

Poster Presentation: Modern Urban and Regional Development

29a: Overland Cycle-Routes – Ways for ecological Mobility or Ways for Passtime?

Lamm, Ulrich (DE)

*German Cyclist Federation – ADFC, Bremen
Fesenfeld 121, 28203 Bremen, Germany
ulamm.brem@t-online.de; www.radweit.de*

This presentation shows principals of an improvement of the infrastructure for overland cycling. It is based on geographical investigations. It is not based on sociological records nor on physical tests and calculations.

1. The Chance of Ecological Mobility

Ecologically, cycling is an optimal mode of transport, perhaps even better than walking. But what is about the practice of bicycle vacations? If the starting point of cycling is not at home, and the journey there and the journey home are much longer and done by motor power, by ecological standards the whole trip is rather a rail voyage, a car voyage or even an air voyage. Railway transport is much more approvable than the other two ones and an important help for cyclists. But the biggest step is between all three and Cycling. So the potential of the bicycle for an ecological development of traffic is only used efficiently, if cyclists are encouraged to cover their long distances by bike. Considered that many cyclists cycle a hundred kilometers and more in a day, a thousand kilometers in a week, one motorized section of a tour or both can often be avoided. Furthermore well planned journeys on bike can be onset and finish of other kinds of holiday or other activities. This combination of fun and utility of cycling provides real ecological mobility.

2. Detouring Routes and Direct Routes

Unfortunately, most bicycle routes, even the long international ones, have been created in the purpose of keeping tourists in the region. They are laid out to be used ("done") once in a life, perhaps divided upon the vacations of several years.

Detours in a bicycle route do not only cost the users' time and power and make a bicycle route unsuitable for aimed tours. Unless they base on the default of shortcuts, detours rise the costs of installation of the route. Mostly they rise the costs of maintaining it. These factors carry much weight in northeastern Germany, with its traditional lack of comfortable secondary and rural roads. A lot of money has been invested in very few and detouring cycle routes. The same amount of money could have been used (and should be used in future programmes) for more numerous more direct routes. The purpose of spreading tourists in the country is the reason of creating detouring routes, but a greater number of direct routes is as appropriate as one detouring route to lead tourists to many places. And if direct routes make cycling more useful, the tourist economy can earn money from more cyclists instead of earning a lot of money from a few cyclists.

It is a wrong imagination, that direct routes must be ugly or boring: The straighter the route, the more cyclists have the chance to pass more than one landscape in a day. Shifting from one valley into another is more interesting than following the same river all the time. Cycling straight, cyclists can experience very different aspects of a landscape, as it has developed historically.

While detouring routes are inappropriate to cover distances, direct routes are not inappropriate for cycling without interest in local progress, such as sight-seeing or movement without target. Tourists who emphasize sight-seeing can insert intensive local investigations. If a network of direct routes is dense enough, friends of round courses can use meshes of the network.

3. Choice of Lines:

- Cycling being individual traffic, a cycle-route mustn't be led like a bus line. Where two places are linked by a belt of suburbs, a central route through this belt is necessary for local traffic. Long distance traffic is better served by a route collateral to the belt.
- Objects of interest ought to be linked by branches of the route and not by detours.
- Towns and big cities are targets and obstacles as well. There should be the choice to pass through and visit, or to pass by. This can result in a rhomboid structure of the route. Nevertheless, sometimes an inner bypass following a river or canal can be more attractive than an outer bypass leading through several suburbs and neighbouring towns. Such a river or canal should only be used, if its direction is appropriate.
- Where a route passes through a historical centre, it should be led a way that is always or almost always passable on bike.
- The attractiveness of a route is improved, if in towns and villages on the way, it is possible to rest on a typical place, which is well integrated in the course of the route.
- In some towns the opening of oneway streets has to be completed so that they are useful for non-resident cyclists, too.
- If the optimal route uses a ferry with limited working hours or working days, or passes an area temporally closed, an alternative route without temporal limits has to be available.
- As a passage through urban areas banks of rivers and canals are useful (see above). Outside towns their appropriation is different. Most German Canals being relatively young (i.e. built after 1900), they are not really integrated into historically grown structures of landscape and settlement. So the paths on their banks are as boring as motorways. Where they have surfaces of minor quality, they combine this disadvantage with the discomfort of a field lane.

Detours of the Berlin-København Cycle Route and More Direct Alternatives



Map no. 1

4. Appropriation of Roads and Tracks:

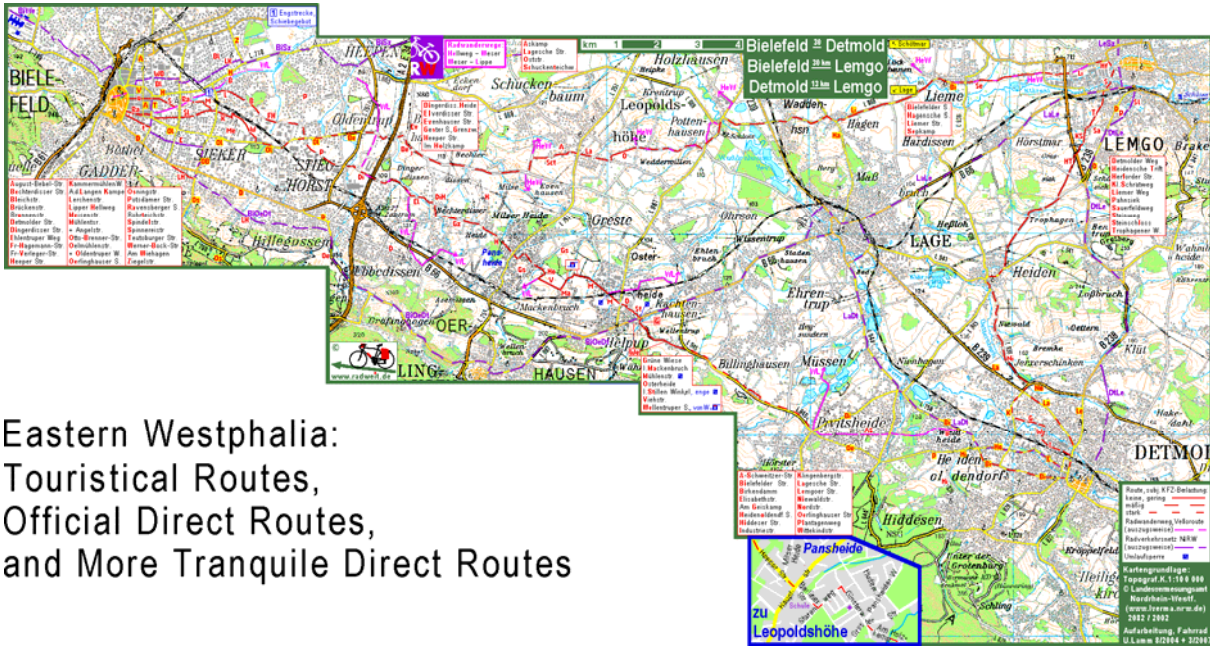
- Cycle routes have to be usable
 - with loaden bicycles,
 - also with tandems, trailers and lying bikes,
 - with all kinds of weather above 0°Celsius.
- Tarred surfaces provide best comfort and reduce effort and costs to maintain bikes and ways.
- People travelling with unskilled little children may come in stress from any car on their way. All other travellers have more discomfort on a formally car-free track beneath a motorway, than on a road with moderate motor traffic.

5. Market and Lack of Empiric Dates

Some people argue, that cyclists as consumers would prefer regionally concentrated detouring routes. But many or even most people like to go far away in their vacations. Unfortunately many people practise this mobility as an ecological hazard. A great deal of hosting economy and gastronomy are organized regionally. Their advertisement propagates, that individual tourism were identical with many long stops and little progress. An empiric proof of the effects different types of signposted routes in the same region seems to be difficult. But maybe the popular assumption that river routes avoid slopes is not the only reason for their popularity. Long sections of a number of river routes are relatively streight.

6. Example: Berlin – København

Of course, the tendency of the authorities to design detouring routes exists an many regions of Europe, but the German section of the cycle route from Berlin to København (marked in pink) is quite a typical example (See map no.1). The southern part being merely a Havel riverside route cyclists at first are led to the outer west of Berlin. Due to the direction of Havel river the route then leads northward and aims rather at Rügen than at Rostock. The next intermediate target is Heinrich Schliemann's home. This 19th century archeologist is known for his excavations in Troja, no mental preparation for Denmark and Scandinavia. Then the north coast of the lake Müritz is touched. For a bike tour from Berlin it is not encouraging not to have the first view upon it, before having half around that huge lake. Even the shift to the valley of river Warnow is prolonged by detours. The alternatives marked in red show that shorter lines are possible. Being portable information without local implementation, they were developed independently from the agreement of local authorities and economic actors. Vice versa no infrastructure has been built especially for their purpose. Therefore, some desirable improvements (marked in green) are pointed out that were possible, if they were harmonized with the authorities.



Eastern Westphalia:
Touristical Routes,
Official Direct Routes,
and More Tranquil Direct Routes

Map no. 2: This map is a re-arrangement of an online-presentation.

7. Northrhine-Westphalian Bicycle Traffic Network

In Northrhine-Westphalia (NRW) there are touristic routes and the more direct "Radverkehrsnetz NRW". But this network in some regions includes many routes on federal roads, and in some attractive regions it has been adapted to detouring touristic networks like the "Radelpark Münsterland". Map no.2 shows three types of routes between Bielefeld and the two most important towns of the district of Lippe. In this region the NRW network (lilac) mainly uses main roads. One part is led on top of a mountain range, uselessly. The detouring touristical routes in between are marked only partly in this map, in order to maintain perspicuity. Direct communications between the three towns mainly using roads with little ore moderate traffic are possible (marked in red).

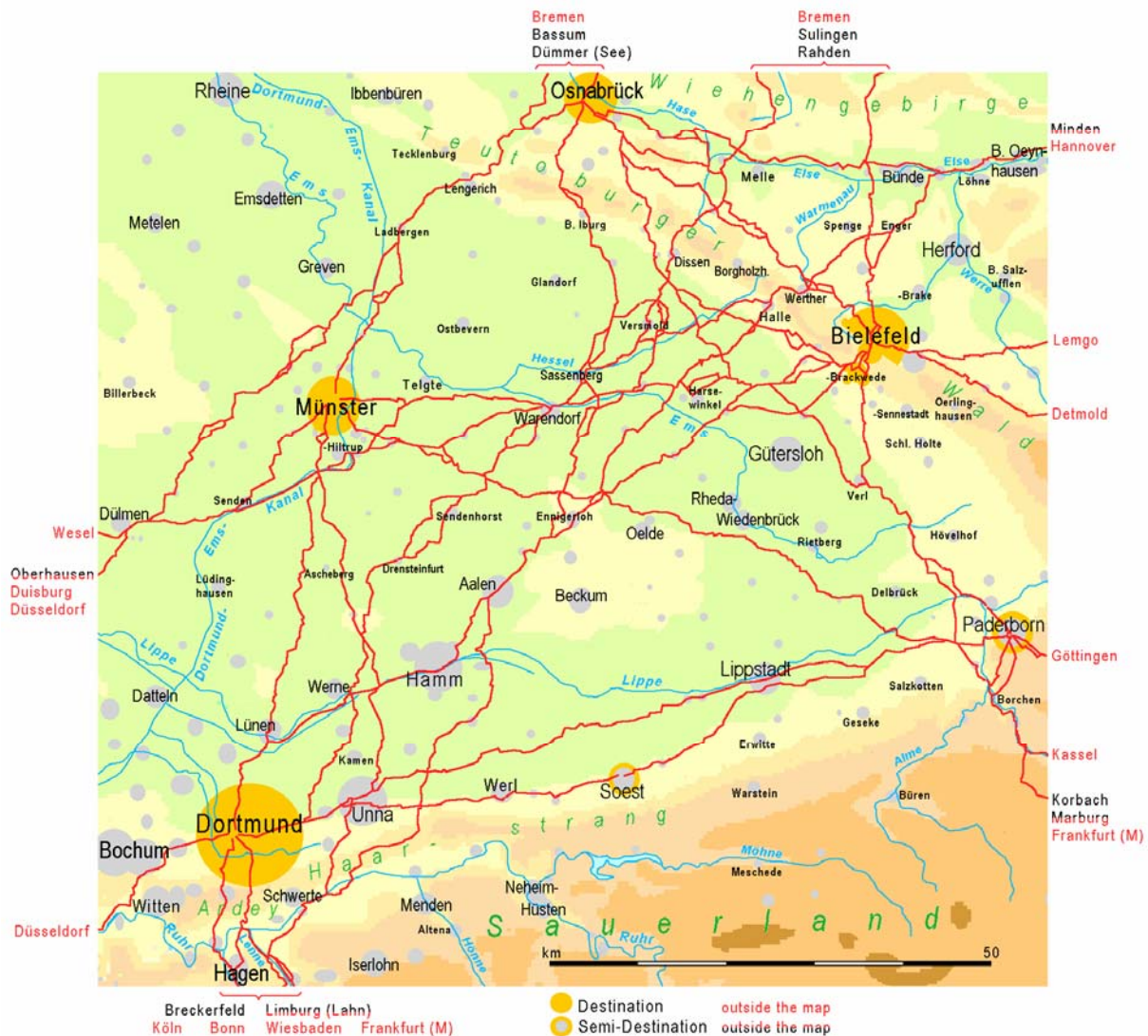
Recently a questioning of cyclists has been carried out by the NRW section of the ADFC, in order to evaluate the effects of that network. Due to regional differences in the layout of the network, and due to the design of the questioning, the evaluation hasn't provided informations about the influence of variations in the layout of routes.

8. Density of a System of Routes

This presentation does not criticize the ambitious idea of the NRW network, and it won't deny the huge efforts done to realize and maintain it. Nevertheless some aspects of the realization could have been better. So the "Radelpark Münsterland", integrated in this network, is designed very detouring in the attempt to create a denser touristical network this way.

Map no. 3 demonstrates, that a system of direct routes and bypasses can form a dense network, too, though the design of the example only regards very few targets.

Relatively Dense System of Direct Routes and Bypasses Combining a Polygon of only a Few Targets



Map no. 3: The direct destination form Osnabrück to Dortmund has not yet been developed.