



## Cycling Capitals

There is a number of cities many would intuitively label as 'cycling capitals', be it Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Münster or Freiburg im Breisgau. In these cities, as in many others, bicycles are part and parcel of the streetscape and the everyday lives of residents. So a high cycling level is definitely a first important characteristic of bicycle capitals. But what accounts for such high intensities of bicycle use and how are they maintained? In this context, the concept often mentioned is that of a 'local cycling culture', which points to the bicycle-friendly attitudes and habits among members of a community that have evolved over time. On the other hand, the concept stresses the special importance placed on cycling in municipal transport policies and urban planning. This dossier showcases a number of cities engaged in massive cycling promotion efforts through their policies and planning. Starting from the perspective provided by the new National Cycling Plan 2020 for Germany, the analysis should not be limited to the established 'frontrunner cities' that have been implementing professional cycling policies for decades; but it should also include the 'up and coming' cities that are making their successful contribution to a positive evolution.

### Cycling knowledge: In high demand internationally

Cycling knowledge from the Netherlands and Denmark is in high demand internationally today, in particular in the fast-growing metropolises in Latin America and Asia. Such metropolises think about the bicycle increasing-

ly in terms of a tool to help resolve the issue of permanent traffic congestion and accessibility problems faced mainly by the marginalised segments of the population. In collaboration with the Cycling Embassy of Denmark and the Dutch Cycling Embassy, working platforms have been established. Consulting services, university research institutes as well as national and municipal offices use these platforms to coordinate their international activities. They are used, for example, to organise exhibitions and symposia on specialised topics. Such activities are supported by the respective countries' ministries of foreign affairs and embassies of cycling countries across the world to encourage other countries to follow the example of Denmark and the Netherlands.

*Cover image: Every day traffic in the city centre of Münster*

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## Cycling Capitals in Germany: Münster and Oldenburg

### Münster

The city of Münster is located in North Rhine-Westphalia and has a population of about 290,000; for decades it has been known as a cycling city, also beyond Germany. In 2007 Münster had a cycling mode share of 37.6% which made cycling the primary mode of transport surpassing car use with a mode share of 36.4%. Apart from the many public bicycle-parking facilities provided throughout the city, Münster, among other things, also boasts the largest bicycle station in Germany with 3,300 parking spaces. An indirect but vital measure to promote cycling is the consistent management of the city's limited car parking space. Parking fees are a major reason why many residents use the bicycle instead of the car to move around in the city.



Prinzipalmarkt - square in the heart of Münster

Planners in Münster have pursued a consistent urban and transport planning scheme that favours cycling. Only parts of the city centre are open to private motorised traffic and to get around it, car users have to take the ring road outside of the historic city. Pedestrians and cyclists can use a 4.5 km (2.8 miles) long green belt around the historic city known as the promenade. Cyclists use this 'ring road' also as a connection to the outskirts. The promenade is what used to be Münster's old fortification wall from late medieval times; today it is part of the city's parks. There is a pavement running parallel along the cycle path so that both cyclists and pedestrians benefit from the 'ring road'. Day-to-day cycling on the promenade is a smooth and relaxed cycling experience. The perception of ideal cycling conditions in parts of the city centre may explain to some extent why, even if they do not have much cycling experience,

new residents shift to cycling soon after settling in Münster.



Busy cycling at the university district in Münster

### Oldenburg

The city of Oldenburg, located in Lower Saxony, has a population of about 160,000 and cycling levels that are among the highest in Germany. A citizen survey that was conducted by the University of Oldenburg in 2010 showed that cycling accounts for 42.7% of all trips within the city. 50% of Oldenburg's residents use the bicycle for trips to the city centre. Most trips covering a distance of up to 5 km (3 miles) are by bicycle. So cycling levels are almost as high as the level of car use, which is 43.6%. Levels of walking and public transport use account for 9.1% and 4.7% respectively.



Cäcilienbridge in Oldenburg  
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Cycling promotion is enshrined in the city's conceptual programmes and planning policies. A transport development plan has been in place in Oldenburg since 2000. This plan is directly linked with other current urban development programmes as well as climate protection and pollution control. The aim is to conduct integrated transport plan-

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ning in which cycling, walking, and local public transport are to be developed as the building blocks of a climate-friendly day-to-day mobility. In 2007, the Oldenburg cycling initiative (Initiative Radverkehr Oldenburg, IRO) was founded; it is made up of city council members, interest groups, members of the police and administrative staff specialising in the field. Members of the initiative formulated cycling promotion goals and an action plan to implement them. Both were adopted by the city council in 2009 and inform current mobility and transport development planning.

Similar to the world-renowned cycling city Copenhagen, Oldenburg is also setting different priorities for its cycling measures every year. Currently the focus is on: bicycle parking facilities, connecting cycling and local public transport, signal control systems, on-carriageway cycling, transforming of old junctions, and information and image improvement through PR. Oldenburg wants to increase the already high cycle mode share by another 5% between 2009 and 2013.

## Up and coming: The city of Kiel

The northern harbour city of Kiel is the capital of Schleswig-Holstein, with a population of about 240,000. It was for a long time not known to be a typical cycling city, but the city's cycling levels increased significantly in recent years. In 1998 only 8% of trips were by bicycle; in 2009 cycling already accounted for more than 20% of all trips. This increase was possible, in part, because of the city's ability to use limited financial resources for successful cycling promotion. Simple but visible measures show cyclists that consideration has been given to their needs: the creation and signing of a total of 12 bicycle streets; the provision of public tyre pumps in the street environment; cycle stands in the city centre; or an online platform allowing users to report cycle path damage. Cycling in the city relies heavily on a citywide cycle route network with cycle signing. Current and future provisions for bicycle planning are incorporated into the Transport Development Plan (VEP) for cities from 2008.

A major success factor, however, is the Kiel Cycling Forum (Kieler Fahrradforum), a roundtable that has been serving as an advisory body for the Kiel's urban planning committee since 1989. The forum is made up of all relevant stakeholders with regard to cycling in Kiel: the political parties of the city parliament; important as-



Transfer interface bicycle/bus/train 'Umsteiger' in Kiel, bicycle station and public transport info centre

sociations (e.g. German Cyclists' Federation ADFC; environmental organisation BUND, Friends of the Earth Germany; seniors' advisory council; General Students' Committee of the university); the administration (civil engineering department; public order office; individual responsible for cycling); as well as other crucial stakeholder including transport services, the police, city marketing representatives and other guests. The Kiel Cycling Forum holds six meetings annually. All important cycle planning and construction measures are discussed in the forum. Results are compiled and submitted to the urban planning committee as recommendations. In addition,



Many new cycle lanes and parkings in Kiel

a cycling excursion is organised every year with members of the cycling forum, the urban planning committee, and the local advisory councils. Apart from the significant increase in cycle mode share, Kiel has received awards in recognition of its successful cycling promotion activities in recent years: In 2005, Kiel won second place in the category of cities with a population above 200,000 in the latest Fahrradklimatest ('Cycling Climate Test'), a survey conducted by ADFC and Friends of the

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Earth Germany (BUND) to assess the bike-friendliness of German cities and municipalities.

## Capacity problems: How to deal with the cycling boom

In many cycling capitals it is no longer enough for projects to focus only on increasing cycle use. It is equally important to manage the massive amount of bicycles and in particular to provide adequate parking facilities in the city centre. Dutch cities in particular offer innovative solutions in terms of infrastructure and organisation. The city of Groningen was faced with the problem of many bicycles parked where they shouldn't be in the pedestrian area, thus blocking the entrances to the shops. The city reacted by introducing a 'red carpet' for pedestrians to help keep the shop entrances clear on very busy days.



*Masses of bicycles in Utrecht (NL)*

Infrastructural solutions include measures that are relatively inexpensive, such as segregated bicycle parking spaces indicated by road markings and staffed cycle parking (Amsterdam), mobile cycle stands (Groningen), as well as more costly bicycle parks, such as the 'De Serre' (Dutch for greenhouse) in Apeldoorn or the huge cycle park, suspended above the water, at Amsterdam Centraal railway station. In order to make it easier for cyclists to park their bicycle at their place of residence, the city makes arrangements with the builders of new residential complexes regarding the provision of cycle parking.



*'Red carpet' for pedestrians in Groningen (NL)*

## Conclusion

The international cycling capitals use a wide range of political strategies and planning approaches. Nevertheless, there are some central characteristics that have generated positive results in many of the cities. Bicycle planning, for example, is conceived as part of integrated transport and urban planning schemes. This notion is often premised on the general principle of a 'short journey city' and the strengthening of active travel in a compact settlement structure. In this environment, the bicycle can be established as the dominant means of transport. At the same time, however, this requires consistent measures to reduce car use, such as reallocating road space away from private motorised traffic to benefit cycling, introducing speed limits and increasing parking fees.

To tackle the topic of cycling in this way, adequate organisational structures have to be put in place; it also requires close collaboration among the various departments. A citywide cycling strategy can serve to bring together different stakeholders and activities within a formal common framework. A strategy can also be used to link cycling to other strategically important topics, such as climate change.

Furthermore, it is crucial to communicate implemented measures to the public and to involve residents in important planning activities. Only this can ensure a lasting 'acceptance' of cycling policies at a high level.



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More information can be found in  
CyE A-9 The cycling modal share in cities  
CyE I-5 Bicycle Parking in the city centre  
CyE O-3 Cycling in sustainable urban mobility planning

"Cycling Expertise" is available online:  
[www.nrvp.de/en/transferstelle](http://www.nrvp.de/en/transferstelle)

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