

# Get on your (floating) bike

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A Copenhagen cycle share scheme won an international design competition. The system is as flexible as a bicycle tube.

[F094 Image 1](#)

When you find out that the OPENbike cycle share scheme won the Copenhagen international design competition because of its floating capabilities, you're forgiven for thinking it meant the design included extra air in huge spongy tyres. But the floating element actually refers to the bike's independent self-charging system, which means that unlike most cycle share schemes, this one does not rely on fixed docking stations for the collection and return of the bicycles.

## **Hub dynamo**

Micheal Koucky, founder and CEO of environmental consultancy Koucky & Partners – which collaborated on the project with sustainability consultancy Green Idea Factory and design agency LOTS Design – says: "A normal bike share system is not a floating system; it is based on fixed stands and you have to take the bike to the nearest stand when you've finished with it. A floating system doesn't need a stand, so it's closer to using your own bike.

"OPENbike uses a hub dynamo to charge the bike, removing the need for a charging station and the expensive infrastructure that goes with it. You use a smart card – similar to the London Oyster card – to check in and out of the bike system."

## **Incomparable**

The competition was commissioned by Copenhagen's Department of Traffic, Technical and Environmental Administration because the city wants to establish a new cycle share system by 2013 – and one that does more than promoting cycling.

Cities that have recently developed bike share schemes, such as Paris and Barcelona, have a population which relies heavily on other transport methods; whereas in Copenhagen there are more bikes than there are citizens!

Michael says: "Copenhagen is not comparable with these cities because people already cycle. In Paris and Barcelona, bike sharing is to promote cycling to people who don't own bikes; in Copenhagen it's to give people who already cycle a more flexible system."

### **Pub**

And when it comes to flexibility, Michael has the Carlsberg and Tuborg drinker in mind: “If you cycle to the pub, you can leave the bike outside the pub, with no need to find the closest bike stand, and reserve the bike so it will still be there when you leave the pub.

“If you’re not planning on cycling home afterwards, you can check out of the bike system, and the bike is then available to other users. Other users can find the bike using its positioning system, which they can access via the web, through a smartphone, or by phoning the service. If you forget to check out, the bike will do it for you after it has been stationary for five minutes.”

### **Heavy load**

And it’s not just pub-goers who benefit, as an OPENbike cargo bike is easily big enough to carry five crates of beer to a party.

Michael says: “Cargo bikes are very important because, although one in three families has a cargo bike, they are too expensive for someone to buy for occasional usage. Renting a cargo bike through OPENbike would allow a single person to transport beer to a party without needing to have a car.”

### **Fata morgana?**

And with fun features and clever technology – such as your bike flashing when you text it or the bike registering major impacts which can then be reported to the police as possible accidents or vandalism – the people of Copenhagen must be chomping at the bit (or is that the handlebars?) for the new cycle share system.

But there’s no guarantee that OPENbike will arrive.

Michael says: “It’s not definitely going to be developed. It is up to the city of Copenhagen to work on ideas and create a tender from those ideas. But OPENbike could be developed by 2013 because the technology it uses already exists.”