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Cycling transition, user roles and policy interventions: Lessons from a megacity in India

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Abstract

Cycling is a key mobility option for low income citizens in India. Currently the cycling regime in Indian megacities are undergoing rapid transition, on one hand destabilisation of the existing regime is prevalent while emergence of new 'smart' niches on the other. These changes are driven by (often contradicting) visions of sustainable mobility involving a range of actors notably policy makers and users. In transition literature and evolutionary studies, users are seen particularly central to transition processes as their effort in reorienting existing routines and practices to fit new innovations are fundamental to successful transitions. Such routines, beliefs and practices shape and in turn also shaped by different roles played by users in transition processes. However, generally, in the developing world, top down policies and planning initiatives dictate the direction of transitions by enabling or constraining user routines.

In this paper, we study transitions in cycling regime in an Indian megacity at the intersection of new users' roles and changing practices and beliefs around cycling. We first identify the new users' roles along with the administrative interventions in the cycling regime in the city in the past 10 years. In the second step, we analyse the connection between the user roles in the course of cycling transition, in response to the change initiated by policies. In conclusion, we discuss how transition in cycling regimes in the context of an Asian megacity require different models, processes and interventions, compared to the iconic cycling transition cases of the West, adaptive to the local socio-cultural institutions, thereby inviting policy makers, academics and users to act accordingly in order to achieve smart mobility futures.

Keywords: Cycling transition, User role, Policy Intervention