované



Vo vnútri bary pri obľúbených
11-ke Svijský mäz, nepodobajú sa
pôru na obrate nad nami



V spálni, oblacň v Svičten
s vlastným fotoom, tričko sme dostali
na nejakom MTB maratone, ktorých
som sa zúčastňoval v rokoch 2009-2012.
Na stene zariadený obraz P. Sagana s podpismi
mojich bývalých kolegov, ktorí mi ho
dali pri prepustení z bývalých práce,
pod ním mala Linda



My first bicycle.
I remember how my parents could not teach me to ride without the auxiliary wheels. So they gave me a balance bike that my aunts used to learn to ride. It doesn't even have inflatable wheels. One day, I raced it down the yard at my grandma's yelling, but without falling. After that I did not need the auxiliary wheels.



Mom.
I still remember the times when she used to ride me to kindergarten in the children's seat. I grew up on this bike, and so did my sister. Today, my mom uses it to go to work.



Aunt.
My aunt works right opposite our house. She comes to work by bike, which she always leaves in the neighbour's courtyard. The brakes don't work, so whenever she goes home there is this sound of her trying to brake by feet.

Marián Malatinec

Our family lives in a small village where everything is too far to walk to and too close to drive to. And so bicycles have become the best way to move around – to go for fun or work. In the pictures you can see untraditional portraits of a family that has two wheels more.



Neighbour.
This bicycle reminds me of summer holidays when my neighbour used to go to the shop in the morning and his brakes screeched, so it was usually the first sound I heard in the morning.



Grandmother.
Grandmother can be seen walking through the village only rarely. Even if she needs to go just three houses away.



Sister.
She got it as a gift from our friends. It was new. She had ridden it about five times before they bought her an electric scooter. Since then, it takes up space in the garage.



Grandfather.
I have heard a lot of stories about this bike from my grandfather, but I have never seen him ride it.

REFUSE
REDUCE
REUSE
RECYCLE
ROT

CYCLE UP!

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.
Illustration: Dobry trh



Transition from car to e-scooter? All it took was to nudge people

An experiment showed that providing an in-app choice significantly increased the share of e-scooter rides and lowered the number of ride hail trips. Nudging can be an effective tool for influencing travelling habits without imposing traditional regulation measures, for example taxes or restrictions.



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Peter Mesarč
The author is Country Manager for Bolt scooters in the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic.

Platform Bolt is the largest European operator of shared electric e-scooters, available in 25 countries, in more than 250 cities in Europe. For us, it is a mission that commits us to advance availability, safety and sustainability of urban transport. People mistakenly think that Bolt are only taxis. But Bolt is a superb multimodal application for mobility, thanks to which you can hail a ride, rent an e-scooter or an e-bike, have your food or shopping delivered, and in some countries rent a car. We are constantly trying to speed up and improve the transition from car ownership to shared mobility throughout all these verticals, and offer better alternatives, including transport systems, car sharing, e-bikes or bicycles, as well as food delivery.

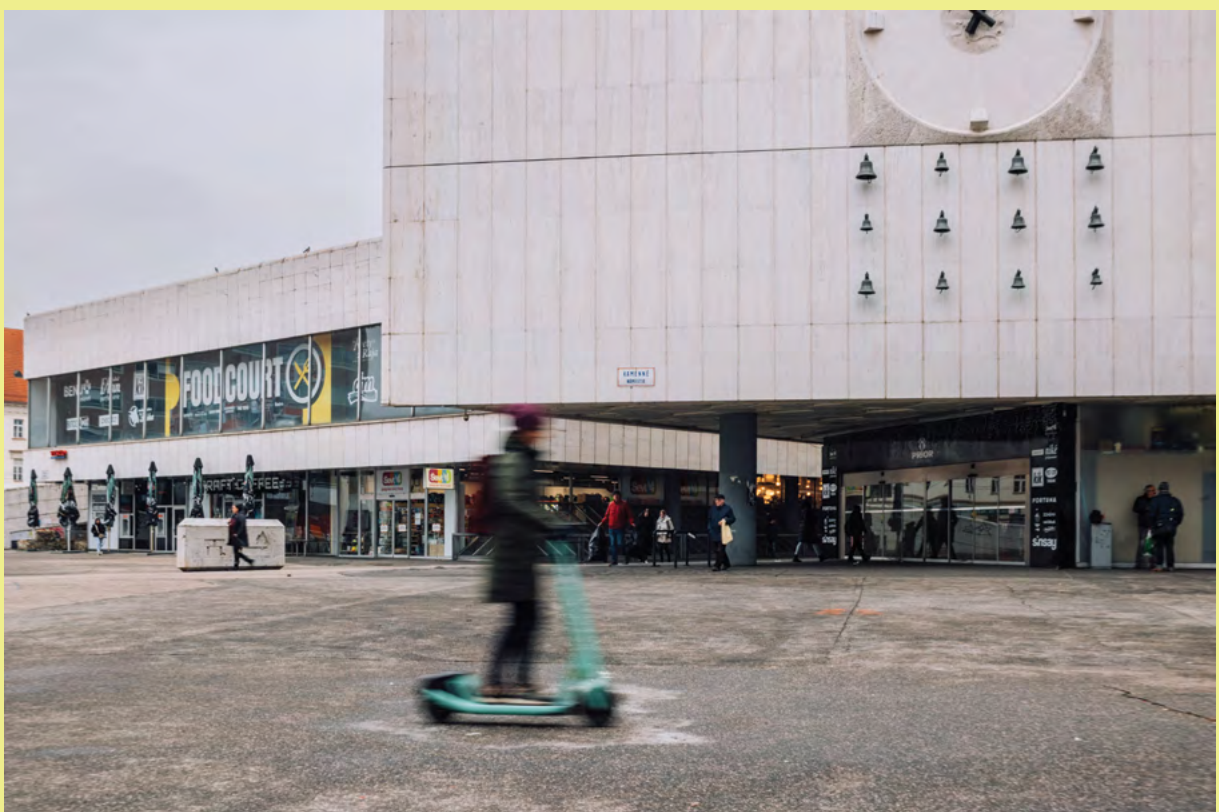
E-scooter instead of hail ride
In 2022, in cooperation with the Norwegian Institute of Transport Economics (TØI), we conducted an impact study on active support of e-scooter usage within the Bolt application. It was a pilot project titled *Reducing car use through e-scooters*, the aim of which was to encourage users of our application to choose a shared e-scooter instead of a ride hail for journeys shorter than three kilometres. Simply put, when a person wanted to order a ride hail for their travel home from work (and the journey was shorter than three kilometres), the application pointed out a free e-scooter in their proximity, i.e. approximately a maximum of 300 metres away. And the result was that as much as 60% of users

changed their mind and chose an e-scooter over ride hailing. Even better is the fact that in many cases, according to this study, it resulted in permanent change of mobility habits and people continued using e-scooters even after the project ended. In other words, as soon as they found out how easy and comfortable the use of an e-scooter is, the probability that they would use this mode of transportation rather than a car in the future increased.

Spaniards have knocked themselves out
The experiment lasted 4 – 6 weeks and took place in 10 European cities: Stockholm, Oslo, Gothenburg, Lisbon, Krakow, Madrid, Bordeaux, Brno, Ostrava and Valletta (cities of

What is nudging?
Nudge is any aspect of the choice architecture that alters people's behaviour in a predictable way without forbidding any options or significantly changing their economic incentives. To count as a mere nudge, the intervention must be easy and cheap to avoid. Nudges are not mandates. Putting fruit at eye level counts as a nudge. Banning junk food does not. (Thaler a Sunstein, 2008)

Source: Copyright © Institute of Transport Economics, 2022



Photos: Marek Jančúch

Possibilities of choice in the application changed transportation habits

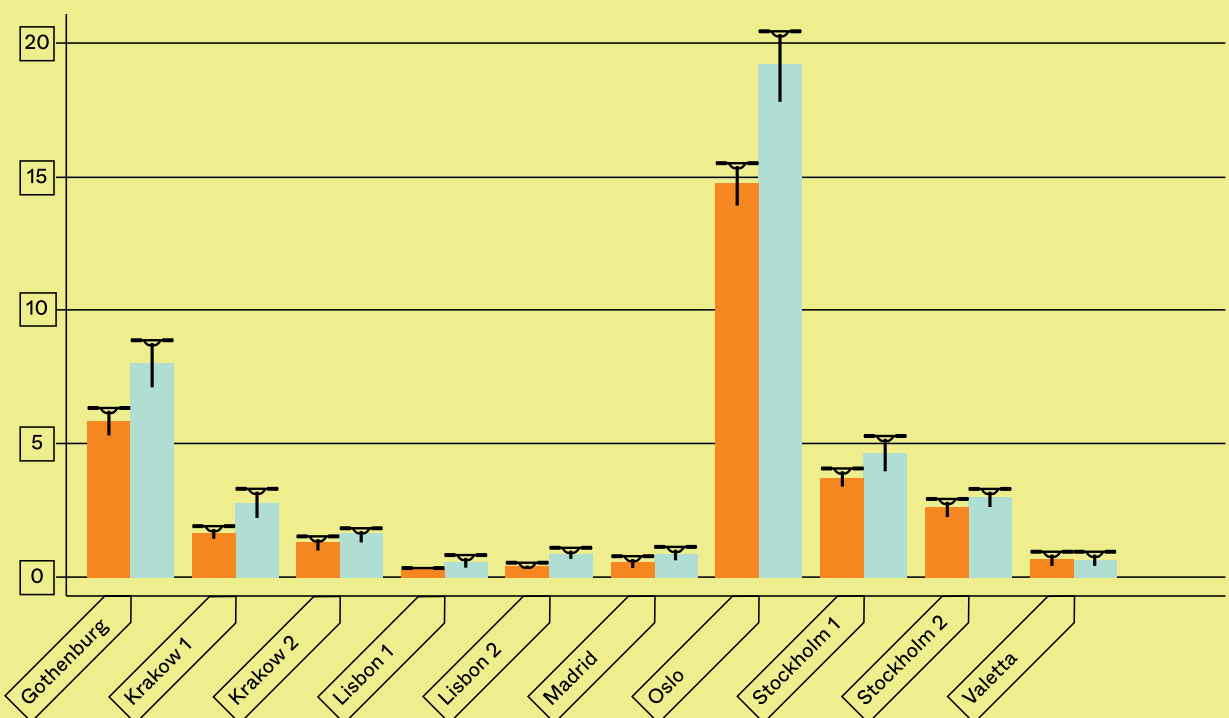
The experiment found that nudging in the application significantly increased the number of rides on e-scooters and lowered the number of rides by taxi. Thus, in Oslo, where the results were the strongest, e-scooters replaced as much as 55% of ride hail trips. The remaining 45% were done by users who would normally close the application. That illustrates how information in the application can influence the travel habits of users in a way that significantly lowers the number of car use, and all this to a greater extent than has been documented so far. That is why nudging can be an effective way of affecting travel behaviour without reaching for traditional regulatory measures, such as taxes or restrictions. While the behavioural change was initiated by experimental nudging, the result was facilitated by the fact that the application interface is multimodal, and that with its several transportation options to choose from it can play an important role in switching users' travel regime.

Source: Copyright © Institute of Transport Economics, 2022

Share of users that choose e-scooter in their first relevant search session, treatment and control.

not nudged nudged 95% CI

Source: Copyright © Institute of Transport Economics, 2022



Bordeaux, Brno and Ostrava were excluded from the analyses due to an insufficient number of observations. The e-scooters were launched during the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. Slovakia was the only country in Europe that banned the use of taxi services of any kind. (This was disabled to measure the direct impact. Editor's note.) The sample group also included a control group of users who did not receive any nudge to use e-scooters via the application. The most significant increase in preference of e-scooters over automotive transportation occurred in cities with the densest network of e-scooters; for example, in Lisbon by 210%. High figures were also recorded in Scandinavian countries, especially in Gothenburg (54%) and Krakow (68%). For example, in Oslo, the number of e-scooter trips rose by 3,800 additional users to whom the e-scooter option was presented at least once, compared to the average value.

Will cities be without cars?

The consequences of these findings are immense, since most rides in Europe are no longer than five kilometres long and about a quarter of ride hails via the Bolt platform are shorter than three kilometres. The study has thus indirectly indicated significant space for restricting automotive transportation. As much as 95% of the time, our cars are parked – in front of our house or workplace.

People's motivation to switch to a more sustainable mode of transport is, however, only one side of the coin. The fact that users of the Bolt app prefer micromobility to cars can have a positive impact on the environment. CO₂ emissions produced by e-scooters are lower by one-third compared to those produced by cars. Thus, we foster the transition of European cities to carbon neutrality by 2030. We closely cooperate with cities to fit e-scooters and bicycles into the city's urban ecosystem. Not only before launching but also during the operation, we are in intense communication with the city and its bodies. We make sure



How can micromobility decrease car ownership?

The concept of 'micromobility' has been proposed as an avenue to reduce car transport and achieve more sustainable transport systems in urban areas. Micromobility is a commonly used but not universally defined concept referring to shared or personally owned small and lightweight vehicles that are typically electric and used for short trips, such as e-bikes and e-scooters. According to Yanocha and Allan (2019), micromobility services in combination with walking, cycling and public transport can ease the demand for private car ownership in cities and reduce private driving significantly as a result.

Source: Copyright © Institute of Transport Economics, 2022

that the operation implements the local incentives, since we believe in the expertise of the local city representatives. These can include safety features such as speed limitations or bans on traffic and parking in risk areas (kindergartens, senior homes, monument reservations). We try to help cities share useful data and operation summaries, which they can use to better design their infrastructure.

Within the framework of sustainable mobility, the key role is played by the cities that draw up these plans (e.g. Trenčín). Bolt offers a diverse range of means that can be incorporated into sustainable mobility plans, such as micromobility for rides between 0 and 5 kilometres, digital taxi for rides over 5 kilometres, and last but not least car-sharing for longer travels, or even long-term vehicle rents, although these are not available in Slovakia yet. Our role is to offer people a good alternative each time they want to use their personal car. This means a scooter for short rides, ride hailing for longer trips and car sharing for the longest ones. We are aware that a great motivator besides a 'green mindset' is affordability and convenience of the given options. We believe that thanks to cooperation with cities, all modes of urban transportation – public transport, ride hailing services, transportation services and micromobility – will be so well integrated within 5 to 10 years that the need to own a personal car

will reduce significantly. Cities will free themselves of congestion and will be able to serve people rather than cars.

There is no point in owning a car

This bold claim is supported by the latest study, Shared Mobility's Global Impact, which showed that shared mobility plays a key role in urban transport systems. It is estimated that it will double its share from the current 3% to 7% by the year 2030.

For the past 100 years, the cities were dominated by cars, but we are now entering a new era when people will use their personal cars less and less. The study states that in the past decade, the distance travelled by personal cars has dropped by 1,700 kilometres per year, but the number of vehicles registered per household has remained the same. Experts calculated that for those car owners who travel less than 15,000 kilometres per year, the alternative modes of transportation, like digital taxi services, scooter, bicycle and car sharing, can be more affordable than owning a car.



the car is not fit for use. Many Bratislava people drive these tin cases by one, especially SUVs, instead of taking public transport.

I draw and paint a lot of cars without wheels, changing them into heavy, complicated, and immobile vehicles. I turn them into forms

I'm too lazy to drive, says painter and cyclist Šille. Even accidents haven't discouraged him

To travel by one in tin boxes makes no sense, he thinks. In his pictures, he turns cars into non-functional and immobile objects and SUVs into allegorical chariots.

Author:
Pavla Lényiová
Environmental publicist. She used to work for the public broadcaster Rádio Slovensko and at the Ministry of Environment.

Photos:
Marek Jančúch
Erik Šille

He is known for reflecting hot social issues through multi-layered visual references. Although in his works you can find figures like Hello Kitty or SpongeBob, their depiction is not cheerful, but rather gives you chills. Much more idyllic images appear on his Instagram profile, eriks.cycling.stories, since he is a passionate cyclist. In 2015, he bought his first bicycle. He was instantly hooked, and uses the bicycle as a means of transportation within the city, too. We spoke about what he does to survive on the Bratislava streets, why he takes pictures of the city's policemen parking on cycle lanes, and how his passion for cycling influences his work.

Q

Q: One year after you started cycling, you got hit by a car twice in Bratislava. The drivers failed to give way to you. There are not so many people riding bikes in the capital because this is exactly what they fear. How come it has not deterred you?

A: I must admit it did discourage me for some time. That first injury was so complicated that it prevented me from finishing the sport season. But I have no patience for traffic jams, and I am too lazy to sit in a car. I don't like travelling by car and I get really annoyed by trying to find a parking place. So, after two months I got back on the bike and spent my free time on it.

Q: You cycle for example to Vienna for breakfast, which is approximately 160 kilometres there and back. Why and how often do you do it?

A: Once in some months from May to October, I persuade my friends to cycle down to Vienna. The last time we went there was two months ago, but we set off so early that we couldn't find any place in Vienna where they would give us breakfast or coffee. Finally, we ended up with baguettes at a petrol station.



Erik Šille was born in 1978 in Rožňava. He studied painting in Bratislava at the Academy of Fine Arts in the studio of Professor Ivan Csudai. Today, he is a teacher at the school. In his works he draws on consumer culture, pop culture and comics. In his colourful pictures, full of various references, he reflects on heavy topics, such as the war in Ukraine, limitless consumerism, or the fascination of part of Slovak society with fascism. His works are in the collections of several galleries, including the Slovak National Gallery.

He owns five bicycles and is a member of three cycling clubs.



Some things I do just on my own, at my own expense. The last policemen I pointed it out to even acknowledged that I was right. I told them I was making a memory card game from it, so they should not wonder when one day I send a little packet to them so they can play.

What I like about these early morning rides, whether to Vienna or somewhere closer, is the challenge of overcoming discomfort. The last couple of months I have been forced to get up at 5 a.m. We set off at darkness and go into dawn, to orange sunrise, and on our way back we see Bratislava getting up while we already have dozens of kilometres behind us.

And this is something one likes to boast about, for example when I come from Vienna to school at lunchtime and say I have already been to Vienna for juice and coffee.

Q: You founded Million problems cycling club. On the sport application Strava (Diet), one can see you already have several members. They are mostly people active in culture or art. Do you do it purely for pleasure or is it more than just a free-time activity?

A: I founded it with Marián Benkovič from Modré hory (transl. note: poet and rapper Bene). On these cycling trips, something always happens. For example, one bike got a flat tyre two times, and we did not have any spare inner tubes. Another time we set off to have coffee somewhere and we travelled many kilometres, through the Carpathian Mountains as far as Lozorno, and the place was closed. So, we agreed to become Million problems cycling club and several people have joined – sculptors, artists, architects, people working in culture. We are a closed group, which



accepts new members only through invitation. Our goal is absolutely not to aspire to some sport performance, but rather to enjoy it and ride even in the rain or when it is snowing, when others already have their limits about cycling for pleasure.

Q: It sounds very informal. On the other hand, you have a logo and you are also working on the design of your jerseys, on which, I've heard, you will each have your blood type.

A: Sport cycling clubs have flashy jerseys, the meaning of which surely is to be better seen. But my friends and I talked about taking it from totally the opposite side and being underground, perhaps completely in black, almost like black metal jerseys with Schwabacher. I realised that apart from design, it would be nice to have some important things on them. In Bratislava, there are several superb cycling clubs, such as Jazdím čiernu stredu (I Drive on Black Wednesdays), which is a feminist club. They have an interesting jersey with symbols of respect and regard. Žiletky (Razor-blades) are completely black. Many potential design manuals for many clubs originated here.

I realised that none of the cycling clubs use one piece of information that could be very important. I have it on my helmet, too – my name and my blood type. It's to speed up the help in case I were unconscious after a hit and fall.

*Acting out, 2017
/ 140 × 170 cm /
painting.
Author: Erik Šille*

Q: I am not sure if we will succeed in not scaring off potential cyclists with this interview...

A: This is cycling outside of the city, where you go much faster – sixty, eighty.

Q: You already mentioned that the bicycle is not only a sport tool for you but also a means of transportation. Although in Bratislava the number of cycling routes has been increasing in recent years, the infrastructure is still not sufficient. One cannot avoid riding along with cars. Don't you mind it?

A: Since I do sport cycling as well, my edges are more worn. I can imagine that a person who takes out their bike once a month and wants to travel by it to work because it seems more convenient to them that particular day will be scared off by the traffic and so they climb onto the pavement.

Q: What kind of barriers do you come across when travelling around Bratislava on bike – physical or mental?

A: In the same way that I am concerned about drivers, I am troubled by the cyclists and their lack of discipline. I can see their disrespect to pedestrians. Cyclists run onto a pavement for some distance or some minutes, then they get back on the road, then they cross the road through a zebra crossing



so they don't have to wait with cars at the red light. They create the impression – and this is something I often hear from drivers who I communicate with on social networks – that we are the ones causing the conflicts. As for me, I am radically strict about this – I never enter the pavement. I don't make unexpected decisions, like making a sharp turn in a microsecond.

I have a problem with drivers who have probably never cycled. When they are next to us, they accelerate and the roar of the engine 50 centimetres from you is shocking. The worst is when they even blow the horn next to you. I can see that smallness – that this person in that tin cube feels very strong against the cyclist. It is an act of absolute recklessness or even a slight endangerment of a fellow citizen.

Avoiding crossroads through a zebra crossing is often not about lack of discipline, but the survival instinct. And the riding on the pavement as well. For example, when somebody is carrying their child in the bicycle seat. Or when the cycling route ends and you have no other option than to continue on the road or pavement.

But yes, then the cyclist should get off their bike at the zebra crossing. It is important that when we expect thoughtfulness from drivers, we should be disciplined in the same way.

Q: I've heard you take pictures of police cars standing on cycling lanes. Do you do it so that you can point it out to them or are you collecting material for a picture?

A: It's happened to me many times. I take these photos of them from such an angle where it is obvious that there

Car as Non-functional Object.

*Ink on paper.
Author: Erik Šille*

was a free parking place there. I would like to turn it into a memory card game.

I once wrote about it on Facebook and people shared their own same experience with the city police and sent me their photos. At that moment, I realised that there was so much material that something could be done with it. I am not the type of person to moralise in some poster form.

Some things I do just on my own, at my own expense. The last policemen I pointed it out to even acknowledged that I was right. I told them I was making a memory card game from it, so they should not be surprised when one day I send a little packet to them so they can play.

Q: Since August 2023, Bratislava has resounded with the topic of Vajanského nábrežie running along the Danube, where the city changed two of the four lanes into cycling lanes. It caused a wave of resentment because there are jams in the peak hours. How do you feel about that?

A: I remember the time when the SNP Square was closed and there was only a U-turn. When they closed the Old Bridge, people said the city traffic would collapse. I remember many situations in Bratislava when some roads were closed, and I think people will get used to this one as well. I also once hurried by car to pick up my son and got onto the Vajanského nábrežie unprepared for it. And I rarely drive. I was nervous for five minutes, but if I was to decide how it should stay, I would leave it as it is now. All who are afraid of cycling out of the fear of drivers have received a generous offer from the city.



It's a question of mindset. If I need to be somewhere by four, I set off earlier. After all, we live in a city. For example, Tokio is a much bigger city. I lived there for seven months and I never saw any Tokio citizen scold any cyclist from their car.

Q: You have been to Tokio several times on residency. You have experienced cyclo-mobility as a natural part of city traffic and you also cycled there. What has remained your most intense impression?

A: I used to see women on bicycles taking their two children in carriers to/from the schools or kindergartens. It is true they ride a lot on pavements. The pavement is split – on the right there is one direction, on the left the opposite, and the cyclists use sound signals to let you know they are going to overtake you. They ride whether there is snow or snowdrifts, in any weather. Those women with children were dressed in various plastic foils and raincoats and the child's seats had rainproof covers so the children would not get wet.

Q: A frequent theme in your works is consumerism. The topic of sustainable mobility is part of an issue of excessive consumption, which has a negative impact on the environment. In your works, there are a lot of references to waste, excessive use of resources, but I have not found any explicit reference to cyclo-mobility. Does your experience with cycling influence your work more indirectly – as psychohygiene?

A: If we speak about cycling not as a means of transportation, I take it exactly as breaking away from painting. I actually kind of forbid myself to do it, because I don't like dealing with myself. I prefer to deal with society, European problems or worldwide issues. Nothing nice has ever motivated me to process it. Cycling for me is a wonderful act of experiencing the countryside and the seasons.

I have made only three or four ink and antiperspirant drawings. I have such an authorial technique in which I say it is raining and I have my bike in my hand. In most cases when I have time for cycling, it is rainy or very windy.



殺さないで
korosanaide / don't kill me, 2023 / 21 × 15 cm / painting. In his works, Erik Šille processes ecological topics



Occupation, 2022
/ 140 × 140 cm /
painting
Author: Erik Šille



Q: Can art contribute to making people use their bikes more, to changing the fact that the car is a manifestation of social status, and all this without it being an agitation and PR?

A: I draw and paint a lot of cars without wheels, changing them into heavy, complicated and immobile vehicles. I turn them into forms in which the car is not fit for use.

Many Bratislava people drive these tin cases alone, especially SUVs, instead of taking public transport.

Q: I have also tried to find those in your pictures.

A: They are in several of my pictures, but I depict them as allegorical chariots carrying a cut-out piece of the countryside with family houses on their truck beds. Instead of smoke, through the chimneys of these family houses come out little bubbles with Instagram or Facebook 'likes' with numeric codes that the fascists use.

I take it more like an allegory of Slovak countryside, where it is much more important to use an SUV if you want to go into the mountains. I perhaps criticise that rural environment which flirts with fascism. I take it more like an allegory of Slovak countryside, where it is much more important to use an SUV if you want to go into the mountains. I perhaps criticise that rural environment which flirts with fascism.

Sometimes I wonder if my bike is thinking about me too

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.
Illustration author: Kristína Uhráková, Pressink



In 15 years, downtown bike lanes will pass without controversy

Says traffic expert from Prague, Květoslav Syrový. He is an urban cyclist. Twenty years ago, on two wheels, he felt like a hunted animal. As a traffic engineer, he decided to do something about it. His experience with calming transport comes from Czech cities and also the Bratislava project Ulice pre deti (Streets for Children).



Author:
Pavla Lényiová
Environmental publicist. She worked for the public service broadcaster Rádio Slovensko and at the Ministry of Environment.

Photo:
Jan Hromádka

Květoslav Syrový (1979) studied Environmental Engineering at the Faculty of Civil Engineering of the Czech Technical University in Prague. He designs traffic solutions in diverse volumes – from agglomerations and cities to transport terminals and streets, in cooperation with architects and urbanists. He is engaged in the creation of legislation; he was a member of the workgroup for inclusion of cycling transportation in road legislation. Since 2007, he has been a member of the Commission for Cycling Traffic of the Council of the Capital City of Prague. It is an advisory body that issues opinions and recommendations to traffic projects in the city.

You emphasise the need to focus on mobility, not only transport. How do you differ between the two?

Mobility starts with making decisions about which different means of transportation one would use. If we want to change habits that are not entirely okay, we have to motivate people to do it. By price, charging, regulations or, on the contrary, by something more positive. That means working with mobility.

Traffic is something that already happened and we only puzzle over what to do with streets full of cars. It is an already open tap, but when you turn the water on you cannot stop it. It is necessary to do something with that tap.

You focus on sustainable mobility and your wife is the chair of the organisation Pěšky městem (Afoot Through City), which attempts to pursue solutions to facilitate pedestrian mobility around Prague. Have you even got a car?

We bought a new car because the old one stopped working. Sometimes we need to get to places where it would otherwise be complicated.

We also use it in the city, but we try not to drive it in peak hours or when it is not necessary. When my daughter was ill and needed to go to the hospital for an operation, of course I drove her there. The car is a good servant but a bad master.

As for your daily routine, do you travel by bike, on foot or by public transport?

On foot, by public transport, and for the 'last mile' I use shared bikes. This split between cyclists, pedestrians and drivers does not really work because in the end, somebody always gets out of that car and must walk a bit. To get to a tram stop I have to go on foot.

According to the Prague association AutoMat, only 1% of Prague's transport is cycling. How do you find cycling there?

It has changed quite a lot. Twenty years ago, the transport was a bit different: there were less cars, and they drove differently. They were older, not so easy to manage, and the drivers were more ignorant to both cyclists and pedestrians.

Today, on the contrary, more dangerous is that feeling of a super safe car driver that nothing can happen to them. The car basically drives for them, and they only turn the wheel and sometimes push one of the pedals. In the context of their own safety, such a driver starts to ignore their environment a bit more. But, at the same time, thanks to gradually improving infrastructure, you begin to have your space there, and the drivers perceive and respect you.

Moving around Prague on bike starts to be much freer, but those percentages are not increasing. And that is because at the same time the number of journeys made by vehicles are increasing too. There are, for example, 70,000 vehicles of various delivery service companies that cross the centre of the capital city, which was not happening before.

So, on the one hand, the cyclists are already considered, but the cars are more powerful and interactions with them can be very unpleasant?

That's true; one must be cautious. And, unfortunately, similar to how we slightly go against each other socially, we behave likewise on the roads – we are more conflicting.

Cycling lanes at Vajanského nábřeží in Bratislava. Photo: Jakub Čaprnka



Květoslav Syrový contributed to the introduction of a system of connected cycling measures in Třebíč. The project was awarded the prize of Vít Brandy, which is granted to traffic constructions enriching the public space. Photo: Archive of city Třebíč



Květoslav Syrový's project of tactical urbanism for pedestrians and cyclists on Opletalova street in Prague, in front of the main station. It consists of a raised pedestrian refuge, cycle lanes and parking for bicycles. Photo: Květoslav Syrový



Mornings before the elementary school Nevádzová in Bratislava are calmer today. Photo: MIB Archive

Which Czech cities or towns and Prague boroughs are most advanced in cycling mobility?

The top are towns and municipalities in the regions Pomoraví and Polabí – Pardubice and Hradec Králové. People have been riding bikes there for years. For the most part because it is a flat area, but also because the towns have spacious communications, broader boulevards. They are built differently, in later eras, not on those medieval ground plans. And since they are smaller towns, mobility in them is easier. Now they are investing mainly in countryside cycle routes.

In Moravia, it is Litovel and the cycling mecca Uničov. Every second person rides a bike there.

As for Prague, the city boroughs are cautious, retrograde. Changes of management every four years, and sometimes even every two years, make cycling a residual topic with marginal attention. Infrastructure gets the most and long-term support by the municipal office.

Together with the Prague municipal office you are working on the project Bezpečné cesty do školy (Safe Routes to School) coordinated by Pěšky městem. It is aimed at calming traffic around schools so that children can come to school on foot. Which project has brought the most crucial change for the better? Can you also support that with data on the decrease in numbers of children coming by car?

We have just started to monitor the measurability. At all schools, and now there are about 50 or 60 of them, one adjustment has been done. For example, one crossing in front of the school, which was raised and calmed. But that alone has no impact on the choice of the mode of transportation.

When you are standing there, you can see that where children were not given way before, it is a perfectly calm place and it works. We can just ask parents if they are satisfied.

Could the benefits be measured through data on accidents?

The accident rate as such is a low number. Before, there could be for example one accident in ten years. And it could have been a minor injury. Or there was the potential that while reversing, somebody could hit a child. We can now see at two schools that the parent hit their own child while reversing. We are trying to eliminate such situations. It is not really measurable, it is rather subjective, and we try to ask the school community more, mainly the children themselves.

But we already have two schools in Prague 5 where we succeeded with a set of measures that really demotivate drivers to come close to school. The public bus stop was moved, there is a raised junction, cycling two-way, two new friendly spaces, and it's starting to show that the drivers have begun to be more cultivated in the morning.

The best data we have is for school streets. There is a morning half-hour or hour closure for vehicles in front of the schools. When you ask parents before it was implemented, 40% to 60% say they could imagine it but are doubtful it would work and people would respect it. But after it was implemented, 90% of the parents are usually satisfied and say: keep it as it is, it's great.

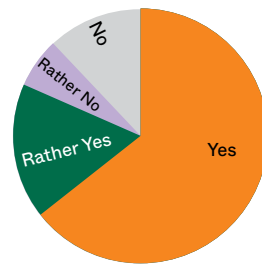
Has it happened that you had to change or take back something because the parents did not accept it or the measure did not work?

We have never reversed any calming measures at Czech schools. The only thing that didn't work was a pilot school street at the elementary school Solidarita. There was insufficient communication. We closed one part of the street for one month for 24 hours and unfortunately, only a few people felt it was a safe space. It was a misunderstanding, it was too harsh from the very beginning, and it was perceived as another space for children to play.

Finally, the local residents said: 'If you close it for half an hour or an



Evaluation of a trial measure of a school street after one month of operation at the school Na Dlouhém lánu, Prague 6. The aim is to adjust the street constructionally. Source: Pěšky



79% of parents and children wish to keep the school street

We try to intervene in the whole concept of the neighbourhood and improve several places at once. When at the same time we offer schools some space for bicycles and scooters, children start to use them more.

hour in the morning, we will be perfectly fine with it.' So, the goal was basically achieved.

How about cycling mobility? Do calming measures around schools contribute to more children coming to school on bikes?

It is happening. We used to make local adjustments that did not have such an impact. But today we try to intervene in the whole concept of the neighbourhood and improve several places at once. When at the same time we offer schools some space for bicycles and scooters, children start to use them more. Mainly scooters that they drive on pavements. The rule is simple: when you cannot park, you don't use that means at all.

But we also had a case in the quarter Kunratice in the south of Prague

where we did not do any adjustments, just built a space for 30–40 bikes and it was immediately full. It is not only about infrastructure but also about an offer of parking.

By the way, recently you criticised the draft of a new decree on requirements for construction. In your opinion, rooms for bicycles should be a mandatory component of new buildings in the Czech Republic. How has it evolved in the meantime?

I saw the draft after comments and it is still not there. Although the lawyers of the ministry for local development promised before 60 witnesses it would be there.

One and a half years ago, the Czech government adopted the Strategy for Active Mobility, which states that to support and develop

active mobility, parking capacities within buildings must be ensured. Unfortunately, the department of transport responsible for mobility has not communicated with the ministry for local development in this spirit at all.

Let us return to safer streets at schools. You cooperate also with the Bratislava municipality authorities in the case of the elementary school Nevädzová, where the measures were well received by parents and the school. Can you compare this experience from Bratislava with those in Prague?

In Slovakia, you are a bit more resolute. We are a bit Švejk-like, we muddle along, and before doing anything new we mull it over three times and then rather do nothing, only not to change something that is already in place.

Vigorous measures were introduced by the municipality office also in the centre of Bratislava on Rázusovo and Vajanského nábrežie along the river Danube, where two lanes of the four-lane road were changed into cycle lanes. It stirred up discontent among part of the public. How do you see it?

For me, it is a step in the right direction. I think that such a thing will be without any discussion in fifteen years.

I think that the vision was to calm the medium permeability of the city along the embankment. In my opinion, the city should have simultaneously started regulating the entry to the centre, which is done by pushing through parking policy. This is accompanied by considerations whether there should be a low-emission zone or entry to the centre for a fee. All means possible should be used to lower the demand for car traffic.

This is a step that should be done parallel to turning a four-lane road into a two-lane one. Unfortunately, from the outside it looks as if it was all based on those cyclists. But, there might be measures I don't know about. I followed it only through the media.

The city has reformed the parking policy but has not introduced a city toll or low-emission zone in the centre. But let's go back to the Czech Republic. You are one of the authors of the winning masterplan proposal for the neighbourhood around Papírové náměstí in Liberec. You designed it as a neighbourhood without cars, where you can park the car in front of the house for a while until you unload the shopping. Examples of such an approach can be found only abroad so far. To what extent is your proposal pioneering in the Czech context? I had not participated in anything like that before and we were not even inspired by anything. That place was simply asking for it. It is a compact area that can be traversed from one end to the other in ten minutes. We told ourselves



that cars did not belong there, and we didn't want them there. Nearby is a pedestrian zone where it works without cars.

We have three possibilities: we either make the parking places in the houses or in front of them. Then there are houses with a back entry and car-less front space. At first sight, it is without cars, but cars actually drive underground and it becomes overpriced when there is some kind of an underground street for cars. We also wanted to get rid of those garage entries. We wanted to design a truly vivid city with vibrant ground floors without entries.

And so we said that one parking spot will be on the side, because it is quickly accessible, and then there will be a bigger parking house outside of this area. Those who will not wish to have a car will not rent a parking place there.

Papírák is an existing quarter neighbouring the historical city centre, so a pedestrian zone really fits there. At the same time, it is a periphery inside the city with many gap-sites serving as catchment car parks. So, how does it continue after winning

Visualisation of one part of the Papírák design. Květoslav Syrový designed the project in cooperation with re:architekti. Visualisation: re:architekti

View of Vrabčia street in the future car-free neighbourhood. Visualisation: re:architekti



The elementary school Jitřní before and after the measures proposed by Květoslav Syrový within the project Bezpečné cesty do školy (Safe Routes to School). Source: Archive of Pěšky městem

in the urbanistic competition? Have the locals accepted that you are taking away their parking places?

Liberec has gradually been building new places in parking houses. So there are enough parking places in the centre. The more areas for parking you offer, the more frequently the area will be used by cars. When you show data that there are parking possibilities in the wider area, then a Liberec citizen has nothing to say to it. There was a public hearing three days ago. We expected a massacre. But it did not happen.

In such a car-free neighbourhood there is no need for special routes for cyclists.

Exactly. The entire area is designed as a shared zone. This is a novelty in our legislation as of 1 January 2024. Nothing special needs to be done for cyclists. And the cyclists who are used to passing through this area must figure out from the character of the environment that they are a bit like guests there. Anybody riding anything must feel like a guest there. The less separated lanes and routes there are, the less people treat the environment like, 'this is my space, get out of it'.

In shared zones it will be possible to drive a maximum 20 km/h and the driving lane is a level surface; there are no raised pavements or kerbstones. There is no such legislation in Slovakia yet. How do you perceive this novelty?

We needed it. Although we could manage the institute of a pedestrian or residential area, there were some problematic words that downright irritated the Czech Police, for example. Before the approval it said things like, 'Mind you, a residential area allows for the playing of children and this is not what we want here. For playing, they have playgrounds.'

But it is not only about children playing. Streets lack small areas for short stops and meeting with others. Purely car-oriented infrastructure has dominated everything in the public space. One problem is a more personal relation to the location. More people try only to exploit and make use of the space without respecting anything. That is, however, not an issue of the transport department, but just a consequence. The reasons should be sought in the social economy, and only then can we go back to urbanism and mobility.

*pollution, traffic
congestion and
climate change,
are desired by all –
regardless of whether
they drive a car or
ride a bike.*



*Streets that are more
livable and more
pleasant, and which
are part of solutions
for issues like obesity,
environmental*

Let's give up the idea that cars are needed everywhere.

Street ballet regulates cars and encourages cyclists. For the past thirty years, the western countries have been interested in the bicycle as a means of transportation. However, the cycling measures have not brought the desired increases. On the other hand, the streets are dominated by cars running on fossil fuels, even though their negative impact on the environment and our health has been well known for more than half a century now. What are we missing?

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Photos:
Andrej Ištók
Barbara Rusnáková
Jakub Čaprnka
Kristína Kundáková
Lukáš Hromčík

In our culture, the car is omnipresent. We use it to go to work or to take our children to football training. We get in it when we are running late or when we need to go only there and back. At weekends, it takes us to the forest or a visit. The car has become a means of transportation determining the rules on the streets. But who exactly sets these rules?



Illustration:
Jozef Glaba

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The question of power is reflected in one of the first stories about fossil fuels. In 1859, in Titusville, Pennsylvania, oil was extracted for the first time. An inaccurate story says that it came exactly in the moment when the world started running out of expensive whale oil. However, at that time in the US, there was a prosperous market with alcohol fuel, writes Dan Alloson in the American Environmental History. Three years later, Lincoln's administration imposed a tax of 2.08 dollars per gallon of distilled alcohol. One gallon of petroleum cost only 58 cents at that time. The opportunity was quickly seized on by a private company, Standard Oil. It captured the distribution network and pushed out competitors with petrol prices below their production costs. The American market was flooded by oil and the Rockefeller's conglomerate, Standard Oil Trust. In 1911, the Trust was accused in an anti-monopoly case and split into 37 independent companies. Their descendants are today's biggest oil companies: ExxonMobil and Chevron.

The power of oil was increasing. But then, on the 100th anniversary of the American oil industry in

1959, at the symposium organised by the American Petroleum Institute, the largest and oldest trade association in this field, something unexpected happened. In his public speech, physicist Edward Teller warned that fossil energy sources would run short and explained that burning of conventional fuel produces carbon dioxide, which causes a greenhouse effect. The evidence was clear. Despite that, eight years later, when an oil embargo was imposed on the US and the senate explored the potential of electric vehicles, Robert Dunlop, Director of the American Petroleum Institute, assured the senate: "By the time a practical electric car can be mass-produced and marketed, ..., emissions from internal-combustion engines will have long since been controlled." [1]

The result to date: the fossil fuels industry got to know the facts about the unsustainability of oil use more than 60 years ago! The first international negotiations on the climate began 31 years ago. Participants of the UN conference on climate change agreed the shift away from fossil fuels for the first time only this year. And the emissions from combustion engines are still not under control.

Why is the car 'suddenly' a problem?

People own cars, but for more than half a century it has been said that the car owns us. In the late 1960s, Donald Appleyard carried out a study in which he investigated the quality of life of people in their streets and the impact of the car on health and habitability of communities. In San Francisco, he compared three residential streets according to the level of traffic activity. It turned out that inhabitants of the busiest street had fewer friends and acquaintances around them because they could not interact on the street socially. In 1981, Donald Appleyard published his book *Livable Streets*. This has become one of the most influential books on urbanistic design of its time.



Cycling in
Bratislava.
Photo: Kristína
Kunáková

Already back then, Appleyard confirmed that the space that the car as transportation receives is bigger than we are willing to admit. This is at the same time an answer to the question of critics who ask why cars are suddenly a problem. The problem is not the car, but the inequality of all street actors involved. This is caused by weak willpower to regulate the power of those who pursue their own profit. Since the publication of the book *Livable Streets*, there has been a lot of research dealing with negative environmental, social or psychological impacts of car traffic on the quality of our lives. The outputs are 'only' diverse variations of to what extent and in what form the high rate of car mobility is harmful. They confirm the ambiguous saying: What is too much is too much.

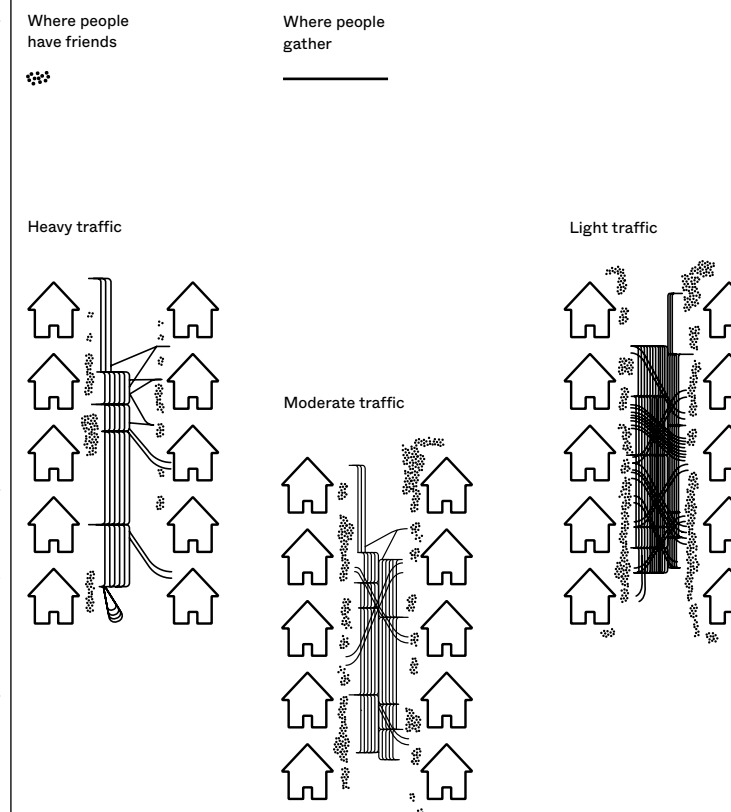
What makes people decide to start using a bicycle?

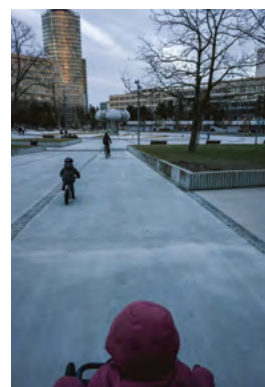
The first attempts to construct a bicycle date back to the early 19th century, when Karl von Drais thought about replacing the horse and steam power with something that would be suitable for transportation of people in everyday life. In a simplified history of the bicycle as a mass means of transport, it first appeared as a pastime of the bourgeoisie. Only in the early 20th century did it turn into a mass means of transportation. In post-war Europe, it quickly fell into oblivion, then saw its resurrection in the 1970s as a product of free-time activity. A new role of cycling occurred with the outgoing millennium. Interest in cycling has been increasing and it has become a representative of sustainable transport.

When we look at policies supporting cycling as a means of transportation in the 21st century, they are quite similar throughout most countries. They speak about an effective, cheap, ecological and comfortable alternative to cars causing traffic jams, congested streets, air pollution and noise, health problems, stress, and loss of social cohesion. Despite similarities, in some countries cycling

Appleyard's Livable Streets Social Interactions on Three Streets – Neighboring and Visiting

Source: www.streets-alive-yarra.org





Bratislava, Námestie Slobody. Cargo bikes are being used to transport children to school and playgrounds
Photo: Jakub Čaprnka



flourishes, whereas in others the process to launch it keeps failing. Why?

British professor of sociology Peter Cox, who has long been dedicated to the phenomenon of cycling, says that while the physical act of cycling remains consistent, the product of which is an increase in mobility compared to walking, its social, political and economic impact, created by the interplay of the actor and the environment, could be dramatically different. Harry Oosterhuis, researching the history of bicycles and policies focused on the promotion of cycling at the

Maastricht University, describes six factors that influence the development of cycling: natural conditions, spatial and urbanistic features, demographics culture, transport infrastructure, and policy. From them, we can influence only the two last ones.

Oosterhuis analysed to what extent policies and governmental programmes led to an increase in numbers of cyclists and how to support this requirement.

“There are indications that Danish, Dutch, and German cycling policies, which are shining examples for many advocates of cycling,

Guest editor Petra Marko cycling in Bratislava. Photo: Barbara Rusnáková

researchers, and urbanists in other countries, have not raised the share of bicycles on means of transportation, but have rather made cycling safer and more effective for a relatively large number of people who had already been using bicycle as a mode of transport,” he explained.

The assumption that infrastructure for cyclists would increase the volume of bicycle traffic has not been proven either. It could be the other way around. Programmes focusing on cycling could be reactions to an increase in bicycle traffic. A similar effect, he says, can be seen also in promotional

campaigns for improving the image of the bicycle. They attract mostly the people who already cycle.

So, how can the bicycle be made more attractive? Oosterhuis and Cox claim that construction of cycling infrastructure is not futile, but its usage depends also on fostering people’s relationship to the bicycle as a potential mode of transport. In the long term, we have been talking about the history and culture of cycling, which we cannot affect retroactively. In the short term, it concerns individual perception of cycling – our habits, attitudes and experiences

Have you ever had a feeling that you should cross the road by zebra crossing quickly because the driver would not wait? Have you no fear about letting your child walk the street freely or going alone to school on foot or by bicycle? These are not livable streets, says Appleyard. But they can become such – when we create a choreography that will enable the street ballet to be danced by all.

connected with cycling. Oosterhuis points out that if at creation of national, regional or urban policies we focus on the fact that cycling is a matter of rational and instrumental choice, and the technical solutions boost cycling, we will miss out on understanding what factors influence people’s decisions about its usage. If someone is a Sunday rider or never rides, they identify a lot more obstacles in evaluating the costs and contributions of cycling,

On the other hand, if they have a positive experience with cycling, they will evaluate the factors of time, physical effort, comfort, safety, effectiveness, or health benefits more positively.

Fulfilled prediction of a street visionary

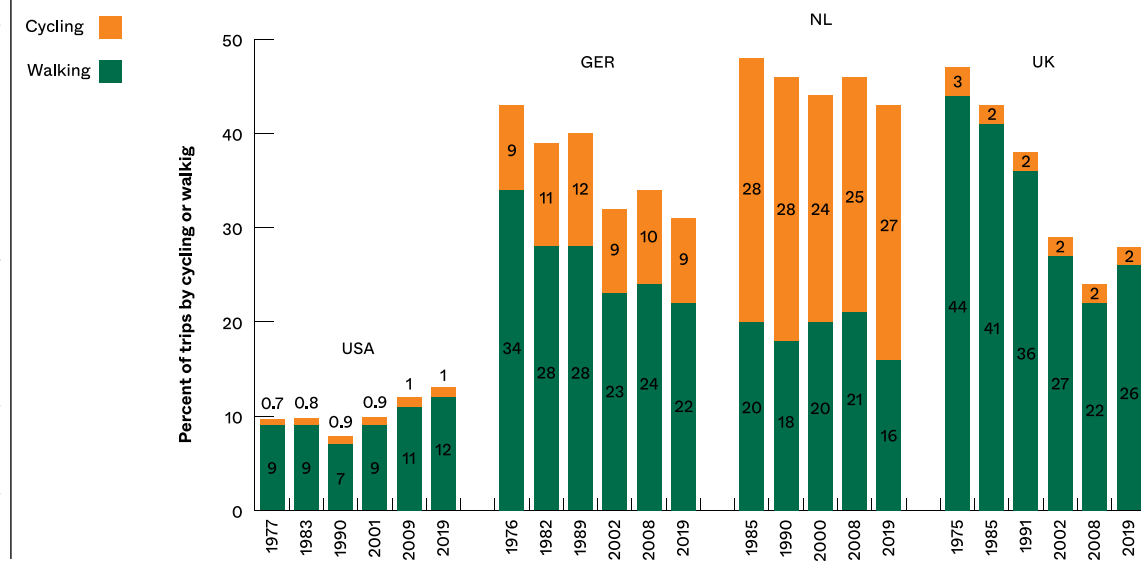
Appleyard perceived the street as the social centre of towns or cities, as a scene of eternal conflict between life and the threat of death, a conflict taking place

on our streets between traffic and people. A memento and confirmation of the conflict is Donald Appleyard himself. One year after the publication of his book *Livable Streets*, he was killed on the street by a drunk driver.

Streets that are more livable and more pleasant, and which are part of solutions for issues like obesity, environmental pollution, traffic congestion and climate change, are desired by all – regardless of

Trends in combined cycling and walking share of all daily trips in the United States, Germany (GER), the Netherlands (NL) and the United Kingdom (UK), 1974–2019.

Source: Ralph Buehler, PhD Professor Urban Affairs and Planning School of Public and International Affairs Virginia Tech Research Center (VTRC)



Cycling communities in Bratislava.
 Photo: Lukáš Hromčík

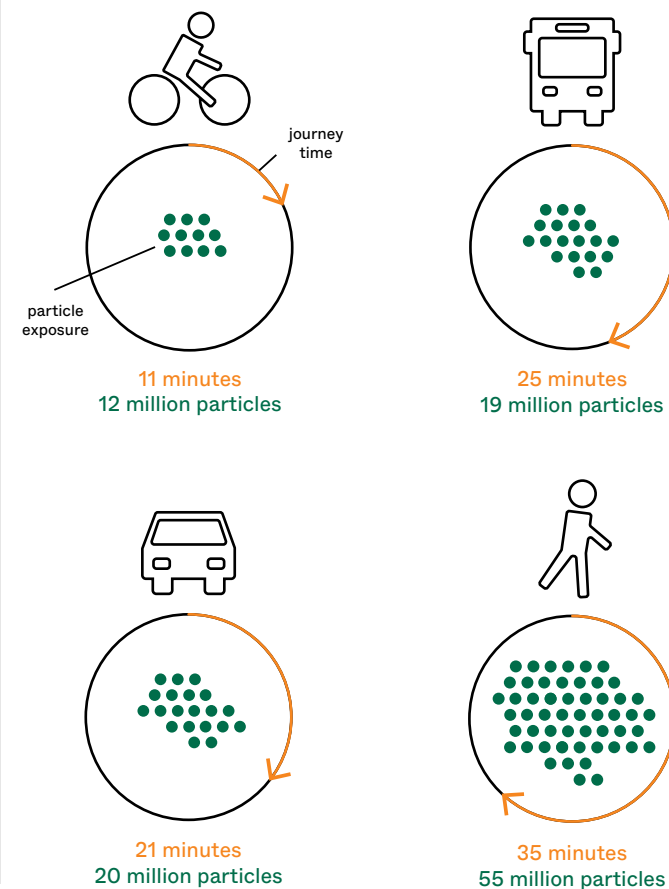


whether they drive a car or ride a bike. Nonetheless, at social decision-making, we follow the voice of the more powerful. It is not drivers suffocating with exhausts from their own cars who have the power. Our evaluation of solutions is based only on short-term economic benefits. On the other hand, policies supporting sustainable transport, which expect that by building the cycling infrastructure the country will change to another Netherlands, stagnate. The key to success is combined measures, such as building of cycling routes and at the same time, increase of parking tariffs in city centres. However, what we still lack is research that would analyse national cycling habits, their comparison between countries, and measures that would count with (in-)experience of a potential user.

Although numbers are exact, they cannot calculate and take into account what is human. The street is full of actors who are equal. Yet not everyone has the same power. Everybody should experience the feeling of freedom, safety, health and satisfaction. Have you ever tried to cross a road and a driver refused to stop, or they pretended

Cyclists inhale the least amount of pollutants on the street.

Source: Guardian 2018, source: James Tate, University of Leeds



you did not belong there? Have you ever had a feeling that you should cross the road by zebra crossing quickly because the driver would not wait? Have you no fear about letting your child walk the street freely or going alone to school on foot or by bicycle? Have you ever caught yourself minding the car noise in heavy traffic? These are not livable streets, says Appleyard. But they can become such – when we create a choreography that will enable the street ballet to be danced by all.

Further sources:
 [1] <https://www.theguardian.com/environment/climate-consensus-97-per-cent/2018/jan/01/on-its-hundredth-birthday-in-1959-edward-teller-warned-the-oil-industry-about-global-warming>

EXTEND YOUR LIFE. CYCLE.

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.
 Illustration author: Kristína Utráková, Pressink



Prešov as Amsterdam of the East

“In 1991, after studies in the Netherlands, I realised that cycling does not mean that you can only ride there and back in your free time, but that bicycles can be used as a full-time, safe urban transport. The city of Prešov, due to its size, was ideal for something like that.” So describes the beginnings of the cycling community Kostitras by its former member. Plans from the '90s for a cycling infrastructure prepared by local activists are still being used.



Author:
Apolónia Pecka Sejková

Photos:
Kostitras Archive
www.luboskrahulec.sk

I was lucky to be born in a town that was a mecca of cycling during my childhood in the 1990s. Along the river Torysa, I could get to school or to my grandma's for pasties on a separate cycle pathway. At schools, there were sheltered stands for parking bicycles, and we had supervised cycling training at road safety playgrounds on how to move not only on the roads but also in the terrain.



↳ Cycle Base, Winter Cycling Tour of Prešov.
Photo:
www.luboskrahulec.sk

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More cycling lanes and cycling routes were gradually introduced into planned urban documentation and they were being turned into reality. As a child, I took it for granted. Only later I realised that it was not like that everywhere.

Even today, Prešov has really good conditions for urban and suburban cycling compared to the majority of Slovak towns. There is a separate pathway lining the entire length of the Torysa river in the town. Recently, an underpass under the Levoča Street bridge has been built, so the busy intersection can be crossed on foot or bike without waiting. A crossroads with Požiarnická Street has been newly completed, which has brought safer and more comfortable riding than before. Today, the original

cycling route (“cyklisták”, as we call it in Prešov) is even part of the European network of long-distance cycling route Eurovelo 11.

Our housing estates have quite good infrastructure as well. The largest housing estate, Sekčov, is connected to the centre by separate cycling routes along Rusínska, and pavements split between pedestrians and cyclists along the main housing estate road are frequently used. Parallel to the original cycle pathway along the Torysa river are cycling lanes marked in red for faster riders.

Events connected with urban cycling in Prešov are usually very creative and cheerful. The Prešov cycling community has held a small celebration for a few years now to remind us of their achievements and unattainable goals. Decorated by Christmas lights pointing out the importance of passive safety, in freezing temperatures of the Twelfth Night, accompanied by dance music, enthusiasts of free riding cruise together along the streets like a frozen carnival parade in Rio de Janeiro.

The 1990s beginnings – the municipal office called us back and asked us how to build it

Of course, it was not always so ‘cyclo-pink’. Before the 1989 revolution, Prešov used to be a town where shops, doctors’ surgeries, schools or services were easily accessible on foot for most of the population and if something was a bit farther away, you could rely on a relatively well-operating system of public transport. Bicycles were used mainly by those who considered it their hobby. Expansion of the town by more remote parts of the housing estates Sekčov and Šváby in the late 1980s meant that many people suddenly lived a little sideways of the compact urban structures. Post-revolution, accessibility of the car for a wider range

of people slowly brought changes to Slovak towns, which could be seen, heard and felt. Individual car transportation started to take up more space in Prešov, and the bicycle as an alternative was still an exotic phenomenon rather than a rule. And it was exactly these changes that the members of the Prešov cycling group Kostitras, founded in 1995, reacted to. Its co-founder Vierka Štupáková had worked in environmental circles, and she looked at the issue of urban cycling, which was at that time on the margins of interest, very intensely. She decided that with her technical background she could move forward the development of cycling as a fully fledged means of transportation in Prešov.

↳ From a campaign for cycling measures in Prešov, a cycle path in the housing estate Sídliisko III, 1997
Photo: Kostitras archive

↗ Cycle path along the Torysa river, cca 2001

“At that time, we came up with a completely revolutionary idea to design the cycle routes within the already existing transportation system. And so I found out how little I actually knew about it. Thanks to the post-revolutionary era, we could go for study stays abroad, where we really gained a lot of knowledge,” she says. A great contribution to the organisation was that Kostitras was joined by Apolónia Sejková (the author’s mother – editor’s note). “When I came for my one-year studies to the Netherlands in 1991, I realised that cycling does not mean only that you can ride there and back in your free time, but that bikes can be used as a full-time, safe urban



Gatherings, rides, happenings organised by Kostitras in the second half of the 1990s.
Photo: Kostitras archive



transport. It seemed to me that Prešov, due to its size, was ideal for something like that,” she says.

The first campaign, intended to address both the public and politicians, came after they had prepared technical designs and drawings of a potential network of urban cycling routes and separate cycling roads based on the newly acquired knowledge from abroad. “They were not happy about it and first sent us away, those old town cadres. But then they called us back and asked how to build it,” describes the beginnings of the negotiations with the town by one of the ex-members of the cycle group, Peter Kalenský.

Cycling infrastructure can help all

Kositras had to overcome the barrier of a weak collective imagination systematically and for a long time. The first great success was the already mentioned cycle path along the Torysa river, the keystone of a safe connection of the housing estate Sídliisko III to the centre. This path was built in 1996, after two years of an intense campaign consisting of public debates, sports events, mass rides through the town, and systematic writing of letters to those in charge. “But all this with a smile on our lips. We

really wanted our activities not to be perceived as our fight against the town or the cars. We rather presented the cycling infrastructure as something which could help all people, regardless of their political opinions,” says Štupáková.

The experience from the foreign studies on how to incorporate cycling infrastructure into the existing urban environment was turned into a manual: Let’s Give Space to Cyclists. It was published in 1998 and was a great help during negotiating particular measures. “We simply kept showing them: ‘look what we have found – we would like the same, too.’ Our material was really detailed – even more



Peloton opening the Carpathian Cycling Road before the Municipal office Prešov, 2000
Photo: Kostitras archive



↑ Foot bridge over the Torysa river with a separate lane for cyclists, opened in 2022. Photo: CTZN

↗ Cycle path along the Torysa river, cca 2001. Photo: Kostitras archive



extensive than the currently valid regulation Technical Conditions. Designing Cycling Infrastructure,” recalls Štupáková.

Thanks to this technical readiness, supported by a vocal campaign, they succeeded in advancing their intentions and were invited as experts to strategic planning not only at the local level but also at the national one. “Some things that we published for Prešov have not been carried out here but in other towns. Our projects were really well prepared, but sometimes the political will or financial possibilities were stronger somewhere else,” says Sejková. “On the

other hand, the documentation that we prepared on our behalf or directly for the town, for example through the project Central Meet Bike, was chosen and gradually carried out. The fact that the town is ready for calls and can quickly prepare realisations is actually a great success.”

Besides urban cycling, they have been dedicated to issues of regional cycling and cycle tourism almost since the beginning. For example, the aim of the project Our Carpathian Way, which was accompanied by two volumes of cycling book guides, was to connect towns that are reputed to

have nothing interesting in them, which are far away from the centre in all the involved countries of the Carpathian Arc (Slovakia, Poland, Ukraine, Hungary, Romania). “Those people there were very happy that something was happening, and we all hoped that cycling was prospective and that the local people would have some money and working places from it. But probably none of us expected the development to take so long and advance so slow,” evaluates Sejková.

Building of community

Kositras activities have always attracted volunteers, enthusiastic

Some things that we published for Prešov have not been carried out here but in other towns. Our projects were really well prepared, but sometimes the political will or financial possibilities were stronger somewhere else.

cyclists, organisers’ families and friends. Without their help, many of the campaign activities could not have been carried out. However, at one point, the group made a decision to go even further in building the Prešov community. From the financial means that they received from several organisations as prizes for their high-quality work on campaigns in the third sector, they decided to start a club.

Club Ryba v stene (Fish in the Wall, according to the aquarium in one of the walls of its interior) was created in a self-repaired little house designed by Prešov architects and operated from 1999 – 2005. “We said we wanted to create a place where we could all meet. Instead of us going everywhere, let’s create a place where people with ideas could come to us. And so we started building a slightly different community, quite multicultural for those times. At one time, we had as many as 170 events per year. There were people from music, fine art, and there was a gallery where pictures were sold, too. For example, during a reading of the poetry of Egon Tomajko, the audience included punks, skinheads, Romas, students – all were listening, and some even shed a tear,” recalls Štupáková with a laugh. The topic of cycling

was a bit in the background at that time, but not absent. “It was great, concentrated. Everybody from the third sector used to come there, everything originated there at that time, everything worked. There was nothing alike in the town. In today’s Prešov, there are several places that people can ride to and there are overlaps between them,” reminisces Tomáš Palo, current chairman of the association. As one of the Prešov musicians, he is an example of such overlapping of these communities that the Ryba v stene contributed to. However, ‘mixing of cultures’ brought other interesting moments, too: “There were also those who were annoyed by it here and there. This is where one legendary phrase originated: ‘So, I come from a bike trip for a normal beer, and there is some PO-ETRY,’” says Sejková with a laugh.

Control day with town representatives before launching the construction of a cycle path, 1995 (in front Viera Štupáková). Kostitras archive





The Prešov cycling community has held a small celebration for a few years now to remind us of their achievements and unattainable goals. Decorated with Christmas lights pointing out the importance of passive safety, enthusiasts of free riding cruise together along the streets.

↑ *Cycle Base, Winter Cycling Tour of Prešov. Photo: www.luboskrahulec.sk*

Hello drivers, we are cyclists

Many alliances from those times made their imprint in the further operation of the cycling group. “Hello colleagues, hello drivers! We are cyclists and tomorrow is a day without cars!” – this is how Braňo Jobus addressed one Prešov intersection together with a cycle brass band, *Cyklišťanka* (with occasional alternatives, it is the brass section of the band *Chiki Liki Tu-a*). The band arranges the cultural programme or pop-up happenings connected to cycling activism in the town. Another musical project that fits well with a cargo bike is *Flickering Brass Musical System* (BDHS – *Blikajúci dychový hudobný systém*), necessary for the right cycling-activism mood. Another very non-traditional musical accompaniment was a string quartet

at a breakfast meeting during the campaign *Let's Leave the Cars at Home*. According to Tomáš Paľo, this campaign, full of events for people on bikes, truly raised interest in the topic. Also, the already mentioned winter ride event *Cycle Base* has been happening with organisational contributions of both long-term and new members of the non-formal cycling-activism bunch around *Kostitras*, and of Prešov art or cycling tourism. Since the end of 2018, a group of urban cyclists tried to start a tradition of *Critical Mass Prešov*, but they have not yet renewed their rides since the loosening of the anti-pandemic measures. And yet, according to several observers, the pandemic era visibly increased the number of cyclists on our roads. “In winter, there are abnormal



← *Tomáš Paľo, current chairman of Kostitras. Photo: www.luboskrahulec.sk*

numbers of people riding in snow,” says Paľo with satisfaction.

Connecting urban and suburban cycling

The current chair of *Kostitras* would be glad if they could work more on ‘soft’ campaigns promoting cycling as a mode of transport in the town. “One thing is that Prešov's infrastructure has been improving. The ideas *Vierka* (*Štupáková*) and *Polá* (*Sejková*) have pushed through are superb. However, there is research proving that when a campaign is done profoundly, the usability of the bicycle as a means of transportation increases even more,” he says. At the moment, *Kostitras* has no intention of starting any big campaigns for using cycling as a mode of transport in the town – it has been proven that a good campaign requires the systematic work of paid professionals; volunteers cannot be used for everything and unfortunately, there is also a lack of systematic financing, for example for education of the youth, who are the future of urban traffic. Moreover, currently the association dedicates itself more to managerial work in regional cycling strategies and projects since they view the connection of urban, suburban and extra-urban cycling mainly in regions as extremely important. “Currently we don't feel like that all-Slovak voice; we work on urban activism less. The topic is with the *Bratislava Cyklokoalícia* and they do it well.”

Focus on new barriers

Formerly, every effort to promote non-motorised modes of transportation was perceived as the activity of a few environmentalists who impose cycling routes for their ‘three friends’. Tomáš Paľo thinks this has already changed and people more frequently understand the bicycle as being part of traffic. At the same time, there have appeared new barriers – for example, fear of moving around in the traffic. “Even here we have joined that system of ‘I drive my children everywhere because there are many cars everywhere’. We couldn't imagine it when the

English explained that to us at trainings in 1999. And here it is – children do not experience the feeling of independence through individual walking or riding a bike. And so they don't learn to be responsible for themselves and their surroundings, and it does not contribute to their mental and physical health the way it could,” believes *Sejková*. *Kostitras* intends to focus on some of these new barriers in the future.



*the first steps in the
right direction. Let
us continue.*

*To protect all road
users, especially the
vulnerable ones,
is a duty of us all.
Bratislava has made*

Giving out reflective tapes won't stop pedestrians and cyclists fearing for their lives

Author:
Ivana Nemethová

*The author is an architect
and a member of the civil as-
sociation Znepokojené matky
(Concerned Mothers).*

What is it like to drive around Bratislava? Let's try it together. Traffic lights on Námestie slobody change to green. A car starts to move, accelerates, goes through Námestie 1. mája to the underpass at Hodžovo námestie, out of it through a smooth curve, along Staromestská Street, and uninterrupted straight to Petržalka.



Illustration:
Jozef Glaba

Two comfortable lanes in each direction, indicating the possibility of overtaking, a classical split to who goes fast and who slowly, not hindering the drivers in any way. And indeed, there is nothing in their way. Not even the fact that the maximum speed there is 50 km per hour, as on most of the city's roads. If somebody tries to keep to this limit, they are weird and probably not from here or they have got lost.

A

And suddenly, one is driving 120 km/h. God forbid they have drunk alcohol, fail to control the car and the car flies off the lane into a bus stop full of people. Which is exactly what happened on Staromestská Street. It was only after that tragedy, the victims of which were five young people, that the discussion started about what to do to prevent such a nightmare in the future. 'Alcohol ban! Speed cameras! Stricter penalties!' However, only a few people realise that something must be done with the 'street' itself. Yes, it is in single quotes, because currently it is not a street but rather a high-speed road.

Similar proposals can be heard in various other cases. A knocked-down pedestrian? 'He should have paid more attention! Why do they throw themselves under the cars at a zebra crossing? And where are their reflective tapes?' Or, the classic: 'Cyclists are suicidal!' Such remarks are addressed to the most vulnerable – children, the elderly, women. 'Why did that child go through the crossing alone? What do these people think, that they are immortal? How could the driver have seen them? They should know there is no chance to brake on time.' Our minds do not find it strange that drivers go fast – they have the right to do so; they rule our streets.

It is quite understandable that such ideas come from people who are not experts. But, if they come from people who are responsible for safety, it is alarming. Blaming victims of traffic violence is inadmissible, just as with other forms of violence. In our society, we often encounter outdated mindsets,

which is one of the principal barriers of why we fail to lower the number of deaths and injuries of pedestrians and cyclists.

Many people do not feel safe on our streets. This fear deters people from walking or cycling. We witness a constant increase in the intensity of car traffic – at present, there are more than 700 cars per 1,000 inhabitants; in Vienna it is half of that.

Accidents aren't coincidences, but consequences of design

A traditional view of this issue hampers us from taking effective measures. In this article, we will look closely at how people (especially people with decision-making power) perceive this relatedness and where we should shift our mindset to achieve real results, such as for example in Oslo, where they have not recorded a single pedestrian death already since 2019. The first assumption is that a certain share of deaths and injuries is an intrinsic part of traffic. 'You just have to accept it.' This claim is dangerous in that it relieves the urgency of launching solutions to this serious problem.

And to put this clearly, this is not only a wish of ours – the vision to achieve zero road deaths is one of the strategic goals of the Slovak Republic approved by the government (by Resolution no. 700/2021 of 1 December 2021). And we are not the only ones. The concept of Vision Zero ([*https://visionzeronet.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/](https://visionzeronet.org/about/what-is-vision-zero/)) originated in Sweden as early as 1997. It has proved effective and is now being put into practice in some large American cities as well.

In Slovakia, there is the BECEP ([*www.becep.sk](http://www.becep.sk)) (abbreviation of the words bezpečnosť cestnej premávky – road traffic safety), which is a separate department under the Ministry of Transport. It serves as national coordinator for improvement of road safety in the Slovak Republic. Its website states: "The principal tasks of BECEP are: Preventive actions with the aim of lowering the number of persons

In May 2021, the organisations Greenpeace Slovakia, Cyklokoalícia and Znepokojené matky measured the speed of traffic on Vajanského nábrežie and submitted the results to the municipality office. Photo: Richard Lutzbauer



killed and seriously injured in road accidents by 50% of its 2020 rate by 2030; ...and to zero by 2050 (Vision Zero)."

Thus, Vision Zero clearly tells us that death and severe injuries are unacceptable and can be prevented. But how? Who is responsible? Traditional understanding hints at an answer: it is the users who are at fault for collisions. Drivers, cyclists, pedestrians, scooter riders. If they followed the rules, if they were disciplined and 100 percent prudent, no tragedy would ever happen (perhaps only with one exception: when a technical failure occurs).

But can people really be like that? Is it realistic to expect anything like that? People are just people,

we all make mistakes, we have our faults, and physical, mental and character specifics. We are not robots, and it is natural that we are sometimes absent-minded, tired, ill, angry.

The reality is that designers and planners who designed our infrastructure and means of transport dozens of years ago did not envisage that. Street design requires all users to behave impeccably, according to the rules. Even the language we use supports this presumption: the word 'accident' indicates something accidental, unforeseen, yet it is not like that. We drive fast machines, which are deadly in the hands of faulty drivers. It takes one hesitation, one bad guess, and the result is fatal.



4 October 2022 memorial march organised by Znepokojené matky and Cyklokoalícia
Photo: Marek Záhradník

These are not 'accidents', this is how it is designed.

The most inappropriate of the solutions is offered by car companies: 'Buy a big SUV and you will be safe.' This is indeed marketing tactics. The catch is that such cars and their owners seriously endanger their surroundings. The statistics show that collisions of SUVs with pedestrians and cyclists cause more severe injuries and more deaths because these cars are heavier and their front part is higher. This false feeling of safety is a profitable business for car companies.

How to calm towns

How is it then possible that the Scandinavian countries have

succeeded in lowering the death rate to zero? "Our main goal is to give the streets back to people," said Hanna Marcussen, Vice-mayor of Oslo for Urban Development. It was more than just saving lives – they have built a happy, healthy and attractive city, which works better for everyone. Vision Zero is an overlap of the goal to reduce Oslo's carbon footprint and the goal to improve life in the city. So, what exactly is their approach? The first, most effective measure is quite logically to eliminate the risk factor, which is, in this case, fast cars in cities; that means to calm the transport.

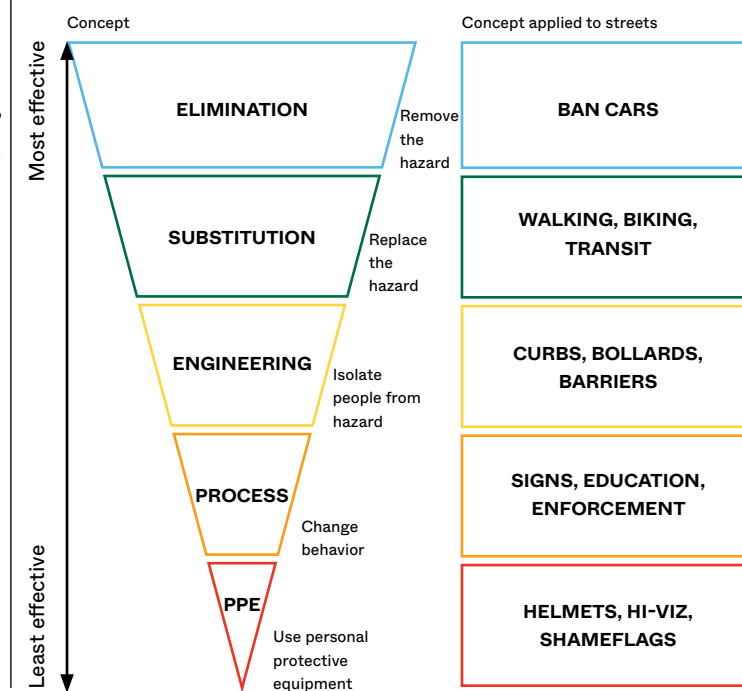
In 2015, Oslo set a goal of reducing traffic by one third by 2030. To achieve this, the city introduced a

The approach of Oslo

- 1 Public spaces are designed with regard to the fact that people are people, and they make mistakes.
- 2 People who design and manage the streets are also responsible for their safety; not only the users.
- 3 And, of course, they achieved it all through a systematic and proactive approach based on data. For example, by identifying the most hazardous locations and deficiencies in the public space.

There is a hierarchy of solutions. Let's have a look at it

Source: Marco te Brömmelstroet, Urban Cycling Institute



fee for road congestion, installed 52 new toll gates, and increased the toll, which is used for covering a large part of the city's investments and activities in transport. It also rid the city of 4,000 parking spaces, mainly in the city centre, and increased the fees for car parking – by 50% in the city centre and 20% in the other parts of the city. The current data show that the intensity of transport has dropped, which has enabled the installation of more bus lanes, cycling lanes and retarders.

With all changes, the city gave preference to securing the safety of vulnerable participants of the road traffic, especially pedestrians. When they started to close the streets to cars, they focused on risk areas with a high accident rate of pedestrians and cyclists. In those parts of the city where closing streets to cars was out of the question, the city turned them into one-way streets.

A fundamental measure to calm the traffic is to lower the speed to 30 km/h or less. At the speed of 30 km/h, the risk of death when a car collides with a pedestrian is only 10%, whereas at 50 km/h it is 90%. Between the years 2015 and 2019, Oslo lowered the speed limit to 30 km/h in almost two-thirds of the road network and the city assured this would be a standard speed limit in the entire city in the future. Mind you, it is not sufficient just to install signs and radars; it is necessary to physically adjust the streets, since up to 80% of driving is a subconscious automatic activity when the driver adapts to their surroundings. When driving down a wide, straight street, the driver automatically accelerates and when they spot an obstacle, they slow down.

To make sure the drivers adhered to the rules, they designed the streets in such a manner that it was impossible to exceed the speed limit. This can be done through physical changes, such as narrowing lanes for cars, raising pedestrian crossings, narrowing the turning radius, road curvature,



Day Without Cars is an opportunity to raise awareness of safety, but will it help when they give out reflective items, whistles and even car-scraping blades? Photo: Znepokojené matky



alternative road surfaces, retarders, and various other construction adjustments. In such complicated streets, the alternative design forces drivers to be attentive and vigilant towards pedestrians and cyclists.

Let us remind those who find these measures too radical how the cars ended up here. For thousands of years, towns and cities have been arising organically; streets responded to the need of people to live, meet, trade, care, play. The 20th century prioritised modernistic planning, so the design was put in the hands of urban planners and architects. A new profession of transport engineer appeared. They began to separate the city functions, build housing estates, demolish older buildings, because it was desirable to make space for transport; since car traffic really needs A LOT of it. Priority was given to what they considered 'economically profitable', i.e. fast

cars. All the rest got out of their way, not to hinder them. And so, the cities were growing also to the width, and accessibility on foot was deteriorating.

Nowadays, the trend has turned around and cities have finally started to make up for the mistakes of the 20th century by giving the public spaces back to people, building quarters based on the 15-minute-city principle with an emphasis on quality of life. And it is all not just about a one-sided limitation on those who drive. It is rather an attempt to fairly divide the public space among people who use it in different ways.

Christoffer Solstad Steen, from Norwegian road safety organisation Trygg Trafikk, describes the changes in Oslo in this way: "Oslo politicians have decided that use of cars will be more difficult – travelling from one part of the city

A photo from activity of Znepokojené matky, by which they pointed out to the police and the public that even wearing clothes with a lot of reflective elements reminiscent of a Christmas tree does not enable pedestrians to cross the street safely.

to another takes longer and for using the roads you have to pay a lot more money than before."

Hand in hand with restricting car traffic, conditions for walking, cycling and public transport have been improving. And here we come to the second point in our hierarchy: providing people with higher-quality possibilities to travel without using the car is a way of improving safety and at the same time of coping with the biggest challenge people are facing now – the climate crisis.

Oslo has created separate lanes for buses, and with the goal to multiply the share of cycling transportation to 25% by 2025 they increased the pace of realising cycling routes tenfold (!) – from the average 1.5 km per year to more than 15 km in 2019. Cycling routes were often constructed instead of street parking places.

With the division of public space to diversify modes of mobility, we get to point 3. Is it necessary to divide the space physically? Is it necessary to separate the cycling routes structurally everywhere? In countries with advanced traffic systems, the trend is to separate them only when it is necessary. In a residential street with the 30 km/h limit, a separated cycling lane is unnecessary; it is even unnecessary to separate the pavement, because it is the common undivided space with moving pedestrians and cyclists that forces the drivers to slow down and be more considerate. However, on main streets, where the cars are allowed to drive faster (40–50 km/h) and where bus transportation is also present, it is advisable to segment the diverse transportation modes. Barriers could be pavements, concrete barriers, railings, flowerpots, beds of greenery, but even a strip of parked cars help separate the road from a cycling route.

And back to Slovakia

Now we are getting to other ways of enhancing safety, which are less effective but all the more popular in Slovakia. Our police and BECEP have been focusing mainly on giving out reflective items to pedestrians, especially children.

The police also try to educate drivers not to drive after drinking and to observe rules. It is quite comical that drivers are informed about the places where they measure speed. Can anybody tell me what the point it is then? Does it lower the death rate? No. The number of victims of traffic accidents rose year-on-year by 22 to 267 in 2023. These included 134 drivers or vehicle passengers, 28 motorcycle drivers, 74 pedestrians (23 of them at zebra crossings) and 15 cyclists. Speeding and insufficient attention to driving were the two most common causes of traffic 'accidents'. Approximately half of the accidents under high speed happened in intravilan. But what result can be expected when the police begin with the least important measures and are resistant to the most effective ones – calming the traffic?

Responses of regional transport inspectorates to various projects are a clear indication that they do not reflect the importance of calming the traffic; for them, the priority is traffic flow. Fortunately, the city management thinks differently and embedded it in strategic documents. Bratislava Plan 2030 proclaims a clear goal: "The city creates conditions and infrastructure for safe, comfortable, and sustainable mobility, ecological moving within the city based on priority placed on pedestrian motion, cyclomobility, and public transport."

One example of this is the Vajanského nábrežie project. It is one of the most valuable areas in the city, separating historical centre and the promenade along the river Danube. The city management took a bold step to narrow this originally four-lane street to build safe cycling lanes there. In May 2021, Znepokojené matky together with Cyklokoalícia and Greenpeace Slovakia were measuring speed at the riverbank road. The maximum speed measured was 92 km/h. In broad daylight, just before the pedestrian crossing. Only 4% of measured green waves respected the maximum permitted speed limit. Despite the fact that the change had brought along better safety for both pedestrians and cyclists, the police had a problem with the cycling lanes project and several months after realisation suggested that the street was put back to its original condition.

Let us go back to Staromestská Street. What will happen with it? It was built in 1972. The priority was cars and the smoothest possible transit through the city to the newly built SNP Bridge. Everything else went sideways. They demolished buildings, cut streets through, destroyed one entire quarter. Pedestrians were given an underpass, and although it was with barriers, without a ramp, and without lifts, thanks to the fact that pedestrians had to go underground, the cars could drive fast and without being held up and that was the most important thing.



The city management took a bold step to narrow this originally four-lane street to build safe cycling lanes there. In May 2021, Znepokojené matky together with Cyklokoalícia and Greenpeace Slovakia were measuring speed at the riverbank road. The maximum speed measured was 92 km/h. In broad daylight, just before the pedestrian crossing.

There are several such streets in Bratislava: Šancová, which is more reminiscent of a highway than a street; Štefánikova; Karadžičova; Dostojevského rad; and we could continue naming others.

If we want to live in a city with high quality of life, now we already know that building a city this way was a mistake. We can learn from cities like Oslo and work towards the same goal. Experts on transport and urban planning should take this knowledge and apply it all over the world, so that no pedestrian, no cyclist or motorcyclist ever has to risk their life to get from point A to point B. Cars will go more slowly, but at the cost of more people staying alive; and that is worth it. We know that it is possible to achieve Vision Zero and that Bratislava has set particular goals in its strategic plans, which it has already started to turn into reality. To protect all road users,

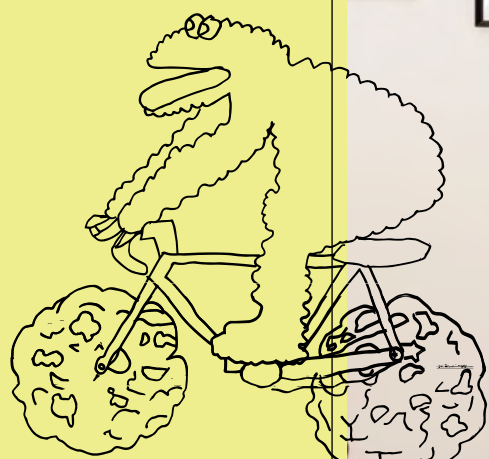
especially the vulnerable ones, is a duty of us all. Bratislava has made the first steps in the right direction. Let us continue.

The bike is better than other means of transport because you're not looking at the world through glass

Change to the bike! Bicycles are fun, movement, health, and much more! And for everyone. Yes, you too! Designers from the creative brand HENTO TOTO remind us through their drawings of the fact known to every child – that the bicycle is simply great fun.



Photos and illustrations:
Hento Toto



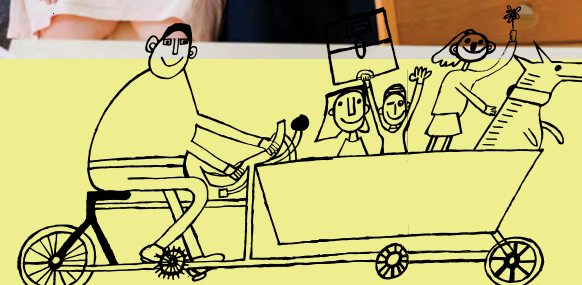
Creative brand HENTO TOTO has been connecting talented designers with mental disability and draftsmen since 2012. It operates under the civil organisation Bol raz jeden človek (There Was Once a Man). HENTO TOTO is based on the principle of 'collaborative art', thanks to which we can confidently declare that nobody can draw it like us. Our success is not only the result of the efforts of a few enthusiasts and draftsmen. It is a product of cooperation of graphic artists and designers, but also of shop owners, event organisers, suppliers, foundations, socially responsible companies, nice and supportive customers, and last but not least, of the parents of our draftsmen.

We inspire ourselves by everything around us – interesting people, joyful animals, stories from life and films, books that we read, food

that we like to enjoy, postcards or other small souvenirs from our trips. We love life in all its colourfulness. Each of us perceives it in our own way and we enrich each other. And, in particular, in all that we do we think about making people happy and smile.

The brand HENTO TOTO is for all of us one big adventure. We rejoice at every new product, every new offer, at collaborations, and literally, at every 'like'. And not only that. All of us grow at it – personally, professionally, as humans.

The illustrations for your enjoyment were drawn by draftsmen from HENTO TOTO: Dušan Bugár, Lucka Husárová, Janka Krankušová, Michal Miklošík, Lukáš Pucher, Lukáš Rakovský, Martin Tomčík and Patrik Tornyai. For more, visit hentototo.sk.

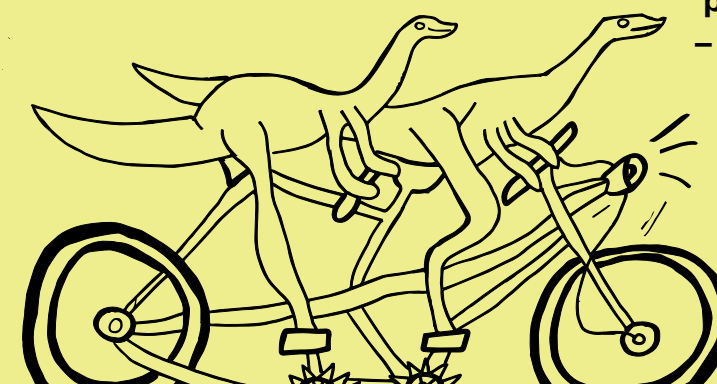


"The bicycle is better than the car because it is sporty, and you can also go to see nature. So, get on a bike and simply move!"

– Dudík –

"Cycling is good for health and being fit, but also for the environment. When cycling, it is important to be cautious and observe rules, to watch out for cars and stones, to wear a helmet, or a vest in darkness, so that the cars can see you well."

– Maťo –

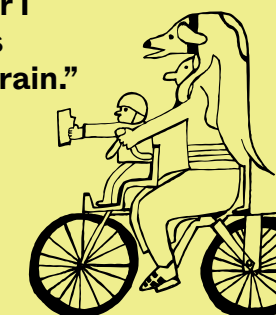
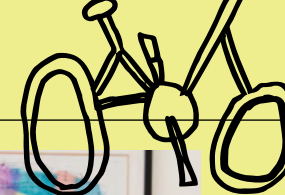


"The bike is much better than other means of transport because we are not inside and looking at the world through glass. The bicycle has the right speed. It is faster than walking, but slower than car, and we can notice and experience much more and take a break wherever we want, for example for a cold drink. Cycling puts you in a good mood. But, whether I smile or am serious depends on the terrain."

– Luky –

"I would love to have a bicycle. The one with three wheels for balance. I would love to cycle to work or, for example, to Zlaté piesky for a swim. And I would love a tandem bike the most, because when there are two people it goes better."

– Lucinka –





neighbourhoods. It is a challenge for towns and cities, for urbanists, architects, developers, parents and the entire society.

If we want to improve the quality of children's lives in cities, we must do everything to enable them to move again, play, or wander their

We Need Cities Where Children Can Move Independently

Says urbanist Sandra Štasselová. The territory of free movement of children two generations back was as big as the entire quarter. Today, we leave our children alone perhaps only in the inner courtyard. In its project City for Children, the Metropolitan Institute Bratislava has focused on the issue of freedom of children in public spaces.

Author:
Sandra Štasselová

The author is an urbanist working at the Metropolitan Institute Bratislava.

Photos:
Jakub Čaprňka
Veronika Gežík
Lenka Antalová Plavúchová
MIB Archive

When I was eight years old, I had a lot of freedom to move around our neighbourhood. I went to school alone, to my grandparents at the other end of our quarter alone. With friends we used to go swimming in the river without any adults. The territory I could wander had approximately 100 hectares. With nostalgia (and certainly retrospective optimism, too), I now look at the meadows and fields in which we trod the pathways through tall corn or blue-flowering flax, looking for bunkers of the enemy gang from the next street.

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Surely your childhood is full of such experiences, too. Now, the pathways are covered with asphalt and big cars are parked behind concrete fences, and children who are growing up there now have quite a different childhood.

In families whose generations have been living in Bratislava, I tried to find out how their freedom of movement was different when they were eight years old and where their own children can go. My research has shown that

freedom of Bratislava children has been shrinking rapidly and that the several-kilometre circle for straying has diminished for today's children to accessing the enclosed courtyard of their block of flats supervised by a parent looking out of the window. Why is it important?

A Popsicle Test

In his book *Urban Playground* [1], sociologist and expert on children's play Tim Gill observes eight-year-old children. The degree of children's freedom at this age indicates their feeling of safety in the city. To determine it, Gill uses 'a popsicle test'. If an eight-year-old child cannot go to buy a popsicle alone, there is a problem either with availability of the service, traffic safety, criminality, or freedom of movement, which children need for their healthy development.

In his other book [2], Tim Gill relates the children's ability to face

The map shows how a several-kilometre circle for wandering has diminished to an enclosed courtyard of a block of flats.

Data source: MIB poll



risks in early age with their readiness for pitfalls in older age. In the past, children were able to move around the city and spend time with other children without supervision of parents. They faced problems that could not be solved by their parents, and they experienced adventures connected with risks or with their own control over pushing boundaries. Experiencing small risks can help children deal with problematic situations in a healthy way and prepare for greater risks. Today, children are not prepared for the stress they experience. [3]

In 2015, the renowned Policy Studies Institute published a study titled: *Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action* [4]. They compared large amounts of data about children from 16 countries of the world – about their mobility, but also their results in

PISA assessments of 15-year-olds (i.e. their literacy), or other aggregated indicators of children's quality of life. The results of the study clearly proved correlation between independent mobility and children's welfare.

If we want to improve the quality of children's lives in cities, we must do everything to enable them to move again, play, or wander their neighbourhoods. It is a challenge for towns and cities, for urbanists, architects, developers, parents and the entire society.

Today's children grow up in different environments, with different possibilities that are influenced by complex societal changes – especially by transport. Limitation of the freedom of movement related to fear of traffic safety is not the only negative consequence of changes in mobility; it also has a direct impact on children's health.



Picture of the quarter Vauban, which offers amenities for children – a slide instead of a staircase, trees to climb, hens in the city, or a meadow for building bunkers behind the house. Photo: Andrewglaser / Wikipedia

Places where we live, environments we go through, ways we express ourselves, air we breathe – all this influences our health. Today's children lack movement. Most of them are transported by car. We have fallen out of the habit of walking, which helps prevent child obesity. Every twelfth eight-year-old boy and every thirteenth eight-year-old girl in Slovakia suffers from it. [5]

Streets full of traffic are also a threat due to pollution. Children are extremely sensitive to this since they carry this environmental pollution in their developing organs throughout their entire life. Air polluted by traffic emissions causes cognitive developmental delay in children, asthma and allergies, cardiovascular diseases, cancer, and many other severe problems. Isolation in cars does not help either. Car interiors contain ten to twelve times more dust particles than there are on the



Photo: Veronika Gežík

street. Traffic dust particles are so small that they pass not only through air-conditioning filters but also through lungs and blood into tissues without any problem.

There Are Also Cities Good for Children

Many neighbourhoods have already been designed for children. They can play with their neighbours on the street and have access to inspiring and stimulating public space. All this thanks to restricted traffic, which gives preference to pedestrians over cars.

The quarter Vauban in Freiburg, Germany, with approximately 5,500 inhabitants, was built in the 1990s on a military brownfield. Its urbanism was influenced largely by an academic study devoted to children's play and mobility. The emphasis was on well-interconnected green public spaces, pedestrian and cycling pathways, connection to a tram going straight to the centre, and maximum restriction of dynamic traffic and parking on the streets.

After almost 30 years after its construction, Vauban is a vivid and pleasant neighbourhood with a low level of car ownership (170 cars per 1,000 inhabitants, compared to the German average of 600 cars) as a logical result of good transport connection and limited infrastructure for car owners. Children's playgrounds are an integral part of the environment; they are not just little fenced courtyards, but well-thought landscape designs inviting children to interact with nature.

If Public Spaces Work for Children, They Work for Everyone

We do not have any national policies yet; topics related to limitation of traffic are difficult to pass politically and systematic changes transforming lifestyles of city inhabitants are difficult to achieve in short election cycles. How should this topic be addressed by cities?

The Metropolitan Institute Bratislava, where I work as an urbanist, has focused on the issue of child freedom in public

spaces through the project City for Children. After dozens of talks with experts on transport, participation, city finance, children's mental health, and with parents, we decided to focus on the topic of safe mobility, as well as on neighbourhoods and communities in the vicinity of primary schools. Elementary schools are genuine centres of child movement, where thousands of them go through the entrance gate on a daily basis.

Elementary schools are evenly located around the city – they are in everybody's vicinity; 95.6% of the city's inhabitants live within a 15-minute walk from the nearest state elementary school. Almost 70% of inhabitants live within a five-minute walk from the nearest school. That means that 6- to 14-year-old catchment school pupils could go to school mostly on foot. This makes it clear that if we succeed in improving the surroundings of all these schools, we will improve pedestrian pathways in the vicinity of almost every city inhabitant, not only of children.

7 Recommendations For How to Create Child-Friendly Cities
(according to the Policy Studies Institute 2015)

- 1 Remove danger from roads; don't isolate children from danger.
- 2 Reduce dependence on cars as the dominant mode of transport.
- 3 Prioritise the needs of children at spatial planning and urban development – public spaces that work for children work for everyone.
- 4 Explicitly incorporate the needs of children and their independent mobility into policies.
- 5 Invest in research consolidating and developing knowledge of children's independent mobility.
- 6 Adapt 'summer time', which will enable children to better use daily light and will lower the accident rate.
- 7 Support policies aimed at improving children's independent mobility at the state level by creating a national support fund.

How far is the nearest school for the inhabitants of Bratislava? (in minutes of walking)

Data source: MIB



Since 2022, we have been devoted to supporting active mobility and increasing the safety around schools. In 2022, based on a pilot neighbourhood around the elementary school Tbiliská in Bratislava Rača, we set participation and cooperation processes across institutions and communities for finding and implementing solutions. The reason this location was chosen as the pilot was that accidents and a complicated traffic situation related to the fact that it is one of the biggest elementary schools in the city (more than 800 pupils). Thus, we had a chance to cooperate with a large group of people who consider this topic critical and who care about effective solutions. The local urbanistic situation, i.e. a free structure of a post-war residential housing estate with blocks of flats without compact blocks, was characteristic of many other neighbourhoods and schools. One year later, in 2023, we cooperated with dozens of other communities throughout Bratislava. We collected a great amount of data,

which we interpreted and together with communities of parents and residents tried to find solutions to make the streets around their schools more friendly and supportive of active mobility.

How Do Children Go to School?

Circles of elementary schools bring together natural local communities of parents and children between the ages of 6 and 14, i.e. the age at which children start to move by themselves around their neighbourhood. For elementary school pupils, active movement, freedom and time with friends are very important. For their parents, it is the safety of the spaces and routes their children tread that is crucial.

According to a 2022 questionnaire survey responded to by thousands of parents from eleven cooperating schools, traffic is the main reason the free movement of children around the neighbourhood is limited. Therefore, parents often walk or drive children to school

It is an endless circle – parents are afraid their children will be run over by a car on the way to school and that is why they drive them there.

or after-school classes, by which they at the same time limit their possibility of free movement for one simple reason – they are afraid they will be run over by a car. Concerns about traffic risks deepen the issue of traffic volume and deprive children of experiences and freedom.

The results [6] surprised us by their unambiguity and self-reflection: parents often use a car to drive children, even though they live within walking distance. Besides the dangerous traffic situation,

they consider the volume of the traffic and bad street design the main problems. If all this is changed, they are willing to let their children go to and from the school alone.

At Tbiliská, we can see that one-third of the children who live less than five minutes' walk from the school are sometimes being driven. Many parents choose to drive them not (only) for convenience but also mainly out of fear, since they do not consider their children's route to school safe enough

and they worry their child will not manage it without damaging their health.

We have been analysing the questionnaire data against the background of objective data, such as the structure of the catchment area, permanent residence of children, their bonds to the school, information from various transport analyses and social-spatial mappings, and information from the children themselves, whom we have included in the discussions to a great extent. The result is a school plan of mobility – a map of current issues with draft measures to mitigate or eliminate them, which is discussed with all significant stakeholders at a roundtable – from children's representatives and parents to state institutions commenting on traffic organisation projects submitted by the local government.

At the elementary school Tbiliská, where the school mobility plan originated approximately one year ago, we can now see several significant changes that have emerged from this process. The



→ Empathising with other roles: the table simulates the height of an adult person who can easily see over parked cars.

→ Masks simulating the height of a three-year-old child and pupils of the elementary school Tbiliská empathising with the smallest users of the street.

→ Pupils of the elementary school Tbiliská explaining their perceptions of safety of the public spaces around the school.

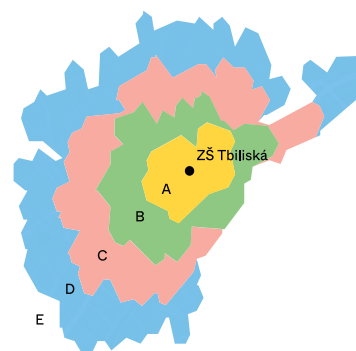
Photos: Veronika Gežík

The results of a questionnaire mapping traffic conduct at the elementary school Tbiliská:

One-third of children who live less than five minutes from the school are being driven.

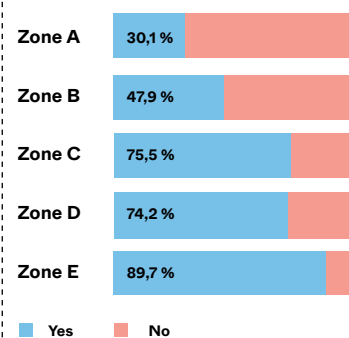
Data source: MIB, 2022

How and where do children go to school?

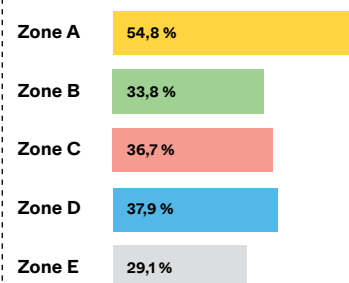


- Zone A** 0 – 5 mins
- Zone B** 6 – 10 mins
- Zone C** 11 – 15 mins
- Zone D** 16 – 20 mins
- Zone E** more than 20 mins

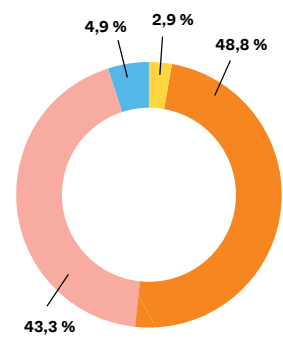
Is your child ever driven to school?



Share of children who go to school alone - according to the zones



Do you consider the traffic situation around school safe?



- Absolutely safe
- Rather safe
- Rather dangerous
- Absolutely dangerous

most visible one is the adjustment of the school forecourt, where chaotically parked cars, which children weaved among to enter the school every morning, were replaced by an organised pedestrian area with street furniture, greenery, and paintings created by children in workshops in cooperation with artist Oto Hudec. Also essential are constructional changes to the traffic area – in the complicated intersection in front of the school, there is a new pathway giving absolute priority to pedestrians, with a drop-off zone designed to ‘retain’ the cars bringing children to school and prevent them from turning into a one-way street at the school. Here, the child can get out of the car and walk straight to the school on a safe path. Thus, the street will be saved from car exhausts and the child will walk a bit before sitting at their school desk.



Walking bus as part of the intervention in support of pedestrian movement. Photo: Lenka Antalová Plavúchová

Still in progress are an overall reduction of the maximum permitted speed in the entire neighbourhood, and minor interventions that will enforce compliance with this restriction.

Alongside these infrastructural changes, a significant part of the City for Children project are ‘soft’ measures, which are aimed at creating a positive experience for parents and children around public spaces, at informing of the benefits of active mobility, and at supporting children’s outdoor play.

Walking Bus

Infrastructure is fundamental, but often insufficient for changing behaviour. One of the measures aimed at ‘nudging’ parents and children towards active mobility is a Walking Bus, which is a group of children accompanied by an adult person leading them



along a predetermined route at a predetermined time towards the school. The bus has stops where more children can ‘get on’. In the last couple of years, we organised a competition, a minor outdoor challenge, which enabled hundreds of children to experience the fun that the morning commute to school can be.

Children Should Play Outside

Public spaces designed with children in mind are usually mono-functional fenced playgrounds with a series of stock elements. They are interesting as social spaces where children of the neighbourhood, generally children up to approximately six years of age, meet. After this age, it is as if children vanish from public spaces. We are often confronted with the fact that schoolchildren do not know their neighbourhoods and spend free time in after-school

Children play and parents get to know each other. Ideal space for community life and open discussions about whether children have enough space to play. Source: Metropolitan Institute of Bratislava

We need cities where children move, play and meet, where access to public space is fairly divided – and those who need a safer infrastructure (because their soft bodies are not protected by metal bodywork) would also get more of it.

clubs or shopping centres. Thus, they are deprived of a lot of experience, of socially inclusive environments, and of an opportunity to bear responsibility and be independent. It is a huge and extremely complex topic, but we are trying to contribute to a shift forward with the activity Streets for Playing.

Streets for Playing

Inspired by British playstreets, we wish to encourage local communities to play outside and live

a community life through short-term traffic closures and street festivals.

Last year, we organised ten events through Streets for Playing, which we planned with the local children. With all pupils and mainly with school parliaments, we plan how to transform the event’s budget into the best outdoor fun – what programme and food there will be, and what things to buy that could be of use even after the event. Then, together with the school,



Photo: Jakub Čaprnka

we realise the event to meet the children's wishes. Foam party, popcorn, hammocks, a flea market where children sell their toys, books and cakes. Children play and parents get to know each other. It is an ideal space for community life, open discussions about whether children have enough space to play, and what qualities create such a space.

The feedback we get gives us energy to search for a sustainable future for this project, because when people come to a theatre or magic act for children, they realise that the greatest fun is meeting their neighbours or classmates there. And that next time they can go climbing the trees without invitation to a magician performance.

We are thinking about sustainability of Streets for Playing and would like to find a system through which the city will encourage local communities to implement such interventions through minor traffic restrictions that they could turn into a community party.

Precious Butterflies

One rainy winter evening, I went running through our neighbourhood. On this several-kilometre route I met only a few dog walkers. Only later did I come across three children playing outside their block of flats – bundled up in ski overalls, they were chasing each other and shouting. They were not sliding down a slide; they were not behind a fence supervised by an adult. I was looking at them as if they were some rare species of butterflies on the verge of extinction.

We need cities where children move, play and meet, where access to public space is fairly divided – and those who need a safer infrastructure (because their soft bodies are not protected by metal bodywork) would also get more of it. Cities where I can cross the street with my child without holding their hand tight out of fear for their life. I believe that almost everybody could agree that we owe it to children (and their caregivers).

Further sources:

[1] Tim Gill: *Urban Playground – How Child Friendly Planning and Design Can Save Cities*, 2021

[2] Tim Gill: *No Fear - Growing Up in a Risk Averse Society*

[3] Since 2009, in Slovakia, the number of children with some mental disability has increased by an alarming 72.1% (Source: eduworld.sk). One-third of boys and girls from the sample group of 10,000 schoolchildren experience anxiety, problems with falling asleep, or irritability at least once per week. (HBSC, 2017/2018).

[4] *Children's Independent Mobility: an international comparison and recommendations for action*, PSI, 2015

[5] Source: MUDr. Lubomíra Fábryová, PhD., *Diabezita: Prečo sú obezita a diabetes mellitus 2. typu nerozlučné dvojčičky*, 2020

[6] Results of a questionnaire mapping traffic conduct at the elementary school *Tbiliská*: One-third of the children who live less than five minutes from the school are driven to school.

I WANT TO RIDE MY CYCLE!

Join us and be an advocate for more bikes in our cities. Download and print this slogan on your own bag, T-shirt, jacket, or make a poster. Ride with style and purpose.
Illustration: Dobry th



How we engage people on the Good Market



From the very beginning of the event in 2011, the Good Market was meant to inspire people in Slovakia to live the streets, to explore and reimagine what public space should look like, and whom the streets should serve. To do so, we have built a strong tradition of closing off one street for the public twice a year, inviting not only local vendors, neighbourhood organisations and shops to join but also local civic initiatives – to share their knowledge, experience in fundraising, research, and building awareness.



Author:
Illah van Oijen

The author is Creative Director, NGO Punkt, a photographer and a facilitator

Photos:
Marek Jančúch



We as organisers always work with the main theme of the market, thus providing our partners and the public an opportunity to reflect on issues that stir society. Whether it is the local economy, the climate, community life or sustainable transport.



This is how we advocated for bicycles in 2024: when we announce the market, we send out an open call to all the vendors, partners and neighbours to join the programme with specific thematic content. Our core programme team actively looks for educational, fun or interactive cultural activities that support the theme and are intended for all age groups.



The event provides space for entrepreneurs and startups in the field of cycling, which gives people practical information on 'where to get their information and buy their gear'.



This year at the festival, we introduced a new infrastructure. We created mobile bicycle stands at strategic places of the festival. This way we took pressure off from the surrounding bicycle stands and fences of private houses, as well as create a perfect infrastructure for visibility of our partners, and the main theme of the event.

Local libraries, communities of cyclists and communities of artists were involved in preparing special bicycle-related events on the market.



Exhibition on our CTZN stage dedicated to the works of students of the Academy of Fine Arts, exhibition of the Hento Toto social workplace, and of our tailor-made PUNKT for CYCLE UP! bicycle titled "Saxana".



A great example was the use of our bicycle campaign T-shirts and slogans: during the market, all the staff were wearing bicycle vests. The T-shirts were for sale and there was also a workshop where people could come and print their own slogan on their own bag/T-shirt/jacket.





And last but not least, all the merchandise we sell to support our activities is made from upcycled materials, for example second-hand T-shirts. And what we communicate on them supports the given theme.



This way we offer people not only a way to support our activities but also to cooperate with us in building awareness on topics such as recycling, composting, and cycling home, to work, to school.



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