

DEMONSTRATION PROJECT: URBAN RE-DIVISION

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Traffic policy in urban areas

In 1975, the Dutch government presented a paper outlining a traffic and transport policy for the next five years. It was given the title: "Towards managed traffic". In this paper the government notes that the great growth in car ownership and usage has been one factor in worsening the human environment, and that this applies particularly to the towns.

The urban road system is not adapted to present-day traffic flows; parking is an increasingly pressing problem; busy roads have become barriers; cities are becoming more and more unsafe for non-motorists; destinations have become less accessible. Noise, air pollution and vibration are worsening the climate in which we sojourn and live; picturesque views in towns are being spoiled.

In order to counteract this worsening of the urban environment, the Dutch government has set itself a number of tasks.

The following two may be mentioned as part of its traffic and transport policy:

- to promote road safety;
- to satisfy certain standards in order to create a high-quality environment in which to live.

In giving consideration to these, of course, a certain demand for transport will have to be taken into account.

One can say that a traffic and transport policy nowadays is really nothing else but weighing the advantages of meeting the demand for transport against the disadvantages this causes elsewhere. One of these disadvantages is road hazards. An improvement in the human environment will also have to promote road safety.

Accident statistics show that the urban safety problem is primarily a slow-traffic problem: nearly three out of every four traffic fatalities inside built-up areas are moped riders, cyclists or pedestrians. It is hardly surprising, therefore, that the government has made it a major policy objective that urban road safety, especially for slow traffic, will have to be vigorously promoted.

Countermeasures

The government paper also contains ideas on how the quality of life and road safety can be improved in urban areas: that is to say: By re-driving the public spaces in existing urban areas into traffic areas and residential areas.

This would also have to include the appropriate design of the public spaces in such a way that certain types of activity are made possible while others are made impossible.

In the residential areas, living recreation, playing, shopping etc. should be at the focal point; traffic would be permitted, though its conduct would have to be adapted to these other activities. The safest and smoothest possible movement of traffic will have to be aimed at in the traffic areas.

So far, no plans have been carried out in The Netherlands which are based on these ideas nor are results of research in other countries available.

Experiment

As the government considers it very important to put its expectations to a practical test, it has decided to make an experiment for which it will provide all the finances. It is estimated that it will cost about 25 million guilders of the Dutch taxpayer's money.

The finances will cover both the measures themselves and the research. The intention is to demonstrate with this experiment, as it were, how urban areas can be re-divided and "what they will then look like".

All the bigger towns in The Netherlands were asked to state where such an experiment could be made. Two would then ultimately be selected from these.

Certain conditions were made regarding the areas for selection. They had to be about 100 hectares in size, the residential function had to predominate and the area had to be intersected by major roads. Two areas have meanwhile been selected and development of the plans

and the relevant research is going ahead. A start will have to be made with putting the plans into effect on 1st January 1978.

About two years is estimated to be required for carrying them out.

In the residential areas playing, strolling etc. are the focal point and that traffic - its driving conduct suitably adapted - will be allowed. According to the plans for the experiment this will have to be achieved by simple means or with more drastic measures. Some notions are:

- keeping out traffic using back roads
- keeping out traffic using back roads and reducing the speed of motor vehicles
- keeping out traffic using back roads, reducing speeds and making the residential area attractive both visually and practically.

These three sets of measures will be put into effect in specific parts of the experimental areas.

As to the measures to be taken in the traffic areas, ideas have not yet been worked out in such detail. But it is known that where possible traffic segregation will be aimed at.

Research

And then, of course, the supporting research. The measures will be evaluated by way of before and after-research. This evaluation will apply to five aspects:

- traffic circulation
- the environment: air pollution and noise
- use and experience of public spaces
- socio-economic aspects
- road safety

Road safety research

There are two distinct phases in the road safety research. Firstly, the measures will have to modify road-user behaviour. For instance: humps

in the road will reduce speeds. A second phase is then to establish a relationship between this modified behaviour and road safety. For instance: a lower driving speed leads to fewer accidents or to less serious accidents.

In this research, a relationship will be established between road and traffic characteristics and road safety in order thereafter to ascertain the effect on road safety of changes in the road.

In absolute terms so few accidents happen in residential areas that an accident study is often difficult for such a project. A different indicator will therefore have to be sought for road hazards.

It is now envisaged using traffic conflicts for this purpose. Our research will pay attention to this approach as well.

Lastly, there is included research into how people experience road hazards. Interviews will be arranged in an endeavour to find out what people feel about traffic hazards and to what extent this is changed by the measures that are taken.