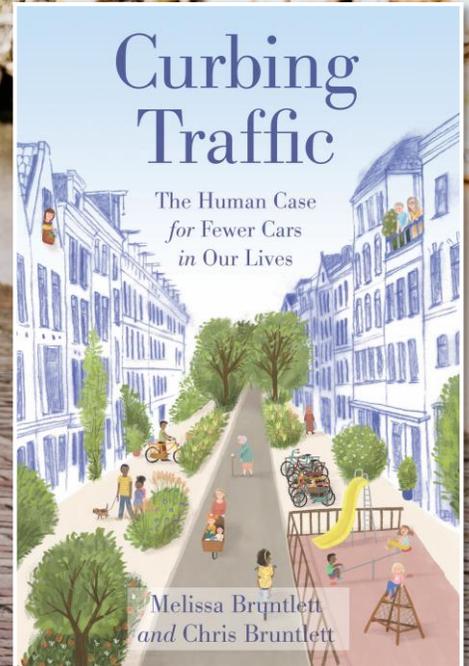
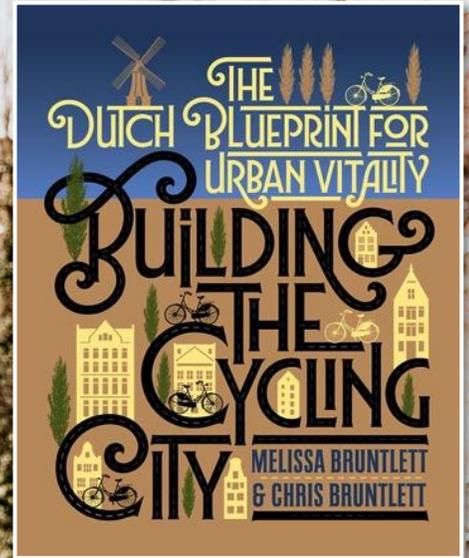




**DUTCH  
CYCLING  
EMBASSY**

# Why are Dutch Kids the Happiest in the World?

Chris Bruntlett • Dutch Cycling Embassy  
Thursday, March 24th, 2022



# Dutch Cycling: For a Bicycle-Friendly World



The Dutch Cycling Embassy is a vast network of public and private organizations from the Netherlands who wish to share their knowledge and expertise to help cities experience the many advantages of cycling.



**Experience** the Dutch cycling culture first-hand



**Think** about best possible solutions and achievable results



**Act** by applying these solutions to your local context



**Learn** more about effective policies and best practices

[www.dutchcycling.nl](http://www.dutchcycling.nl)



# Pedaling Through the Pandemic



- o>o To promote physical and mental health, “slow streets” were implemented in many cities to allow for social and physical activity in a distant manner
- o>o “Pop-up” cycle networks were quickly built to absorb reduced public transport attractiveness (e.g. London at 20% capacity: 8 million ‘lost’ trips per day)
- o>o Since the start of the crisis, over 2,600 km and €1,7 billion of cycling measures have been initiated across Europe



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THE VIEW FROM 'FIETSPARADIJS' 



IT WASN'T ALWAYS THIS WAY 

# Crisis as a Turning Point



- o>o 1972 “Stop de Kindermoord” (“Stop Child Murder”) movement formed by parents in response to road safety crisis killing 3,000 each year; 400 children
- o>o 1973 OPEC oil crisis created huge spike in gasoline prices; leading to national “Autovrije Zondag” (“Car Free Sunday”) policy and doubling bicycle sales
- o>o Both forced public and politicians alike to reevaluate their streets, and build a more resilient transportation system



# Learning From Their Mistakes

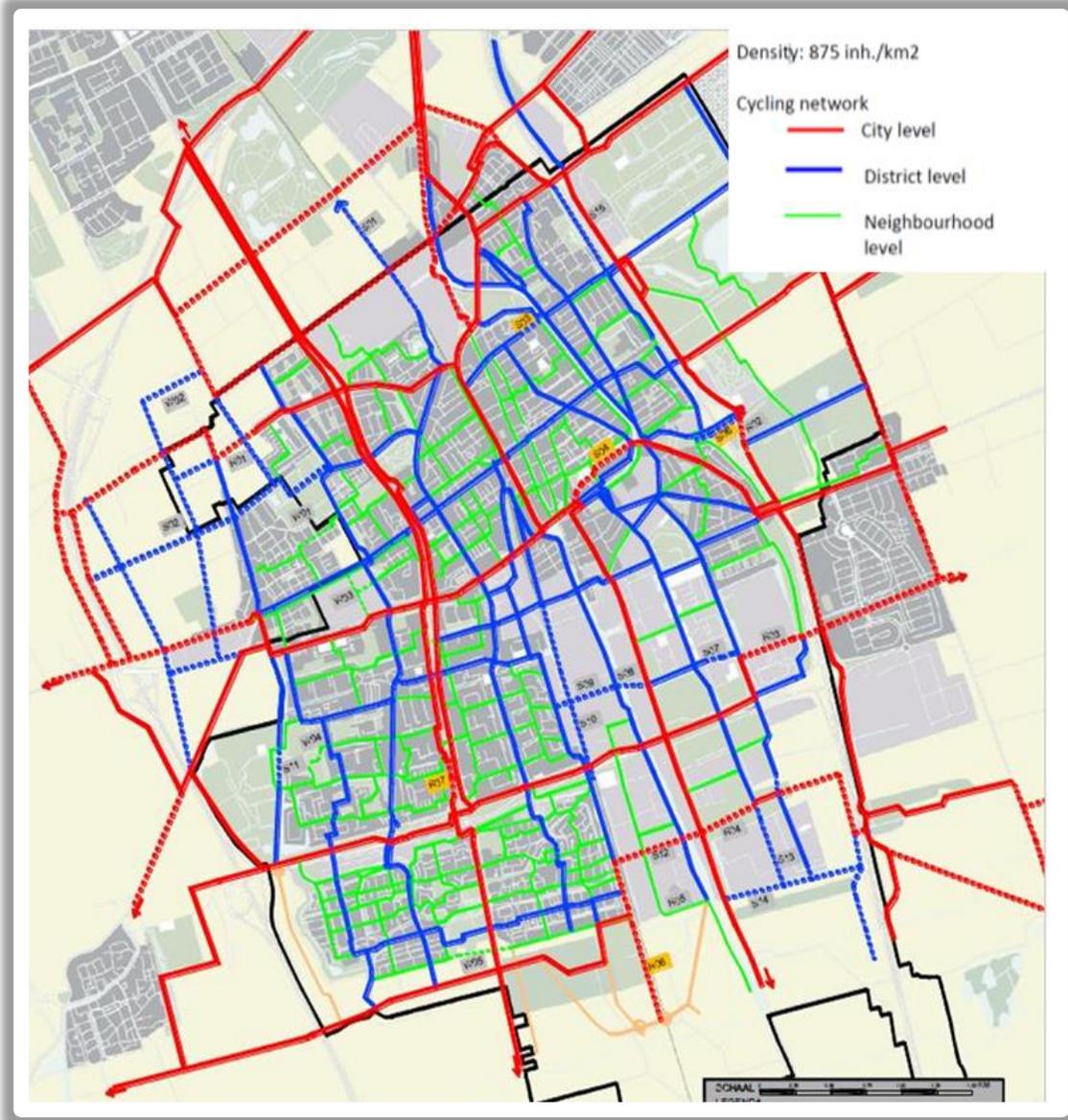


- o>o High-profile failure of demonstration route in Tilburg in 1977: inconsistent design; inconvenient route selection which relegated cyclists to back streets
- o>o Second demonstration route failure in The Hague in 1978: lack of connectivity and consultation led to low usage; huge backlash with local business owners
- o>o The lessons learned from these two failed experiments were applied to the highly successful 1979 Delft Cycle Plan



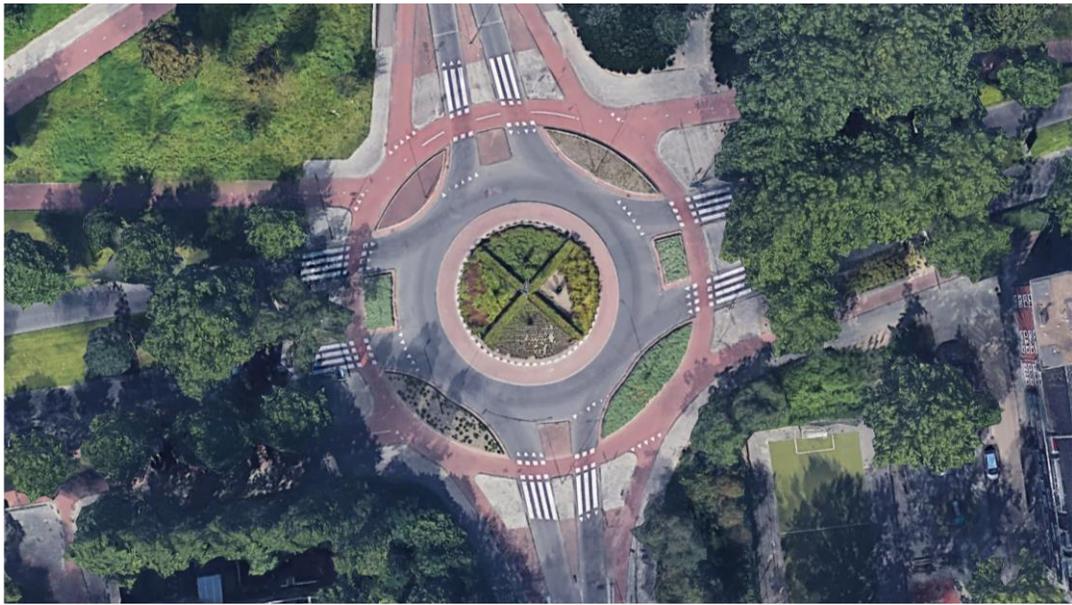


# Think at the Network Level



- o>o Rather than focusing on a single route, in 1979, Delft officials decided to implement a city-wide cycle network
- o>o After consulting with 4,700 households, three networks (of varying grid sizes) were planned; each with a specific journey type, length, and user in mind
- o>o Completed in 1987; lessons learned inform the CROW Manual network design principles of directness, safety, comfort, cohesion, and attractiveness





# Address the Weakest Link



- o>o A network is only as good as its weakest link: often at the intersection where the majority of collisions occur and the cycling infrastructure can “disappear”
- o>o Signalized and unsignalized junctions are physically protected and designed to reduce speeds and raise awareness, increasing safety for all road users
- o>o Raised and continuous foot/cycle path at side streets keeps vulnerable users in a seamless and prioritized space



# Get the Traffic Calming Right



- o>o Effective traffic calming—ie. reducing the speed, volume, and access of motor vehicles—can form an easy and effective part of a city’s cycling network
- o>o Road users can best be forced to travel at lower speeds through engineering
- o>o Concept of “filtered permeability” restricts car access while allowing pedestrians and cyclists to enter

# Dutch Cycling by the Numbers



- o>o 66% of Dutch kids walk or cycle to school; 75% of secondary students
- o>o 80% of Dutch teens cycle to places (school, park, shop, friend's house) at least three days per week
- o>o Rates do not differ between males and females; each of whom cycle an average of 150 minutes per week
- o>o The 12-17 group cycles more than any other demographic, with nearly 60% of all journeys made by bicycle
- o>o Dutch teens cycle an average of 2,000 kilometers per year



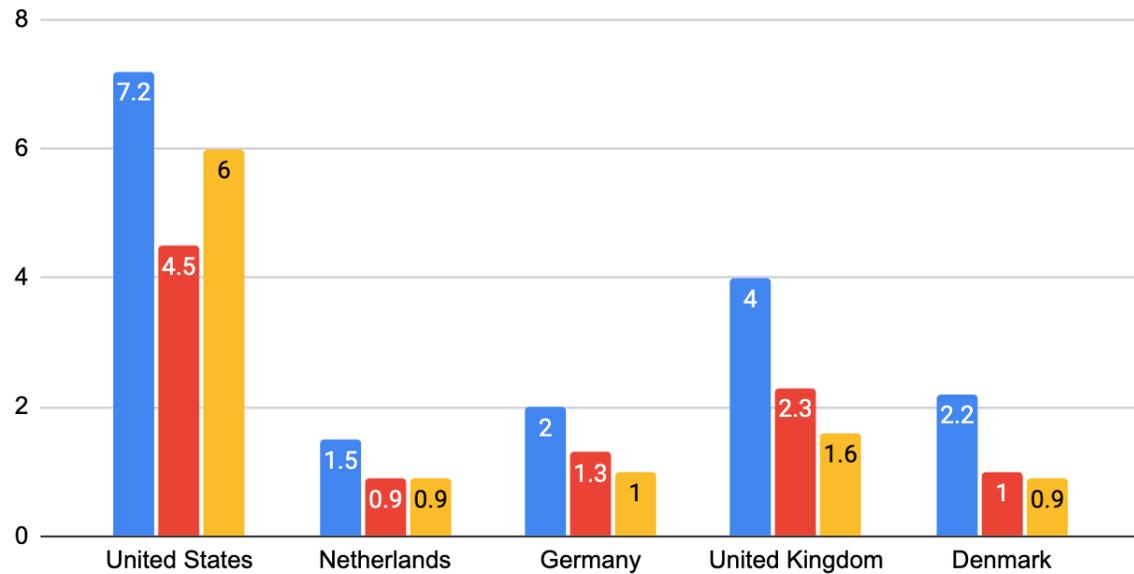
# The Safest Streets in the World



“If the U.S had achieved the same improvements in traffic safety as the Netherlands [since 1970], 22,000 fewer Americans would have died on our roads in 2015.” – Vox

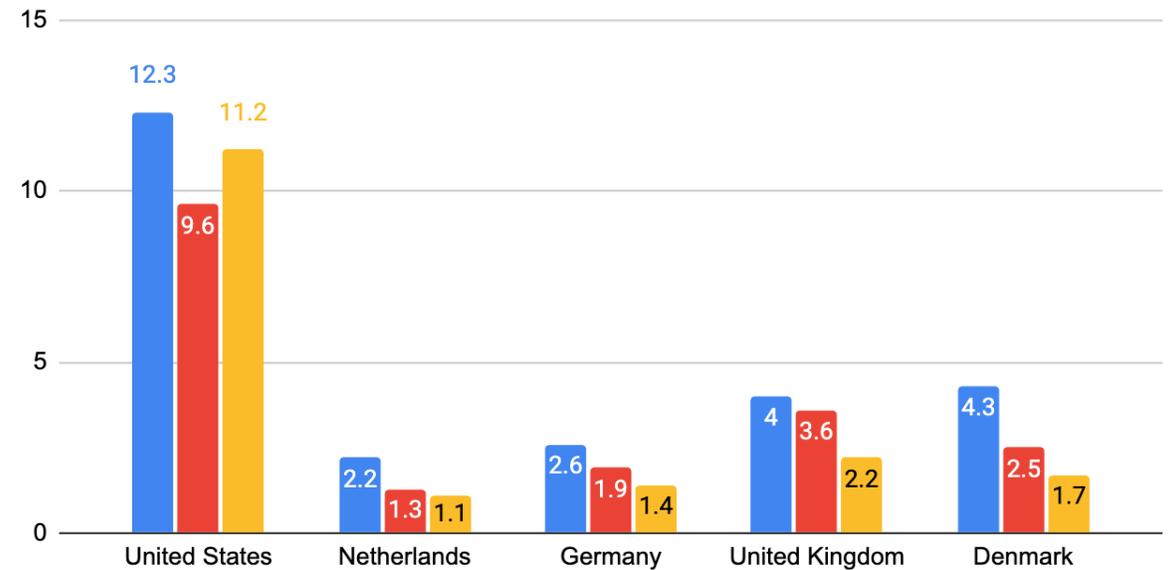
Cyclist fatality rate per 100 million kilometres biked

■ 2000-2002 ■ 2008-2010 ■ 2016-2018



Pedestrian fatality rate per 100 million kilometres walked

■ 2000-2002 ■ 2008-2010 ■ 2016-2018





# It All Starts in The Front Seat



- o>o As soon as they can hold their head upright, many Dutch children are transported in a seat or cargo bike
- o>o This allows for conversation and contact with the parent or caregiver, producing shared sensory experiences of the natural and built environment
- o>o Creates quality bonding time together and improves the child's spatial awareness and social connections





# Active Travel = Smarter Kids



- o>o Kids who walk or cycle to school perform better on tasks that require concentration—ie. solving puzzles—and these effects last up to four hours
- o>o Moving independently teaches kids to assess and take risks—and sometimes make minor mistakes—which is no longer seen as a part of growing up
- o>o Children who are driven everywhere by their parents don't know their neighbors or their neighborhood





# Active Travel = Healthier Kids



- o>o Many children (over 90% in Canada, for example) don't get the recommended amount of physical exercise each day
- o>o This has resulted in a skyrocketing obesity rate (currently in every EU country except one: the Netherlands)
- o>o By building movement into their cities, Dutch kids are among the happiest in the world, with the highest rates of physical activity and lowest rates of obesity and antidepressant usage





# Independence and Freedom



- o>o 21<sup>st</sup> century children can largely be categorized as “indoor children” or those of the “backseat generation”
- o>o Due to danger of motorized vehicles, kids either remain indoors or travel around supervised by their parents
- o>o Minimize the danger from traffic, and suddenly children can enjoy the ability to travel freely and independently to school, shops, sport clubs, friend’s houses, and everywhere in between





# Happy Kids = Happy Parents



- o>o Supervised care trips that are forced on parents by a dangerous environment (and are disproportionately made by mothers) create additional strain on our streets, our wallets, and our lives
- o>o As much as a third of all morning car traffic within many cities is parents driving their children to school
- o>o By enabling safe and active travel, Dutch cities prevent about one million car journeys to school each morning





WHAT KIND OF FUTURE DO WE WANT? ➤



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