The City of Copenhagen's Bicycle Strategy

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Why did we select this case?

Copenhagen is ranked 2nd on the global sharing city Shared Mobility City Index and also 2nd on the West Europe Shared Mobility City Index. Copenhagen set itself the goal to be the world's first climate neutral city in 2025, an ambitious and audacious goal. Their focus is on reducing CO2, improving health of the inhabitants through shared mobility and by building a super cycle highway. Their Bicycle Strategy presents an interesting case as the city is the world's moste bike friendly city in the world.



Bicycle rush hour in Copenhagen - photo by Jeff Peel

About the case

What?

Copenhagen has the goal to become '*the world's best bicycle city by 2025*'. Cities increasingly acknowledge cycling as a central element of a sustainable transport policy. Although, Copenhagen was already known for their culture of cycling before the city launched its strategy, the significant increase of bicycle usage shows that

infrastructure and planning are critical elements to support and stimulate widespread cycling.

How?
There have been two main elements in the implementation: planning and infrastructure. Planning is an integrated feature of urban development and urban governance in Copenhagen. Copenhagen's city plans in the 21th century, dealing specifically with cycling include:

- The Copenhagen Cycle Policy (2002-2012)
- The Copenhagen Transport and Environment Plan 2004
- Copenhagen Bicycle Strategy (2011-2025)
- The Copenhagen Cycle Priority Plan (2006-2016)

The Bicycle Strategy specifies targets, in particular, the key goal of increasing the number of daily bicycle trips in Copenhagen to 240,000 by 2025, from a baseline of 110,000 in 1970 and 150,000 in 2015. The Priority Plan addresses implementation; and Transport and Environment Plan deals with questions of funding for bicycle infrastructure.

The large-scale cycling infrastructure in Copenhagen enhances the ease, safety and enjoyability of cycling considerably. It includes:

- A network of bike paths separate from both vehicle traffic and pedestrians.
- Dedicated bicycle traffic lights, allowing cyclists to leave intersections before cars.
- Specific colored bike paths where cars and bikes share road space.
- Ongoing and extensive commitment to create new bike paths and expand existing ones, especially popular routes.

Why?

The goal is part of the city's health plan, the environmental goal of making the city CO2 neutral by 2025 and to enhance overall liveability in the city.

Success factors and challenges

The recipe for success in Copenhagen was integrating cycling into urban and transport planning and policy, and committing substantial resources in order to make cycling safe, time-efficient and enjoyable. The success lays in good governance; the

combination of long-term ambitious planning and the implementation of an extensive bicycle infrastructure. Another important factor is the political commitment to increase bicycle use in Copenhagen.

What did not work?

One of the key elements: the electric-driven bike-sharing scheme GoBike city bike program has not worked out as planned. The bikes have proven to be difficult use and most of the few customers who have used them expressed dissatisfaction. Probable causes are the fact that most people have their own bike in Copenhagen. The goal was to have 1860 shared bikes in 105 docking stations. But growth stopped at 400 bikes and 27 docking stations, due to delivery issues from the operator. In april 2015 there were only 387 registered accounts. The average bike ride was 6,6, km. Officials behind the project expected that each bicycle would be used three times a day by local commuters. Instead they were used primarily by tourists and each available bicycle has been used less than once a day. The situation has greatly improved. End of 2016 there was a growth from the year before from 169,834 rides, to 700,000 rides. The secret to success was awareness promotion. 60% of the users are locals, the rest are tourists. They seem to be most popular for commutes, as train and metro stations are the most popular drop-off places.

What makes stimulating bicycle usage challenging:

To get more cyclists on the road, issues of safety - especially during peak hour traffic, need to be addressed. Additionally, cyclists want to travel at their preferred speed. This will require widening cycle paths and increasing the barriers separating cyclists from cars. The same issue occurs in Amsterdam where many accidents between bikes happen and the growth of electrical bikes creates an even bigger gap between different travel speeds.

Impact

From the City of Copenhagen's Bicycle Strategy 2011-2015:

- 150,000 people cycle to work or educational institutions every day (45% of the inhabitants)
- The number of kilometres cycled in Copenhagen has risen by around 30% since 1998.
- The bicycle’s modal share for trips to work or educational institutions has risen to over a third since 1998.

- The bicycle is now the most popular transport form for commuting in Copenhagen.

Sources and more information:

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