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Recumbent Bike, Motorized Quadricycle: What If Light Vehicles Made Their Way Into The City?

By **David Sadler**Last Updated **Feb 26, 2023**

FRANCE



The intermediate vehicle prototype "veloto" also called "insect" from In'VD (Innovation Vehicules Doux). PHILEMON D'ANDURAIN / IN'VD 2023

Four wheels, a pedal set, an electric motor, a fairly high steering wheel, a plastic casing patched up with tape... Here is the "veloto", bike-car, that H el ene and Michel Jacquemain, who live in Castelnau-P egayrols (Aveyron, 340 inhabitants), borrow to do their shopping in Millau, 20 kilometers from their home. There "critter", as they call it, is made by a craftsman from Carcassonne. *"We wanted a vehicle suitable for our travels. The bike, even electric, is insufficient on the roads of Aveyron, too slow and not powerful enough. The car, even comfortable, is far too heavy. Like a jackhammer where tweezers would suffice"* explains H el ene Jacquemain with a laugh.


At the other end of France, in Soissons (Aisne), Arnaud Sivert travels with one or other of his two vehicles: *“A recumbent bicycle, which has done 60,000 kilometers, and a velomobile”* a kind of electric bicycle covered with an oblong plastic shell, 30,000 kilometers on the clock. *“Between a classic bike and a recumbent, the energy consumed is halved!”* », launches this Geo Trouvetou, who has tinkered with his rolling objects himself. To get to Laon, the prefecture of the department, he needs an hour and a quarter, and it takes *“three hours dragging a bit”* to reach the capital.

Read the interview: Mobility: *“Cities must support the transition to clean modes of transport”*

In Paris, Patrick Tonnelier, a former tradesman in a winter sports resort, designed the EV4 eight years ago, a motorized quadricycle, without pedals, which tilts in bends. A kind of electric mini-car, one meter fifty long, which allows him *“to go everywhere”*.

Kindness of motorists

All these followers of soft mobility claim to benefit from a certain benevolence on the part of the motorists they meet or who overtake them. *“People are filming us, asking questions”* testifies H  l  ne Jacquemain.

 The velomobile (recumbent tricycle) weighs 50 kg and has a range of 200 km, with a consumption of 8 W/km/h. It can carry 130 kg and was designed by Arnaud Sivert.

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It abounds. In cities and on country roads, we now see adapted bicycles, streamlined tricycles, large scooters, pedal quadricycles, etc. The inventors, monomaniacs of their fetish object, rarely approved to be produced on a large scale, are not afraid to pass for sweet lunatics.

All these unidentifiable rolling objects fall into the same category, that of *“intermediate vehicles”* say engineer Aur  lien Bigo and economist Fr  d  ric H  ran, who contributed to an issue of the journal *Urban transport* devoted to this subject, in September 2022. *“The weight of the vehicles, positioned between the bicycle and*

the car, does not exceed 600 kilos”, explains Aurélien Bigo. These objects, which also include cargo bikes and carts without a license, are called, according to them, to replace the classic car for daily journeys. The models that manufacturers produce today “are no longer adapted to the real needs of users, because they are too big, too expensive, too fast, too resource-intensive”, notes the engineer. SUVs, initially designed for dirt roads and desert crossings, clutter city streets, to the point that several municipalities are considering regulating their use.

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