Interview with Cornie Huizenga

“In India you have a class of people, who make the decision and there is another class of the people, who are affected by these decisions. The cyclists predominantly belong to the latter group, which is not making decisions.”

Joint Convener of Partnership on Sustainable, Low Carbon Transport (SLoCaT), a multi-stakeholder partnership for promoting integration on sustainable transport in global policies on sustainable development and climate change, based Shanghai, China, Cornie Huizenga is a leading global voice of non-motorised transport in sustainable urban transport. Huizenga, who has led several organizations working towards achieving sustainable transport like Clean Air Asia, spoke to NMT Times on the significant role of cycling and walking in the present global transport scenario:

Q. Why does a modern world with tremendous technological and mobility prowess need cycling and walking?

I think you assume that cycling is not modern and technologically advanced. If you look at the development in the bicycle industry, it is the same as the car industry. The bicycle industry is also innovating. Moving by cycle is a radically different proposition than moving by car. And the reason to do those 15 years before is the same as today. It is more sustainable.
Q. In India, cycle is traditionally seen as a poor person’s vehicle. What in your opinion is the economics of non-motorized transport?

It has to do with visibility. At the moment you could say cyclists are not visible in India in the same way as pedestrians are not visible. There is obviously a class dimension to this question. The perception in India is that if you cycle, either you are poor or a sports fanatic. In Europe, the mainstream cyclist is an eight-year-old girl going to school or a 65-year-old person going to buy groceries or a family that wants to have some quality time going out. How do you give more visibility to cycling, you need people who are proud to be associated with cycling. Cyclists in India are in a very much defensive position. You have to justify why you are cycling in India. In Europe, you have to justify why you are using a car.

Q. There is another chunk, less than one per cent of population in India, which uses cycling as a sporting activity. How can we excite this section of youth, who can become brand ambassadors of non-motorised transport?

I would not approach them as individuals. I will approach them as a group. If you can create a network of youth clubs across the country, then you can take the discussion forward.

Q. In the Netherlands, there is a role that the country has played in shaping cycling for all sections of the society, whereas in India the mode of cycling is only for the poor.

This is again going back to the class issue. In India, you have a class of the people, who make the decision and there is another class of the people, who are affected by these decisions. The cyclists belong predominantly to the second group, which is not making the decisions. In the Dutch society, there is a substantial percentage of cyclists among the policy makers. They make decisions on allocation of road space. It is allocated in an equitable manner and also allocated to cyclists. The planners come to their offices by cycles. In many cases, their families go out on weekends on cycles. In India, Mr S K Lohia, a former senior bureaucrat in the federal transport ministry, who was in an influential position as regards transport policy making, started cycling to his office. He then started talking about cycling. There were concepts of non-motorised transport that came out of him. The question is whether his successor also cycles.
Q. Is there also a politics of NMT, because the voice of the cyclists, walkers and cycle rickshaw drivers (pedicab) is almost never heard in a public discourse?

One of the most powerful associations in the Netherlands is the union of cyclists. They have 35,000 members and 150 local branches across the country. The cyclists are very well organized in the Netherlands, which is very important. The cyclists’ union has contacts with political parties. You probably know the European Cyclists’ Federation. They have an office in Brussels and do lobbying in the European Union to ensure that cycling is reflected in the European policy. They are active on Twitter. They are financially supported by the European Commission. This also means that the cyclists’ union is active in political parties. You are having elections in India. In Europe, the cyclists’ union will look at the campaigning and also what the parties are saying about cycling. Read the rest of the interview: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/04/29/interview-with-cornie-huizenga/

Discovery of Delhi

A Dutch journalist finds out a fascinating world in Delhi’s bylanes from a bicycle and helps others discover it too

More and more domestic and international tourists arriving in India’s capital city of Delhi are realizing that the best way to feel its more than two millennia of history and heritage is through a trip on a bicycle. This is exactly what Jack Leenaars, a journalist from the Netherlands, felt when he pedaled through the city’s bylanes one morning. For someone hailing from the Netherlands, called the ‘bicycle capital of the world’, it was not surprising that the vehicle of thought for Leenaars would turn out to be the poor person’s transport in India. But the Dutch journalist didn’t let his thoughts rest: he went on to create a project, which he christened DelhiByCycle, to make the feeling universal. The result: Five fascinating cycle tours to discover Delhi.

For the rest of the article click: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/05/06/discovery-of-delhi-on-a-bicycle/
Children become agents of change

The strong message of using non-motorised transport to transform cities was delivered at a massive road safety campaign, undertaken by 100,000 school children from India’s National Capital Region

“We don’t cycle today. We don’t walk today,” chided Rohit Baluja, President of Institute of Road Traffic Education in New Delhi at a recent event in the Indian capital dedicated to road safety. There was both angst and nostalgia in the voice of Baluja, one of India’s well-known voices of non-motorised transport. Narrating how he used to cycle to his school near the famous Connaught Place in New Delhi every day, he said the peaceful co-existence of different users of roads, including cyclists and walkers, was palpable during those days, “fifty years ago”. Home to nearly 8 million motorised vehicles, New Delhi is notorious for its abominable road accident record. According to published figures of the Transport Research Wing of the Indian government's Ministry of Road Transport and Highways and National Crime Records Bureau for the year 2013, five people are killed and 20 more are injured every hour on Delhi’s roads. A large number of the victims in the capital are pedestrians and cyclists mowed down by speeding vehicles.

To read more click: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/05/06/children-become-agents-of-change-on-indias-roads/

Communicating Commuting

Kathmandu: Can it kick the motorbike habit?

On the underside of a pedestrian bridge on Kantipath, one of central Kathmandu’s busiest roads, there is a large hand-painted sign: “Get a bike – you’ll never regret.” The brightly coloured writing is clearly visible to the tens of thousands of motorists speeding or, depending on the time of day, creeping along the loud, congested road. It is part of a wider campaign to get more people in the Nepalese capital – one of the world’s most polluted cities – cycling. The bike, however, is still viewed by many as an inferior mode.


Supreme Court orders setting up of road safety panel

It is a boring bit of road statistics, but the truth is that India’s most vulnerable minority on the streets is really the pedestrian. Justice AR Lakshmanan, former Chairman of the Law Commission, cited a survey by the Central Road Research Institute which suggested that nine of 10 pedestrians felt unsafe while crossing the roads. So, the Supreme Court judgement earlier this week seeking urgent action from the Union and state governments to look into all aspects of road safety comes as a great relief. It was an order lost in the election din, but on April 22, against the rising criticism of judicial activism in India, the SC came out yet again with an important judgement that will save thousands of lives every year.

Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/05/07/supreme-court-orders-setting-up-of-road-safety-panel/
Toronto to pilot car free day

Toronto is looking at closing Bloor St. to cars for one Sunday morning this summer in a pilot project patterned after Open Streets events held in New York, Mexico City and other cities. The idea is to boldly transform the street into a linear park and let pedestrians, joggers and cyclists take over for a giddy day of motor-free enjoyment. The city’s economic development committee okayed a limited approach after concerns were raised about the original pitch — which was to stage Open Streets on four Sunday mornings, closing at least 10 kilometres of road each time.

Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/05/07/toronto-to-pilot-open-streets/

The greening of Ratchadaphisek Road, Bangkok

One of the busiest areas of the capital for shopping, sightseeing, clubbing or just wandering, Ratchadaphisek Road is also one of the messiest, as City Hall acknowledges. The City Planning Department is arranging to work with local business operators to improve the landscape of the strip. An initial perspective design of the road has already been created by the department. Our design is based on scenic streets chosen from famous cities around the world,” said department chief Kriangphon Phatthanarat, referring to a pilot project to improve the landscape of the road from the Rama IX intersection to the Thailand Cultural Centre T-junction.

Read more: http://walkabilityasia.org/2014/05/07/the-greening-of-ratchadaphisek-road/

Good Reads

The Hong Kong Institute of Planners (HKIP), in collaboration with MVA Hong Kong Limited (MVA), City University of Hong Kong (CityU) and Civic Exchange on 28 April 2014 released their proposal to revitalize Central. Des Voeux Road Central (DVRC), between Pedder Street and Morrison Street, would become a green ‘tram and pedestrian precinct’. It is practical proposal which would significantly change the image of Central and addresses the poor air quality in Hong Kong’s Central Business District.

Read more: http://www.hkip.org.hk/En/Content.asp?Bid=12&Sid=38&Id=893

Footpath Design: A guide to creating Footpaths

This quick reference guide highlights key concepts from the IRC Guidelines, including footpath design standards. The guide also draws from local and international best practice for some themes not covered in the IRC publication.

Read more: https://go.itdp.org/display/live/Footpath+Design:+A+guide+to+creating+footpaths