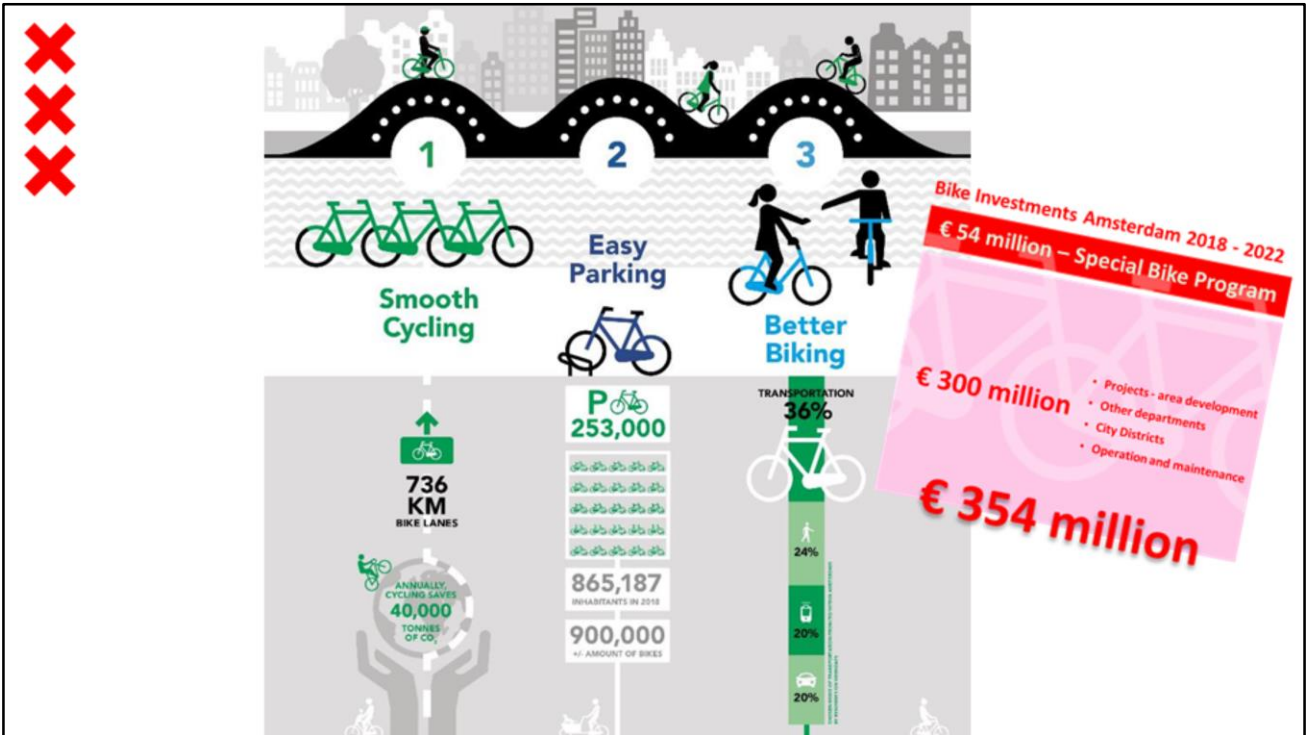




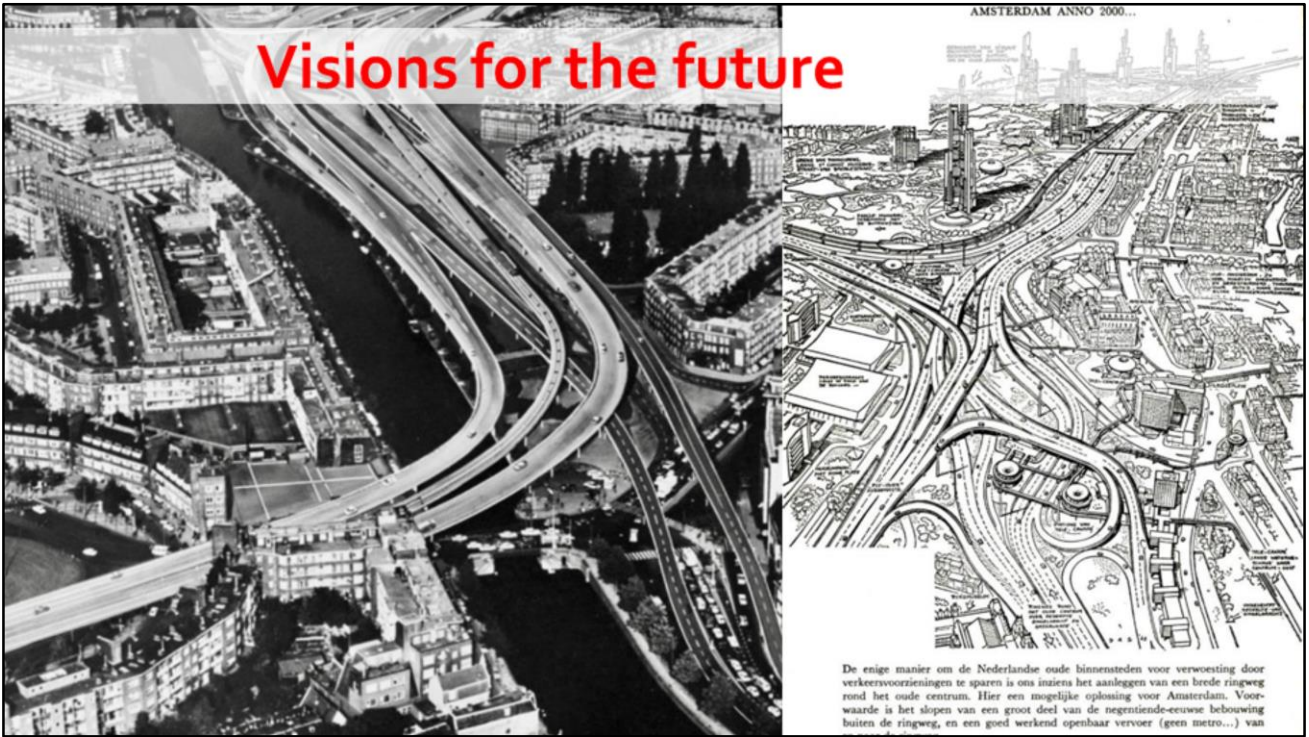
We are going to try to fit the important lessons and challenges learned from 60 years of bike policy in Amsterdam into one short presentation for you. For this presentation, we take Amsterdam (as it is today) as a bicycle paradise, although that depends very much on ones definition of paradise.



These are some key figures about cycling in Amsterdam. Due to corona, more recent figures are not yet available.

We have more bikes than people. By now we have around 750 km of bike lanes, parking facilities for almost 300.000 bikes, but around 400.000 parked bikes in the centre areas.

We have invested around 350 million in biking in the last 5 years. We mainly reallocated the investments in car infrastructure to cycling infrastructure.



We almost missed the boat though...These are future visions of what Amsterdam was supposed to be like in 2000. Although early policy documents were speaking about cars not being compatible with city life, by the 60's they were predicting the end of the bicycle within decades.

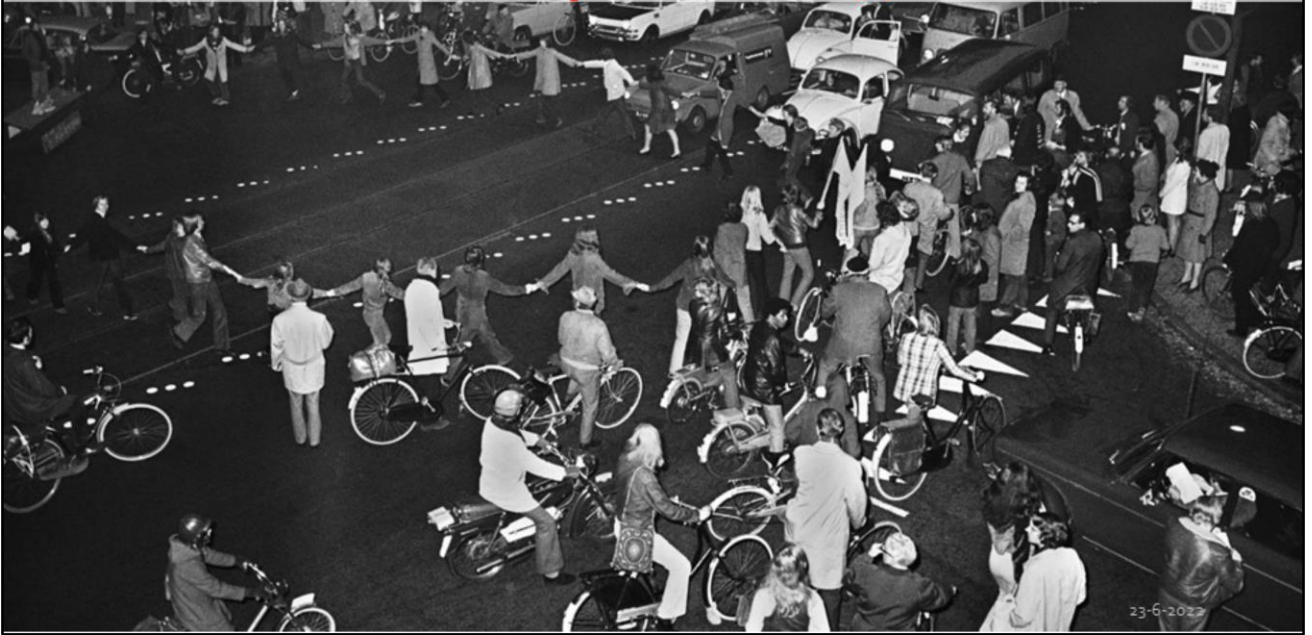


Amsterdam, like the rest of the world, was making way for the future by rebuilding the city for cars. Squares were turned into parking lots and the city started clogging up.



But the people in Amsterdam, just like the rest of the Netherlands, kept cycling. Why? Theories range from Holland being a flat country, having densely build but relatively small cities, to the Dutch people just love cycling (even against the wind, in rain and snow). A more historical accurate theory is that the Dutch already had an established bike culture in the 1920's, an early egalitarian tradition (Royals were riding bikes from the 1930's), a very Calvinist tradition. The war and post war economy including fuel shortages also contributed to the Dutch still cycling.

Citizen's protests 1970's



The growing car use and continues bike use led to a sharp increase in accidents and fatalities. In 1972 more than 3.500 people were killed in traffic in the Netherlands, of which approximately 500 are under the age of 15 (Now that number is approximately 600 people). The vast majority of fatal accidents was on a bike. This led to widespread citizen's protests and grassroots organizations opposing the growing (dangerous) role of the car in the city. A societal will and a new dominant political culture led to more people embracing the bike and the need to keep the city safe from cars.



From the 1970's on we started designing the streets in Amsterdam in a way where safe cycling was possible. Now Amsterdam has a very dense network of bicycle paths, separate and safe from cars. It started with only 3 routes in 1976, but from the beginning there was a vision for the street design of the whole city.

Bike and people friendly residential areas



Through decades of designing residential areas for people, pedestrians and bikes, these kind of streets (in the picture) are now part of a very dense network of roads where bikes are allowed. Amsterdam implemented a maximum speed of 30 km/h, slowed down or banned cars in these streets. Today there is virtually no road left in Amsterdam where you cannot go on a bike.

1. Worst situation to encounter decides



We also see, from previous experience and history, that people's decision to use a bike as a main mode of transport depends on (safety) risk or the possibility to encounter a bad situation on route.

This decision does not depend on whether the bike routes are enjoyable. If you want people to bike everywhere, make sure they feel safe everywhere.



2. Attractiveness compared to and connectivity to other modes of transportation



This decision also depends on how attractive biking is compared to other modes of transport. Pricing car parking is a very effective measure to get more people to use a bike. Another major incentive for bike use, is the connectivity to other modes of transport. In Amsterdam, facilitating bike parking at public transportation stations and a very elaborate and easy bike renting system operated by the railroads have been very instrumental for the growth of bike usage in the last decade.

3. Work (and investing) is never done



We also continuously invest in the infrastructure in Amsterdam, work never stops. We spend roughly 60 million a year on regular improvements (including maintenance and area development) and 10 million on special projects.



However there is also a downside to the continuous growth of bike usage. The growing number of people cycling in Amsterdam led to other problems in the city. First, the growing dominance of bikes on roads makes it a serious hazard for other traffic users, mainly pedestrians and other bicyclists.



Second, the ever growing number of bikes poses real pressure on available public space and can cause possible dangerous situations. We have a real bike parking problem in Amsterdam, towing away around 100.000 wrongly parked or abandoned bikes each year.



Thirdly, bike lanes and streets turn out to be the ideal road for a multitude of new kinds of vehicles., LEV's and mopeds. These types of vehicles with different speeds are becoming a real problem on our bike lanes .



So from this experience, what are lessons to be learned? And how can these insights help your city in becoming a bike 'paradise'?



First, decide what kind of city you want to be. A city for cars, for bikes, for living and playing?
This is a very serious question. Effort is needed and policies/measurements need to be installed to become the city you aim to be.



2. What kind of place for what kind of transport?

Second, decide how much space you want to assign to each modality/transport on your roads and streets. Next, think about how to design your streets to those choices. Look at how other cities have done this. Learn from their experience.



Third, decide what kind of modality you want on certain roads or streets. It is possible to ban cars from certain streets without it having major impact.



4. What kind of rules and enforcement?



Lastly, a not popular topic, but just as important. What rules/regulations, type of enforcement and physical street design do you need to get there? And for which parts of the city? Not just for cars but also for bikes and all the other kinds of modalities the city attracts.



Visit bikecity.amsterdam.nl and sign up!

The city of Amsterdam is happy to share all we have learned, the good and the bad. Check the rest of the platform to read about the challenges we face today in bike paradise and share your thoughts and knowledge with us, give us the opportunity to learn from you too