A Radical Rethink

Dear Reader,

Bit by bit, it is finally becoming obvious for everyone that pure electric mobility is clearly overrated as the global climate savior. In its World Energy Outlook published in mid-November, the International Energy Agency (IEA) expects that, despite all efforts, only about 14 % of the global vehicle fleet will be electrified by 2040. At the same time, the agency's experts predict no more than a 1-% reduction in CO₂ emissions. The reason is that global energy demand will rise by 30 %, and the global vehicle fleet will double to a total of two billion vehicles. On a global basis, only around two million vehicles are currently electrically powered.

Although the IEA forecasts renewable energy to increase to 40 %, it only expects 2 % of this energy to be used for mobility at most. On the contrary, the future may point increasingly towards electric vehicles, IEA Director Fatih Birol told the media, but "oil is far from dead and buried, because growth in freight traffic on the roads, petrochemicals, shipping and aviation are pushing demand to new heights". Accordingly, the IEA considers it high time for a radical rethink to help traffic dispense with fossil fuels in future.

Correct – a radical rethink is necessary, but it needs to keep vehicles with internal combustion engine on board, not discard them. First, they are not the cause of emissions, rather just the symptom. Second, it is urgently needed, alongside electric mobility, to guarantee the decisive economic factor of mobility globally in the decades to come. As physicist and biologist Ernst Ulrich von Weizsäcker, for example, President of the Club of Rome, rightly claims in an

interview with the German newspaper Heilbronner Stimme: "No hasty reaction with the combustion engine," because, "first and foremost, the electric car damages the climate more than the combustion engine in today's electricity mix." Secondly, according to the environmentalist, there is scope to convert "surplus wind power, which would otherwise be lost", into synthetic fuels and thus operate a climate-neutral combustion engine.

But no evidence surfaced of such radical rethinking at the last World Climate Change Summit, nor in the EU bodies, or at federal or state level – at least not public. It almost seems as if those wielding political power could not or would not admit that they had neglected efforts to address specific causes for years. Now reality is catching up with us all.

I hope you enjoy reading this issue of ATZ.

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