

Category: Traffic and Public Transport

Project: Bicycle Rules Amsterdam

What was the challenge?

More and more people in Amsterdam use the bike as preferred way of transport. The municipality encourages this culture, although many cyclists need many bikes and a good bike infrastructure. In the last years it had become a big challenge for Amsterdam to ensure that there is sufficient parking for cyclists, that cyclists use these amenities and know how to find them. For an optimal findability of the bicycle racks and a clear, consistent communication regarding the bike parking rules Mijksenaar has advised and designed a parking strategy that next to communication on bicycle rules could ensure optimal use and findability of the existing parking capacity called: 'Bike Rules'.

Amsterdam is the city of bikes. Nearly every resident of Amsterdam owns a bicycle. With an estimated 800,000 bicycles in a city of 811,000 residents, it is estimated that there are almost as many bikes in the city as there are permanent residents. From couriers to police officers, everyone's on two wheels and many visitors marvel at the multistorey bike racks.

Amsterdam residents cycle about 2 million kilometres each day and in rush hour, between 16:00 and 18:00, 3500 cyclist pass through the Weteringschans alone. This great amount of cyclists is something we are very proud of in Amsterdam. Only the shortage of a good cycling structure causes nuisance. A big part of the nuisance is caused by the fact that cyclists abandon their bikes and leave the municipality with what they call: 'a big iron supply.' Out of 10 bikes, 6 used to be placed within the bicycle rack, 4 outside. Actually, in 2015 15% of the bikes in the racks weren't used which accounted for 40.000 bikes.

From a poll, 85% of the population of Amsterdam feels annoyed when these bikes 'occupy' their bike spot. Besides, 60% is bothered by these bikes contaminating the streetscape. Amsterdam residents wanting to park their bike at Amsterdam Central of Amstel can spend a great amount of time trying to locate a suitable and safe place to park their bike, and out of frustration eventually leave the bike against a tree or bridge eventually causing serious accessibility problems.

For years bikes have been the solution for the accessibility problems: cycling reduces road traffic and numbers of people using public transport, and bikes are the primary form of transport to and from railway stations. It is exactly at these locations that bicycles have come to be seen as problem in recent years: pollution in the public space that also impairs accessibility at stations.

What was the solution?

The solution is to create a greater capacity of bike racks and parking space, ensuring removal of all wrecks and abandoned bikes and making better usage of the existing parking capacity. As space for bicycle parking in Amsterdam will always be limited, the municipality of Amsterdam asked us to design a parking strategy that next to communication on bicycle rules could ensure optimal use and findability of the existing parking capacity.

Together with the municipality we co-created a solution to this problem. We looked into the needs of the users with interviews and worked together with everyone concerned in the whole 'bike-parking-chain': from law enforcers to policymakers. Chris Olivers (Professor

cognitive psychology, VU), Gerard Tertoolen (founder of XTNT and traffic psychologist) and Henk Siemonsma (Dsgn frm) acted as our sounding board.

The programme started with two pilots in a bike-lab and a 0-measurement at two sought-after places: the public library and the central station. We did a 1-measurement with our prototypes and the 2-measurement gave the results of our final designs that we by then had put into use. These measurements have been executed by OIS, an independent research agency.

We have chosen the colour green to show that it is a favoured action. The colour red would signify a prohibited action, although it is the colour associated with Amsterdam. Also, the colour green is the national bike colour in the Netherlands, used throughout the country for bicycle roads and junctions. Furthermore, green is the colour for sustainability. As bikes are inexpensive and indispensable modes of transport that are 'cleaner' than other forms, the colour green is often related to biking.

We used as less text as possible to be able to convey clearly and concisely. The text on the signs shares the message of the set rules on bike parking that every cyclist (already) should know and the consequences of not following them. Next to text we developed the most optimal places to place the signage. One example is the rule tiles, on the ground near the parking racks so that cyclists will see the rules during the act of placing their bikes.

What was the effect?

The results of the measurements were tremendous: on the 0-measurement only 31% of the respondents were aware of the bike rules. This had grown to 48%

