

From 5 to 10 %. The Challenge to Double Vienna's Modal Share of Cycling

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1 ABSTRACT

Cycling plays a crucial role in the mobility strategy of the City of Vienna. On the basis of the executive agreement of the city government of 11 November 2010, the ambitious objective lies in doubling the share of cycling in the city by 2015 (from 5.5% to 10%, 2011 already 6%). Therefore cycling is given high political priority today and in the future and enjoys strong structural and organisational backing by the City Administration.

The dynamic development of cycling in Vienna is noticeable at all levels. On the streets but also in newspapers and magazines, it is obvious that a bicycle culture has evolved in Vienna.

Vienna needs highly developed cycling routes that permit comfortable travelling through the city and into the city. The more cyclists are on the streets the more pressure lies on infrastructure with a high quality. The city has to upgrade its infrastructure on an ongoing basis. A parallel step has to be the promotion of cycling to convince Vienna's population of the many positive arguments that advocate cycling. One highlight of this extended campaign is a special concentration of measures during the "Bicycle Year 2013". Above all, the Velo-city, the premier international conference on cycling, will be held in Vienna on 11th-14th June 2013. This conference is to endow Vienna's cycling activities with additional dynamism and should act as a driver for the implementation of planned measures.

This paper is a compendium of Vienna's bid to the Velo-city conference in 2013 supplemented by further information and data on cycling development and cycling cultures in the city.

2 DEVELOPEMENT OF CYCLING IN VIENNA

2.1 Dates and figures

Vienna looks back on a very long tradition of leisure cycling. Over the past 15 to 20 years, bicycles have become increasingly popular as an everyday means of transport; however, for a long time the share of cycling in the modal split of Vienna was constant at around 3%. A marked upswing in cycling was recorded since 2006. The share of cycling rose to 5.0% in 2010 and now 6.0% in 2011, which corresponds to a relative share increase by about 50%. There are notable seasonal fluctuations: during the "cycling season" from April to October, the share of cycling in the city's modal split is approximately 6.6% and even over 9% in the inner districts. Conversely, the average counts for January usually are only about 15% to 20% of those for June. The counts for 2011 presented another notable increase in bicycle use.

In the 1960s and 1970s, the rise in prosperity and the rapid growth of car ownership led to a strong focus on car-friendly urban planning in Vienna; bicycles were exiled from the streetscape. While the footpath network and public transport system were substantially upgraded, cycling was not promoted: the cycle way network was reduced from 23 kilometres in 1970 to eleven kilometres in 1977. Most cycle ways had to cede their space to ever-growing car traffic. Starting in the 1980s, this trend was reversed. The future cycle way network was to ensure that streets would be recovered for pedestrians and cyclists, rendering them more vibrant and appealing. As a consequence, the cycle way network was extended to 168 kilometres by 1986. As a first phase, "sub-networks in recreational and suburban zones as well as along the Danube and Danube Canal, including main connecting cycle ways" were built.

In 1993, the Vienna City Council adopted new guidelines for the Vienna Transport Concept, aiming at an increase of bicycles in Vienna's overall modal split to 6% of all trips. A key prerequisite for this was the creation of a main cycle way network in 1994. For the first time, the use of bicycles for shopping or trips from and to school and work was promoted. A campaign for cycle parking facilities in public space ("Vienna Rack", "Wiener Bügel") launched in 1985 was systematically continued. Vienna Underground passengers were allowed to take their bicycles along. Due to the dynamic development of cycling, the main cycle way network was revised in 2000, with a special focus on closing gaps in the network and fine-tuning organisational measures. This concept laid the basis for the measures planned for the next years. In the early

1990s, Vienna's cycle way network was only 190 kilometres long – yet by 2012, it had been expanded to more than 1,200 kilometres.

2.2 A change in transport policies

On the basis of the executive agreement of the city government of 11 November 2010, the ambitious objective lies in doubling the share of cycling in the city by 2015 (from 5.5% to 10%). In the meantime Vienna has reached 6.0% of all trips. Cycling is given a high political priority today and in the future and has a new strong structural and organisational backing in the City Administration.

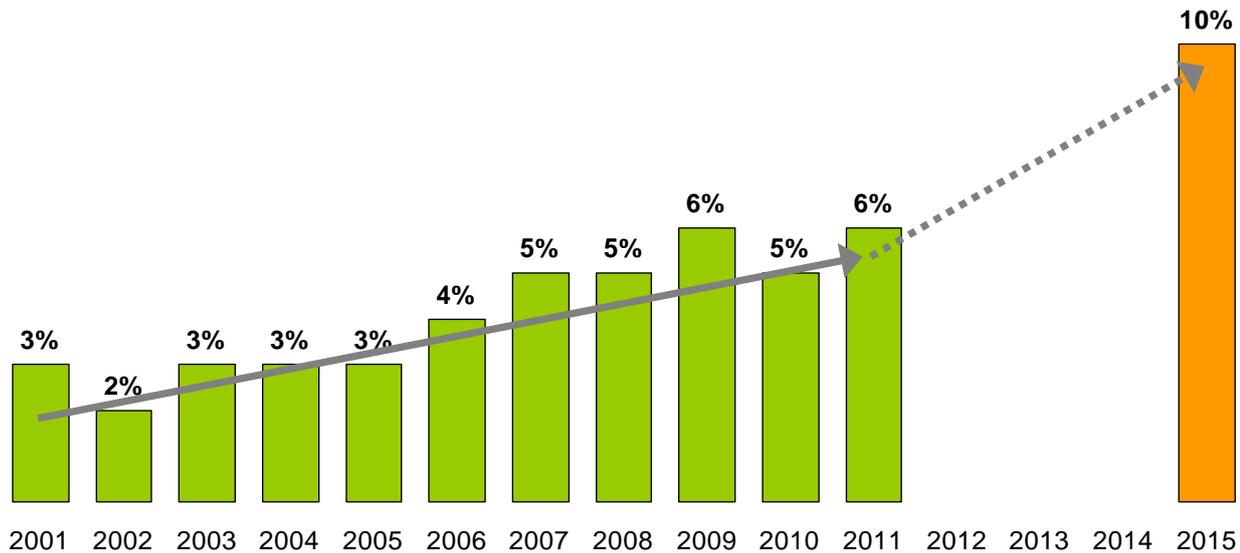


Fig. 2: Development of the share of cycling in Vienna's Modal Split

2.3 A changing bicycle culture

A look at Vienna's streets shows clearly that a bicycle culture has evolved. There are more and more cyclists – men and women of any age – in everyday traffic. Even lifestyle magazines and dailies feature cycling as an interesting topic on their covers; many shop displays use bicycles as decoration elements. Riding a bicycle is not only an alternative to a car, it has become a civil society movement within urban development, urban cultures and urban lifestyles – even in Vienna. Cyclists are reclaiming public space and changing urban images – faster than expected. From the creation of freaky bikes, bike kitchen and critical mass movements, cargo bikes, cycle chic and messenger culture the whole range of urban bike culture and bicycle enthusiasm is becoming a part of urban development and neighbourhood activism.



Fig. 1: Cycling in Vienna, photos by Martin Friedl, Michael Szeiler



Fig. 1: Shoe shop display and an optician using the bicycle as advertising theme, photos by Andrea Weninger, Matthias Schmidt

2.4 Challenges for cycling in Vienna

Vienna is characterised by a number of specific traits that entail specific challenges for bicycle traffic:

- Traditionally, Vienna boasts a very high (by international standards) modal split share of public transport, which currently has attained 36% (2011). The Vienna Underground network was and still will be expanded, accompanied by ongoing improvements of the tram and bus service. As a result, public transport is prioritised in public space design and at traffic lights.
- The historic core and the districts inside the Gürtel boulevard are highly condensed. This entails narrow streets and a great number of buildings from the Gründerzeit era – these residential buildings offer very little space for storing bicycles.
- Cars are mostly parked on the street. Due to relatively narrow streets, many of them are one-way. Opening one-way streets to bicycles (contraflow cycling) was established in Vienna quite some time ago and constitutes a key measure to render cycling more attractive.

- Because of the often narrow streets and manifold forms of use of the streetscape (public transport on its own lanes, public transport stops, sidewalks, car parking), the space available for cycle ways is limited. Plans therefore need to ponder the interests of all road users very carefully.
- Not all parts of Vienna are flat. Elevations must be overcome as well; this may discourage people to take up cycling on a daily basis.

These traits of the city have led to the formulation of numerous special and individual solutions to encourage cycling (e.g. contraflow cycling, ambitious programme to step up parking facilities, etc.) under complex frame conditions.

3 GETTING MORE PEOPLE ON THEIR BIKES

The improvement of the cycling infrastructure must be stepped up. Vienna needs highly developed cycling routes that permit comfortable travelling through the city and into the city. The more cyclists pedal on the streets the more pressure lies on infrastructure with high quality. The city has to upgrade its infrastructure on an ongoing basis; this will be complemented by projects as the housing estates Bike City and Car-free Development but also by the opening of more and more one-way streets to contraflow cycling. Other important projects include “bicycle-friendly streets”, the upgrading of main routes like the Ring-Rund-Radweg with peak user volumes of more than 7,000 cyclists/day and of course further enlargement of cycle parking facilities in public space (over 30,000 slots at the moment) and new solutions for the combination of cycling and public transport. Cyclists need more cycle parking facilities and garages, especially at railway stations.

A parallel step has to be the promotion of cycling to convince Vienna’s population of the many positive arguments that advocate cycling. Bicycle culture has to be fostered, so that bicycles will become an everyday means of transport of a lot more Viennese.

Many infrastructure measures and PR activities will be implemented in 2012 and 2013 to generate a positive spin for this issue. One highlight of this extended campaign is a special concentration of measures during the “Bicycle Year 2013”, which is to create internal and external dynamism to motivate and mobilise all relevant stakeholders. The cycling season starts with the Bike Festival and the RadpaRADE in spring, a lot of cultural and cycling events will be presented during the year 2013. Starting in April 2012, the new FahrRADhaus (bicycle house) will address all questions related to urban cycling: a one-stop shop provides information, cycle training, flea markets, services and deals with suggestions to cycling in Vienna.

The Bike to Work campaign “Radelt zur Arbeit”¹ generates an initiative for specific target groups: information, incentives, testimonials, etc. demonstrate the potential advantages of integrating cycling into corporate mobility. In addition, a number of leading companies were to be motivated to become more bicycle-friendly. In 2011 the campaign successfully involved 4,000 workers from 700 participating Viennese companies to highlight the potential of bicycle use for enterprises.

Above all the Velo-city, the major international conference on cycling, will be held in Vienna on 11th-14th June 2013. This conference is to endow Vienna’s cycling activities with additional dynamism and should act as a driver for the implementation of planned measures.

4 VELO-CITY VIENNA 2013: THE SOUND OF CYCLING – URBAN BICYCLE CULTURES

The Velo-city is the European Cyclists’ Federation’s (ECF) series of conferences is the premier international planning conference on cycling.² The Velo-city is to encourage cycling as part of daily transport. The conference series started in 1980 in Bremen followed by Barcelona, Munich, Brussels, Copenhagen, Seville etc. and Vancouver in 2012. Velo-city conferences have more than 1,000 delegates from all over the world.

The conference attracts delegates involved in transport planning and consulting, policy and promotion of cycling programs. Planners, engineers, architects, non-governmental organisations, academic researchers, physicians, environmentalists, business and industry representatives will share their knowledge on the cycling issue.

¹ <http://www.radeltzurarbeit.at/>

² <http://www.ecf.com/projects/velo-city-2/>



Fig. 3: The Velo-city Conference will take place in Vienna from June 11 to 14, 2013

The motto of the Velo-city conference in Vienna is “The Sound of Cycling – Urban Cycling Cultures”. As in other European metropolises, different bicycle cultures have emerged in Vienna: urban chic, retro, neo-eco, minimal, new racing sports, family cycling, ... All these styles of spatial utilisation have their own rhythm and contribute towards the variety of ecofriendly traffic. In this way, they change and enrich the sound of the city.

With respect to culture and bicycle culture, the thematic focuses of the conference will reflect international trends and developments in the field of cycling. More information will be online in July 2012 on the website www.velo-city2013.com.



Fig. 3: Velo-city in Copenhagen 2010, photo by Troels Heien

5 REFERENCES

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