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Proposal in our struggle against climate change and inequity: producing a simple solar car (like a rickshaw)

The proposal

The car has become the symbol of our ego-centrism and individualism. It is the cause of a lot of destruction: not only ecologically but also socially. In Australia it is one of the main sources of CO₂. Yet it would be easy to produce very simple and light solar cars that would be able to reach the next country town (reach of some 50-80km) without relying on electric home power. It would look more like a rickshaw (or 2 bikes assembled together) than like a usual car but it would be able to move some 2-4 people with simple luggage at a slower speed (40-60km/h). The cost would be probably between \$6'000 and \$10'000.- and it would use no fuel, not even need to be recharged at home by the electric network. Its own solar panels and batteries will produce what it uses and will define its range of autonomy and its frequency of usability.

The learning process

It would help us to discover new ways of thinking and behaving:

- 1) The way this light solar car would be used would change radically our perception of what mobility is: not a necessity, not a right, but a possibility to be used with measure and awareness.
- 2) It would be used only when power is available. This is indeed a basic principle and constraining condition of sustainability: consumption must adapt to the availability of resources. We would then learn how to use our car when energy is available. This is of course a big restriction but it is also the necessary change. It is what I'm used to do with my stand alone solar system when I look how much is available and whether I can allow myself to consume more power (pumping, ironing, watching a movie). We learn then to listen to nature and find a new way of relating with our environment.
- 3) A gentle use of car at a low speed will regenerate our towns and cities after they have been invaded by violent and harmful machines that destroy our social construct and quality of life.
- 4) It would lead to the creation of local small workshops (5-10 workers) that would offer qualified jobs and excellent working conditions at human size. The service for the clients would be adapted and flexible because any small change to the basic model could be implemented.
- 5) It would propose an alternative to mass production and overproduction which are the causes of all our problems (globalisation, competition, pollution, low wages, export of our tradition activities, bad quality, workforce as a market good, etc).
- 6) It would be a first step for offering the local community social and economic means to provide good life conditions for the local youth.

- 7) It would also, by extension of the same model to other activities, offer the community means of deciding about its own future and finding consensus at the local level for what is necessary: anything we cannot agree about will be managed by external forces in their own interest, i.e. at our own expenses.
- 8) It will therefore foster a spirit of democratic empowerment at local level which will reinforce our power to live the alternative form of life we wish to.
- 9) This is of course only one of the first steps... In the same spirit and in the same practical way many other alternative forms of production could be developed – and are already developed - for food production, building, communication, local decision making, etc. that would reinforce the alternative will of the local community.

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