

# Summer Study in Amsterdam

Planning the Cycling City  
University of Amsterdam

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Learning How to See

June -July 2025



# What Was It?

A three week social science course exploring Amsterdam through the lens of cycling.

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# Who Was There?

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## UNITED STATES of AMERICA:

1 BOSTON

2 CHARLOTTE

3 DC

4 LA

5 MINNEAPOLIS

6 MILWAUKEE

7 NYC

8 TEMPE

## AUSTRALIA:

1 THE UNIVERSITY of MELBOURNE (4)

## CHINA:

1 SHANGHAI

## FRANCE:

1 BOURDEUX

2 PARIS

3 TARBES (2)

## COLOMBIA:

1 BOGOTA

## NORWAY:

1 OSLO

## SWEDEN:

1 GOTHENBURG

## SINGAPORE:

1 NANYANG TECHNOLOGICAL UNIVERSITY SINGAPORE (3)



## What did we do?

Spent time in the classroom and out exploring Amsterdam and the surrounding area by bike, train, tram, and foot.

- Had 12 Lectures
- Completed a Scavenger Hunt
- Took a Field Trip to Rotterdam
- Did a Group Pilot Study
- Made Final Group Presentations
- Had Side Adventures to Utrecht, Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, and Zandvoort aan Zee

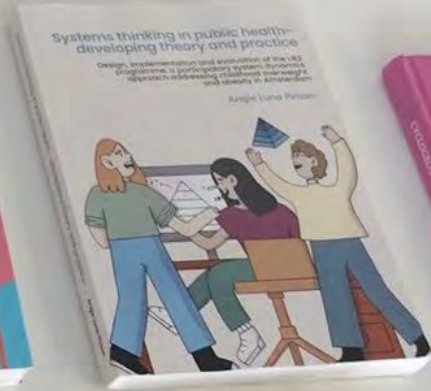




Classroom

## Lectures & Discussions on:

- Historical Context of Amsterdam
- Urban Planning for the Bicycle
- Integration of Cycling with Trains/ Transit
- Sociology Research Methodology
- Ethnography - Anthropology Research Methods
- How Language Shapes Our Reality
- Epistemology and the Politics of Non-Knowing



Out in the City

## Scavenger Hunt

Sought out specific locations around the city to see infrastructure, and **observe**, how people move through it. Interviewed locals about how they **experience** it.





# MISSIONS

## HISTORIC CONTEXT



Recreate this photo. Compare then and now.

## BIKE - TRAIN SYNERGIES



Visit bicycle parking at Centraal Station. Interview users.

## URBAN PLANNING



Ride Nesciobrug to Ijburg. Compare to urban contexts.

## SUBJECTIVE EXPERIENCE OF CYCLING

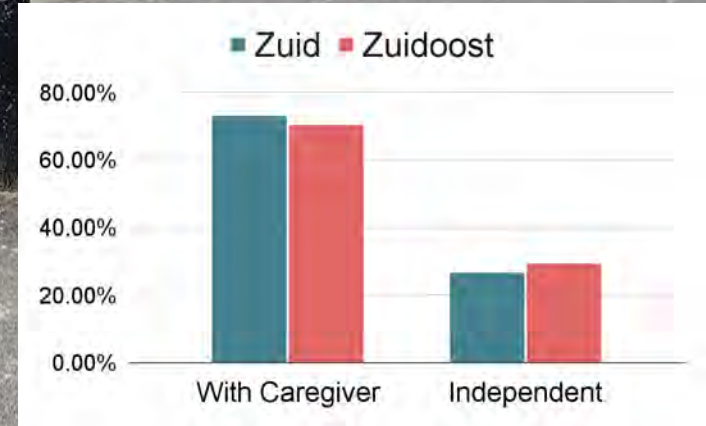
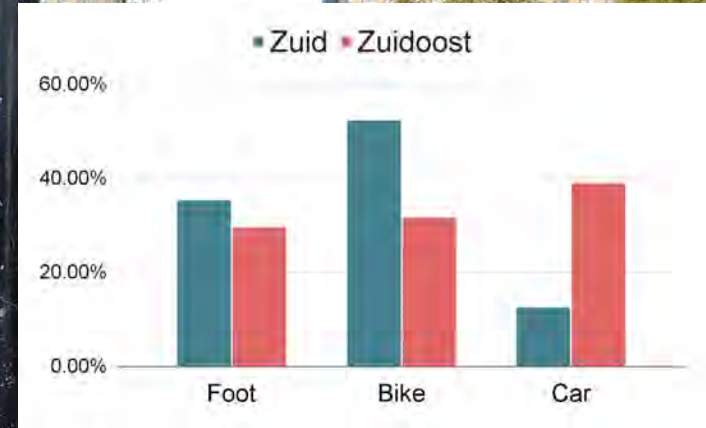


Compare feelings riding Weesperstraat vs. Weesperzijde.

Doing Field Research

## Group Pilot Study

My group **observed** modal choice in school commutes, and interviewed caregivers about the **reasons** behind these choices.





## The Why?

- Sharp decline in children cycling to school
  - From 55% in 2015 to 40% today
- Cycling habits vary across districts
  - Income level, cultural background, access to infrastructures
- Negative feedback loop:
  - Too many cars on the road → Need to drive



Wrapping it All Up

## GROUP PRESENTATION

Shared our findings with  
UvA faculty, staff, course  
alumni, and local leaders.



UNIVERSITEIT VAN AMSTERDAM

# Key Takeaways







The language we use is  
very important, and  
shapes how and what  
we see – and don't see.

What would you call this?





■ Movement is about  
more than getting from  
A to B.

The journey itself is important.

What lies between? How does it  
feel to move through that  
space?



■ The Dutch aren't afraid to constantly experiment, and improve.

Before this was all asphalt road with tram tracks. Now it's a tramway with a park plaza.

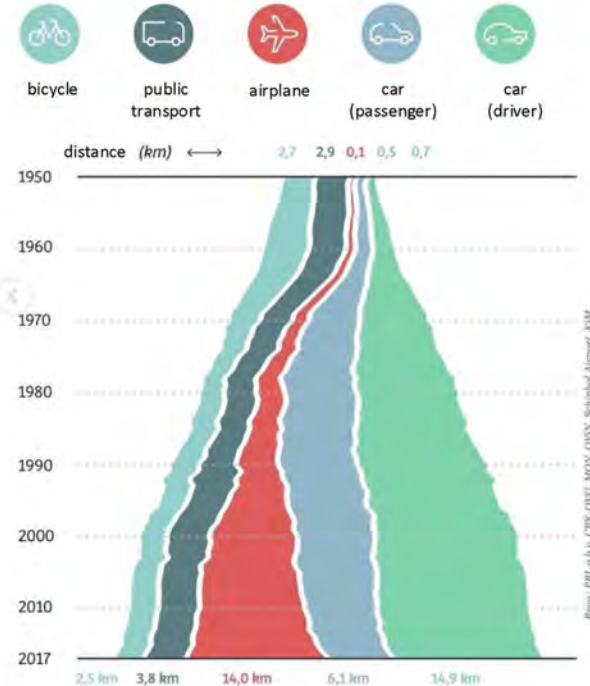


Concentrating on “time savings” has had no net benefit after more than 50 years of trying.

Humans seem to have a universal tolerance for commute time, and are just traveling further.

## We travel further and further

Since the 1950s we cover larger distances in the same time





# Focus on freedom for children.

Even in the Netherlands children are cycling less, and are older when they are allowed to cycle alone.

Children worldwide have decreasing autonomy. It is the expense of automobility.



Beyond the Classroom

## OUR FREE TIME

Took side **adventures** via  
bike and train.





# Ouderkerk aan de Amstel



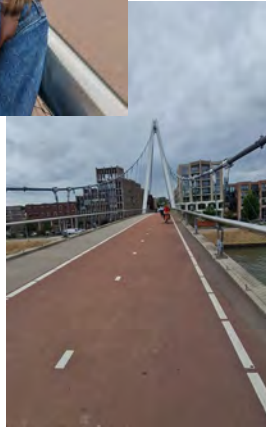




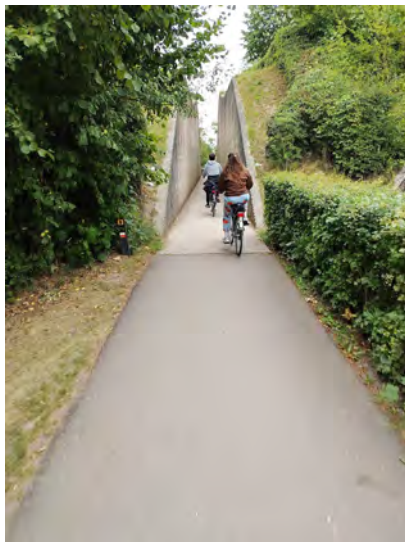
Zandvoort  
aan Zee



# Utrecht



# Fort bij Vechten





I Also Snuck in

# A ThinkBike Reunion

Had brunch in Utrecht, with  
Richard ter Avest.



SOME GREAT SPACES FOR

# Inspiration



A Bridge for Bikes  
The **Nesiobrug**, across the  
Amsterdam -Rijnkanaal to  
Ijburg..



Streets in the De  
Pijpe Neighborhood  
Made of klinkers,  
with speed limits of  
**20 kph**, continuous  
sidewalks, and speed  
bumps.



Centrum  
Human scale streets.  
**Pedestrian zone**, only  
local residents and  
delivery drivers can  
enter.



Firetrucks designed  
for streets  
Instead of streets  
designed for  
firetrucks.

Fietstraat in Utrecht  
Autolouw street along  
a canal.



# What can we do with this?

We know the data shows that active mobility helps with so many of the issues we face here in Charlotte, so how do we make progress?

- 1 We need to build **trusting relationships** with City Council.
- 2 Keep reminding them to get regular updates from CDOT, and **track progress** on implementation of the Strategic Mobility Plan (SMP).
- 3 Use language to focus on giving **freedom to children** to help our neighbors and elected officials see the vision of a better Charlotte.



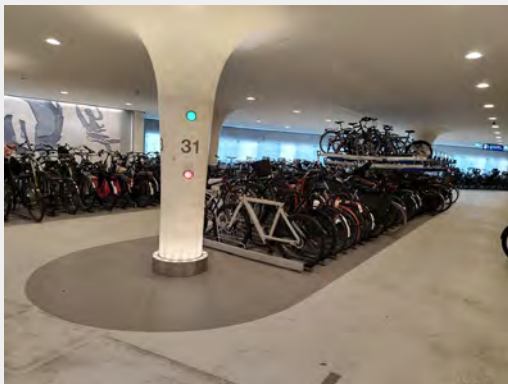
# How Do We Want to Engage with City Council

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## SOME OPTIONS:

- Attend Council Meetings
- Speak at Council Meetings
- Attend Transportation, Planning and Development Committee Meetings
- Attempt to mimic the way the GAC functions?
- Ask to make an annual report to council?

Should we create an official framework for **formal, regular engagement** , with City Council?



# Questions?