Changing **views**
Changing **thoughts**
Changing **behaviour**

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# Introduction

Traffic congestion, $CO_2$ emissions, and noise: personal transport has an impact on the environment, our health and safety and challenges cities, communities and businesses. Although suitable public transport or cycle paths often exist, there is a lack of awareness and an absence of tools for implementing sustainable mobility.

How come we're taking the car? Why is it so difficult to change our habits? How can we deal with switching to sustainable alternatives? In addition to the necessary infrastructure, psychological factors such as norms, values and incentives play a role in changing the mobility behaviour of commuters. Psychological findings help to understand our mobility behaviour and offer strategies for intervention and behavioural change. The Compact "Changing views, changing thoughts, changing behaviour" provides an insight into the topic of behavioural change and offers inspiration for more sustainable mobility.

# Motives for mobility

Mobility implies not only moving from one place to another, but also has a social meaning. High mobility promises independence, development and personal freedom. It is an expression of the status and prosperity of a society. It is therefore important to take social aspects into account and to understand the symbolic function of mobility.

Emotions, benefits and symbolic power: these three motives influence our attitudes and the form of transport we choose. Costs, time and organisational effort represent the benefits of a vehicle, but emotions such as driving pleasure, pride in ownership and the stress of congestion also have an impact. Symbolic motives such as social identity and status influence our attitude towards cars, trains, buses and bicycles.

Studies show that it is not only infrastructure, topography, availability and weather that influence our choice of transport. The car means above all status, autonomy, security and privacy. Bicycles are associated with health and fitness. Cost considerations and the search for a parking space favour public transport.

# Awareness and responsibility

Am I aware of the impact transport has on the climate? Do I feel responsible for poor air quality when I drive? Can I change anything as an individual? The answers to these questions depend on our personal ecological norm. This defines our perceived obligation to behave in an environmentally friendly manner.

Factors such as an awareness of problems and the attribution of responsibility influence our personal standards. First of all, we need to realize that a problem exists. The most common attempt is to raise awareness by providing information and knowledge. Knowledge does not lead directly to a change in behaviour. But it is an important prerequisite for it. At the same time, we should communicate what type of behaviour can improve the problem.

Secondly, whether a person feels responsible for the problem is also a factor. Do you perceive your own behaviour as the cause, or do you think that politics or industry are responsible? If you feel personally responsible for a problem, then you are more likely to change your behaviour. The transmission of values such as freedom, equality and environmental protection strengthens our sense of responsibility.

# Habits

*GETTING UP, DRINKING COFFEE, BRUSHING OUR TEETH, GETTING INTO THE CAR, DRIVING TO WORK...*

Habits are learned behaviour patterns that people automatically recall in certain situations. This means that we do not consciously choose an action by weighing up the pros and cons and choosing the best alternative. Instead, in certain situations we always behave in the same way, which we have learned through repeated successful behaviour.

Habits are important for mastering our daily lives, and without them our brains would be overwhelmed by a multitude of details, information and decisions. But they also limit our perception and make our behaviour inflexible. For example, we tend to neglect information that questions our routine.

In order to change habits, we need to recognize patterns of behaviour and consciously choose alternative actions. Reminders and rewards facilitate this change. Making appointments with other people and sharing our decision with others help us stick to our resolutions. Changes in life such as moving house or job are good times to develop new routines.
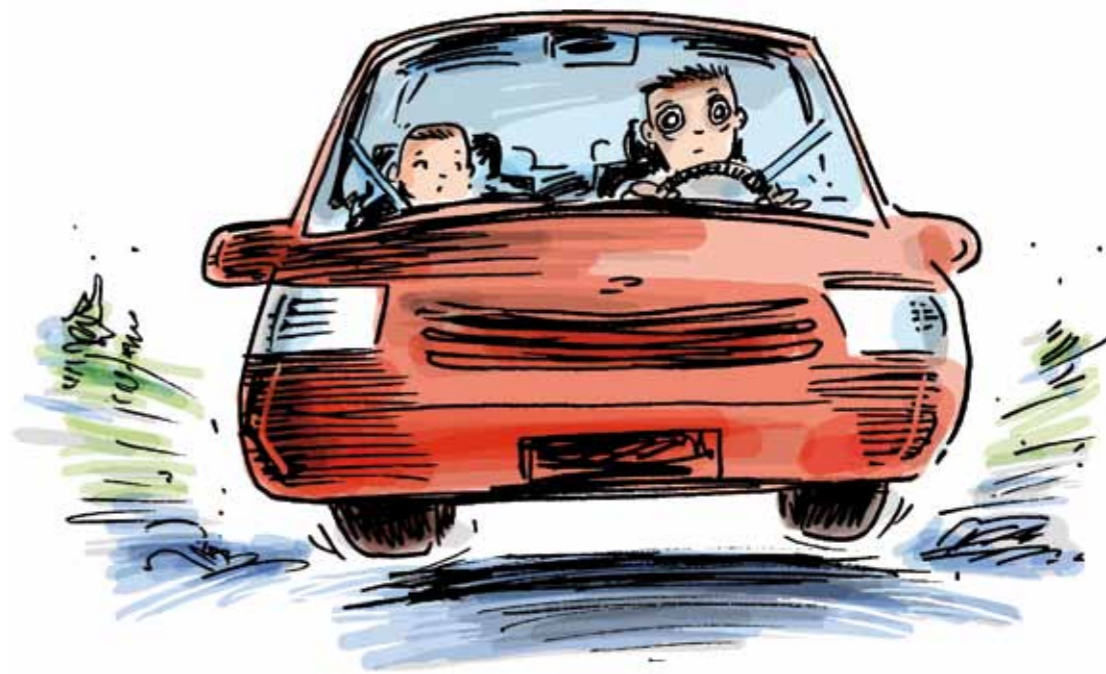
# Social norms

*IMAGINE EVERYONE CYCLES TO WORK AND YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE TAKING THE CAR.*

Other people have a significant influence on our own behaviour. Social norms are shared rules, standards and expectations that define how to behave or how not to behave in a situation. Man is a social being. He adheres to norms so that others accept him and because he wants to do the right thing.

Psychology distinguishes between two types of social norms: target or injunctive norms define how one should behave in a particular situation. They show which behaviour the general public recognises or rejects. Actual norms, also called descriptive norms, refer to the actual behaviour of most people. These norms are also communicated by the environment: a traffic jam also implies that driving by car is commonplace.

"Eighty percent of people commute to work in their own car": communicating injunctive norms that harm the environment can be counterproductive, because people prefer to behave like the majority. In order to change behaviour, environmentally friendly norms can be emphasized through communication and the design of the environment. Comparisons with other people from our own social environment are particularly effective.

# Control

Control beliefs describe the individual assessment required to carry out a certain behaviour. If I think I am not fit enough to cycle to work, I feel I have little control. On the one hand, this has a direct influence on behaviour – I do not cycle. On the other hand, it also affects my attitude: cycling is exhausting.

When we steer vehicles ourselves, for example bicycle or car, we feel a greater sense of control.  In the case of public transport that is driven by others, this sense of control is lessened. My perception of whether I need to be mobile in everyday life depends on my profession, age and children.

Behavioural control is also strongly linked to the infrastructure: is public transport accessible? Are there cycle paths? Are the roads overloaded? Our personal weather hardiness is particularly relevant for cycling. For a greater perception of control, an awareness of possible actions is important, as are positive experiences in the past.

# Psychological distance

We have to use less $CO_2$ to stop climate change. However, when it comes to personal decisions and behavioural change, climate change feels a long way away – the psychological distance is great. On the one hand, there is a distance in time. We formulate climate targets for the next 20 or 30 years, and 2050 seems to be far into the future. What does it matter if I drive a car today or tomorrow?

We rarely feel strong effects of climate change in our own lives. Polar bears on melting ice floes in the Arctic, sinking islands in the South Pacific and melting glaciers high in the mountains are far away from everyday life.

In addition, there is a high degree of abstraction: we can neither see, smell nor feel $CO_2$.

In order to overcome these spatial, temporal and abstract distances, it is important to make behavioural change a personal matter. Most people are more likely to switch to bicycles for health reasons than for climate reasons. Traffic jams outside their front door, road safety, time to work on the train: campaigns for switching to sustainable transport should include personal, immediate and urgent arguments.

# Cognitive dissonance

If our attitude contradicts our own behaviour, an inner conflict arises. In psychology this is called cognitive dissonance. For example, a person perceives himself to be an environmentally friendly person and at the same time drives to work every day in his car. If the person is confronted with information that makes him aware of this contradiction, an unpleasant state of tension arises. There are several ways to resolve the conflict:

1. Change your attitudes: I don't care about the environment
2. Change your behaviour: cycle to work or catch the bus
3. Justify yourself: "I'm much faster by car than by bike"

4. Relativize information: "I alone do not have much influence on the climate"

Above all, we don't change our attitudes that quickly. This is the result of our individual experience. Although our attitude has an influence on our behaviour, there is often a gap. Changes in behaviour are connected with effort. Justifications and excuses are easier solutions for resolving dissonance. For this reason, it is not enough to confront people with the negative consequences of their actions. It is particularly important to point out simple alternatives for action.

# Costs and benefits

When we make decisions, we generally try to reduce the cost of the behaviour and increase our benefits. Our choice of transport therefore depends on factors such as time, cost and comfort.

The low-cost theory assumes that attitudes and values are crucial, if the behaviour in question has low costs. This means that values such as environmental awareness are only included in the choice of transport if the cost of using public transport is low.

Rewards and punishments change the cost-benefit ratio. Rewards are often more effective and acceptable than punishments. However, rewards should be given close to the desired behaviour and should not be too great, so that motivation does not depend solely on them.

# Rebound effect

Environmental issues in the mobility sector cannot be solved by technical progress alone, but also require social changes. More efficient technology often leads to savings, which are used for increased consumption. For example, an energy-saving car could lead people to drive more frequently and further or to buy larger vehicles. Or they could use the money they save for more consumption, such as air travel.

This rebound effect is more likely to occur if a lot of money can be saved through greater efficiency. Time savings lead to increased consumption, especially for means of transport. Increased efficiency is also important as a motive. If it is primarily a matter of saving costs, the effect is stronger than if it is a matter of environmental protection.

# Goals

In order to change behaviour and establish new habits, setting goals are very important. They give direction and facilitate the implementation of intentions. Goals are particularly effective when they are set high, but at the same time still realistic. Furthermore, they should be formulated positively and as concretely as possible, so that progress can be measured. The achievement of objectives should be possible within a short period of time. Large goals can be divided into smaller sub-goals.

For example, the goal "I want to drive my car less" is not very helpful because the wording is very general. "Every Thursday I will take the bus to work" – this goal provides a clear action. Furthermore, it defines when and how I want to show this new behaviour. Rewards also help us to reach our goals.

It is also helpful to concretize the behaviour further and consider possible implementation obstacles and questions in advance: when, where and how will the behaviour take place? What will happen if it rains, for example? What will happen if I want to go shopping after work? People who clarify such questions in advance are less likely to be distracted, have fewer excuses and are more likely to implement their intentions.

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# cross-border mobility

More than ten thousand commuters cross national borders every day in the Alpine region. Existing traffic routes have been created with a national perspective and not with cross-border commuters in mind. As a result, roads are overloaded and local residents have to tolerate noise and air pollution.

In the two-year "Cross-border mobility" project, the status quo is analysed within the framework of the EUSALP macro-regional strategy for the Alpine region. Furthermore, the status quo is analysed, good examples of cooperation are presented, solutions are sought and concrete action plans with measures are drawn up in selected hotspots.

www.alpine-region.eu/projects/arpaf-crossborder

# Bottom line

→ Mobility is more than movement; it also has an emotional, useful and symbolic meaning.

→ Knowledge transfer alone does not lead to a change in behaviour, but it is an important requirement.

→ Changes in life are good moments to develop new habits.

→ Social norms influence behaviour and can be emphasized.

→ Arguments for behavioural change should be personal, immediate and urgent.

→ If conflicts arise between attitude and behaviour, simple alternatives for action should be presented.

→ Values play a bigger role when the costs of behaviour are low.

→ Efficiency gains are not sufficient, a change in behaviour is also needed.

→ Perceived control affects whether or not I perform a behaviour.

→ Set goals that are achievable, positive, concrete, measurable and timed.

# Sustainable mobility — implementation plan

*WHICH NEW BEHAVIOUR DO I WANT TO IMPLEMENT?*

_____

_____

_____

When? _____

Where? _____

Over what period of time? _____

What motivates me? _____

Possible obstacles: _____

Solutions for these obstacles: _____

I will tell these three people
about my project: _____

How will I reward myself when
I have achieved my goal? _____

Date, signature: _____