



Driving us over a Cliff

Dear Reader,

The mobility and climate transition is currently one of the most highly discussed subjects. Politicians, pressure groups and carmakers are scrambling to come up with ideas that will enable the transport system to help save the climate. The three-part series by Christiane Köllner on Springer Professional provides a good overview of this issue and also a critical perspective.

So far, so good, as measures to protect the climate are important. But the problems come when the politicians ignore the basic laws of physics – “Politics instead of physics” as Johannes Winterhagen aptly writes in his comment column for faz.net. However, what is even more concerning is that the car manufacturers are being forced to outdo one another with their ambitious objectives for electric cars in order to prevent damage to their image. And then there is the dangerous behavior of the mainstream press which has jumped on this bandwagon without thinking and is either ignoring opposing views or calling their honesty into question.

The decision by some EU member states to ban combustion engines, to rely entirely on battery-powered vehicles and to force the automotive industry to take the same route represents a state-sanctioned prohibition of technology-neutral development and will lead to their departure from the group of leading technology nations. And none of this helps the global climate. Where is the logic, in terms of both physics and the environment, in having the electricity used to power vehicles counted three times towards the greenhouse gas reduction quota and electricity-based fuels from sustainable sources only twice, even if they are produced in areas where it is sensible to do so? The result is that electricity-based fuels will not be viable. Who stands to gain from this?

It sounds like the screenplay for a TV crime drama, but it is certainly not fiction. It comes from the draft Act on Further Development of the Greenhouse Gas Reduction Quota drawn up by the German Federal Ministry for the Environment. It is important for us to replace fossil fuels as fast as possible, but it makes no sense to be so determined to get your own way that you go against the laws of physics and of the market and then present this approach as being one that will save the climate and take us on a path into the sunlit uplands. Instead, as faz.net correctly notes, it actually involves “crossing the threshold into deception.”

We can only protect the climate and develop new forms of mobility with new fuels if we keep everything in proportion and create a global network. Anyone who ignores this will be driving the environment, the mobility system and the economy over a cliff. Unfortunately, the leading political decision-makers do not seem to have noticed this.

Dr. Alexander Heintzel
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