



Bicycle Parking in the City Centre

Increasing bicycle use requires more bicycle parking spaces

As bicycles become increasingly popular, the demand for bicycle parking spaces is also on the rise. As parking spaces specially aimed at bicycles have heretofore often not been considered in street design, cyclists resort to fastening their bikes to walls, sign posts, and fences – usually with the help of a chain. This parking convention limits the freedom of movement for pedestrians generally, but most especially for the elderly, children led by the hand, and blind people using guiding sticks. Moreover, the lack of safe and weather-proof bicycle parking leads to frequent use of lower-quality bicycles, limiting both the joy of bicycle-riding and hence the frequency with which bicycles are used.

In the Netherlands, where bicycles are heavily used, these problems have existed for some time. Thus, the Dutch have developed new solutions for the high number of bicycles in use, and have tested innovative organisational models. But Germany has also seen the development of various bicycle parking concepts and regulations, such as in the cities of Münster and Berlin.

Experiences and Regulations developed in Germany

The city of Münster, with its high-density bicycle use, has been confronted with bicycle parking issues for a long time. The city has dealt with these problems by de-

signing a high-capacity parking area at the central train station (with spaces for approximately 3,300 bicycles), a large and partly automated parking garage in the city centre, areas designated for bicycle parking in pedestrian zones, and staff hired specifically to remove parked bicycles posing obstructions in particularly crowded areas. The city of Freiburg has also responded to congested parking spaces by creating a no-bicycle parking zone in the innermost centre of the city using a zoning ordinance as a legal basis. However, most cities in Germany

Cover images: Guarded parking at The Hague cityhall, parking space in Leipzigs' pedestrian zone. © J. Thiemann-Linden, S. Korn

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focus primarily on increasing services and informational campaigns, only resorting to the legal wiggle room for the on-going removal of abandoned cycles. But bicycle parking garages and guarded city parking are still the exception.

To assist in preventing a future lack of parking capacity, the Road and Transport Research Association (Forschungsgesellschaft für Straßen- und Verkehrswesen, FGSV), as other such organisations in Switzerland and Austria, have published bicycle parking demand indicators in their technical set of rules, to be taken into consideration in plans for both business and residential buildings, as well as for public spaces. In general, locally conceived bicycle parking plans are recommended, as these are best able to take local needs into consideration. The state of Berlin has incorporated regulations into its building ordinance regarding the needed quantity of bicycle parking places and parking technical requirements. These regulations call for a minimum number of parking spaces (such as two spaces per apartment, or one space per 20 seats at cinemas), and prohibit the provision of simple bicycle stands, requiring instead the construction of sturdier, inverted U-type racks. Another unusual aspect of the Berlin building ordinance is a lack of customary automobile parking requirements. The state of North Rhine-Westphalia has provided suggestive guidelines for the construction of bicycle racks for buildings already in existence – but to date these guidelines have only rarely been implemented.

Varying parking durations lead to varying solutions

In contrast to the parking situation at train stations, the inner city requires many decentralised bicycle parking opportunities with varying durations (such as the city hall, library, school, university, and supermarket). Various solutions have been tested for different lengths of parking duration, which permit safe and easy bicycle parking.

In crowded shopping streets, where bicycles are parked for a quick stop in a store, simple parking solutions, such as a marked parking area, can prevent chaos. Areas indicated with lines or via a different type of road surface or colour allow for cheap “parking regulation”. In situations where the parking duration tends to be very short, bike stands may not be necessary, though marked areas are also easily combined with inverted U-

type racks. In North Rhine-Westphalia, a mobile bicycle parking structure has been in use for several years. This conspicuous, movable structure with racks takes up the space of one automobile parking spot and is especially appropriate for temporary use. Business owners find their revenues increase when they are located in close proximity to sturdy bicycle parking areas. Particularly grocers profit from clientele on bikes (see FoR A-4/2011 „Shopping by Bicycle“).



University restaurant in Leipzig: Parking facilities for short duration on the street and for longer stays in the garage. © Sebastian Korn

Special events generate temporary parking needs

Sporting events, concerts or other large-scale happenings require a large, very short-term bicycle parking system. Ideal for such events are inverted U-type racks, which can be folded up for space-saving storage. Such a system was used for example for the European football cup in Salzburg in 2008, and at the Protestant Kirchentag (“Church Day”) in Bremen in 2009. Thus, Salzburg saw an increase of 1,500 bicycle parking spaces in the inner city, and Kirchentag visitors in Bremen could use up to 2,000 spaces located at three central venues. Between events, bicycle racks are deposited in a public storage facility, together with barricades and other mobile street furniture; in times of need, they are quickly reassembled. During home games, numerous football clubs of the Bundesliga make secure parking areas

Sources

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www.velokonferenz.ch/broschueren.html

available to fans arriving by bike. For example, Borussia Dortmund offers free, monitored bicycle stations at their stadium, in collaboration with the local branch of the German Cyclists' Federation ADFC ("Allgemeiner Deutscher Fahrrad-Club"). The city of Würzburg erects a bicycle station every year starting in April along the Main River and the Romantic Road bicycle paths. At a cost of one Euro, this seasonal station offers space for a bicycle and luggage, and the payment is reimbursed with any purchase exceeding five Euros at Bike+Park-affiliated stores. In addition, the station offers battery exchanges for Pedelecs.

For longer-term parking, bicycle parking garages are ideal. The city of Münster opened the "Radlager" ("Bicycle Warehouse") in the city centre, a parking garage for 360 bicycles. Of these, 120 spots are available for regular customers. With their customer card, regular users are able to deposit and pick up their bicycles around the clock. Their bicycles are transported automatically within seconds from the ground floor to their parking spot on the upper level. For short-term parking, classic double-decker bicycle racks are available for manual park-



The newly built bicycle garage in the centre of Münster.
© Westfälische Bauindustrie GmbH

ing. Parking prices range from 10 cents per hour, to 50 cents per day, to 7 Euros per month, and to 70 Euros for the year. The lack of staff allows for low operation costs, and cameras in use at neighbouring car parking garages also cover the bicycle garage. Such an arrangement is possible because all central city parking facilities are run by a municipal corporation. Partial subsidies for bicycle parking are thus easily available through car parking, and such subsidies are thoroughly desirable in order to boost a lively and bicycle-friendly inner city.

Dealing with abandoned bicycles

The legal parameters for the removal of unclaimed bicycles in Germany are difficult to discern. Removal has thus far generally been justified under transportation or waste law. Transportation law stipulates that parking bicycles that are no longer roadworthy requires special permission. In cases where such special permission has not been granted, the authorities are permitted to remove bicycles under so-called "substitute performance". Abandoned bicycles may also be removed under waste law if they are parked on the street for several weeks. However, if these conditions are not met, local authorities may be liable for the payment of the value of the bicycle and the lock should the owner of the bicycle choose to sue.

Thus, many municipalities store removed bicycles for some time in lost and found facilities, thereby giving their owners extra time to retrieve them. Yet, cities and municipalities in Germany still face legal grey areas when it comes to the removal of non-roadworthy or abandoned bicycles. Heretofore there have been no legal reviews of practices employed for the removal of such bicycles. In contrast, the prohibition of bicycle parking in city centres has led to a number of court cases, for example in the cities of Münster and Lüneburg, as transportation laws do not specifically permit such prohibitions. The legal basis used in Freiburg to prohibit bicycle parking in the inner city (citing the interference with development plans) has yet to come under any legal review.

Regulations in the Netherlands

In the Netherlands, bicycle removal has much clearer regulations than in German-speaking countries. Municipal ordinances in Utrecht, for example, permit bicycle removal under the following scenarios:

- if a bicycle is parked in such a way as to pose a danger to others (in fire brigade access areas, on guiding strips for the blind, and on bicycle paths)
- if the bicycle is parked obstructively (between parking spots, on pedestrian paths or in loading areas) or
- if the bicycle is parked in one place for longer than 28 days.

Removal time varies depending on how the bicycle is parked and in what way it is obstructive. Thus bicycles that pose a grave danger to others can be removed within a half hour, but those posing merely an annoyance are allowed to remain for 24 hours prior to removal. Various cities in the Netherlands have a maximum parking permission of 28 days. Regular patrols and markings lead to strict adherence to these laws. A bicycle guidance system is being tested to help make legal bicycle parking spots easier to notice.

The social economy and debates on pricing

Parking garages that are operated in Germany currently require payment. Most cyclists are happy to spend a small sum on safe parking for their bicycle, especially if the bicycle is parked for several hours. But the cost of running a parking garage is difficult to cover merely via fees, especially in inner cities with high rent and limited real estate available for commercial purposes. Suitable operational models can thus only be made possible with governmental involvement. The advantages of safe parking spaces are evident: by protecting against vandalism and theft, bicycle use is promoted. Orderly bicycle parking gives an impression of good city maintenance and does not inhibit the use of street space. Overall, more people are encouraged to make use of the city, and increasingly less by car, adding to the general health of the inner city. Moreover, bicycle guarding can lead to the generation of more employment.

Conclusion

Inner cities require different types of bicycle parking systems depending on the situation. For short-term park-



A "red carpet" for pedestrians in Groningen (NL) to keep shop entrances free from bicycles. © Jörg Thiemann-Linden

ing, a sufficient number of near-by inverted-U type racks need to be available in order for cyclists to make use of them. Other than at train stations, long-term parking plays a lesser role in the inner city. Monitored bicycle parking garages are an ideal solution for companies, students, and library users. Such garages encourage bicycle use when travelling to the inner city, while reducing the number of parked bicycles obstructing other street users. However, one should not overestimate the active use of such garages or cyclists' willingness to pay for parking. At the end of the day, one of the bicycle's principal advantages is that parking is generally quick and easy, and does not require looking for a spot or expensive fees at a parking garage. Integrating bicycle parking with motor vehicle parking systems offers an opportunity for financial flexibility that supports the cost of bicycle parking, reduces parking fees, and thus increases the use of garages. For efficient use of bicycle parking, the removal of abandoned bicycles is absolutely necessary. Finally, social measures linked to bicycle parking and monitoring can lead to the creation of new jobs.



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More Information on Bicycle Parking can be found in the following editions

Cycling Expertise I-6 Bicycle parking at Train Stations

Cycling Expertise I-7 Bicycle parking in Residential Areas

"Cycling Expertise" is available online:
www.nrvp.de/en/transferstelle

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