

Amsterdam: Planning and Policy for the Ideal City?

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ABSTRACT

Is Amsterdam the "ideal city?" Many of the social, economic, and environmental problems facing Amsterdam are considerably less than cities in the United States , and in most cases, Western Europe . Amsterdam , at this moment in history, might be the world's greatest city because of its ability to ensure basic necessities, freedom and creativity. Tolerance of drugs, sexual freedom, along with integration of different races helps reduce many of the "social problems" faced by most cities.

We have compared, on a per capita basis, differences between Amsterdam/Holland and the United States . The Netherlands is a tiny country, and comparisons are made on a city and per capita numbers on the national level. Our data show that Amsterdam has lower crime, murder, rape, drug usage (cocaine, marijuana), teenage pregnancy, diabetes, obesity, suicide, abortion rates, infant mortality, dependence on fossil fuels, homelessness, and racial segregation is considerably less. People live longer because of Amsterdam 's walkability and bike usage and access to parks. Indeed, the Netherlands leads both Western European and the United States in proportion of trips made walking and bicycling in North America , significantly reducing car dependency. Ghettos are nearly non-existent compared to the segregation in the 1940's/1950's. Quality housing is supplied to everyone that gives pride of place compared to the stark, cold and institutional "projects" provided by the U.S. federal government. Amsterdam leads Western Europe with 35% in social housing, compared to runner-up United Kingdom which has significantly less. The modernism of the '60s where the poor were warehoused is nearly all gone. People living in Amsterdam seem more tolerant, secure, happier, and healthier compared

to citizens in the United States . Great cities provide for everyone, work to enhance the lives of everyone and work to ensure an unrivaled level of freedom. We demonstrate that social and environmental justice are tied together. Amsterdam is by no means perfect, but in comparison to many other democratic industrial cities, it is a far better place for citizens of all races, religions and incomes.

Introduction

A central concern of urban studies is to develop an understanding of social and spatial constraints on basic necessities, such as housing, environment, health, and transportation that are distributed on a non-random basis. British sociologist and neo-Weberian Pahl (1975) asserts that an individual's life opportunities are powerfully influenced by "managers" such as the government, banks, developers, landlords, and business owners, who determine the use of space (see also Molotch, 1976). In Whose City? Pahl argues that "access to resources is systematically structured in a local context" (Pahl, 1975: 203). A person's life is not determined solely by his or her relationship to the means of production, but by his or her spatial location in the urban system. Inequalities are generated within and among cities. Why can certain cities provide essential needs while others cannot within capitalism?

The neo-Weberian analyst attempts to understand how access to fundamental needs varies among urban areas and attempts to identify why certain urban places have difficulty allocating necessities, while others do not. Pahl creates boundaries of what urbanist should and should not look at: "housing and transportation are elements in my view of the city, family allowances and pension schemes are not" (Pahl, 1975: 10).

Pahl asserts that we must come to understand how urban managers and gatekeepers can increase or decrease these basic necessities for living in the city. Elected leaders, non-profits, bureaucrats, social movements and community organizers change, remake, rebuild, revitalize and destroy the pattern and infrastructure of the city that can have an impact on the life opportunities of all citizens. The gatekeepers allocate resources, make policy and enforce police actions (building code enforcement, planning approvals in the criminal justice system, etc). Pahl's

thinking on city was problematic because it focused only on basic human needs. It never explored or embraced the importance of cultural, creative and personal freedoms.

Methodology

Like the founders of urban sociology Louis Wirth, Ernest Burgess, and Max Weber, we are doing a comparative analysis that needs further refinement and testing. Our results are indicative of trends and not definitive. Ideally, we try to include large number of cities as our experimental variable, but alas, there is only one Amsterdam, after that everything gets diluted. We tried to compare Amsterdam with the averages of other American cities. In terms of social sciences, ideally, it would be nice to have 50-75 Amsterdams to compare to 50-75 U.S. cities, but Amsterdam is unique. Amsterdam is the outlier, the extreme city, the wild city, the ideal city. What we're interested in is comparing social and environmental justice in the United States versus Amsterdam.

We believe the case study approach using Amsterdam can yield some important findings (Feagin et al, 1991, Clavel, 1986, Durkheim, Weber, Capek and Gilderbloom 1992). French sociologist Durkheim (1895) argues that the essence of social science starts with comparison and should attempt to mimic the hard sciences as a method comparing one sample that has the treatment versus another sample without the treatment (see also Kantor and Savitch, 2005).

Few studies have been done across national boundaries, and if there are comparative studies across nations, few, if any, have been done across cities (Fainstein, et al., 1983; Kantor and Savitch, 2005; Abu-Lughod, 1999), particularly Van de Ven's (1997) book comparing Brussels to Amsterdam, and Musterd and Salet (2003) book comparing Dutch cities with other European cities. Other comparison studies across cities include studies between Houston and

Santa Monica (Capek and Gilderbloom, 1992), comparisons of Burlington, Berkeley and Santa Monica in Pierre Clavel's (1986) *The Progressive City* and a comparison of rent regulation policies among U.S. cities (Gilderbloom and Appelbaum, 1988).

Comparison of cities across international boundaries can be illuminating in measuring differences in social policy and planning. It is only through comparison and measuring relationships that we can achieve greater certainty (Kantor and Savitch, 2005). Durkheim's (1897) study of suicide was notable because he was able to explain variations in suicide by what kind of religion was dominant in each area. His study was considered a landmark sociological study since it showed how taking one's life was a non-random phenomenon associated with religious norms tied to particular places. This paper uses the thinking of these great sociologists as a framework for analyzing Amsterdam in comparison to American cities. This is not the final word on the subject, it is just suggestive.

In terms of gathering data, we went to numerous government agencies in Amsterdam that collect data at the municipal, regional, and national level. We also used the same approach for gathering data for United States cities. We also use computer search engines to uncover data and create new tables that compare Amsterdam/Netherlands to the United States. While such data has been looked at for more than 100 years, we thought the comparison of Amsterdam to the United States was fairly novel and the most comprehensive analysis to date. The data presented go well beyond previous studies in terms of scope and breadth. Our comparison would test whether public policy, political leadership, and public administration make a difference in the lives of people. Although this is not exhaustive, we think it's illustrative of how public policy can impact capitalist cities and their quality of life.

While there have been other studies that attempt to measure the quality of life in Amsterdam, and some provide comparisons with the United States and other European cities (Hajer, 1995; Terhorst and Van de Ven, 1997; Fischer and Hajer, 1999; Terhorst, et al, 2003; Hoffman, et al, 2003), our contribution is more nuanced by providing the most up-to-date data available using a much wider variety of indicators that measure environmentalism and social justice. We have developed a more comprehensive list of indicators used in the past, such as housing, transportation, health, crime, racial conflict and sustainability. We did not cherry pick these tables—everything we found on a comparative basis is presented—even if they go against our thesis.

While we've increased the number of indicators measuring social justice, many of these measures are done on a per capita national basis and are not broken down by city or region either in the United States or Netherlands. It is important to note that Amsterdam's "social justice" is not isolated from the national government which works hand in hand by adopting and passing the policies pushed by the Netherlands's largest city.

The differences observed would be sharper if they could be broken down by city. It is important to remember that Netherlands is a tiny country, roughly about the size of Maryland, which if it were a state, would rank 44 out of 50 U.S. states in terms of size, followed by tiny Massachusetts and Hawaii. Indeed, five out of eight tables/figures in this paper are comparisons done on a per capita basis.

What is commonly pushed in Amsterdam is passed on a national level, albeit on a more moderate level, so it is only fitting that national and local policies would be interconnected. While we believe this data suggests significant differences measuring social justice in the United

States and the Netherlands, we hope this will spark comparative analysis of the relationship between policies at the national and city level and its impact on people, social justice and the environment.

The Politics in Amsterdam—a wide range of ideas

The Nazi occupation of the Netherlands left a permanent imprint on the Dutch. The Dutch experience under Nazi fascism, which led to horrific genocide, forced slavery camps, hunger and starvation, and a massive effort to exterminate nearly 100,000 Dutch Jews along with other “out” groups such as gays, the disabled, and leftists, helped to reinforce ideas of tolerance and guarantee essential rights and human necessities among the Dutch. Amsterdam has a monument to those killed in the Nazi occupation. This tolerance, along with numerous social programs fueled by the radicalism of the 1960s, is embedded in the Dutch identity and evident throughout post-World War II Dutch culture. This includes the Dutch political system, where Amsterdam and the Netherlands are represented by a plurality of parties aimed towards progressive goals.

Like some European nations, the Netherlands operates under a parliamentary form of government, with a monarch as the head of state. Parliamentary government usually consists of multiple political parties, which build coalition governments. There is a low threshold based on proportional representation with a considerable number of parties winning a low percentage of seats (Musterd and Salet, 2003).

The national parties are represented in the Amsterdam municipal government. The municipal government has 45 seats, with each seat occupied by a council member who is elected by Amsterdam residents to serve four-year terms. The mayor of Amsterdam is nominated by the

municipal council but appointed by the Queen instead of being popularly elected by the people of Amsterdam, unlike the United States or even other parliamentary governments (World Mayor, 2006). In an interview with current mayor Job Cohen in 2006, the mayor said that “being elected by the inhabitants of the city would not give a mayor more authority – it would provide him with more powers because he would have obtained a mandate by the majority to execute his political programme” (World Mayor, 2006).

The recent municipal election in March 2006 gave the Labour Party (PvdA) 20 of the 45 seats. The Liberals (VVD) received eight seats, the Green Party (GroenLinks) and the Socialist Party (SP) each won six seats; the Democrats 66 won 2 seats, and the Christian Democrats (the majority party in the Dutch parliament) has just 2 of 45 seats on the Amsterdam City Council (www.iamsterdam.com, Council Election 2006).

The 2006 municipal elections in Amsterdam resulted in a coalition among the three parties with the most seats in the council, the Labour (PvdA), the Liberals and the Green Left to form a “red-green” body for the first time. This new coalition has worked with the mayor and the rest of the Amsterdam municipal government to tackle issues such as poverty, housing, transportation, immigration, racial integration/segregation, economic development, promotion of creative class business climate, and even some rather silly issues such as “dogs pooping in public places” where parties take different stances.

Although the winner-takes-all system on the municipal and local level in U.S. cities can still allow the election of progressive mayors, the structural limitations of the U.S. two-party system and structure of federalism do not produce as many progressive outcomes as in the multi-party system of European nations such as the Netherlands. Unlike the U.S. system, the Dutch

and Amsterdam governments have proportional representation, which forces them to build coalitions with other political parties to create a government. Many of these parties, particularly on the left, have helped reinforce the culture of tolerance that has come to define Dutch culture and Dutch identity.

Amsterdam: Decriminalization of Sex Trade

As an important port city, Amsterdam has been in the business of sex since the late 13th Century. Approximately, 25,000 prostitutes work in the Netherlands according to a survey of the A. de Graaf Foundation (Prostitution Information Center, 2007). Combined statistics show that on a given day, 6,000 prostitutes work in Amsterdam (Prostitution Information Center 2007). The legalization of prostitution is supposed to keep out organized crime. Ideally, sex work should be free of middlemen, or pimps, and in the words of Prostitution Information Center “to end abuses in the sex industry” (Prostitution Information Center, 2007). In October 2007, the social housing organizations attempted to reduce the number of brothels by enforcing laws aimed at taking out pimps and organized crime in the sex trade leading to a reduction in prostitution.

Despite the city’s openness about the sex industry, Dutch teens have low pregnancy and abortion rates. Table 1 compares rates for the United States. On average, Dutch teens wait longer to have sex, are less likely to become pregnant, are less likely to pursue abortion, and are more likely to use contraception. Advocates for Youth, a U.S. organization that advocates sexual education, highlighted the differences between European and American sexual education and media campaigns. Access to information, services and contraception is confidential and free. American campaigns encourage abstinence, while Dutch campaigns deliver a message that safe

sex is an issue of self- and partner-respect and is necessary for teen sex (Advocates for Youth, 1998). In Holland, sex and drugs is a health issue, not a criminal issue.

In Amsterdam, there is a five-day waiting period between a request for an abortion and the procedure, giving a woman enough time for reflection (Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2007). In the Netherlands, all late-term abortions are illegal (Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2007). Until recently, U.S. law allowing abortions were determined by the state, but a 2003 law put a federal ban on third-trimester abortions. Prior to the legislation, most states forbade abortion in the final trimester of pregnancy. Table 2 shows abortion rates and HIV rates for both nations. The abortion rate in the United States is nearly double that of the Netherlands. The rate in the Netherlands is growing, according to the national Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, largely due to a higher rate among women of foreign descent (Netherlands Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, 2007).

Like the abortion rate, the HIV infection rate in the United States is nearly doubles in the Netherlands. Within these statistics, different groups have increased rates. Heterosexual infections are growing in the United States. In the Netherlands, growth has occurred among male homosexuals, a group that has leveled off in the United States (U.S. Center for Disease Control, Van de Laar, 2005).

The Netherlands has a unique approach towards preventing the spread of AIDS among heroin addicts. The Dutch view that the establishment of a network, a consensus of preventive measures and cooperation has been “essential in the successful implementation of an extensive and far-reaching national AIDS prevention program for drug users” (Leuw and Marshall 1994: 67). This includes a wider needle-exchange program, which has not resulted in increased needle

usage, and only 25-30% of all heroin addicts in the Netherlands use drugs intravenously (Leuw and Marshall 1994: 67). Another study disputes this by finding that the percentage of intravenous drug usage is as low as 10.5% (Netherlands Ministry of Justice, 1999).

Amsterdam: Decriminalization of Drug Usage

Like sex, the Dutch consider drug use a health issue, and focus on harm reduction. Soft drugs are decriminalized with penalties rarely enforced. Proprietors of coffee shops, which sell soft drugs in the Netherlands, are charged only under certain circumstances, such as the selling of large amounts to a single user, selling to a child, or creating a nuisance. Hard drugs are restricted with several innovative programs to get people treatment. The Netherlands encourages health care prevention, while cracking down on organized crime and major drug trafficking.

This policy was developed in 1976, when Parliament established a commission to reconsider prohibition. Marijuana usage was considered a youth culture rebellion, but its use is typically short-lived, mostly recreational, and unlikely to lead to use of more dangerous drugs (Dolin, 2001). In 1995, several government ministries combined to evaluate the policy and discovered that the Netherlands had some of the lowest rates of drug use in Europe for both hard and soft drugs (Dolin, 2001). Table 3 compares rates of drug use among Netherlands and the United States. U.S. citizens are twice as likely to smoke pot and five times more likely to try cocaine than in Holland. Cocaine usage is less in the Netherlands, while smoking and alcohol consumption is a little more. Table 3 finds that the lifetime prevalence of heroin is three times higher in the United States than in the Netherlands. Not in the tables (data does not exist for the U.S.) is that the Dutch have the lowest drug related death per million in Europe. In 1995, there were 2.4 drug-related deaths per million inhabitants in the Netherlands, compared to 9.5 for

France, 20 in Germany, 23.5 in Sweden and 27.1 in Spain (Netherlands Ministry of Justice, 1999).

Amsterdam: Lower Crime Rates

The Dutch believe that decriminalization of drugs and sex work has dealt a blow to organized crime networks that once controlled a large portion of window prostitution (Brants, 1998). In fact, data do show a reduction of crime, which this paper shows later. With the police free of stopping prostitution and drug busts, they can focus on other more pressing concerns. The sale and use of soft drugs (cannabis and hash) is tolerated and not prosecuted for much the same policing principle. While all drugs are illegal according to the Opium Act, soft drugs are decriminalized. However, hard drug laws are still enforced with many innovative programs to get people the treatment they need offered in lieu of penal sentences.

The criminalization of drugs and the sex trade is a factor in the increase of violent crime. Miron (2004) claims the U.S. homicide rate could be reduced 25 to 75 percent by decriminalizing drugs. If that figure is accurate, decriminalizing drugs would reduce the American homicide rate to a number comparable to the Dutch. Decriminalization has resulted in lower crime rates, including lower rates of soft and hard drug use. As one policeman told us, “it is virtually unknown for a pot smoker to murder someone.”

Table 4 shows criminal justice data collected by the United Nations. While police per capita are comparable, a closer look demonstrates critical differences. The United States experiences a much higher rate of personal crime. The incarceration rate per 100,000 is seven times higher in the United States than in the Netherlands and per capita spending on the criminal

justice system is nearly twice as high in the U.S. The homicide rate is three times higher in the U.S. than the Netherlands.

Attempted homicide includes any assault with a deadly weapon in the U.S. data, but was not specified in Holland. There is a dramatic difference in these numbers. Violent person-on-person crime is 15 percent of all American crimes, while in the Netherlands, these crimes are just five percent. Most Dutch crime is property crime as seen in Table 4. According to Table 4, citizens in the United States are 100 more times likely to have a gun than a Dutch citizen. U.S. laws differ by state, but guns are easy to obtain and possess (Krug, Powell, and Dahlberg, 1998). In Holland, guns are nearly impossible to buy and keep. A Dutch person cannot even inherit a gun unless that person is a member of a licensed shooting club, hasn't committed a crime of any type and is not known "to move in criminal circles." Guns must be locked in a special safe, separate from the ammunition (Netherlands Justice Ministry 2005). Guns can get into the Netherlands via Belgium where fire arms are sold to the public.

From the data, we also can see that more juveniles are prosecuted in the United States, and the incarceration rate is nearly 10 times that of Holland. The trend toward violent crime explains some of this, but not all. A case can be made that the pursuit of violent criminals takes more police resources, so a low violent-crime rate, such as the Netherlands, allows police to pursue thefts, burglaries, frauds and embezzlements more than their American counterparts; it also would inflate the Dutch crime rate, especially considering the lack of drug crimes.

Table 5 shows health and quality-of-life data (WHOSIS, 2007; U.S. CDC, 2005; Netherlands CBS, 2005) The Dutch are healthier despite higher spending by the United States. The Dutch live longer. They maintain a healthier weight, get more exercise and suffer less from diabetes. Infant mortality is less in Holland. However, heavy drinking, smoking tobacco and

cancer mortality is higher in Holland, factors that likely correlate. Unlike the United States, where many bars, restaurants, and entertainment establishments are going smoke-free, the Dutch still allow smoking in bars until the summer of 2008.

Amsterdam: The Tolerant City

“Amsterdam is the great liberal experiment in Europe. No part of the city announces that liberalism as boldly as the red light district, where- in the Oudekerksplein—there coexists the Old Church (possibly the oldest building in Amsterdam, believed to be consecrated by the Bishop of Utrecht in 1306), all the prostitutes in their doorways and windows, and a kindergarten. What other city in the world would believe in the hopeful coexistence of religion, prostitution and early childhood education?... But it is both brave and original of the Dutch to celebrate human differences.”

-John Irving, November 2005

Before exploring the tolerance of Amsterdam, let's examine some definitions of tolerance. There are two kinds of tolerance, negative and positive. Negative tolerance is “the capacity to ‘put up with’ another’s difference from self because the different other is simply not perceived and/or because the self and other do not intersect” (Lofland, 2000: 147). This can be done through either sharing a large bounded space, but not the smaller pieces of it, or by sharing smaller spaces within the larger space, but separate from each smaller group (Lofland, 2000). Positive tolerance is “the capacity to put up with others fully recognized differences from self... with a mild appreciation for, or enjoyment of, those differences” (Lofland, 2000: 146-149). Positive tolerance can be achieved by having diverse people forced into conflicts without recourse, developing a capacity for tolerance (Lofland, 2000).

Amsterdam touts its tolerance. The city's English-language Web site geared toward tourists includes emphases on the ethnic, cultural and sexual diversity of the city. The population is made up of 170 nationalities (de Boer, 2007). Amsterdam is a highly integrated city with a 45 percent ethnic minority population. Many of Amsterdam’s minorities come from former

colonies, such as Suriname, Indonesia and the Netherlands Antilles. Others come from nearby largely Muslim nations, such as Turkey and Morocco.

Although the Surinamese population of Amsterdam has decreased slightly in the past five years (See table 6), Amsterdam's Turkish population has increased seven percent, the Moroccan population has increased more than 10 percent, and the number of non-Western and Western foreigners who have moved to the city has increased (Cijfers, 2006).

The location of these ethnic groups has increased the spatial inequality of these populations. The large Surinamese and Moroccan populations are now being deconcentrated out of the massive public housing in the Southeast, and in the Bijlmermeer section, away from the activity of Amsterdam Centrum (Deben, 2000). Today, the Bijlmermeer housing projects are being demolished and residents are being resettled and integrated throughout Amsterdam. The Surinamese settled in lower-income and less attractive neighborhoods, but enjoy greater social mobility, while the Moroccans settled in higher-end areas, but are less socially mobile, which can be explained by differences in cultural and economic origins (Musterd & Salet, 2003). Regardless, the ethnic groups experienced little segregation, because of the tolerant culture.

Today, ghettos are unheard of in Amsterdam. This ethic of tolerance and diversity has resulted in a city policy that prevents the creation of ethnic ghettos and enhances exposure of immigrants to the ethnic Dutch population and culture. Unlike the United States, ghettos and/or highly segregated places, which are nearly all poor and made up of one race, do not exist in the Netherlands, because of the dominant role of the social welfare state in the Netherlands in fostering the integration of immigrants, as well as the use of the market and other "reciprocity networks" to make distinction between ethnic groups in the Netherlands (Aalbers and Deurloo, 2003: 197-208).

The world media has sensationalized the murder of two well known Dutchman (Theo Van Gogh and Pim Forutyn) by two non-native Dutch of which one did it under the name of Muslim religion. These murders have given folks the impression that the ethos of tolerance has been reduced since the Dutch have responded with stricter immigration and deportation laws requiring law-abiding foreigners to develop the ability to speak and write in Dutch and not be appalled by Dutch sexuality. As former Dutch Senator, Hanneke Gelderblom has argued that Holland cannot allow everyone in the world to come here especially those who don't want to embrace Dutch culture of tolerance.

Recent racial unrest among Muslims in Paris was not present for the same group in Amsterdam. Leon Deben, professor at the University of Amsterdam, argues that this kind of unrest would not happen in Amsterdam or any other major Dutch city because the minority population is integrated, as opposed to the Paris where Middle Eastern youth are isolated in large housing blocks. (Expatica, 2005; Canadian Broadcasting Channel News, 2005; Deben and Bontje, 2006).

The ethic of tolerance is permanently embedded into the consciousness and identity of the Dutch people, and the experiences under Nazi occupation reinforced the values of tolerance and diversity. Heiner (2005: 228) argues that it was their experienced during World War II that helped the Dutch create a post-war society based on commitment for a more humane criminal justice system in the Netherlands.

Also, Trade with Indonesia and other former Dutch colonies meant greater diversity and tolerance. Many Dutch-speaking Indonesians arrived in the Netherlands during the post-war

economic boom, as well as ethnic groups such as the Turks, Moroccans, Surinamese, and immigrants from the Antilles (Culture of the Netherlands).

While traditional Dutch society was built upon four “pillars,” or social, political and educational systems that were separated by religious and political beliefs, societal shifts after World War II and in the 1960s ultimately led to a rapid depillarization of society. Devoted religious practice was declining the political left and societal concepts of inclusion were on the rise; combined, these led to a dramatic societal shift. The injection of a fifth pillar, made of a largely Muslim immigrant population, in recent years has further challenged the Dutch to accommodate the change. This has at times led to trouble, from flamboyant media to assassinations, but a prevailing societal commitment to inclusion, demonstrates a Dutch commitment to working through social change to develop a new structure with a peaceful resolution (Halink and Carpman, 2003; Fainstein, 1999).

Tolerance and Creative Class

Amsterdam believes that in order for cities to be successful they must possess the “three T’s” of economic growth, which are technology, talent and tolerance (Florida, 2005; Deben and Bontje, 2006). Cities with a creative class have the economic and social characteristics that allow creativity by having high levels of diversity and tolerance, a high gay population, a highly-educated and skilled workforce, the size and population of the city, and the number of amenities the city offers. Tolerance toward drugs and sex usage is a major magnet for the tourist industry as well as attracting the creative young professionals to the city.

But critics claim that Florida's creative class would lead to more social exclusion, which one might think the city of Amsterdam doesn't want or doesn't have. By Florida's own

admission, members of the creative class are "inward looking and selfish" and have yet to develop a vision of society in which all citizens can participate and benefit. Individual mobility divides the United States into the "have regions" favored by the creative class, and the "have-not regions," which are largely abandoned (Dreher, 2003). The critical view of the creative class is much stronger in Europe than the United States, where many cities in the U.S. have adopted Florida's ideas as gospel and argue is the engine necessary for economic growth and development..

Statistical data on the sexual orientation of Dutch residents is difficult to find. These records are not kept due to privacy laws. However, Amsterdam's reputation as the "gay capital of Europe" is well known (Timmermans, 2006). The moniker is touted by the city and celebrated by the 1987 Homomonument and the annual Gay Amsterdam parade. The city made world history in 2001 when it became the first municipality to perform same-sex marriages (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2007). It also has large immigrant population and is a world leader in technology. Amsterdam already has attracted a high creative class to the city, as a result of the majority of its residents and Western foreigners being attracted to the city's arts and culture, the city's image and its history (Bontje and Crok, 2005). Amsterdam's lifestyle and tolerance are selling points to outsiders, something that Amsterdam reinforces as an economic development strategy. The producers of the creative class in Amsterdam, such as the creative industries, are there because of the location within the city, the role of the economy, and the city's image. The creative industries, as well as foreigners and citizens' strong connection to the development of Amsterdam has helped Amsterdam grow into a creative knowledge center, although the city hasn't developed a policy to become a creative knowledge city, (Bontje and Crok, 2005).

The Dutch view of tolerance allows people to endure the beliefs or behaviors of others that differ from one's own beliefs or behaviors, not just put up with them. This extends to the everyday norms of city life, including traffic. To the Dutch, the bicycle is not merely for transportation, but is a tool that promotes citizen solidarity (Reinarman, 2007). This is called pragmatic tolerance, where the differences in drugs, sex and lifestyle do not necessarily impact the sovereignty of others.

Amsterdam Housing Policies

The Netherlands leads all European nations (as well as the United States and Canada) in the production and maintenance of social housing. Social housing is essentially housing taken out of the free market and placed within a cooperative-run entity founded by a church or a political party. Most of Dutch social housing is controlled by non-profits, not the government (Van der Veer and Schuling, 2005). As Harloe (1985) notes “the problem is that the free market has, historically, been unable to provide housing to socially acceptable standards at a cost which is affordable by low-income households.” Limited recognition of this fact provided the basis for the development of housing policy and subsidies in Europe. In the Netherlands, the percentage of the social housing dwellings is highest in Europe. In Table 7, about one-third of the Dutch housing stock was social in 2005, 10 percent higher than the next European country (Table 7).

In the Amsterdam region, 45 percent of the dwelling units are considered social, and 55 percent of the municipal units are social (see Table 8). The average rent share is 24 percent, much lower than rent for the American working class (Gilderbloom, 2008). Seventy-five percent of the housing stock including all private rentals is rent controlled. The waiting list for social housing in Amsterdam can be as long as 9-12 years. Since social housing is a precious

commodity, many people hang onto their apartments long after they are able to afford more expensive market-rate housing, or rent them illegally, or to those who have little choice but to buy that unit.

Amsterdam residents consume about half as much housing as their American counterparts. They are creative in producing housing in attics, basements, boats, old warehouses, tree houses, silos, and even shipping containers. Ghettos are non-existent. Quality housing is supplied to all that gives pride of place in Amsterdam. The modernism of the '60s where the poor were warehoused is nearly all gone.

Housing policies are sound with strong historic preservation practices that protect historic buildings. It is not uncommon to walk through Amsterdam and see a large collection of buildings that are 100, 200, 300 and even 400 years old. If any buildings are torn down, 90 percent of the materials (wood, brick, glass, and plumbing) are recycled and used again. Squatting laws also encourage landlords to fix up abandoned housing units otherwise face losing these unused structures. The best green house is an old house.

While the United States has an estimated 744,000 homeless in shelters and on the streets and nearly 322,000 unsheltered homeless in American cities, the Dutch have only a fraction of that amount (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). We observe that homelessness is not nearly the problem in Amsterdam than in American cities (Gilderbloom, 2008, National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). Our own observations, along with four graduate classes doing field work in Amsterdam, have yet to see a visible homeless population sleeping on sidewalks, park benches, and lawns, as you would find in the typical U.S. city, whether it is Chicago (1,702), New York (4,395), Houston (6,583) Miami (1,989), San Francisco (2,655) or

Los Angeles (50,414) (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2007). Leon Deben (2007), the leading Dutch urban sociologist who has done counts of the homeless in Amsterdam, estimated just 450 homeless in the city, compared the number with Louisville, which has a homeless population of 10,154, according to a recent report from the Coalition for the Homeless. The homeless living on the streets in Amsterdam rotate off the street and into either shelters, family homes, or detoxification programs with education and job training.

One concern is that the amount of social housing has fallen over the years. Moreover, the amount of space for the new Dutch middle class is significantly less than Americans. For example, the Amsterdam middle class lives in two-bedroom /one-bath dwelling, while the typical American middle-class family lives in a three-bedroom, two bathroom house, which occupies a much larger amount of land. Space matters.

Amsterdam: The Green City

With more bicycles than people, the lack of petroleum dependency is evidence that Amsterdam is an Earth-friendly city. The municipality integrates actions to make it an example of green urbanism. In Amsterdam, 77 percent of the population owns one or more bicycles, a rate of 1.27 bicycles per person, and 28 percent of trips are made by bicycle, more than most of its European neighbors (Table 9). The Netherlands leads both post-industrialized North American and European countries in terms of proportion of trips walking or biking. In the Netherlands, nearly half the trips are petroleum free while in the United States its seven percent while European countries like France and England lag far behind (Table 9). In Amsterdam at least 67 percent of the population uses a bike at least once a month. One-third of residents go to work by bike. However, bike use among the Muslim immigrant community is far lower (de Boer, 2007).

Intricate webs of bicycle lanes have improved comfort and safety for cyclists and helped increase use. Some parts of Amsterdam prohibit cars and allow only pedestrians and bikes. Bikeways also enhance mobility and access for the disabled. Tommy Clark, who directs the Louisville (Ky.) Metro Office of Disability Services, said that Amsterdam might be one of the most wheelchair-accessible major cities in the world.

Rutgers University professor John Pucher (2007, 2003) has provided empirical data showing that urban residents who walk or ride bikes gain an extra hour of life for every hour of biking, or an average biking culture can increase the lifespan of a person from 2½-4 years in Holland and Germany. Moreover, the state saves on health-cost payouts because people are healthier. He noted that people who ride bikes tend to be smarter and happier, and “we save money on commute times, give less money to countries that dislike us, and we pollute the environment less.” According to Pucher (2007):

The image of the city is closely associated with cycling. In a new marketing campaign the city calls itself “Bike Capital of Europe”. ... 50% of them make daily use of the bicycle, 28% a few times per week and 8% weekly... The city is flat and has a very compact semi-circular development pattern. Many bridges make bike transport very convenient.

He also makes this observation:

Bike use reached a low point in the 1970s with only 25% of all trips. Then, bicycle advocates and environmentalists promoted the bike. Their views were shared by many citizens, as automobiles caused congestion and pollution in the city. The two possible scenarios were to either adapt the city to automobile traffic (building parking in city center, widening roads to ease congestion etc.) or to improve public transport and cycling options. In 1978 a new city council took office, which promoted cycling.

The city takes on several other Earth-friendly policies.

With a growing urban population, and increased car and air traffic that accommodates,

Amsterdam knew it had a critical air pollution problem before the European Union established baseline levels for pollution. Improving air quality is one of the four pillars of the city government's current environmental policy, and the city is taking aggressive steps in monitoring and reducing emissions. (City of Amsterdam) Expected hot spots of poor air quality near the A-10 Highway and near Schipol Airport exist. While Amsterdam's air quality suffers from typical urban pressures, it is still below CAFÉ standards, and is aggressively attempting to stay there or improve. Cutting down on vehicle emissions, despite traffic that is growing at the rate of the economy has kept ground-level ozone levels unchanged (Van Der Zee , Helmink & De Jonge, 2007). Garbage incinerators in Amsterdam are among the cleanest in the world (Dare, 2007).

With 65 miles of ancient canals, water pollution can be a serious threat. When they were first constructed in the Middle Ages, the many working windmills kept water circulating. Today's urban environment offers additional threats, such as automobile pollution. To combat these threats, water is flushed 2-4 times a week, and special cleaning boats troll the waterways to clear them of surface litter. Converting the houseboats to the sewer system in 2005 made a huge difference and have turned the canals into a vibrant place of aquatic life with accompanying water fowl. Herons and pelicans are common sites near the canals and on houseboat ledges. In addition, dredging barges clean the canal bottoms, lifting about 10,000 discarded bicycles and 100 sunken boats each year. (Amsterdam City Government, 2008).

Amsterdam recycles soil and building supplies and encourages its boroughs to recycle material, such as stolen bicycles and cars that it dredges from the canals regularly. These and other efforts are outlined in its Environmental Policy Plan, which is updated every four years.

The recently completed plan focuses on improving the environment in four areas the city felt it could improve over the short period. These are noise pollution, air quality, climate change and the sustainable use of raw materials. A brief look at these initiatives include aggressive mapping efforts, sustainable building practices and sustainable features in new large-scale developments, wind-generated energy and centrally ordering tropical hardwood to minimize environmental and financial costs (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2007).

Amsterdam even recycles its landfills. In 2002, efforts to clean up the Volgermeerpolder landfill began. Once rehabilitated, this area will serve as a nature preserve in the northern edge of the city. (Municipality of Amsterdam, 2007).

Amsterdam's city council recognizes a need for green places, if not for recreation, then just to keep people grounded. "The goal is that everyone is 15 minutes from looking a cow in the eyes," Democratic 66 Amsterdam councilman Sebastiaan Capel said about Amsterdam's efforts to incorporate meaningful green space into the community: "Our green spaces are not waiting for something else, but demands are high on space. Housing and public space are problems in the same areas." (Capel, 2007).

Despite pressure, policy mandates and enhances public green space. The method the city is using to meet this goal dates back to the 1935 General Expansion Plan. Although the original plan was intended to be green spaces with the city wedged between, the current look is quite the reverse: urban spaces with green fingers reaching in. No green space is in danger of being lost, not even to the car. Capel recalled plans for a new expressway, a ramp of which would cut through a green finger. City officials focused on the ramp, wanting to know what it was. They were told it was a proposed ramp, but probably wouldn't make it to the final highway plans. The

officials refused to consider the expansion until they were shown a plan without any lines through the green finger (Capel, 2007). The green spaces have survived through the 2002 plan with plans to expand the nine green fingers.

Part of the expansion comes as the city builds new islands on the north side of town. It's a necessary step. Growing inland would put pressure on the agricultural Green Heart Dutch project. Holland's Green Heart is also not up for negotiation (Marchal, 2007).

With its dense population and tourism burden, public space in Amsterdam's Centrum is scarce. Even in this cramped city, there is room for green space in the city center. From the sloped mall of Museumplein that covers an underground parking garage; to the beloved Vondelpark, an art-imitating-nature urban park; to Westergasfabriek, a brownfield-turned-culture center; to Amsterdamse Bos, a post-World War I public works gem, Amsterdam makes sure that while a cow may be more than 15 minutes away, an escape to nature is a short walk down the street.

Amsterdam: City engineered for tomorrow

There's an Old Dutch saying: "God built the world, but the Dutch built Holland." They reclaimed their lands from the waters of the North Sea, using ever-evolving civil engineering techniques to grab land from the seas, drain it and raise it above sea level. This process of developing polders is what gives Holland its unique landscape. Flat peaty plateaus rise from one water table to the next highest. In the early days, the lifting of these polders was done by windmills pumping water from the land to enhance buoyancy. Pumps now run by conventional electricity.

Today, population pressure has created a need for land near Amsterdam. Not to be deterred by something as simple as a lack of land, the Dutch dredge the bottom of The IJmeer, a lake that was once a shallow inlet of the North Sea. The dredged land is piled up and pressed out to develop islands used to expand the land area near Amsterdam (Marchal, 2007).

The Dutch are not the only nation to prepare for disasters, but plan for much larger events. Protection is nationally mandated to defend the country from at least a 1,250-year flood. Massive storm barriers are engineered to defend the low-lying nation from storm surge. Dikes, storm walls and dams must assure that a disaster in Holland would have to be a very significant natural event (Deltawerken Online, 2004). Building to legal minimums is not common practice in the Netherlands. Many flood ways are engineered for a 4,000-year flood. Levees and floodwalls in the United States are generally engineered at the 100-year level. As several recent American emergencies, such as Hurricane Katrina, the flooding of the Platte River, and the 1993 Great Midwest Floods, prove this level of protection is often inadequate even to those beyond the 500-year floodplain. There were 34 federally declared flood disasters in the past decade in the United States. There were four in the past five decades in Holland; the most significant in 1953, before much of the current protections were developed (Kok, Vrijling, Van Gelder and Vogelsang, 2002).

An estimated 70 percent of the Dutch population is at risk for flooding, something inherent in being a low-lying state with many water resources (Kok, Vrijling, Van Gelder and Vogelsang, 2002). However, aggressive engineering and maintenance plans have made flood losses over the second-half of the 20th Century a modest 1.58 billion euro with fewer than 2,000 deaths (Kok, Vrijling, Van Gelder and Vogelsang, 2002). No conversion rate is needed to

determine that the Dutch had less damage than the United States' \$195 billion in flood damage over the same period (NOAA, 2007).

Since heavy rains and mountain melts in the heartland of Europe led to extreme flooding of the Rhine and Maas Rivers in 1993 and 1995, there has been a refocus on protecting Holland from its rivers. A re-evaluation of Holland's dike system has been performed. Changes are being made to allow a natural spillover floodway into natural and unpopulated floodplains. Another plan includes increasing in width of the IJssel River, which will disrupt some lives, but it is considered a necessity to defend against global warming (Sterling, 2007).

Perhaps the greatest global-warming challenge is the rising sea, threatening lands claimed hundreds of years ago. More than half of Holland lies below sea level. The Dutch solution: Raise the land on the coast quickly. The plan is to inject the limestone foundation of the land with sulfuric acid, creating expanding gypsum with nowhere to go but up (Kroon, 1993).

From creating land to expanding floodways, to defending against global warming, the Dutch understand that human/nature conflict is something that requires engineering entrepreneurship to avoid. While other nations, such as the United States and Japan, regulate against the hazards they can fight and help victims rebuild, the Dutch take emergency planning to the next level by employing its most creative ideas to protect Dutch lives and property.

Conclusion

There is a lot we can learn from the Dutch about important solutions to policy and planning. Amsterdam provides us with valuable lessons. Cities should be remade for all to enjoy. Goodman (1956) observed that an individual "has only one life and if during it he has no great environment, no community, he has been irreparably robbed of a human right." This

question is symbolic of a much larger debate about democracy, community and the economic riches that will determine what kind of society the United States, the Netherlands, and other European and Western capitalist democracies will become in the 21st Century. With the failure of socialist and communist societies, we need to work within the parameters of capitalism.

Marxism essentially argues that all cities in capitalism are wretched places filled with poverty, disease, fear, death, and crime. Amsterdam shows that a capitalist city can meet the essential needs of the people, such as health, housing, safety, individual freedom, sustainable living, and transportation. Amsterdam shows how within the framework of capitalism, democracy, green thinking, and providing for basic human needs and opportunities can be met for nearly all of Amsterdam's residents. Amsterdam is a place of freedom, not repression.

Amsterdam and the Netherlands rank the highest among the 17 OCED nations in providing the most thorough and effective welfare state by providing a higher standard of living to the dependent poor (even among the immigrant populations), such as providing more employment options, housing options, and services to families and children, than the United States (Mollenkopf, 2000). More importantly, policies ensure that every Amsterdammer has housing by providing housing for all income groups, including the poor.

Most urban scholars can tell us what is wrong with a city but few can provide a recipe or model for revitalizing inner-city neighborhoods with affordable housing, green urbanism, accessibility and integration. Amsterdam is the ideal city to gain inspiration from, because it is a city that solves problems instead of ignoring them. This paper hopes to shed new light on the forces that shape our cities.

Can we have hope about the future of cities? As we head into the new century, can a more comprehensive, more engaging, and perhaps more optimistic theory of the city be

embraced? There is a lot we can learn from the Dutch about important solutions to policy and planning. Amsterdam is a city that does not ignore and shun the invisible populations (Gilderbloom, 2008). Rather, it has created progressive policies and initiatives that are designed to reach every section of society, thereby benefiting everyone. Learning about cities such as Amsterdam provide us with some valuable insights towards recognizing these common lessons, and more importantly, represent the greatest and most compelling opportunity for sustainable living in our society. These are the kinds of questions we should be addressing as we seek to develop a new urban paradigm.

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Table 1. Comparisons of Sexual Behavior between the United States and the Netherlands

	United States	Netherlands
Teenage birth rate ¹	48.7	4.5
Teenage abortion rate ¹	27.5	4.2
Age of first intercourse ²	16.8	17.7
Percent used contraceptives at first intercourse ¹	76	85
Percent used condoms at last intercourse ¹	58	52
Percent used birth control pill at last intercourse ¹	18	63

Sources: 1. Advocates for Youth (2006) European Approaches to Adolescent Sexual Behavior & Responsibility. 2. South Carolina Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy (2003) Adolescent Sexual Health.

Table 2. Comparison of Abortions and HIV

	United States	Netherlands
Abortions ¹	21 per 1,000	8 per 1,000
HIV ^{2,3}	20 per 100,000	7 per 100,000

Sources: 1. Sedgh G et al. (2007) "Induced abortion: rates and trends worldwide" in the *Lancet*, 370(9595):1338–1345. 2. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2007). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. HIV/AIDS Surveillance Report, 2005. Vol. 17. Rev ed. 3. Van de Laar, M.J.W.; De Boer, I.M.; Koedijk, F.D.H. and E.L.M. Op de Coul. (2004) HIV and Sexually Transmitted Infections in the Netherlands in 2004. Ministry of Health, Welfare and Sports, Centre of Infectious Diseases Epidemiology.

Table 3: Comparison of Drug Use and Behavior

	(percent)	United States	Netherlands
Ever used drugs ^{3,4}		46	Not available
Lifetime Prevalence of Marijuana Use ^{1,2}		37	17
Marijuana ever ^{3,4}		46	23
Marijuana in past year ^{3,4}		14	5
Marijuana usage in past month ^{1,2}		5.4	3
Age first used marijuana ^{3,4}		17	19
Cocaine ever ^{3,4}		15	3
Used cocaine in past year ^{3,4}		11	1
Age first used cocaine ^{3,4}		20	25
Lifetime prevalence of heroin use ^{1,2}		1.4	0.4
Heroin ever ^{3,4}		1	1
Heroin in past year ^{3,4}		0	0
Age first used heroin ^{3,4}		22	23
Used Ecstasy ^{3,4}		5	4
Used Ecstasy in past year ^{3,4}		1	1
Age first used Ecstasy ^{3,4}		21	26
Smoked in past month ^{3,4}		25	30
Teen smokers (past month) ^{3,4}		13	19
Drinks Alcohol (past month) ^{3,4}		52	77
Teen drinkers (past month) ^{3,4}		29	21

Sources: 1. US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, National Household Survey on Drug Abuse: Volume I. Summary of National Findings (Washington, DC: HHS, August 2002). 2. Trimbos Institute, "Report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point, The Netherlands Drug Situation 2002" (Lisboa, Portugal: European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction, Nov. 2002). 3. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2006). Results from the 2005 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: National Findings (Office of Applied Studies, NSDUH Series H-30, DHHS Publication No. SMA 06-4194). Rockville, MD. 4. Van Laar, M.; Cruts, G; Van Gegeldonk, A.; Croes, E; Van Ooyen-Houben, M., Meijer, R., and T Ketelaars. (2006) Trimbos Institute, Report to the EMCDDA by the Reitox National Focal Point, The Netherlands Drug Situation 2006.

Table 4: Comparison of Crime Rates

Per 100,000 Population	United States	Netherlands
Police ²	219	199
Total Crime ²	8,517	8,212
Per Capita spending on criminal justice system (1998) ¹	379 euro	223 euro
Homicide (2004) ²	5	1.27
Attempted Homicide ²	330	9
Assaults ²	805	278
Rapes ²	32	10
Robberies ²	147	117
Thefts ²	2,503	4,580
Automobile Theft ²	413	241
Burglaries ²	755	573
Frauds ²	134	124
Embezzlements ²	6	49
Drug Offenses ²	560	47
Juvenile prosecution rate ²	466	170
Incarceration rate (2004) ³	638	116.8
Parole rate ²	231	1
Guns ⁴	220	2

Sources: 1. van Dijk, Frans & Jaap de Waard, "Legal infrastructure of the Netherlands in international perspective: Crime control" (Netherlands: Ministry of Justice, June 2000); 2. United Nations Commission on Drugs and Crime. (2005) Responses to Seventhth Survey on Crime Trends and the Operation of the Criminal Justice System 1999-2000. 3. Barclay, Gordon, Cynthia Tavares, Sally Kenny, Arsalaan Siddique & Emma Wilby, "International comparisons of criminal justice statistics 2001," Issue 12/03 (London, England: Home Office Research, Development & Statistics Directorate, October 2003), p. 10, Table 1.1. 4. Krug, E.G.; Powell, K.E.; and L.L. Dahlberg. (1998) International Journal of Epidemiology. V27 (2):214-221.

Table 5: Comparison of Health and Life Quality Statistics

Percentage unless noted	United States	Netherlands
Heavy Drinker ^{1,2}	7	11
Smoker ^{1,2}	21	30
Obesity (m) ^{1,2}	31	10
Obesity (f) ^{1,2}	33	12
Diabetes ^{1,2}	7	4
Gets enough exercise ^{1,2}	48	56
Suicide rate ^{1,2}	11	9
Life Expectancy (m) ^{1,2}	75	77
Life Expectancy (f) ^{1,2}	80	81
Healthy Life Expectancy (m) ^{1,2}	67	70
Healthy Life Expectancy (f) ^{1,2}	71	73
Infant Mortality (per 1,000) ^{1,2}	7	4
Cancer mortality (per 100,000) ^{1,2}	134	155
Percent of GDP spent on health ^{1,2}	15	9

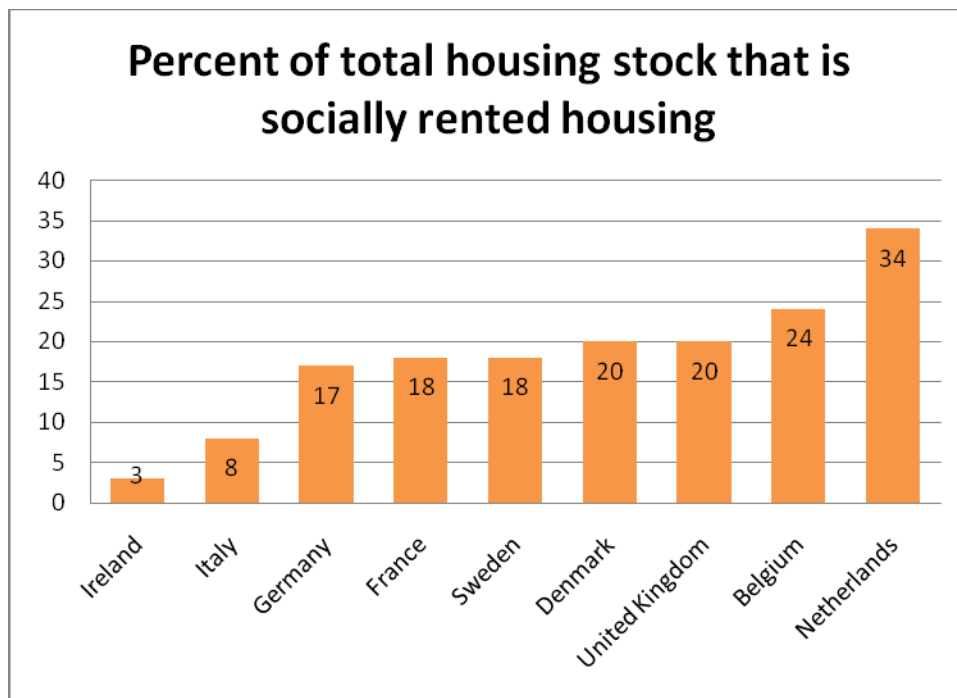
Sources: Netherlands Central Bureau of Statistics (2005). United States Center for Disease Control (2005).

Table 6. Comparison of population by Ethnic Origin

ethnic origin	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	index 2002=100
Surinam	71,464	71,471	70,717	70,446	69,645	97
Antillean	11,799	11,705	11,503	11,523	11,360	96
Turkish	35,806	36,594	37,333	37,943	38,337	107
Moroccan	58,809	60,767	62,691	64,370	65,426	111
other non-western foreigners	63,063	65,791	68,159	70,049	70,401	112
total non-western foreigners	240,941	246,328	250,403	254,331	255,169	106
western foreigners	100,268	101,121	102,671	104,723	105,112	105
native Dutch	394,119	388,596	385,689	383,897	382,746	97
Total	735,328	736,045	738,763	742,951	743,027	101

Source: Amsterdam in cijfers. 2006.

Table 7. Percentage of Social Rented Housing by European Countries



Source: Italian Housing Federation. "Housing Statistics in the European Union 2005/2006." September 2006, Rome.

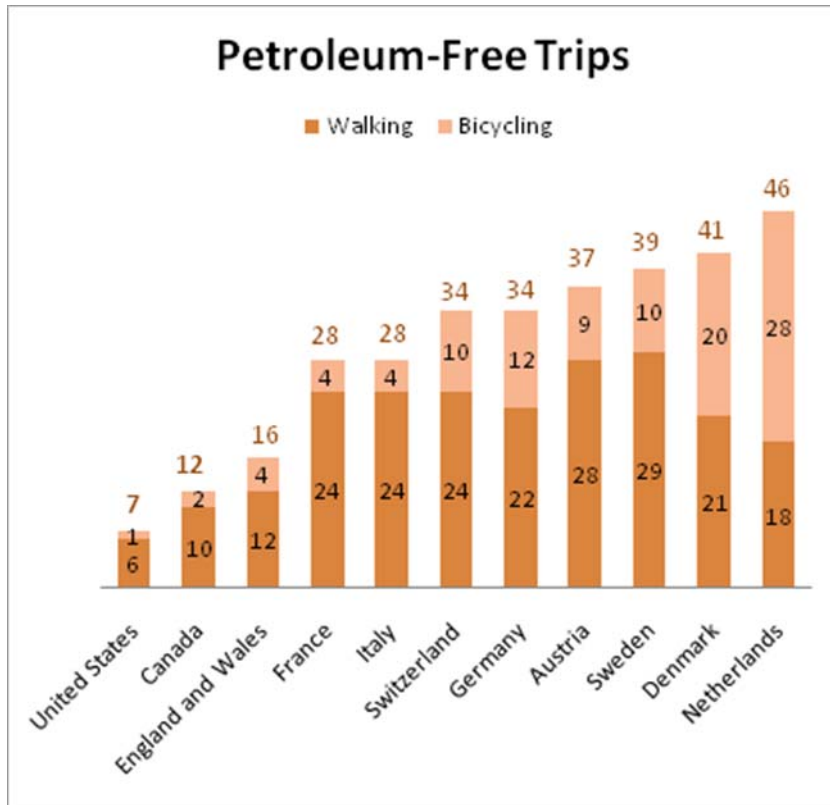
Table 8. Number of Inhabitants, dwellings, and Housing Associations (HAs) in the Netherlands and Amsterdam

	Inhabitants (2003)	Dwellings (2002)	Social Rented Dwellings (SRD) (2002)	Percent of SRD	Number of Housing Associations (HA)	Average Size of HA
Netherlands	16,292,572	6,709,732	2,347,632	35%	568	4,677
Amsterdam Metropolitan Region	1,498,722	681,842	309,635	45%	35	8,847
Amsterdam Municipality	736,562	374,952	206,310	55%	14	14,736

Source: CBS/BE Bevolkingsstatistiek, CBS/WON Woningstatistiek, Ouwehand and Van Daalen.

Percentages have been calculated from original data.

Table 9. Transportation by walking and bicycling



Source: J. Pucher and L. Dijkstra, "Promoting Safe Walking and Cycling to Improve Public Health: Lessons from the Netherlands and Germany," *American Journal of Public Health* 2003; 93(9): 1509-1516. Percentages have been totaled from the original data.