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Kabul, Afghanistan...



MY TURN

Wayne Chan



File this story under too much of a good thing

If you live in or near a major metropolitan area, or have travelled to one, you've probably encountered them — brightly colored bicycles parked randomly on street corners, along walkways, in bike racks, by storefronts, or near street signs. It's called "bike share" and it's a relatively new business model, but a promising one. Anyone with a smartphone can sign up for any number of bike-share companies through a dedicated app, find a nearby bike, assign it for your own use, and ride away to your desired destination. Seems like an environmentally friendly, win-win solution for everyone, right?

Well, even the best ideas can backfire without a little common sense.

Take China's bike-share situation.

It turns out that a number of companies in China have gone all-in with the bike-share business, setting up shop in many of China's largest cities. If you've ever been to China, it seems like a perfect solution to streets packed with cars that add to major pollution and congestion problems. Give the people access to bikes and at least for some trips, you save a car trip. What could go wrong, right?

Apparently Chinese bike-share companies have watched the movie *Field of Dreams* a few too many times because they appear to be working under the theme, "If you build it, they will come." Tens of thousands of bikes, perhaps millions of them, have been produced and strewn all over Shanghai and other large Chinese cities. So many of the bikes sit around unused that local authorities have begun stockpiling them in empty lots just to keep pedestrian walkways open to the public.

The piles of bikes have actually become

mountains of bikes, filling up parks and lots — just about any spare inch of storage space.

Some of the bike-share companies have gone out of business because they ran out of money after having provided so many bikes that just sit idle.

Here's my question.

Maybe I'm missing something, but let's say you're

the inventory manager in charge of one of these bike-share companies. You walk outside with one of your bicycle procurement managers to inspect the current stock of bicycles. You walk past a field full of your bikes stacked on top of each other 15 feet high covering the size of a football field. You have to be very careful where you walk when stepping over a few of them



A man walks by impounded bicycles from various bike-sharing services stored at a compound of the urban administration office of Luyang district in Hefei, Anhui province, China. (Chinatopix via AP)

just to avoid the possibility of a bicycle avalanche.

At some point during the inspection, basically while walking past a battalion of bikes, would it not make sense to turn to your colleague and say, "You know, Bill, do you think maybe we have enough bikes out there now?" And yes, I realize a manager for a company in China is not likely to be named "Bill," but I've always thought Bill was kind of funny, so there you go.

Maybe a manager really did ask Bill that very question. But if they did, Bill obviously didn't agree and perhaps replied, "Are you kidding? I can still see the sun! We need more bikes!"

Some things are better left unexplained, I guess.

I'm just glad that all the times I've travelled to China, I haven't seen too many all-you-can-eat restaurants. If they followed the model of the bike businesses, can you imagine what a dumpling restaurant might do?

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Pakistan's first trans TV anchor hopes to change perceptions

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profession as anchor to change the general attitude of our society toward transgender people," she said.

Jan, the head of the Trans Action Alliance, hopes Malik can serve as a role model for others and change the popular perception of transgender

people.

"Thank god, one of us is going on television in a serious job," Jan said. "Previously, we have been presented as a joke. I hope and I believe this will help us get our rights, our protection, and respect."

Khan reported from Islamabad. Associated Press writer Riaz Khan in Peshawar, Pakistan contributed to this report.

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