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The Role of and a Place for Transport and Mobility in Society

A Changing World and an Era for New Mobility

Jan Rotmans (Source: "Verandering van een tijdperk" / "Change of an era", 2014) said it: "we're not living in a world with changes, but in a changing world". There are so many social, economic, spatial and even more importantly technological changes occurring. Many things are changing and in some domains rather heavily. So mobility also has to change, because mobility is related to many of those domains. Changes, Challenges and Chances is from now on the adagium for mobility.

Mobility has to explore and grasp the challenges and chances, in order to develop and take care for a sustainable, vital and mobile society. In other words, to contribute shaping the society. A fundamentally different view of mobility is necessary. In this paper the author would like to initiate a first alternative view, looking at the primary survival conditions of mankind and the environment.

Communication with each other is one of these primary survival conditions. Can you imagine a society without communication? The need for communication is a basic need, which leads to mobility, and also to freight transport. The basic communication need of mankind is the starting point for what nowadays is called traffic, transportation and mobility. Of course there is always an important place for the traditional field of traffic and transportation, starting with infrastructure.

Mother Earth: We're also a Spaceship

It could be considered that our mother earth is merely a spaceship (see figure 1).



Figure 1: Mother Earth, We're Just a Spaceship

If somebody, for instant, sent a manned international space station into the Universe, all living conditions, certainly the primary ones, must be guaranteed. So climate, environment, water management, inner condition ought to be in good condition, in order to survive. The whole housekeeping system must be balanced. In this housekeeping system human being plays an essential and central role regarding their basis, material and non-material, needs. An important intangible need is the need for human contact, meetings and exchanging information. All-in-all the need for communication with social goals. A housekeeping system where people cannot or even badly communicate with one another is not in order and not desirable.

What applies to a manned spaceship also applies to our mother earth (see figure 1).

The Housekeeping System and Some Important Issues

There are three levels of attention required regarding the whole housekeeping system. Level 1: what kind of material do we have? Level 2: how do we manage these materials? Level 3: how can the whole system achieve or be kept at a sustainable and livable level? These three levels are depicted in three layers in the figures 2 to 4.

Figure 2 shows the environment on the upper level. On the one hand the environment, being all conditions and influences that are essential for the life of organisms (such as human beings, animals and plants) and for community living. On the other hand the biodiversity, the number, variety, and genetic variation of different organisms found within a specific geographic region (Source: Wikipedia). At the base there are the other valuable elements required for the housekeeping system, such as climate, energy. According to the author this base must also include communication between people. Therefore communication can be considered as one of the primary survival conditions, also called primary policy fields.

Figure 3 shows the further important issues, called by the author secondary survival conditions or policy fields, that also has to be honored.

At the end managing the issues memorized in the figures 2 and 3 serve a sustainable and livable society. The most important goals regarding mobility are livability, safety and accessibility.

The figures 2 to 4 are representing the most important themes and policy fields but do not pretend to be exhausted.



Figure 2: Primary housekeeping, so policy domains = human being and his environment

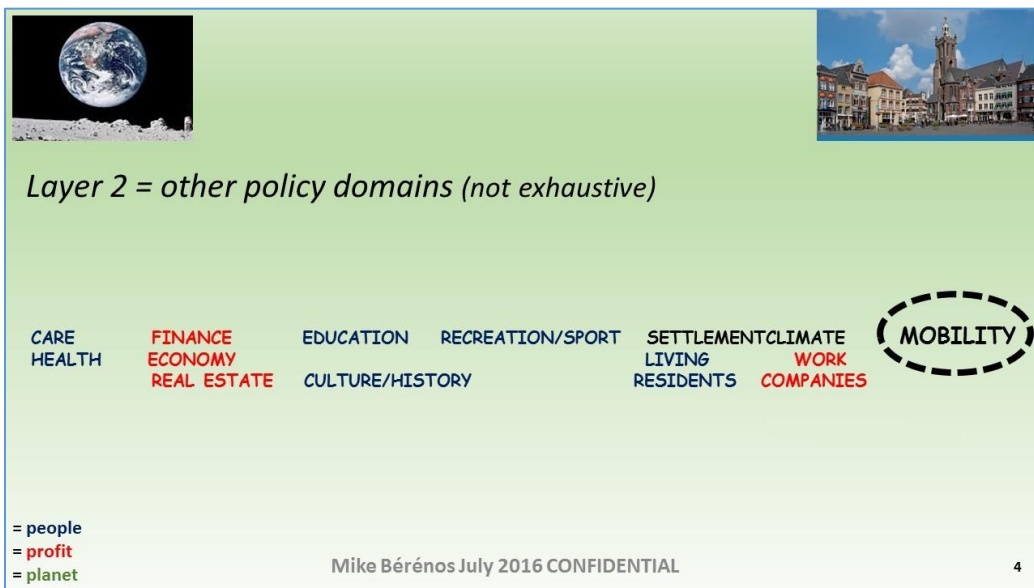


Figure 3: Other policy domains



Figure 4: Ultimate goals

There is, indeed, on the level 1 a place for the non-material needs of mankind. In this paper the focus is on the non-material need of communication, and therefore mobility. A place for mobility that has not been unpacked sufficiently enough so far. This is remarkable and a bit unfairly, because it deals with the facilitating of a primary human survival condition i.e. the need for communication. In order to contribute to welfare, wellbeing and happiness, this primary survival condition also need to be met, creating mobility enrichment.

The need for communication influences mobility in two ways: i.e. physically, but also digitally (social media, internet, mobile phone etc.). Indeed, also digital mobility. It is not always required to make a physical journey to communicate with one another.

About communication in the next paragraph.

Communication

There are currently two fields of communication. One field is the organizational side of communication, for example within firms around personnel issues. The other one is the marketing side, the communication of firms with their customers.

The communication this paper aims to unpack relates to society and spatial aspects, a third field of communication. This third level of communication relates to social goals. As indicated before, there are two appearances of this kind of communication: digital and physical mobility.

Professionals in this third field of communication are looking at how people communicate with each other and facilitating this communication for a better, a sustainable, vital and mobile society, regarding also the negative aspects of especially the physical mobility (i.e. road safety risks, noise and air pollution, as well as global warming). So, the new mobility professional is looking at how to facilitate physical mobility, including digital mobility aspects.

So the starting point has to be the communication system, with an important component the traffic and transportation system.

The author pleads for a new field of study i.e. the *communication patterns system* -physical and digital mobility- and derived from this, the traffic and transportation patterns. Questions that arise are: What does it look like? Who and what is behind it and how can you manage these communication patterns? Can you, with insights into the communication patterns system, operationally manage the (disadvantages of) the physical mobility? There should be an integral scientific research program on this. A research program in which communication concepts are integrated into mobility studies, leading all together to a broader and deepened insights into transport and mobility behavior.

The new traffic and transportation planners must claim this third field of study and work. It is clear that examining this should be interesting and worthwhile, benefitting mankind and society at large, and the future of the mobility and transport profession as well as the professionals working in it.

A little bit more about the WHY of this profession and slightly less about the WHAT and HOW.

As such, defined and organized, professionals in this field are therefore helping to build a sustainable, vital and mobile society -shaping society- through the management of the living conditions as mentioned in the figures 2 and 3, using new behavioral insights.

Integrality in Transport and Mobility

Where possible, text colors in the figures 2 to 4 indicate what is specific people, planet or profit. In doing so we see that sustainability, translated into people, planet and profit, is intertwined everywhere. So there are instruments everywhere to achieve sustainability and it also shows the important of integral thinking. This only brings benefits, starting with the efficiency in taking interventions and measures, and thus more efficient use of resources.

Integrally can be seen at at least four levels:

- ***the communication system*** with (digital) modes and infrastructure, the organization of mobility (mobility as a service), and last but not least the (potential) user of the system (see figure 5). So, it give more insight when for instance vehicle technology is also combined with infrastructure, organization and the (potential) user.

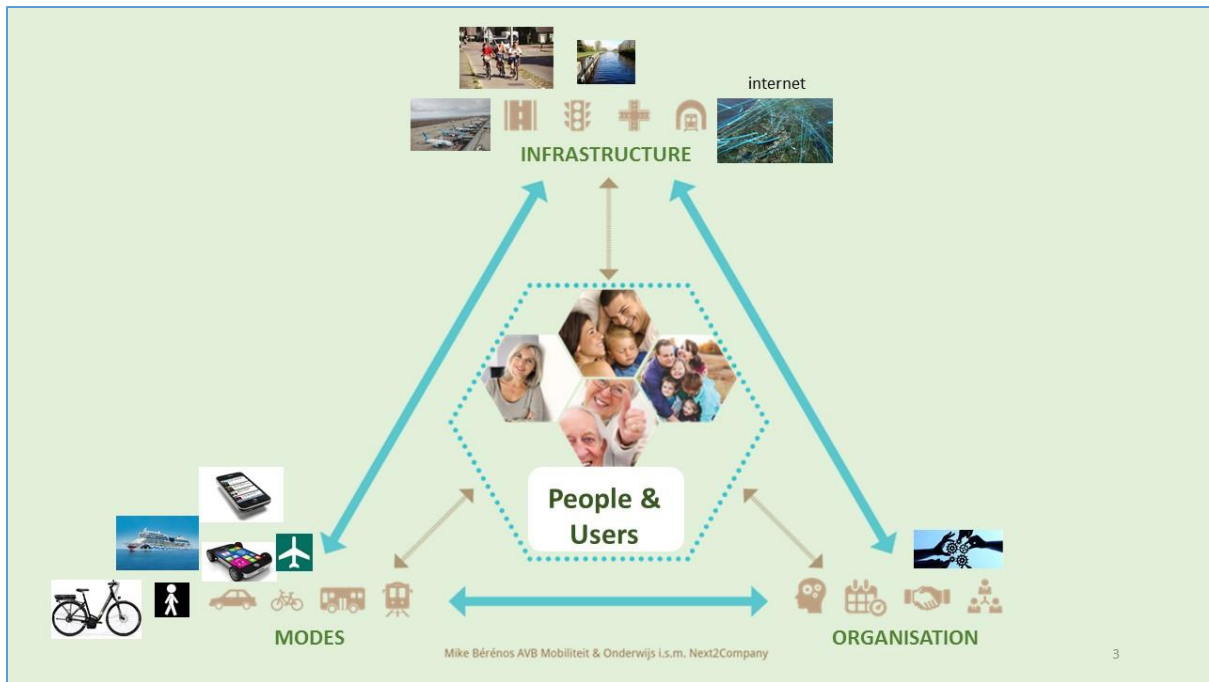


Figure 5: The communication system

- **Accessibility.** There are at least four kinds of accessibility to be respected (see figure 6). Looking for instance at accessibility 1, we can see that in people-profit-planet especially people is involved.

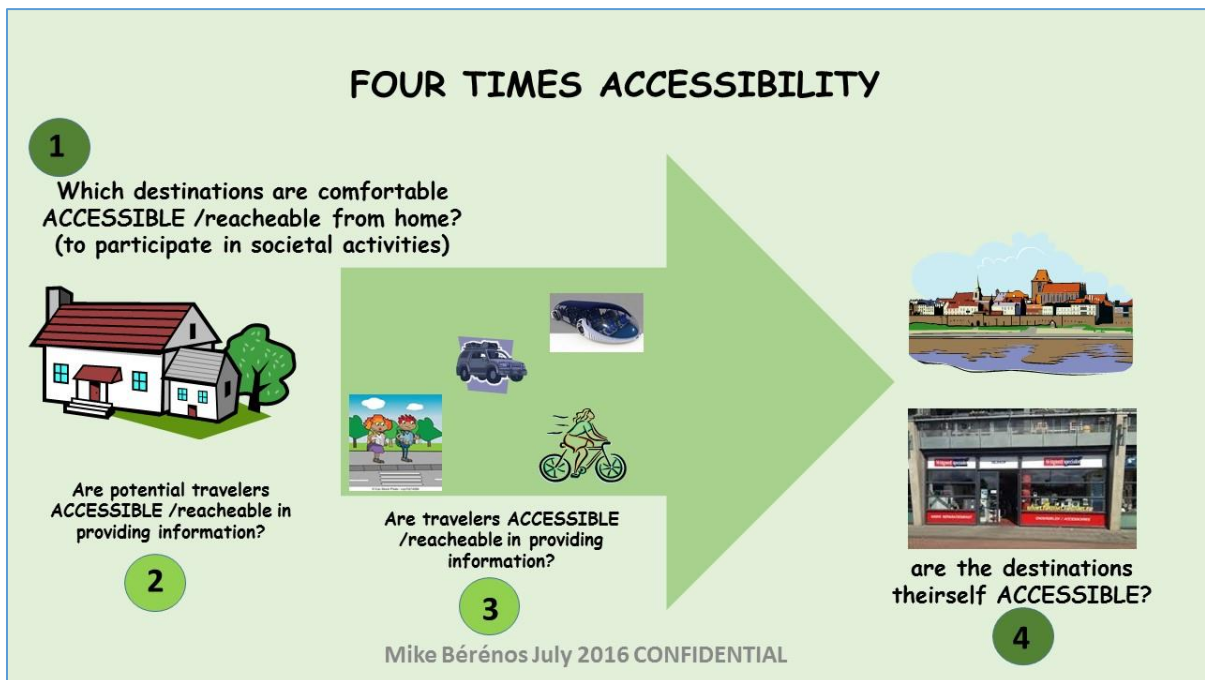


Figure 6: Four times accessibility

- **Interdisciplinarity.** Mobility has to do with people, society, spatial organization and technology. So many sciences/disciplines are related to traffic, transport and mobility, such as for instance social psychology, sociology, economics, urban planning, technology, etc. So not only consider traffic or mobility or technology/technology alone.

- **Policy fields.** Mobility is almost everywhere, in care, health, education or in the search for the right conditions for the settlement of firms (see figure 3). This also connects mobility with other policy fields,

including environment, energy, water, space or with nature and landscape. It is also said, "With mobility, you must always involve the framework, the context".

Conclusions

Integral thinking, with an 'umbrella-driven' view on mankind, society, environment and mobility is necessary and leads to a new look at mobility and the role for mobility in shaping society. Integral digital/physical mobility as well as integral mobility in relation to the other (primary) policy fields.

Is it required to take the communication system as a basic start of looking at mobility? Doing so offers opportunities for a new perspective on mobility, new research and broader policy interventions for a sustainable, vital and mobile society.

It is clear that such a look at mobility can give a positive swing to the profession and most probably the role and place of transport and mobility in society. So let's unpack the utmost primary role of mobility i.e. communication in society and about the chances and challenges that face us. However, potential threats also need investigation in case mobility does not respond properly to a heavily changing world. A changing world where mobility can play an important role in getting the housekeeping system of our mother earth in good condition. What a challenge, and what a lot of chances in shaping society!
