

Urban Resilience in Developing Megacities

TOPIC

Over the next twenty years, concern about sustainability, climate change and health will push European cities to promote widespread bicycle transportation. In relation to these challenges cycling culture would have the greatest effect in developing megacities. Currently there are 23 megacities; by 2025 the UN predicts nine new megacities in Asia bringing the total to 37. All but eight of these will be in the developing world – the quality of life for millions will be determined by the quality of their cities.

How is urban public space being shaped in developing megacities to influence a culture of cycling?

Cycling Megacities

OBJECTIVE

The low social status of the bicycle in developing countries restricts the level of public investment in necessary infrastructure. This diminishes the use of the bicycle. I will explore how new policies, investments and educational campaigns are transforming urban public space in a bid to make cycling a transportation option to all social classes.

This study will contribute to developing policy and architectural research across the UK and Europe, given the growing interest in cycling advocacy.

Shenzhen, China
Estimated population in 2025:
13,728,000
(+25,000,000 when including wider urban zone)

Four of the world's existing megacities are in China. By 2025 there will be three more. Chinese planners hope to merge nine cities in the Pearl River Delta (from Guangzhou to Shenzhen) creating a 16,000 square mile urban area, 26 times larger than Greater London. Over the next six years, £190bn will be spent integrating transport, energy, water and telecommunications networks but is cycling going to be part of this?

Dhaka, Bangladesh
Estimated population in 2025:
22,906,000

A city with 600,000 cycle rickshaws. The government struggles to provide basic public services such as water and electricity for the 40% of the population that are slum dwellers. So what support is there for an affordable cycle transport network?

Mexico City, Mexico
Estimated population in 2025:
21,648,000

Ten years ago this was the most polluted place in the world, according to the UN. Vehicles were responsible for half of the contamination. Since then, the government has prioritised modes of transport aimed at reducing pollution and congestion. A new bike-sharing scheme and bus network are gradually persuading citizens to leave the cars at home – providing a model for other developing megacities.

Lagos, Nigeria
Estimated population in 2025:
18,857,000

Africa's largest city is important as one of the world's most rapidly expanding urban areas is a crucial testing ground for other countries and cities growing at a similar rate. Ojo Maduekwe, the former Minister of Transport for Nigeria said in 2001 that cycling would be part of Nigeria's future, and told Nigerians to embrace cycling as a partial solution to the growing gridlock in the capital. What have become of these aims?

METHODOLOGY

FILM ARCHIVE AND MAPPING

I will create a film archive documenting urban public space in the megacities from the perspective of a cyclist. This will explore exciting alternative techniques for supporting a cycling culture, cycling infrastructure and changing social perceptions of the bicycle around the world. I will map city-wide bicycle movement and interview designers, activists and cyclists to further understanding of how the urban form is affecting cycling culture. I will use these resources to create a short documentary exploring new constructions of public space, architecture and systems from the gathered research.