

## An audience with Hep Monatzeder

than a short walk away from your destination. Or a short train ride, for that matter. The city boasts an excellent rail network, including the S-Bahn and the U-Bahn trains, neither of which seem to have any problems coping with the unusually cold December temperatures and early snowfall.

In the city centre, the Gothic-style town hall rises impressively out of the snow, looking very much like a castle from a Hollywood epic. It's not just for show either – the city officials still work from the building, and the deputy mayor has a particularly good view from his second-floor office of the Marienplatz square and its bustling Christmas market. Adjacent to the town hall are rows and rows of under-cover cycle parking racks – chock-a-block and full to brim by midday.

Munich hosted the Velo-City conference in 2007, so it's not surprising therefore that cycling is high up on the city's agenda. But it's something that the city and its officials take very seriously. "Berlin – which is more than two times bigger than Munich – has one, voluntary external person responsible for cycling in the entire city," explains Wigand von Sassen, who is in charge of the marketing and communications strategy for cycling in Munich. "In Munich, there are 11 people responsible solely for cycling across five different departments."

And those 11 people are having an effect. 14% of journeys made in Munich are made by bicycle – compare that to the German average of 10%. Bicycle traffic increased by 40% from 2002 to 2008. More than 30% of all one-way streets have been opened for contra-flow cycling. About 50% of the total road network in Munich includes cycle lanes.

The city allocates €4.5m annually for cycling – and of that, von Sassen has about €1m to spend on marketing. He says: "To get people to use bicycles more, or to walk, we need both 'hard' and 'soft' measures. 'Hard' measures relate to infrastructure and capital expenditure on creating environments pedestrians and cyclists want

to use. 'Soft' measures refer to communications and convincing people to change their mobility habits."

Last summer saw some innovative marketing strategies to help implement these "soft" measures and improve public perception of the bicycle, including a Pop-Idol-style cycling model competition, complete with sponsored cash prizes (€4000 for the winner). Ordinary residents turned up to a mobile photo-studio to have their picture taken posing with their bicycles, the pictures were put online and the city voted for their favourites. Photographs of the finalists were plastered across 820 bus stops and billboards throughout the city.

Other strategies which were implemented last year included shutting off the city's main ring road for an evening to allow cyclists to ride on the normally car-congested route, and painting a large bicycle symbol on the ground in Marienplatz, in front of the tourist-magnet of the town hall.

The city has adopted the slogan "Radl-hauptstadt" – the "cycling capital". It's a clever piece of marketing, tapping into the fact that Munich is the capital of Bavaria, the southern region of Germany. Bavarians are fiercely proud of their history and heritage and refer to themselves as Bavarians, not Germans. The slogan is doubly clever in including the local Bavarian term for bicycle – "radl" – instead of the more formal version found in the German dictionary.

**H**ep Monatzeder, deputy mayor of Munich, leans forward conspiratorially. "I'll let you in on a secret," he says. "I actually prefer walking to cycling..."

I meet the mayor in his office on a cold December afternoon, at the town hall in Marienplatz, in the centre of Munich. He has a rangy healthiness about him, the type of man you instinctively know spends a lot of time outdoors. He reminds me of Clint Eastwood. In a suit. His office is very modern, well-lit and with high ceilings. It's much like any other office from the inside, apart from the feeling you have of disappearing into the depths of a fairy-tale castle

*"We want to reconquer the city for the citizens... We want to create spaces for them in the city that they don't have to share with cars..."*

Hep Monatzeder,  
deputy mayor of Munich

when you enter the imposing building through stone doorways that seem hundreds of feet high.

"You see the city differently depending on what mode of transport you use," he explains. "If you're in a car, you only see the world passing by. If you ride a bike, you'll interact with more people, when you're stopped at lights, and so on." But, he says, "if you walk, you see even more."

The nickname The Bicycle Mayor is a popular one around Munich for Monatzeder, and I quiz him about this. Has the tag sprung from a love of bicycles, or is it from his bicycle policy? "I think it's mostly from my policies, though of course, I do cycle myself," Monatzeder muses. "When I started as [deputy] mayor, in 1996, bicycles made up 6% of the total transport mix in Munich. I said, 'this has to reach double figures'. We set ourselves a goal of achieving a level of at least 15% by 2015."

There were several reasons for such an ambitious target. "Firstly, we had the money to invest in cycling infrastructure – so we did," says Monatzeder. "Secondly, Munich prides itself on offering a very good quality of life, and cycling can offer many improvements to the quality of life – including reduction in CO2 emissions and improved public health. Thirdly, between 80 and 90% of the journeys being made in the city are less than 6km long, which is ideal distance for cycling."

I wasn't an easy task getting such a target incorporated into city plans. Munich is governed by a coalition made up of the Green Party, to which Monatzeder belongs, and the Social Democrats. "Trying to convince the members of the Social Democrat party that cycling is an important issue was very hard," Monatzeder remembers. "It took a long time. Initially, we had a budget of €1m in 1996 to spend on cycling. That increased

slowly to €1.5million. Then we had elections, and that proved very important. When negotiating a new coalition contract, we could push forward what was important to us."

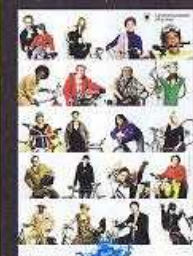
And cycling is very important now to the residents of Munich too, especially among university students and young people. Monatzeder says that this is increasingly due to a culture change being effected in the city. "When I was younger, the thing all young people wanted was a driver's licence and a car," he says. "But today, having a car is not nearly as important to young people. They may have a license and they may car-share. But they'd prefer to use a bike or a train and save all the money that they'd otherwise spend on the car, on the insurance and on the fuel."

It's not just the students who have taken to utility cycling. "A lot of older people are taking up cycling for its health benefits," says Monatzeder. Given that cycling enjoyed a total 14% proportion of Munich's traffic split as of 2008, reaching the original goal of 15% in the next five years seems eminently achievable. Monatzeder smiles knowingly. "Yes, but we've changed the goal now," he says. "Now, we want to achieve 20% by 2015."

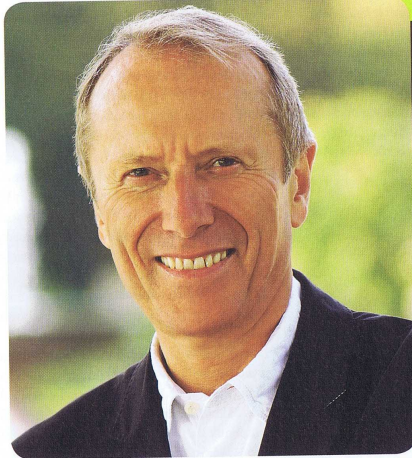
To Monatzeder, the connection between a city's quality of life and its mobility is very clear. "Every city has the same problem with mobility – too many cars," he says. "They pollute the cities. Mobility changes to immobility."

Retrospectively adding car-parking to inner cities and trying to widen arterial routes can be close to impossible. And even when roads are widened, the space is often taken away from pedestrians and cyclists. Monatzeder points to the main streets of Ludwigstrasse and Leopoldstrasse. Traveling along the roads, you're struck by the sheer width of the streets. "They used to be very nar-

An innovative marketing campaign aimed at changing behaviour and public perception kick-started in 2010. The campaign included a Pop-Idol-style competition for "bicycle stars".



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*"If you can convince people to make these journeys on bicycle, then there is more room for commercial traffic... Cycling offers a win-win situation."*

Hep Monatzeder, deputy mayor of Munich

the drive actually comes from the Green party," says Monatzeder. "They are continuously developing the cycling policies we have, and the shift in policies to focus on bicycle transportation came from the party to start with."

He goes on to explain that the subject of cycling mobility has now been noticed nationally. "In the past, cycling was simply something to talk about if you did it in your free time," he says. "But for the last couple of years, there's been a cycling council in the central transport ministry. This gives cycling better recognition. Cycling as a mode of transport has long been underestimated, and it still is, in some parts of the country."

Cycling tourism has become more and more important. "We focus on regional tourism," Monatzeder explains. "Several hotels in Bavaria offer special rates to bicycle tourists. As the capital of Bavaria, Munich's strategy is to build good infrastructure in the city and then to connect that to surrounding regions and districts. After that, we try to connect with our national neighbours – Austria, Slovakia and the Czech Republic. I recently opened a new bicycle route which goes from Munich to the Czech Republic."

**W**here does Munich go from here? The numbers of cyclists are rising rapidly and the Bicycle Mayor is seeing 15 years of hard work starting to bear fruit. But far from getting carried away, Monatzeder is focused on the practical steps needed to further improve Munich's mobility.

He says there is a big problem in riding north-south in the city. "We want to lead cyclists through the city, but it's a route that pedestrians and cars use. That's a very difficult problem. We'd have to implement the concept of shared space found in Scandinavian countries." It's something that looks difficult to implement, as the idea of letting cyclists use the roads is already a hotbed of controversy. "Cyclists use cycle lanes as well as roads, because car drivers pay more attention to cyclists when they are on the road. But whenever we make suggestions about letting cyclists ride on the streets, it all becomes very political, because that means taking space away from car drivers."

Legislation isn't the answer, he feels. "Legislation to force better road sharing is not the first step. We need a change in behaviour first. Not just car drivers, but everyone using the city's roads. Cyclists are not blame-free. Many cycle without lights in the dark, cycle through red-lights, or cycle the wrong way on a cycle lane."

Safety – of cyclists from car drivers, from other cyclists, and of pedestrians from cyclists – is an important part of the marketing campaign. The city has tried many new ideas, including hiring an

actor to dress up as a jester and roam the streets talking to people about safety. The 'Safety Joker' received mixed reviews in the local press, concerned that such a serious topic should not run the risk of being trivialised by the light-hearted treatment.

Various ways of integrating cycling more closely with bus and rail networks are being considered, as is the idea of converting car parking spaces in the inner city into bicycle parking. "We provide each new Munich citizen with an information pack on mobility," says Monatzeder. "We want to inform these people about how to get around the city before they find their own way and stick to it. You can convince new citizens to use public transport or bicycles before they get set in their ways."

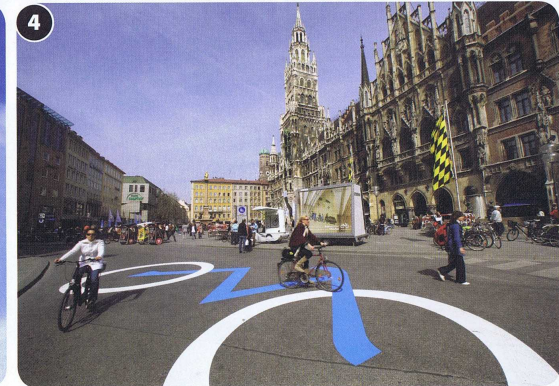
The scheme sends each new citizen a brochure, and then a representative will make a follow-up phone call to explain the mobility options available in each specific case. Use of public transport has risen by 8% as a direct result. "Each euro spent on the information packs is doubled in spend in public transport," says the mayor.

Perhaps surprisingly for someone nicknamed the Bicycle Mayor, Monatzeder takes a very balanced view of city mobility and transport. "What I'm trying to get across to other town officials is

that we can live a better life," he says. "We can do something for our health. We can do something to reduce CO2 and tackle climate change. There are many different building blocks to improving our cities, and traffic management is just one."

Monatzeder spends three times as long talking with me as our original schedule permitted - proof about his passion for his city and its way of life. He's convinced that last year's marketing has catapulted bicycle traffic onto everyone's agenda, whether politicians or residents. But he's no fanatic. Through the course of our interview, he simply details the facts and figures that make it logical that cycling should be an integrated part of city life for the benefit of its residents. Monatzeder sums up quite simply, "Cycling offers cities a win-win situation."

1. Monatzeder is determined to create more green spaces in Munich, to improve the quality of life and to encourage people to linger and enjoy the city
2. Even the snow doesn't hamper the many people now choosing to cycle as their primary means of transport around Munich
3. Part of Munich's marketing campaign digitally altered a photograph of one of the city's most famous monuments to embed the bicycle deep into local culture
4. The blue-and-white bicycle symbol of the "Radhauptstadt" campaign, seen here emblazoned across the town's central Marienplatz square, right outside the town hall



Photos: Fotostudio/Photo/Photo 11, Getty, Anand/Anand 10