

WALKING FOR ME, YOU AND MILLIONS MORE

A Wake-Up Call



Illustrations
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Colophon

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1 THE 300 STEP LIFE

My first view of the world, and one that has fascinated me all my life, was through the large window of my parents' home. In the living room, three storeys high. When I was two years old, I discovered that standing on the tip of my toes, I could see outside.

Looking down I saw the road. Just to the left, was the intersection, with heavy traffic coming from all four sides: cyclists, cars, pedestrians. I spied a dog. For me these movements were significant. At every opportunity, I pressed my nose to the window. And, I badly wanted to be on the road, to experience it first hand, to see and feel it all.

But, watching was always also great fun.

For the first few years of my life, the late fifties, I grew up in the neighborhood of Blijdorp in Rotterdam. A great deal was available all around within a walk of 300 steps: there were shops for groceries, a tram stop and bicycle parking. There was the hairdresser and the family doctor, both in starched white jackets, who I was afraid of. A little further, but still within walking distance, the always attractive Blijdorp Zoo.

Later I realized that then, everything one needed to do daily, by and large, could be done on foot. Also, this was a form of exercise and good health, without much deliberation.

When I was three years old my parents decided we needed another house and we moved to a smaller town.

Nowadays, for a lot of people regular walking is no longer practical. With the introduction of automobiles and television, adults and children alike are settled into couches or strapped into car seats. Then there is the internet, the laptop. Much of life is spent in front of a screen. Walking is often too far, and sometimes too unsafe.

Wheels and screens are replacing our feet everywhere. For the rich and the poor, in America, Europe, China and India. Among men and women – although the latter often take more steps.

And the next ten years?

Will we walk less because we will even have more wheels and screens than we have now? How can we compensate?

How much space will there be for walkers behind buggy's, wheelchairs and activities for all stages of life in between?

Daily walkers don't count in governments' planning and in business models. Investing in walking will be an exception. Experts predict that globally, governments and investors will give preference to lifestyles that focus on driving, parking and sitting.

Some think tanks predict that within ten years almost 50 percent of the world population are obese. In many countries the number of traffic casualties increases rapidly. At the moment 30 percent among the deaths and seriously injured are pedestrians. This is not a happy scenario given that walking is just as much a part of life as eating and drinking. However, walkers rarely protest, they are not vocal.

Are there social leaders who care about space for our feet? As a writer I started searching for them. Where are these role models or motivated professionals? What do they teach us?

It strikes me that walking is increasingly important for so many aspects of our life. Our minds (See 2) and our bodies (See 3). I discover that going on foot saves consumers' money (4); and that many people profit from a Nearby Bonus, though they have no idea (5). Role models influence governments (6) and empower citizens' groups (7).

My research helps me to suggest what is needed in the future (8).

Do you want to know the ways people walk?

Then visit www.healthydailywalking.com Tips & Tools. For yourself. And to get others more often on their feet. Here you can also find many sources of my research.



2 EMPTY YOUR HEAD, CLEAR YOUR MIND

The first professional walker I encounter reading interviews is Ann Meskens. She is an entrepreneur and writer who lives in Belgium. I read her lively, spicy stories.

“The pleasure and freedom of walking helped me to discover what was really important to me. For years, I couldn’t figure out the meaning of my life. I worked as a horticultural technologist and insurance broker. Then, the more I walked, it became clear to me what I wanted to do. After years of practical work, I started a new study, philosophy”, she says.

Ann’s favorite walks are in the city. “Why do I enjoy this? It’s a different experience from driving a car or riding a bicycle. It is me that moves through the environment.” After her walks, Ann gets down to her reading, thinking and writing.

Just one foot in front of the other

Human beings process impressions at a speed of about five kilometers per hour, experts say. This is quite a brisk walking speed.

For those who walk every day and in a pleasant environment, it isn't a big effort. It's about putting one foot in front of the other, almost lazily.

Ann Meskens says that when she walks, she sheds off fatigue, is energized and inspired. In recent years, scientists have increasingly proved that regular walking is beneficial for mentally healthy and sick people, alike. Getting away from computers, laptops and mobile phone screens slows down memory loss. And dementia, Alzheimer's, and other old-age diseases and health challenges. Mental ailments are less likely to occur.

After completing her studies in philosophy, Ann works as a philosopher consultant. She has built a successful business. She writes, gives lectures and is a radio commentator. Her hero is Jacques Tati, the French filmmaker and comedian. "Among other things, I like his light-footedness and his eternal and cheerful loitering", says Ann.

Walking alone

Walking can be a solitary exercise. Many people prefer to walk alone, either to do an errand or a chore. For those who like the idea of a walk as a time that 'flows', it is just that. It brings a sense of freedom, independence, and self-confidence. They can listen to music or stop to take a photograph, things that could be potentially dangerous in a car or on a bicycle. Dogs are an important incentive for many people to step out. They are like a daily coach for them.

Companionship, no talking can be wonderful

Walking with others offers companionship. It can be a quiet walk or while talking. People get together for hikes and have various experiences. Some say, "We talk to each other, but sometimes we stroll a bit by ourselves". Others say, "No talking can be wonderful". And still others say, "Sometimes you can tell half your life story, walking along!".

Here is the story of Theo Wismans, teacher at the Charlemagne College in Landgraaf, Netherlands. While mentoring a group of challenging teenagers, he came across a book by hockey coach Marc Lammers, who had won gold with the Dutch women's team at the Olympic Games in Beijing.

“The idea was to propose to the group: let us go for gold together. That meant, we are going to walk for a long time. It was incredible. They all came along. And, somewhere in the hills we sat down together in a circle and had a conversation. We repeated this experience again. In the end, even the most problematic of the pupils said he had enjoyed himself.”

Walking coaches

In workplaces, colleagues walk during their lunch break. They plan an activity together, or they just enjoy a healthy break. A walk can be helpful when two people need to have a difficult conversation.

There are now, in many countries, professional walking coaches. This is based on the idea that walking is a refreshing, healing and spiritual activity. It can also be good for people with mental health challenges. Some coaches walk with groups to talk about the purpose of their work. Others are a therapist, where the session is on foot. Walking paying attention to your steps and to the environment, helps you to enjoy and realize the importance of the moment.

As one coach says, “A pleasant cadence of, for example, doing three steps as you inhale and four as you exhale”.

Creating conducive spaces

Roads, streets and walking paths are designed by professionals who often work in isolation, behind their drawing boards. They determine how we use these public spaces. But, not all designers are unaware.

Allan Jacobs and Elizabeth Macdonald are renowned architects and urban designers, known for their work on cities and urban spaces. They visit building sites and ask the question, which I also ask myself: Do I like it here or not? And why? They believe that, unconsciously, we experience what we see, smell or hear around us, and this affects us positively or negatively.

When designing walking routes, they recommend variety. There must be space and shelter, with attention to trees and greenery. Sidewalks must be wide with benches at intervals, so people could rest or just watch the world go by.

The architects endorse investing in playgrounds where children and grandparents can enjoy each other's company in a playful and imaginative way.

Musical compositions

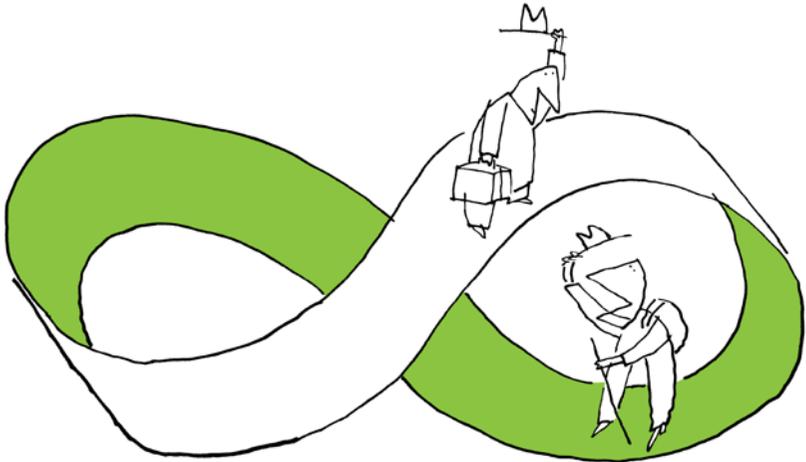
In walking, the first impression influences a choice. Psychologist Kevin Lynch said that if you want to direct people, you have to be aware of the 'orientation'. Not only in cities but also in the countryside. He suggests building towers, striking corner buildings and exciting rows of trees. People should experience attractive surroundings opening their front door.

The Danish architect and urban designer Jan Gehl has focused on improving the quality of urban life by re-orienting city design towards the pedestrian and cyclist. His designs are like musical compositions. He gathers people at one spot and juxtaposes them on another. Here, a crowd. There, a space for individuals. With the result, the walking and hanging out experience is a pleasant and diverse one.

A look into the future

I described situations of regularly walking to empty your head for a while. But a lot of those who could benefit, do not know. They don't think about it, or forget, consider it uncomfortable, creepy. They ignore already available walking paradises. Will there be sufficient awareness in the changing world?

Walking is getting more and more important to help preserve our natural skills. Computers and robots are moving into our areas of thought and physical activities. That is why it is important to be aware that we have legs and feet and so we create our own footprints. People could enjoy massively all kinds of walks: from just small trips around the house to long holidays as life changing experiences. Media should not give the upper hand to messages scaring people. These make them insecure and afraid of getting out in the street or meeting others.



3 HEALTHY HABITS

Pauline Dekker and Wanda de Kanter are two heroes. They are Dutch lung specialists. Over the years, their practice has meant seeing and listening to patients, talking, arguing and fine-tuning their learning. Because of this, they have developed an approach to a healthy lifestyle.

Dekker says, “My patients talk about their habits and their support and denial. By listening, I know what motivates them to live a healthier life, which includes more exercise. Without help, they are often not able to find their way. I learned that a person’s self-discovery is a much stronger support for a healthier life, as opposed to advice from others”.

“Both of us were smokers and much later we discovered how this influenced our health. I stopped smoking at the same time as my husband. Having a companion and a competitor in endurance helps a lot,” says De Kanter.

The two specialists see how change is possible. They stress that accepting new behavior in general requires a period to get used to it. Anyone who decides not to eat potato chips anymore will normally face challenges for about a few months. Then the new habit sets in.

The stimulus of success

Dekker and De Kanter have helped many people get off bad habits. They even made a television series and became motivational writers. Currently, De Kanter also is a successful lobbyist against the tobacco industry. The two doctors have done an impressive job in helping people become aware of what makes a healthy life.

However, their approach of highly personalized attention is very time-consuming and expensive. There are options for inexpensive help and walking coaches. Also, there is a lot of information on how to do this through e-learning, the internet and other new tools. These can fill a vacuum, as the medical profession is still less focused on prevention, and more on treating symptoms and prescribing medications.

For better health now and later

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), two out of three adults do not exercise sufficiently and are therefore more likely to become physically ill. Children become more lazy, lethargic and obese. Regular walks are the best remedy for adults, besides good nutrition and a sound sleep. A brisk one-hour-a-day walk or so is sufficient for a normal healthy life. Every extra hour of walking, over and above the one hour, could mean a longer and healthier life.

Public health

It may not be possible to achieve good health by ourselves. Being aware of one's health is one thing. But other factors such as clean air and spaces for safe walking are also needed.

In the old days, citizens in Europe and the USA had no proper access to institutional health care. At the end of the 19th century many died of infectious diseases. Clean water, hygiene for everyone and better living conditions were needed. There were few or no government policies or facilities. Citizens and doctors called on governments to build sewage systems and water networks for all. They advocated for health policies and plans for infrastructure and financial allocations to implement programs. Housing cooperatives were formed, and they created healthy, affordable living spaces. Dreadful diseases became extinct as practices of health and well-being were widely adopted.

Green Revolution: where nutrition and health go hand in hand

In the developing world, growing populations required coalitions of governments and scientists to meet peoples' needs. For example, in India more people had access to food because of the 1960–1980 Green Revolution, a program to promote larger harvests and less loss of crops. Another example: Africa conquered high child mortality due to large-scale vaccination campaigns and the massive distribution of mosquito nets.

How to keep good health

In present times, peoples' reluctance to be active is reminiscent of the health challenges of the past. Poor health is a result of harmful eating habits and living conditions. I look at the site of the Canadian researcher Todd Litman. He discovered that where you live partly determines the risk of obesity. Governments that promoted suburbs or 'Distant neighborhoods' where almost everything you need requires a vehicle, created more health hazards. Be it school, shopping, work, etc., distances are too far to walk. Sometimes, it is just the right distance to bike. But mostly, it is essential to drive.

Those who live in places where their daily needs are met by foot, have a choice. They do not always need to get into their car, catch a bus or use their (motor)bike to go from one point to another.

Seductive walking: a fine art

Here and there doctors now say: "Today, planners who design cities and architects making buildings are more important to everyone's physical health than doctors". They call for neighborhoods with many walking possibilities, where distances are acceptable for as many people as possible. Being active, making many healthy steps. Designers could provide prominent beautiful stairways, locating elevators to the sides. Design company ARUP picks up the signal and publishes the guide *Cities Alive: Towards a walkable world*.

Imagine being seduced by pedestrian networks, a series of routes that are a coherent ensemble. Greens, parks and playgrounds that invite us to move around and play, in the heart of neighborhoods.

Volunteers make the difference

Several countries have initiated successful health practices, encouraging volunteers and professionals to share a passion for walking. I meet them at conferences, and they tell me their stories.

In North America, for example, there is the Canada Walks movement, dedicated to getting more people walking – for transportation and recreation – by creating communities in which walking is safe, convenient, and inviting. In the UK, the charity Living Streets has been a beacon for walking since 1929. Their goal is ‘to get people of all generations to enjoy the benefits that this simple act brings and to ensure all our streets are fit for walking’.

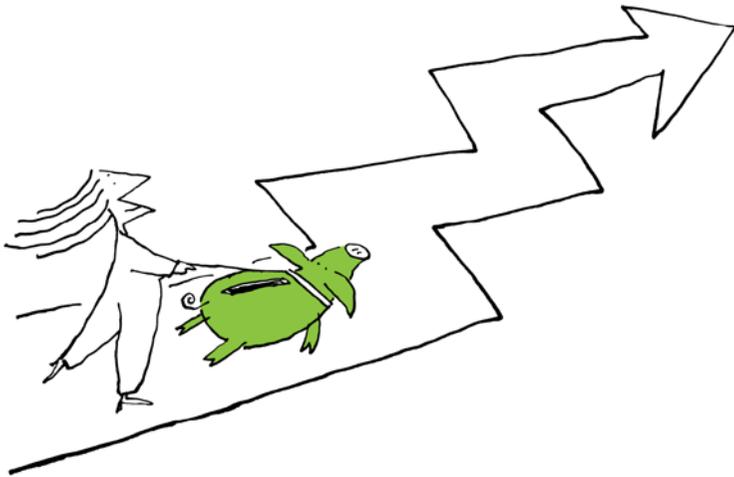
Or, look at Australia where “fifteen hours a day sitting is the norm”, according to The Heart Foundation. For years the foundation has been organizing groups of walkers in the state of Victoria. More than 80,000 people, mostly overweight, have started to walk on a regular basis. A sophisticated system of 2,000 volunteers coordinates the program. There are rewards for those who perform, and there is fun. People either walk with friends or make new friends. Some of the participants have become advocates and lobby for the improvement of walking routes in their neighborhoods, cities and states.

A look into the future

I saw how professionals and volunteers are successful in making people healthier. Here and there, but not everywhere. Can the future change this situation? There is more and more information about problems associated with insufficient body movement. Obese and overweight people are tackling their issues by changing the way they eat, what they eat and by consciously introducing more exercise into their lives. They move more, walk more and have a much wider range and choice of food. Their success gives them satisfaction and food is not always on their mind.

Heart and circulatory diseases, diabetes and back problems are kept at bay. Breast cancer is less likely to occur as enhanced walking improves blood circulation. Bones become stronger as walking prevents the depletion of calcium. After surgery patients recover better and quicker when they are used to make enough steps.

Having a healthy body by walking requires space for moving around. Healthy cities and villages. More 'Near-by neighborhoods' in stead of 'Distant neighborhoods'. A changing world must ensure that drivers or cyclists respect the needs and rights of walkers. Give less space to the elephant in the room: a mentality of only thinking of oneself, and not taking care of others or the environment. Or not even being able to empathize with others. Sidewalks must be clear and easily accessible, so that pedestrians who choose to walk are rewarded and not penalized. Thus, the interest of the individual and the public go hand-in-hand. Will this happen in the future?



4 SAVING MONEY, SAVORING CHOICES

Going somewhere costs money. When you always need a car it could ask a fortune. On foot you only need shoes to buy or to repair. How to make choices?

An example I discover is in the German site WoMo. This Wohn- und Mobilitätskostenrechner helps Germans to make decisions. Enter an address in Hamburg or Munich and you know exactly the costs of travel to other parts in these cities. For example, it compares the use of a car or public transport plus walking. This is a handy tool for life changing decisions: a new home or job, study, marriage, or breaking up. Those who do not live in Germany, must do this work by themselves. What did I find out?

Saving money and time

- A (second) car, motorbike, scooter, electric bicycle, city bike, all cost money. Besides, there are costs in terms of insurance, maintenance, gasoline and parking. Most cars are parked for about 90 percent of the time. To rent a car every now and then saves a lot of money.

- If you live in an American suburb you need a car as the homes are some distance from people's daily needs. Here, people spend on average 24 percent of their income on cars. If you live in a walking area, half of this: 12 percent.
- In the Netherlands, a household with a car spends approximately 14 euros of every 100 euros on transport. As much as food, sometimes even more. Without a car? On average, transport takes out only 7 of every 100 euros of the budget.
- There are other savings: less need for parking space and no parking fees.
- A car means not only losing much time in traffic jams, but also more working hours to earn the money you spend on it. Whereas, walking only requires good shoes and clothing.
- Those who walk a lot are usually less likely to become ill. This means a smaller risk of absenteeism due to illness. If you are a healthy self-employed person, a basic health insurance is perhaps sufficient.

Walking spaces: a criterion for choice of homes

In real estate it's all about location. It's a well-kept secret that a good walking environment partly determines the value of residential buildings. Smart real estate agents indicate the walking distances to good public transport, schools or shops when offering a house for sale.

The exact location and the neighborhood (in combination: the location factor) are very important for the price, almost as much as the number of square meters, the technical quality of the building and the colors of the kitchen cupboards. In India, for example, the top market for real estate is located around the green area of the Lodi Gardens, a walking paradise in New Delhi.

In the Netherlands, 30 to 40 percent of the value of houses is determined by the environment. The draw of a neighborhood, district or city determines its image. Invitations to walk do not only come from livelihoods such as luxurious villa parks, but also from many 'ordinary' neighborhoods. How? Good and spacious sidewalks and short distances.

A colleague who is visiting the USA regularly talks about a new trend. "The generation born between 1980 and 1995 that is searching for a house to live in the next ten years, considers walkability as an important

point in their decision making. Two thirds want to live close to friends and family,” she says.

More products and services choices

There is a wide range of products and services for those who enjoy walking. Some employers do offer a choice to their employees: car allowance or a subsidy to use public transport and thus walking more steps. The walking consumer has more and more choices. From simple good socks to high-tech complete life-styles. Information about routes, rewards and daily tailor-made walking tips. Many hobbies and activities that are connected to walking are funny and beneficial. There are many communication tools with fellow walkers.

A good life without owning a car

What will happen to the price of energy? This dictates travel costs, just like taxes do. Prices can be low or high. Alternatives show up, like electric cars. But nobody knows how the energy world might change and at what speed. Thanks to ever-increasing sharing and rental opportunities you will save a lot of money in the long term without owning a car.

Besides monetary gains there are other economic benefits to walking and/or taking public transport. There is an opportunity to think, meet or discuss, phone or check your messages. While running errands, working, or watching beautiful objects and views, ideas are born. Your bank balance looks up too!

A look into the future

More money, savoring choices, thanks to regular walking. All well and good, but as a consumer I had to put all the figures and the arguments together by myself. I had to make judgments without much help.

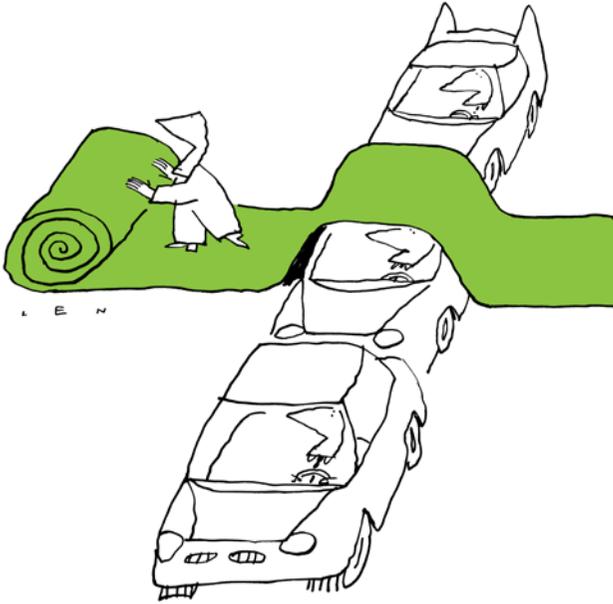
Are consumers being made more aware of their financial choices in a changing world?

Currently, all kinds of transportation are available easily, massively and affordably. A great deal of research, marketing and media attention is being spent on cars, self-driving or not, and also some on smarter bikes.

Who knows, in the future there might be money bonuses for pedestrians, where healthy behavior is rewarded, instead of rewards from employers in the form of a business car. Those who meet healthy standards receive an extra allowance as an employee or they get a discount on their health insurance. If governments would tax proven unhealthy behavior more, this would be a treat for all walkers and exercisers. When neighbors improve walking facilities, the selling prices of their individual houses rise.

Here opportunities can be found for budget advisors coaching families in debt or bankrupt millionaires. These clients discover for themselves the cost of going from point A to point B. Each method of transport requires time and attention. Car, scooter, bicycle or more walking and public transport. Clients write down their daily and monthly movements and expenses. In this way, they realize where the money is being spent and how they can save.

Do the changes needed take place in the future? Like constant media attention, showcasing good examples and role models. Good consumer tests on walking products and services. Not getting confused by the constant promotion of unhealthy behavior. Inventors and marketeers work for the benefit of walkers and their walkways. A strong techno push and better revenue models are necessary to make walking improvements commercially viable. Just like it happened with the growing popularity of running and cycling.



5 MORE WALKERS, MORE BUSINESS

One morning at breakfast, my delicious egg gets cold. I see a story in the Dutch newspaper Trouw, which I read repeatedly. It is about two beggars at a busy intersection in the city of Blantyre, Malawi, in Africa.

The young Morris Michael is paralyzed and in a wheelchair. Ngoma Matchaya (same age) is his friend. They both live in a shantytown. Every morning Ngoma brings a wheelchair to the asphalt road on the edge of the slum. He goes back to get Morris ready and then carries him on his back, over a crumbly path, to the wheelchair.

Opportunities

Then begins the three-hour trip to the intersection where both friends demonstrate their tricks in walking, running, spinning and twirling for five hours.

The more passers-by, the more opportunities for their micro-business. Two out of every hundred drivers of vehicles from four-wheel drives to stinking trucks, give them a penny. Their show earns them 4 dollars a day. At 3 pm their trip home starts, because by 6 pm it gets dark. Back home, Ngoma first takes the wheelchair back, and then Morris.

The article says that since their meeting years ago, this mini-company took shape. Without Morris, Ngoma will not be able to beg. And, without Ngoma, Morris would not be able to come to the intersection. Walking routes allow them to reach their source of income. And, at the intersection, the few square meters of space they are allowed enables them to make a living.

A Nearby Bonus

What is the Nearby Bonus? In my view it is everywhere, where people meet. It's an opportunity, financial or otherwise, of people being together in one space. Where large groups of consumers come together, entrepreneurs see opportunities. They count how many people hang out or walk where, and accordingly display their offers to attract their attention.

Another example: employees and business people who are in the same neighborhood, will be of great benefit to each other. They meet each other, encounters are easier. Colleagues make more friends while walking during breaks. Employers can scout for future employees. The Bonus strengthens prosperity and pleasure: shopping, going out, doing business, playing, meeting.

More choices

Morris and Ngoma were born in a village, miles away. Just like billions around the world, they moved to the city. There they got a chance to work, make friends and find some comfort and happiness. Morris thinks: 'In my home village I was alone'. Ngoma thinks: 'I would have been starving there now'. Who knows, the two men may find a house closer to their intersection in the coming years. Maybe, they will start a different business. Until then and maybe later too, access to sufficient and safe walking spaces remains crucial to them.

The shopping mall

Walking could also mean looking and buying. Since 1870, entrepreneurs in Europe financed arcades or cozy, glass covered spaces, good for shopping. In addition to centuries-old traditional markets (squares and halls), large-scale commercial buildings appeared: the department stores. Surpassing these markets was the American shopping mall, an excellent invention where consumers, on foot, can find almost all products in one area. A deliberate design draws the customers' attention – from one attraction to another. They stay longer, buy more.

I see such malls in all countries I visit. But often they stand isolated in their surroundings and are not like the old-fashioned arcades woven into a unity with streets around. For example, if somebody wants to go from one mall to another in the city of Gurugram (India), facing each other on both sides of a six-lane motorway, you must go into the basement parking garage, drive the car on the road and take the other direction at a crossroad, park there. A direct pedestrian tunnel or bridge, fifty meters long, could have generated customer satisfaction.

A 200 meter walk

In Washington DC I once met the writer Joel Garreau. I invited him for lunch at the Tabard Inn, a special building with a series of small rooms and spaces that invite you to walk and look further and further. It turned out to be one of his favorite hang outs too, with an atmosphere of like-minded people.

I always thought that in the United States, with exceptions, cities and villages were not walkable. But, Garreau painted a different picture. "As a child, I experienced large ugly offices being built near my parental home," he said. "Years later, when I returned, this group of boxes turned out to be a lively neighborhood, with shops, cafeterias, office buildings, homes, gardens and all!"

Garreau has authored a book and created a database on how Americans have changed their ways of life in recent decades. He says enthusiastically, "I discovered how developments often go. An office building comes up at an intersection of motorways. Then, several more go up. An entrepreneur opens a mobile canteen, between two buildings. At lunchtime employees walk to the canteen. This creates a walking route used by other service providers.

First, one sees temporary housing; later permanent buildings. A walk of about two hundred meters is often the limit. In the long run, a genuine, lively neighborhood emerges, which I call an Edge City. Spread across the US, more than 180 of such cities have appeared."

Las Vegas: the walking dollars

As a tourist and gambling paradise, Las Vegas was created for the car. But the economy changed, and so did traffic. In Las Vegas Boulevard in the seventies you could easily drive at a speed of fifty miles per hour. Now, there are regular traffic jams. Buildings changed from pure gambling halls into mega casinos, with overwhelming architecture and interior designs. Customers began to spend more dollars. Being visible from the car is no longer commercially interesting: there is too much to see. The goal is to lure more pedestrians into the casinos.

Las Vegas remodeled Fremont Street into a walking area. Casinos were linked to footbridges to prevent visitors from using their cars. Walking became a pleasant experience: cool water vapor from fake palm trees, with escalators everywhere. Indoors, street life of the big city is glorified: visitors love to walk around the avenues of a simulated Manhattan or Paris.

Amsterdam

In Europe, Amsterdam has shown that it is possible to be able to walk in a city and still be a commercial successful place. Since the 17th century, the Canal Zone has been adapted to the changing demands of time. Numerous amenities, businesses and cultural highlights can be found nearby.

People are living, working and enjoying themselves in the same area. The government provided for cleaner canals, decided that canal houses had to remain intact and erected thousands of small poles or 'amsterdammertjes'. These are to separate pedestrians from other traffic like cars and bikes. In recent decades local government discouraged strongly the use of cars in the Canal Zone. These developments allowed for walking. For these reasons companies and residents keep investing.

As a result, the city center of Amsterdam has become so popular in recent years that the hustle and bustle has greatly increased. Unless new spaces or rearranged spaces are made available for bike parking, there will be a problem. The space for pedestrians has already decreased. Solutions to the issue of differences in speed between walkers, bicyclists and other wheelers are needed. Also car parking still consumes a lot of space.

A look into the future

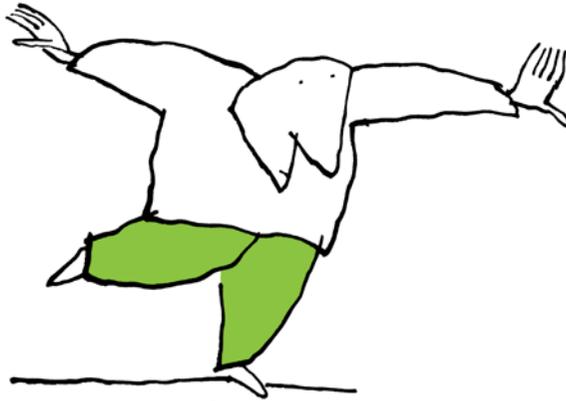
What is the future of the Nearby Bonus? Do mainstream entrepreneurs see the benefits and opportunities of 'more walkers, more business' in a changing world? Will there be a Nearby Bonus at all? On architects' drawing tables in India, curious to see what cities will be built tomorrow, you notice only a few walking routes. How about cities in China, Indonesia, elsewhere?

The internet replaces face-to-face contacts. Consumers, with items delivered home, spend less time shopping. The result: they sit many more hours. The fewer walks to the shops may increase 'mobility poverty'. Business contacts also change: deals, negotiations and applications are mainly processed online. Social media know who of your friends is also walking on foot, what is on sale nearby, who you could meet, where. By offering games such as Pokémon Go, thousands can be enticed to walk per app.

Wanting to keep a Nearby Bonus or make it bigger requires extra attention. For example: government authorities, business clubs and corporations make attractive walking networks and keep distances short. They give priority to development in urban and rural areas which emphasize the human scale.

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6 GOVERNMENTS CAN SUPPORT WALKING

The American Jane Jacobs (1916–2006) is also a hero. Originally a journalist, she had a keen eye for daily life around her and her family. Fifty years ago, she started to turn upside down many building plans of New York City. She was a visionary when it came to plan for residential, office and shopping areas. “The pavements are the most vital parts of the city – for the economy and for people,” was her motto.

Jacobs advocated a different approach in city planning. Making room for economic opportunities and safe streets instead of only freeways for cars and parking spaces everywhere. She persisted with strong and convincing arguments and received support. The municipality followed her. And later, more governments, all over the world.

The icon

Jacobs was an icon. Her books are still eagerly read. The organization Jane’s Walks helps many cities to promote good sidewalks, see the website janewalk.org. What they propose is simple and efficient: officials or politicians take walks, side by side with citizens. Together, they recommend how sidewalks, streets and neighborhoods can be improved. Jacobs wore big owl glasses, popular in the 1960s.

Some of the walkers now wear these comical glasses while inspecting the streets. Children put red stickers where it is dangerous to walk.

Good government initiatives

It is the job of governments to ensure that citizens are safe. Some countries, for example, have managed to reduce the number of victims of road accidents, including walkers. By passing well-conceived laws, ensuring implementation and giving adequate information about what is permitted and what is not, countries like Germany and Switzerland made their streets safer for pedestrians.

An accident is not just bad luck, but a combination of unfavorable circumstances: an error by one or more parties involved, plus a failure of the system.

Austria developed a 'Masterplan Gehen' (Walking) in 2015. This country increased its expenditure and attention on better routes and efficient walking distances. It offers training sessions for students, planners and governors to make them aware of the needs of pedestrians. Also, small towns or cities benefit from this plan. A senior Austrian official at the Walk 21 conference in Vienna said: "For better pavements, or smart, safer crossings, you need a few citizens, professionals and a motivated mayor."

The city of Utrecht in the Netherlands has developed a pedestrian plan. Citizens pointed out, on an online map, spots that are unsafe and difficult for their feet. They offered solutions and the municipality responded to their suggestions. Some governments put Design for All at the forefront: streets, squares and parks, designed for the enjoyment of children and the elderly. And therefore – for all.

Building resilience

Being able to walk swiftly and escape during a crisis can be the difference between life and death. Designer Dan Hill of the company ARUP is a writer on this issues. People who are able to walk, are more resilient citizens. Eye witnesses of crises, such as the 9/11 attacks in New York, tsunamis and hurricanes, say that it is important to be able to flee, on foot, to a safe place. In chaos, you have more flexibility on foot than by car or public transport.

This is also true of situations where governments are not functioning. For example the situation during wartime. I heard about experiences in Beirut during the civil war in Lebanon in the eighties. The good design of Beirut helped inhabitants to survive. They knew which roads could be used for a safe passage, how to stay alive. There is much value in knowing where to walk (quickly obtaining a survival package, for instance), where to get information, and which neighbors you can trust.

A resilient city is a walking city.

Incentives for walking to school

Governments can create incentives for walking. In the United States, finances were allocated for the Safe Routes to School program, which encouraged children to walk to school more often. In ten years the number of walking children increased by 25 percent, with 17,000 schools participating, and a total of 7.8 million pupils. Teachers and parents massively supported this initiative for good and safe footpaths, adequate information and greater awareness of choice. The program was successful, though it took time.

Another example are the Sports Gardens in neighborhoods with many overweight children. Like in The Hague (the Netherlands). Sports clubs offer the children a choice of activities in a safe playground, in the heart of the neighborhoods Schilderswijk and Duindorp. Children walk from home to the grounds, by themselves without any danger. With continuous guidance in the Sports Garden, at low costs, they get acquainted with different sporting activities. Schoolteachers say that children in their classrooms who participated in these sports were fit and had improved concentration.

Promoting walking

Governments can promote walking as much as they do safe driving. I read a report by Delft University of Technology where five hundred motorists were asked questions about making choices. Seventy two percent of the respondents said: 'When there are two routes, I choose the fastest rather than the safest, because, I am a good driver and I pay attention. I am not running a risk, others are'.

Another question: 'When the government is creating a new route, should it be based on the safest or the shortest?' A majority (66%) said exactly the opposite: 'Make the safest route. It is in the interest of all to reduce the number of road accidents. It's the task of the government'.

When individuals are not fully aware of traffic psychology, the government can invest in good sidewalks, pleasant walking routes and Design for All. In countries like the Netherlands there are enough funds. The government subsidized semi-electric vehicles for billions of euros, while the expected result of a better environment did not materialize.

Self-driving cars: Saviors or Deceivers?

Around 2008 the American journalist Tom Vanderbilt travelled all over the world to see how consumers travel for business, work or pleasure. He spoke with countless experts and tested many new inventions. On the eve of the epoch of the upcoming self-driving car, he wrote *Traffic: Why We Drive the Way We Do (And What It Says About Us)*. I read the book with red ears.

Tom Vanderbilt's thesis is that devices are becoming more and more intelligent. But, most consumers do not behave as expected by the inventors. Over time, behind the wheel, drivers get more confident and the safer the cars become, the more risk the drivers take. They drive faster, keep less distance between themselves and the other cars. Those who make mistakes in traffic are corrected less and less. Most cars have a single person and therefore it is difficult to get feedback about their driving. And, there are less chances of being fined after driving violations.

Vanderbilt also discovered that for a number of drivers the daily car journey was the most difficult task of the day. For some, a chore. For others, an enjoyable activity. Not all drivers are happy ones, whistling as they drive.

For these issues, does the self-driving car offer a solution? Is it a threat to walkers? The machine and the human being of flesh and blood must, in any case, share space. And, a walker can only make limited speed.

Lack of checks and balances

The world lacks influential debates on all the pros and contras of driverless cars. The European Cyclists Federation (ECF) is one of the few groups asking questions: what about walkers and cyclists? Likewise organizations lack power in the arenas of politics, research and marketing on this issue.

Can walkers blindly assume that cars will stop for them? Are cars going to honk or give an extra light signal to say they stop? Does all direct eye contact disappear? It is only when self-driving cars are on the road on a large scale that researchers can definitively answer these questions.

Will there be the time, then, to make changes?

Public interest

I see more examples of governments prioritizing public interest, as in public transport. It is established that people who often travel by bus, tram or train, also walk (and in some countries cycle) more often. When governments finance motorways as well as appropriate systems for public transport, they give citizens a choice. More public transport organizations are now offering services that meet consumer needs. They also provide appropriate passenger information, such as preferred walking routes.

Besides transport systems, a related question is the location of new neighborhoods and renovation of existing ones. Different political opinions are at stake. The government is an important decisionmaker when it comes to making space available and deciding how easy it is to move around. Also here this choice is on the table: making 'Distant neighborhoods' or 'Nearby neighborhoods'.

Yet, walkers are benefiting from innovative and accessible facilities in existing neighborhoods such as good sidewalks and known distances. An advantage of planning new housing in existing neighborhoods is that the main infrastructure for public utilities – sewage, pipes and cables (for electricity, fiber optic, water, heating) – and public transport are already in place and therefore, new investments may not be required. There is more choice living around public transport stops.

Governments can lead

In democracies, voters can change their mind about who they will vote for. A government in power can also reinvent itself. In ten years' time quite a number of civil servants will be replaced. Governments are faced with new challenges such as providing safety and picking up where market forces fail.

How do governments make room for the growing population: extra billions, living close to each other? Meanwhile more people are thinking and behaving in isolation. They live in and through their smartphones and other technology inventions. Public space is considered private space and people behave accordingly. How do people realize that others need to be taken into consideration as well? For governments, it's a big task.

A look into the future

I saw examples where government agencies stimulate walking. But most countries and cities have no Masterplan Walking or no good sidewalks everywhere. Although growing, only a few brave government people, researchers and others are aware.

Is the world changing for the better? If city councilors or governors wish to encourage walking, they must seize opportunities as and when they arise. Will they do? Or will they give the upper hand to unproven advantages of self-driving cars, and thus supporting claims like saving space or making fewer car kilometers?

They should serve walking interests although these lack prominent spokespersons.

Governments could use Design for All as a guideline. They could work to ensure efficient and safe routes; organize spaces so that walkers do not need to travel extra distances; avoid heavy traffic wherever possible and make maximum use of walkers and cyclists. Setting clear rules, implementing them and rewarding good behavior.



7 CITIZENS CREATING WALKING SPACES

Sarika Panda Bhatt is an architect, based in Delhi, India. In 2013, she and other like-minded colleagues got an idea to help a group of residents who wanted more space to walk, cycle and move around where they lived. On the internet she says: “We knew from other countries that residents sometimes shut off parts of a road, organize a party and draw attention to their issues”.

The city involved is Gurugram, the former Gurgaon. It is near Delhi. “Those who live or work here lack sufficient choices when they have to travel from A to B. In their free time, they miss fresh air and space to move around,” she adds.

Successful

One of the first steps was to convince the police to give permission for the project. Exciting! They were successful. On Sunday mornings, from 7 am till midday, different sections of the roads were blocked off and thousands walk, cycle, play, dance, and do yoga and more. The event is called Raahgiri Day. The number of participants increased since the start in November 2013. National daily *The Hindustan Times* is a sponsor and covers the events.

Gurugram, with more than 2.6 million inhabitants has three car-free Sunday routes of 2.5 to 5 kilometers each. Panda Bhatt presented

to the authorities a package of plans for better walking, cycling and public transport. The authorities agreed on the first package, resulting in the construction of an eight-kilometer cycle path.

Initiating community spaces

The Raahgiri Foundation is one of the organizations that lobbies for good facilities for activity. They seek solutions and work with the local authorities. Residents in other cities, governments and companies take part in the activities. In Dwarka, the city district of Delhi, and in Mumbai on Palm Beach Boulevard, 1400 kilometers away and in Bhopal, a city 700 kilometers away.

The playful initiative of the Raahgiri Foundation has spread across India, mainly through the internet and social media. There are Facebook pages.

Lobbying and involving local authorities has paid off. “Nowadays, in Gurugram on Sunday, the police commissioner participates himself, riding his bike”, Panda Bhatt says enthusiastically.

India is one of the many countries challenged in planning its use of spaces. As cities grow, more inhabitants need and want to choose various transport options. Cars, subway, taxis, walking, and cycling. They want their children to be able to play in safe and healthy spaces. They welcome citizens’ initiatives that serve as a ‘gadfly’ to gain attention to walking and issues of civil society organizations.

Close to home

I come across other examples. The British charity organization Living Streets got 4,500 most overweight residents in three low-income neighborhoods to walk regularly. The residents got to know each other, enjoyed walking in groups and helped each other in different ways. Professionals supported the ideas of residents and provided tips on how to keep up the activities.

Nature lovers: allies

Walkers and nature lovers are often allies. In the US, the Trust for Public Land, a private organization buys land under neglected walking routes and refurbishes the paths. Citizens pick up clutter and mobilize others

who can contribute to achieving this goal. In Baltimore, a network of 45 kilometers connecting residential areas and parks is created. (Baltimore Walks). Elsewhere, under the umbrella of the Trust for Public Land, volunteers redesigned the Oregon Trail, a historic migration route westward.

Heroes wanted

In India, Sarika Panda Bhatt and the Raahgiri Foundation are heroes of the step-by-step approach. Sometimes a single ominous event is reversed by someone taking the initiative to act. In the 1960s, it was Rachel Carson, an American marine biologist, whose book *Silent Spring* advanced the global environmental movement.

Carson showed that overuse of DDT as a pesticide in agriculture destroyed bird and animal life. She and others started groups that created new laws, searched for application of new techniques, with the goal of cleaner air for everyone. The areas affected by DDT were eventually cleaned up, over a period of 20 years. Maybe there is a 'Carson' to champion walking?

Bicycle activism

In many countries today, people cycle. This could be because of government support. But a great deal of credit must go to citizens' initiatives. Just like walking in present times, cycling became unfashionable almost thirty years ago, considered 'too ordinary' or 'for losers'. However, many people have stayed on the pedals.

Bicycling came back and has been on the rise in Europe, the US, and other places. Helped by the enthusiasm and tenacity of groups of citizens. In some places bicycle groups work together with walkers, as their interests overlap. For example, in the United States there is The Walking & Bicycle Federation. The German cyclists' association ADFC pays attention to walking. In the Netherlands, the National Bicycle Platform, the Fietsersbond and Wandelnet work together.

Working together pays off

The success of the bicycle lobby shows what the efforts of groups of road users can bring about. This can be an example for the pedestrians. Sincere cyclists' organizations take pedestrians seriously, because where space is scarce they benefit from avoiding conflicts with walkers. Where cycling increases by a few percent, the space that cyclists occupy is often at the expense of walkers. Bicyclist interest groups could help to establish pedestrian interest groups.

A pedestrian lobby

There could be stronger walkers' lobbies. And, stronger coalitions are needed in the sectors of health, sport, education and business. In 2010, at the international conference Walk21, Jack Short, a specialist in this area, urged the audience to act. He shouted out to a large, full house conference room, "All the international forums I visit regularly, consult 80 to 90 organizations. None of them stands for the pedestrian." He called out to pedestrians to come out of their isolation and look for partnerships.

Nowadays, the situation is a little better. In Brussels a few lobbyists for European pedestrian interests are walking around. More is needed. Like the empowerment of Walk21, the international professional movement.

A look into the future

There are examples of citizens creating walking spaces. But they are exceptional cases.

Will there be more examples in the future? Enough active citizens' groups are needed to ensure that everyone can walk easily. Those who share an interest should cooperate. For example, walkers are slow traffic just like cyclists, runners, but also like dog lovers. Or public transport users and car drivers. Motorists are walkers too, in another momentum.

Who knows, more citizens and professionals may realize that there is a lot to gain in spending time, attention and money on the issue of walking. To lobby for space.



8

FUTUREPROOF WALKING: FIVE TRACKS

My search is almost over. On a lazy day in Goa, in the Southwestern coast of India, I am at the beach. Thirty, forty meters from me is the water's edge. I am doing what most people enjoy, anywhere and everywhere in the world: watching others enjoy themselves. I am not active, merely watching.

I see many graceful Asians, next to Westerners who carry extra kilos of abdominal fat. They all pass by, like a movie. Chatting, running, or licking their lips on the way to enticing eateries further on. I wonder, how many people will be walking here in ten years' time? And, will many Indians be as obese as many Westerners are now, with associated health problems? Is it but evident that they too will become obese or do they have a choice otherwise?

Front runners

The way we are moving around is mainly determined by habit and by group behavior. What we do must fit in every day's routine.

I have seen how one person, or a group of motivated citizens can make a difference. They make it easy for others to move more. They can be citizens or motivated professionals doing a good job. They all learn from each other.

The enduring commitment of such role models determines whether government agencies take their responsibilities seriously, businesses seize opportunities or unwieldy and bureaucratic organizations start moving. There are more front runners than I have seen: in organizations, civilians, all kinds of professionals. They can be found among business people, government officials, elected politicians, citizens. Professionals in domains like care, health, traffic planning, design, neighborhood- and real estate investment, sustainability, city- and country planning, research.

The future

Are there walking spaces, accessible and usable for everybody, of all ages and in various stages of health? Spaces where walkers don't have to compete with fast moving vehicles. A future where daily walking is celebrated as health item number one?

Cars, motorcycles and fast bikes feature predominantly in investments, media coverage and conversations. With the growing population and increase in the hustle and bustle of chaotic cities, speed differences are increasing. There is a risk that activities at slower speeds, like quiet walking, will come under pressure.

Walking must not be minimized, knowing that it is simple and as necessary as food and drink. We should avoid a scenario where walking becomes a weekly outing, in which steps are taken somewhere after an hour's drive, and then a drive back home again. Or, just the few steps every day from bed to kitchen, or to the office chair and back again.

THREE BASICS FOR A WALKABLE WORLD

What should be done to ensure that everyone gets the daily walk they need? There are three basics for a walkable world for the many: easy – beneficial – rewarding.

- **Easy:** Going on foot **must be an easy option**, encouraged and appreciated by your environment. Regular walking can become a habit, recognized as something normal by family, friends or media around you.
- **Beneficial:** Going on foot must **match your wallet**. A contribution to your financial well-being.
- **Rewarding:** Going on foot in a growing world must **be attractive to many people and rewarding for them**. When many people do walk, they easily take up a position.

THE RANGE OF FIVE TRACKS

To ensure that everyone is able to walk requires extra attention. It does not happen automatically. Most important is: enough people must be committed to walking of others and of the public.

With the three basics in my mind I am suggesting five tracks where walking for the many is central. Together they form a wake-up call with examples who could do what.

TRACK 1: BUILDING COMMUNITY

lobbying | enjoyment | being proud | helping | save money

All neighborhoods and buildings stimulate walking. They are made for it, and are safe. Those who walk know the routes, the obstacles and the solutions. Neighbors encourage each other to walk. Citizens form all kinds of communities and networks that effectively defend the rights and interests of walkers. This is civil society organizing itself.

Examples

Residents get together and evaluate the streets. They give a score card to the streets. Problems are solved by themselves or by local government. They organize a 'safe walk' check, make some improvements themselves or, if the challenge is greater, they contact the municipality or district manager. They claim safer crossings and adequate traffic lights for pedestrians.

Citizens can think of ways in which consensus can be built about values and desired behavior in traffic. Those who are financially able, support generously the organizations that promote walking interests. Citizens, including dog owners, runners and more, working together, show that cherishing and improving pavements and walking routes is a good investment.

Extra benefit

Empowering civilians.

TRACK 2: EVERYONE A NEARBY BONUS

Design for All | seizing opportunities | show results | making money

Governments and organizations invest in walking and moving space, based on a safe Design for All. This can be governments, companies and civil society organizations. They make the size of the Nearby Bonus as large as possible, creating less 'Distant neighborhoods'. They offer guarantees for walking distances, safe access to buildings, neighborhoods. This is the result of adequate money, time and attention for a common good.

Examples

The authorities implement a Masterplan Walking, by country, city or area. This includes walking networks that connect important places. Also, suitable routing to and from good public transport stops, bicycle parking locations and car parks. Big data is collected to improve walking routes with clear protection of the privacy of the individual. How the algorithms work, is explained. Investments in bicycle facilities are promoted and secured along with better walking facilities. More professionals are trained as experts in walking.

Mayors consider a good Nearby Bonus for everyone as their task. They can help bridge the gap between citizens, politicians and civil servants. Pedestrians are a number one priority in the streets.

Governments and others accommodate our pet dogs. Clear rules are set and good practical facilities to exhaust them are created. Just like sports gardens central in every district, where children can walk in by themselves.

Extra benefit

A big help creating livable and traffic safe cities in a growing world, where people still have eye contact.

TRACK 3: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

be a role model | express urgency | get followers | challenge | caress ego | serving supporters

There are many role models. Well known personalities can be true ambassadors. Besides these big heroes, there are smaller heroes. For example, those who are active on social media (Vlogs, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) and pay attention to walking. Others are active in magazines, newspapers, TV and podcasts. Or, those who walk with enthusiasm. Everyone can act in his or her own circle.

Examples

Large media investors sponsor walking because walking is an important issue for many people. Role models, such as charities, athletes and media heroes, put the spotlight on good examples. Combining entertainment with information. Some royals and other glamour icons opt for walking continuously, telling and sharing their stories. They point out that self-interest here is the same as public interest. Long-term campaigns with hotspots where flows of information on walking issues blend and are distributed to a variety of media. Reliable facts and figures (statistics!) on walkability are collected and disseminated to different audiences.

Other examples. Schools show attractive road safety lessons. They make pupils self-reliant and encourage them to walk. Or shopping managers present walking routes for their clients. Volunteers who get people on their feet are celebrated as heroes.

Extra benefit

Keeping the growing costs of healthcare for governments and citizens under control.

TRACK 4: TOOLS TO SLOW CLIMATE CHANGE

*coping with changing weather | saving nature | money | humor |
wanting a better world*

It is widely recognized and appreciated that walking helps to reduce CO₂ and particulate matter emissions. The old mistake not to pay attention to walking in agreements on climate change, is being corrected. Optimal space for every person becomes the norm. The right of every inhabitant to good sidewalks and walking, as advocated by the *Charter of Walking of the Walk21 international movement*, becomes a reality. A global and connected forum is created.

Examples

Healthy cities become reality. Decision makers for building neighborhoods create routes that generate energy, like some recent innovative bicycle paths and motorways show. Designers make attractive hiking trails in warm cities and hot areas thanks to new intelligent, natural ventilation possibilities. They develop sensors that detect rain and therefore control green crossing lights for longer periods of time. Advocates on walking and cycling work together.

Other examples. Business decisions in sustainable companies take into account walking options within daily work routines. Enjoying good staircases, organizing walking meetings. Travel expenses systems reward going on foot.

Governments and civil society organizations often give credits to those on foot. Politicians, civil servants and citizens who support walking are true champions of sustainability. Knowledge and experiences from areas with safer traffic can be replicated and adapted to other areas. More people are proud of their own footprint.

Extra benefit

Down-to-earth support and contribution for climate or energy related reform.

TRACK 5: WALKING AS A PLEASANT CONSUMER EXPERIENCE

*looking | benefiting | taking advantage | doing what you like |
consuming | producing*

There are more consumer items, for sale or free. With their wide range of products and services, entrepreneurs see many opportunities for business. Consumers have choices when it comes to walking: they do so, en masse. There is a mature awareness that those who walk have more choice when it comes to food and beverages. So- make good use of the ever-richer world.

Examples

Walking products are more and more popular. From simple good socks to high tech complete life styles. From games like Pokémon Go to super fashionable shoes. Walking fashion for every type of weather, all climates. Those who walk are more confident, feel safer by being more visible. Colorful, nice design.

Apps, if you wish, that pamper body and mind.

Good consumer tests on walking products and services. Information about routes, rewards and daily tailor-made walking tips. Optimal links between good food and walking are available.

People enjoy massively all kinds of walks: just small trips around the house or long holidays as life changing experiences.

Extra benefit

More diversity in the market place.

What about me?

After evaluating my search on walking I started the website www.healthydailywalking.com with practical tips & tools. For those interested in health and in walking. With designs of illustrator Len Munnik. The website is also addressing governments, corporations, healthcare and education institutions and charity clubs. Through the site I am happy to stay in touch with you readers, for example to share my sources. The book revenues will support the website.

Back in Blijdorp

I am back in Blijdorp, Rotterdam, where I spent my first years as a child and daily life was within 300 steps. I walk the nostalgic streets again. The sidewalks are still good, but they have become narrower. But wow! A subway station has opened, just around the corner. With public transport I can go almost anywhere. I see children in the streets, running, having fun, looking around. I dream about how they are going to discover their lives. In a space they have inherited.

