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Bycyklen Copenhagen (NL)

This Danish initiative, pioneered in 1995, is the first example of a 2nd Generation scheme where bikes are freely available providing a coin deposit is made. The scheme is limited to the city centre and works in much the same way as trolleys in a supermarket.

City Bikes, as they are known, can be picked up at one of 110 locations within the city centre from April to September; outside these months the bikes are taken in for repairs. There are 2,000 bikes available and users need to deposit a Dkr20 (£1.80) coin in one of the designated racks to release a bike. When they are finished, the money is returned when the bike is placed again in one of the racks. Stray bikes are intended to be kept to a minimum by the fact that anyone returning a bike to a rack can claim the Dkr20 deposit.

If a bike is taken outside the city limits then users are liable to a Dkr1,000 (£90) fine if caught by the police. Bikes are also forbidden from being secured using personal locks. There are opportunities for companies to sponsor the scheme in return for their logo appearing on the bike.

City Bikes have been shown to help reduce the number personal bikes stolen in the city by effectively providing the same service as a stolen bike. The scheme is very popular with tourists, residents and city workers alike and certainly demonstrates the cyclist-friendly attitude of the city. The bikes are basic (only one gear, although that is acceptable in this city) and therefore theft of components is kept to a minimum. However it is not uncommon to find broken or vandalised bikes.

Bycyklen incorporates an employment training scheme whereby participants maintain the servicing of the bikes. The 6 month programme results in 80% of participants securing a job later on. Unfortunately, it appears the city struggles to keep up with maintenance and the bikes become cumbersome to ride once they start to deteriorate.

In spite of such issues the scheme has become significant among international bike-sharing programmes, for its long service and for helping to establish Copenhagen as a pioneer of city cycling facilities and infrastructure. The scheme has been replicated in cities including Aarhus, Helsinki and Melbourne (pending), and nearly every third generation scheme that has been introduced more recently is known to have looked at Bycyklen as a key example, to learn from its problems and its success.

Provider:

Fonden Bycyklen
København, Værkstedsvej 5
DK-2500 Valby



Designer / Architect:

Wilhelm and Niels Christiansen.

Cost of Provision:

Information undisclosed.

Strengths:

- A free service
- Simple and straightforward to use
- No registration fee or subscription is required and therefore accessible to all
- A dedicated City Bike repair shop as well as a mobile repair service.

Weaknesses:

- Broken and stolen bikes are a persistent problem as there is little security and no way of tracking bikes or users
- Bikes can be heavy and cumbersome.
- Functional, well maintained bikes are not always easy to find.

Useful References:

<http://www.bycyklen.dk/>

<http://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/48-hours-in-copenhagen-564175.html>

http://www.treehugger.com/files/2006/04/city_bike_in_co.php