

公共の利益実現のための近隣政府の有効性

——オランダ国立美術館を貫く自転車道を例に——

坪原 紳二

The Efficacy of Neighbourhood Government in Protecting the Public Interest

——The Case of the Bicycle Route through the Dutch National Museum——

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Abstract : The City of Amsterdam, the Netherlands, had previously divided its area into districts, where basically all the municipal authorities were transferred. As a result, the districts were in charge of public roads, including the underpass through the Rijksmuseum, the national museum. The underpass, however, has historically served as a part of main bicycle routes, whose location was still under the jurisdiction of the city. Until the museum reopened in 2013 after a major renovation, there was a long controversy over whether this underpass should be closed to bicycles. The aim of this study is to reveal what kind of policy choice the district and the city made concerning this controversy, and to examine reasons behind such a policy choice. It turns out that the city played a decisive role in reopening the bicycle route, and that the district opted for closing it partly for reasons inherent in the district system.

Keywords : Amsterdam, bicycle routes, neighbourhood government, Rijksmuseum

1. Introduction

(1) Demand for decentralisation

In the late 1960s, decentralisation within large cities had 'in general, become a very fashionable idea' in developed countries (Yates, 1973, 12). In combination with 'direct involvement of amateurs in the making of decisions', decentralisation, not only administrative but also political, was believed to help realise participatory democracy, by bringing government closer to the people (Cook and Morgan, 1971, 4). For some theorists, such as Kotler (1969) and Hallman (1974), the ultimate goal of decentralisation was to establish neighbourhood government, which is 'governed by a representative body, elected by the residents' and has 'certain taxing powers' as well as 'considerable freedom of action within the sphere delegated to it' (Hallman, 1974, 12-13).

In response to such demand for decentralisation, various attempts were made across the world although they were mostly far short of neighbourhood government. For example, in the USA, the City of Portland established the Office of Neighborhood Associations in 1974, and subsequently 'recognized roughly ninety neighborhood associations', which are 'eligible to recommend an action, a policy, or a comprehensive plan to the city and to any city agency on any matter' (Putnam and Feldstein, 2004, 241 and 247). In Japan, Nakano City divided the city area into fifteen districts, and established a neighbourhood committee for each district from 1977 to 1984. The committee could make a 'concrete proposal' to the city about issues related to its district such as 'the construction of facilities and the improvement of the environment' (Miura, 2013, 14).

After the 2000s, a call for decentralisation seems to have again become 'in fashion' across the world: 'Decentral-

ized government has come to be seen as a cure for a remarkable range of political and social ills' (Treisman, 2007, 1). What is demanded is 'the shifting of power from central to local government and beyond to the neighbourhood' (Lowndes and Sullivan, 2008, 53). In fact, the UK passed the 2011 Localism Act, which 'gave community groups a range of new powers, including the ability to produce Neighbourhood Development Plans' (Sturzaker and Shaw, 2015, 587). In Japan, the City of Nagoya experimented with neighbourhood committees from 2010 to 2014, part of whose members were elected by residents. The committee could propose projects to the city within an allocated budget although its amount was very small (City of Nagoya, 2015).

(2) Controversy about the Rijksmuseum

Among these various attempts at neighbourhood decentralisation, one of the closest to the ideal of neighbourhood government was the district system in the City of Amsterdam, whose population is about 834,000 as of 2016. Until it significantly weakened the system in 2014, the city divided its area into eight districts, and transferred basically 'all the municipal tasks, authorities, and financial means' (Olij, 2012) to seven of them, under the principle, 'decentralise what it can; centralise what it must' (ISS, 2013).

The effectiveness of the district system of Amsterdam has been well discussed in the political arena, but not well studied, particularly through concrete projects in which the districts were involved. For example, faced with the weakening of the system, its advocates cited some projects, such as the redevelopment of the neighbourhood Bijlmer, where the districts played a crucial role as the 'most important' reason to maintain the system (ISS, 2013). However, there seems to be no research on how the district system in fact contributed to those projects.

A main bicycle route runs through the underpass in the middle of the Rijksmuseum, Dutch national museum, in Amsterdam (Figure 1), an internationally-famous cycling city, with more than 60% of trips made on bicycles within the ring road (Slütter, 2012, 10). For more than ten years since the early 2000s, when the renovation of the museum started, causing the 'temporary' closure of the bicycle route, there had been controversy over whether this underpass should be permanently closed to bicycles (Table 1). Although the underpass, a public road, was under the juris-



Figure 1 Rijksmuseum and its underpass (northern façade)

Table 1 The Chronology of the controversy over the underpass of the Rijksmuseum

April 2001	Cruz and Ortiz were selected as the architect for the renovation of the Rijksmuseum.
January 2004	The district council adopted the motion to maintain a permanent and unobstructed underpass for cyclists.
March 2004	The underpass was closed for construction work.
June 2005	The district council approved the RAK.
January 2007	The district council approved of granting the building permit to the museum.
July 2009	Museum director Pijbes submitted a building advice application for a new design for the underpass.
August 2011	Museum director Pijbes started a campaign for closing the underpass to bicycles.
August 2011	The DB decided the Programme of Conditions.
January 2012	The DB decided the Preliminary Design.
May 2012	The district council's committee supported the DB's decision to close the underpass to bicycles.
July 2012	The city council's committee supported the B&W' decision to reject the request from the DB.
May 2013	The underpass was reopened to bicycles.

diction of the District of Oud-Zuid, and, later, of Zuid, the city reserved its right to decide the place of main bicycle routes. Therefore, both the district and the city were involved in this controversy. The aim of this study is to reveal what kind of policy choice the district and the city made regarding the underpass during the years of controversy, and how each of them contributed to the ultimate reopening of the bicycle route. The study also examines reasons behind the policy choice taken by the district and city. It particularly examines whether there were reasons inherent in the district system, as well as more general reasons of findings from technical studies and the political party composition of the district and city governments. By doing so, this study tries to suggest risk, if any, involved in delegating power to neighbourhoods.

(3) Methods

For this study, the author collected and analysed written materials and conducted interviews with six individuals.

Written materials included the minutes of the district council and its committees from January 2003 through July 2013, and the minutes of the city council and its committees from January 2011 through May 2013. These minutes are accessible online, and the author searched for relevant minutes using the keyword *rijksmuseum* through the search engines on the websites. Technical reports and planning documents were also downloaded from these websites.

The author also reviewed online articles of the newspapers *De Telegraaf* and *de Volkskrant* from August 2011 through September 2013, again using the keyword *rijksmuseum* through the search engines provided on the websites. In addition, the Amsterdam division of the Dutch Cyclists' Union (*Fietzersbond*) provides a website titled '10 year of the underpass of the Rijksmuseum', which compiles various materials related to the controversy, including many articles from the newspaper *Het Parool* and its own technical reports. The author also intensively used this website.

The interviews were conducted from 7 through 9 September 2015. Interviewees included a former member of the city council (PvdA), two former members of the district council (PvdA and GroenLinks), and a former district-alderman (*wethouder*, PvdA), all involved in the controversy, with some supporting and some opposing the bicycle route. An interview was also conducted with the leader of a citizens' organisation campaigning for protecting the bicycle route. Although not directly involved in the controversy, an individual who played a central role in establishing the district system was also interviewed. Furthermore, the author sent questions to a member of the Cyclists' Union who was the leader of the Amsterdam division during the controversy several times by e-mail, and received detailed answers.

Although the author did not conduct scientific traffic study, the author observed traffic on the underpass and around the Rijksmuseum from 6 through 10 September 2015.

In the following, this paper first briefly explains the Dutch local government and the district system of Amsterdam, including its original aim. Subsequently, the paper follows the controversy in detail in chronological order.

2. The District System of Amsterdam

(1) Dutch municipalities and sub-municipalities

The members of a Dutch municipal council are elected every four years according to the proportional representation system, with each political party presenting its candidate list. Since any single party usually cannot gain the majority of seats in the municipal council, some political parties form a coalition cabinet after the election. This top executive branch is called the *college van burgemeester en wethouders* or B&W. *Wethouders*, ministers at the municipal level, had been nominated from among municipal councillors until May 2002, when it became possible to choose them from outside the municipal council. Each *wethouder* has his or her own work fields or portfolio, such

as education, finance, urban planning, housing, and traffic. Although *burgemeester* is generally translated as mayor, the position is appointed by the national government. It chairs the B&W as well as the municipal council, and is also in charge of some fields such as public order and public information.

The Dutch Local Government Act (*Gemeentewet*) had allowed a municipality to install sub-municipalities (*deelgemeenten*) within its area, and to establish a sub-municipal government (*deelgemeentebestuur*) in each sub-municipality until 2012. The sub-municipal government had the organs corresponding to those of the municipal government: the district council, *dagelijks bestuur* or DB, and chair, corresponding to the municipal council, B&W, and *burgemeester*, respectively. The DB and district council were regulated according to the same rules governing the corresponding municipal organs. The act states that ‘the promotion of a considerable portion of the interests of this sub-municipality is entrusted to’ the sub-municipal government⁽¹⁾.

(2) The history of the district system of Amsterdam

This possibility of installing sub-municipalities had been used only by two municipalities: the City of Amsterdam and the City of Rotterdam. In Amsterdam, sub-municipalities were called districts (*stadsdelen*), and their theoretical foundation was laid by the report ‘Power for the Neighbourhoods (*Macht voor de Wijken*)’, which was published by the Working Group on Governmental Issues of the Amsterdam division of the labour party PvdA in 1972. The PvdA had consistently been the largest party in postwar Amsterdam’s city council until the latest local election in 2014, when its dominant position was taken over by the D66.

According to the report, ‘social problems cannot be addressed “from above” because of their growing complexity and explosiveness’ any longer. ‘An exit from this dilemma’, the report argues, ‘can be found in the direction of participatory democracy’. Subsequently, the report examines the ‘existing governmental structure’, which follows the ‘trend’ of an ‘increase in scale’. While admitting the advantage of a ‘single regional government’ in terms of ‘efficiency’, it notes several disadvantages of ‘centralisation’. A ‘centralised government’, it argues, does not do ‘justice to the wide-ranging character of various areas and their residents’, and ‘is less aware of local circumstances’. It also ‘hampers the control’ of government by citizens, and does not facilitate the ‘participation of citizens’. Therefore, to make government more responsive and responsible as well as participatory, ‘the government of Amsterdam’ must start the ‘process of governmental decentralisation quickly’, it concludes (WBV, 1972, 5–6).

Michael van der Vlis, the chair of the working group and the main author of the report, took the initiative in introducing the district system as *wethouder* of Amsterdam, and two districts, Noord and Osdorp, were experimentally installed in 1981. The ordinance concerning the districts stipulates that the chair should be chosen from among the members of the district council, and that the DB should consist of four or five members. Moreover, the district system was based on the ‘open housekeeping’, where ‘all the municipal authorities’ were transferred to districts ‘unless an explicit exception was made for something’(2). The explicit exception was shown in the ‘A-list’, which was attached to the ordinance. For example, ‘X. Traffic and Transport’ of the A-list lists two authorities to be reserved for the city: ‘1. Caring for a city-wide traffic and transport policy’ and ‘2. Making a city-wide traffic circulation plan’ (GA, 1984, 23). This was opposite to the system of Rotterdam, which rather listed those authorities that were delegated to sub-municipalities. As a result, the districts of Amsterdam had more ‘tasks, authorities, money, and public officials’ than the sub-municipalities of Rotterdam⁽²⁾.

Since then, the number of districts had gradually increased, and there were fourteen districts from 2002 to 2010, when the number was reduced to seven, with the population of each district ranging from 80,000 to 140,000. In July 2012, the Lower House approved an amendment to the Local Government Act that deleted provisions concerning sub-municipalities, that is, made it no longer possible for municipalities to install sub-municipalities. This amendment was enforced at the same time as the local election in March 2014, when districts as sub-municipalities were

replaced by a much 'lighter' form of decentralisation, namely, steering committees (*bestuurscommissie*) (MBZK, 2011).

3. Unanimous Support for the Bicycle Underpass at the District Council

(1) The underpass as the main bicycle route

The Rijksmuseum, which was originally located in The Hague, opened its doors at the current location in Amsterdam in 1885. The land, which had been owned by the City of Amsterdam, was on the periphery of the built-up area in those days, and the city planned to build the new neighbourhood Zuid behind the land. Therefore, although it transferred the land to the national government for the construction of the museum for free, the city attached one condition: 'the museum must also serve as a passage for the new neighbourhood that would be built behind it' (Van der Ham, 2005, 435). The architect Pierre Cuypers, who won the design competition for the museum in 1875, met this condition by placing an underpass through the middle of the museum while creating the entrances on the northern façade, on both sides of the underpass.

For about ten years after the museum opened, the underpass was used as storage space for large pictures and building materials (*de Volkskrant*, 2012a). Subsequently, the nave in the middle of the underpass, about 7.5 m wide and demarcated by two rows of columns, was used by bicycles and, at the beginning, carriages, which were replaced by cars later, moving between the city centre and Zuid. The aisles on both sides of the underpass, each about 3.5 m wide, were reserved for pedestrians. In 1931, the city banned cars from entering the underpass; since then, it had become one of the busiest bicycle routes in Amsterdam, with 13,000 bicycles a day in the early 2000s (De Lange, 2011, 2). As a result, the city's Structure Plan 1996 included the underpass in the Main Network for Bicycles, which was 'the desirable urban network of through, utilitarian, and recreational bicycle routes' (DRO, 2005a, 44).

(2) Renovation of the Rijksmuseum

In 1999, the national government decided to renovate and expand the Rijksmuseum in order to 'bring it in top condition for the twenty-first century'. Seven architects were invited from across Europe to put forward their ideas on the renovation; they were required to respect the original architecture of Cuypers (DRO, 2005b, 4).

In April 2001, the jury selected the Spanish duo Antonio Cruz and Antonio Ortiz as architects for the renovation. Cruz and Ortiz proposed light courts below ground level on both sides of the underpass, which were connected with each other under the underpass (Figure 2). Ticket counters, the entrance to exhibition rooms, or a shop and a café were located in the light courts, where visitors were to reach by escalators from the underpass (ArchiNed, 2001). More importantly for residents, Cruz and Ortiz maintained the bicycle route on the underpass, as did all the other architects. The jury report, however, recommended that the underpass should be closed to bicycles, which should be led through the garden around the museum.

In response to the report, the DB of the District of Oud-Zuid, which consisted of the D66, PvdA, and liberal party VVD, sent a letter to the state secretary of culture in May 2001, emphasising that 'the existing bicycle underpass [wa]s a crucial element in traffic and urban design



Figure 2 Light courts connected with each other under the underpass

for our district' and that the bicycle underpass 'must be incorporated as a guiding principle for further planning and reconstruction activities' (SAOZ, 2005, 41).

To supervise the renovation, the organisation The New Rijksmuseum (*Het Nieuwe Rijksmuseum*, HNR) was established, which consisted of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science; the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment; the Government Buildings Agency; and the Rijksmuseum.

(3) The motion for the bicycle underpass

The HNR presented the preliminary design for the renovation to the public in September 2003, when the district — whose DB was formed by the D66, left-wing party GroenLinks, and VVD after the 2002 local election — also knew the design for the first time (SAOZ, 2005, 42). Cruz and Ortiz placed the entrance, which consisted of a staircase leading to the light courts underneath and lifts on both sides of the staircase, in the nave, using its whole width. Bicycles were to use the aisle on one side as a two-way bicycle path; pedestrians, the aisle on the other side.

Although bicycles were still allowed to use the underpass, space available to them was significantly reduced. The Amsterdam division of the Cyclists' Union (Cyclists' Union) feared that the bicycle route was too narrow and once an accident happened between bicycles and visitors, bicycles would be entirely excluded from the underpass. With the same fear, some neighbours of the museum formed the citizens' organisation Committee Save the Underpass (*Comité Red de Onderdoorgang*, RdO) and campaigned for a safer bicycle route in the underpass, in close cooperation with the Cyclists' Union. In addition, the preliminary design was also unacceptable to the DB because of 'too little space for cyclists and pedestrians' (SrAOZ, 2004).

Therefore, the district organised the Working Group on the Underpass of the Rijksmuseum in October 2003, which consisted of the HNR, district, Cyclists' Union, and neighbours, with the goal of 'finding a compromise with passing slow traffic within design' (SAOZ, 2005, 42).

The district bulletin for 9 December 2003 announced that the underpass would be closed to all the traffic for four years: the first nine months to one year was for burying a storm water tank under the front square of the museum along Stadhouderskade, followed by the renovation work of the museum, which was to be completed no later than 1 January 2008. In addition, the bulletin reported, 'It is not yet decided when this "temporary" closure exactly starts', using quotation marks for the word *temporary* as if the closure were actually permanent.

In response to the unrest among the public caused by this article, the district council's Committee of Public Space and Traffic discussed the issue of the 'closure of the underpass of the Rijksmuseum' on 7 January 2004. Here, responsible district-*wethouder* Jan-Coen Hellendoorn (VVD) ensured that the closure was temporary, and promised to make it clear to the museum that 'seeking to keep the underpass open [wa]s not the effort by a lobbyist' and that such effort was 'supported by nearly all the residents of the city'. Since there was 'massive support for keeping the underpass open', he saw 'no threat to keeping the underpass open except for the opinions of architects and people in the Rijksmuseum'. Three citizens who were allowed to speak at the meeting all argued for keeping the underpass open, particularly by pointing out the aesthetic value of the underpass, which was 'one of the most beautiful places in the city'. Political parties, from left to conservative to local parties, also argued for keeping the underpass open. For example, the VVD found it 'evident that the underpass remain[ed] open in a complete manner in the longer term', while the GroenLinks regarded it as 'self-evident that the passage remain[ed] open'. Therefore, at this meeting, it was confirmed that there was 'a rare unity among the DB, political parties, and residents' 'over the fact that the passage must remain open' (SrcAOZ, 2004).

In the Working Group on the Underpass of the Rijksmuseum, the HNR proposed a 'variant' of the preliminary design, which allocated more space to pedestrians and bicycles than the preliminary design. Bicycles were led along the glass walls on both sides of the underpass while pedestrians inside the bicycle paths. Because the variant

made the entrance narrower by placing lifts between two stairs, pedestrians could also walk a part of the nave (SrAOZ, 2004).

At the meeting of the district council on 28 January 2004, a participant spoke on behalf of the Cyclists' Union and RdO. She was a member of the working group, and all the proposals she saw there, including the variant, placed stairs in the nave, leaving too small space for cyclists and pedestrians. She put forward an alternative where the entrances were placed not in the nave but on the side walls, so that the existing profile of the underpass, with bicycles on the nave and pedestrians on the aisles, was kept intact. She asked the council to press the DB to make the museum examine this alternative.

During the subsequent discussion, the GroenLinks introduced the following motion with the other coalition parties D66 and VVD:

Confirms that there is district-wide support for a good possibility of cyclists and pedestrians' continuing to use the underpass after the reconstruction of the Rijksmuseum (...),

(...)

Decides to pronounce for maintaining a permanent and unobstructed underpass for cyclists and pedestrians (...) therefore,

to reject the plan presented by the Rijksmuseum where the full width of the middle section of the underpass is used for the entrance to the museum (...)

Also confirms that other variants of the plan where the admission to the Rijksmuseum happens through stairs and the like from the underpass itself quickly form a too large obstruction for passing bicycle and pedestrian traffic

For this reason, decides to ask the DB to press for, in its contacts with the Rijksmuseum, a fundamental investigation into alternatives where an entrance is created that has no effect on the area of the underpass itself.

As can be seen in the last paragraph, the motion incorporated the demand made by the Cyclists' Union and RdO. The PvdA 'totally agree[d] with' the coalition parties, the Christian democratic party CDA '[found] the reaction reasonable', and local parties also supported the motion; the motion was adopted unanimously (SrAOZ, 2004).

(4) The Spatial Assessment Framework

Not being able to find a compromise supported by all the parties, the working group was dissolved in January 2004. The construction work on the front square started in March, however, causing the 'temporary' closure of the underpass (*Amsterdam Centraal*, 2004), which turned out to be a long-lasting closure. In June, the DB and HNR discussed how to break the 'impasse' (SAOZ, 2005, 42), and decided to make the Spatial Assessment Framework (*Ruimtelijk Afwegingskader*, RAK), a vision based on which the DB could assess the entire renovation project, which included the construction of two buildings, the Aziëpaviljoen and Studiecentrum, in the museum garden (SAOZ, 2005, 5). The DB commissioned the city's Department of Spatial Planning to draft the RAK.

In February 2005, the DB approved the draft of the RAK, which deals with the renovation at three levels: the 'building', the 'surroundings', and the 'position in the city'. The underpass or the 'Passage' in the draft, the most controversial element in the renovation, is the subject at the level of the position in the city. Section 4.3 'Passage' of Chapter 4 'Rijksmuseum — position in the city' first examines pedestrians and bicycles separately, in Subsections 4.3.1 and 4.3.2, respectively.

In the square Museumplein behind the Rijksmuseum, the Stedelijk Museum was also preparing its renovation, which was due to complete in 2008, the same as the Rijksmuseum. The renovation included moving the entrance on Paulus Potterstraat to Museumplein — an attempt that another museum in Museumplein, the Van Gogh Museum, was also considering (Figure 3). The draft expects that these projects will 'generate a remarkable

increase of the number of pedestrians in the Passage'. On the other hand, according to the variant of the renovation design, the existing dim underpass will become a 'particularly attractive environment to stay', with a view of the light courts below through the glass walls. This will decrease the speed of passers-by, the draft expects, which 'has a negative effect on the flow capacity of the sidewalks' (DRO, 2005b, 16–22).

The draft also expects bicycle traffic to increase in the underpass in the future, because 'the use of bicycles further grows in the city; the number of trips on bicycles increases between districts and the inner city.' It examines in detail whether there are alternative bicycle routes to the underpass. There is 'no space to realise two-way bicycle paths on the western side' of Paulus Potterstraat, it states, while planned 'small bicycle lanes' on Hobbemakade 'offer no genuine alternative to the main bicycle route through the Passage'. In addition, 'building bicycle paths through the museum garden' on the eastern side of the museum is again 'no genuine option particularly because' it fundamentally undermines the 'monumental character of the museum complex'. The draft concludes that 'acceptable alternatives to the main bicycle route through the Passage do not exist.' (DRO, 2005b, 23–24)

Subsequently, Subsection 4.3.3 addresses the 'tension between pedestrians and cyclists in the Passage'. As seen above, 'an increasing number of people will use the Passage on foot and bicycles'. In addition, the flow speed of passers-by will become slower. As a result, 'unavoidable conflicts will emerge between pedestrians and cyclists unless extra attention is paid to the layout and division' of the underpass, the draft expects. For example, to handle pedestrians and bicycles safely during peak hours, '[t]he maximum capacity of the whole tunnel profile will have to be available'. On the other hand, the draft discourages the use of fences to separate pedestrians from bicycles, given the 'special situation of the Passage', where 'fences are quite dangerous' when 'panic reactions happen in crowds' (DRO, 2005b, 24–25).

As a concrete design framework, Subsection 4.3.4 presents the following 'Conditions for the Layout Plan Passage':

1. A traditional road division with an articulated profile where pedestrians move along the facades and bicycle traffic concentrates on the longitudinal axis of the nave.
2. The sidewalks on both aisles must be at least 4.60 m wide (...) and extended between the columns to the curbs that border the bicycle path in the nave. (the tangential line to the inner side of the columns is a logical place for the curbs) In this manner, pedestrians and cyclists can see each other. (...)
3. The width of the two-way bicycle path in the nave reaches at least 6.00 m (...).
4. (...) A difference in height of at least 6 and at most 8 centimetres must be created between the foot path and bicycle path not only on the Passage but also on the approaches. The difference in height alerts mostly foreign pedestrians, who are not used to cyclists, to the presence of the bicycle path.
5. If the main entrance to the Rijksmuseum is planned in the Passage, this must not lead to a decrease in the maximum capacity of the profile of the Passage. (...) (DRO, 2005b, 26–27)

Chapter 5 'Testing Criteria' incorporates the above conditions as criteria to assess the renovation plan at the

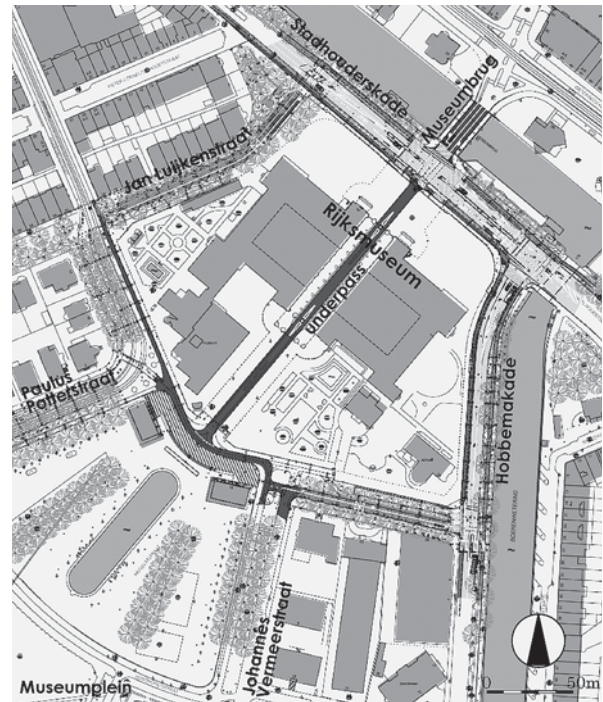


Figure 3 The surroundings of the Rijksmuseum
(Base map: GA, 2011, 41)

level of the position in the city as follows:

- The layout plan for the Passage and any solution to the main entrance in the Passage must fulfil the Conditions for the Layout Plan Passage (4.3.4).
- The Passage must be publicly accessible in the day and evening, and at night, and (socially) safe for cyclists, pedestrians, and handicapped people. (DRO, 2005b, 32)

Therefore, the draft is consistent with the motion, and substantially requires the HNR to examine the alternative put forward by the Cyclists' Union and RdO.

The DB solicited public comments on the draft for four weeks through 15 April, and nearly one hundred individuals and seventeen organisations, including the RdO, Cyclists' Union, and HNR, submitted written opinions. The HNR, in its 'extensive response' (SAOZ, 2005, 10), challenged the legitimacy of the RAK as well as pointing out various faults in it. The HNR also commissioned the consultancy firms Arcadis and Incontrol separately to conduct 'simulations' of the 'busiest situations in the underpass' (SAOZ, 2005, 12), and sent the results to the DB. Both results proved that the variant put forward by the HNR could handle the stream of pedestrians and bicycles without problem.

The DB also organised the 'public debate' on the RAK on 12 April, which attracted about three hundred people. The debate was mostly dedicated to the underpass. Without finding any compromise, however, the chair concluded the debate just by confirming the 'conflict of interests' (SAOZ, 2005, 49–54).

After these procedures for public participation, the DB decided the Document for Answers, which presents how to modify the draft in response to public comments. According to the DB, there is no reason to change the principle, 'cyclists through the nave; pedestrians through both aisles'. Therefore, sticking to this principle, the DB proposes giving 'certain flexibility' to the conditions prescribed in Subsection 4.3.4. Namely, the sentence enclosed in parentheses, designating the exact place of the curbs (Condition 2), should be deleted, and the width of the bicycle path in the nave can be between 5.00 m and 6.00 m (SAOZ, 2005, 6–8). This modification is in fact in line with what the Cyclists' Union had demanded to prevent collisions between bicycles and pedestrians. With the bicycle path 5.00 m wide, there is still a sidewalk 1.00 m wide inside the columns, where pedestrians can see bicycles well when crossing the bicycle path (FAA, 2012a). On the other hand, concerning the two buildings in the museum garden, the DB yields to the HNR, removing limits in building area and height prescribed in the draft so that the HNR can build the Studiecentrum of 26 m height as originally planned (SAOZ, 2005, 8).

The B&W of the city, consisting of the PvdA, VVD, and CDA, adopted the draft of the Policy Framework for the Main Networks in April 2005, which, in accordance with the draft of the RAK, again included the underpass in the Main Network for Bicycles (SAOZ, 2005, 7). The city council approved this draft unanimously on 11 May, and the same day, the national government 'succumbed to the opposition from neighbours and the District of Oud-Zuid' (NRC, 2005); the state secretary told Cruz and Ortiz to make a new design for the entrance according to the RAK (SrAOZ, 2005).

The modified draft was presented to the district council's Committee of Spatial Planning and Housing on 24 May, and subsequently to the district council on 22 June. At these meetings, some political parties, mainly local parties, raised objections to the removal of the limits in building area and height, fearing that this could undermine the historic view of the Rijksmuseum. The policy related to the underpass, as described in the Conditions for the Layout Plan Passage, however, was hardly controversial; it was rather strongly welcomed. The VVD was 'very glad that cyclists [could] continue to use the underpass' and 'that no entrance [would come] in the middle of the underpass'. In the D66's view, 'a good solution [had] come regarding the underpass with' the RAK. According to the CDA, the RAK's principle that nothing was built in the underpass 'guaranteed a sustainably safe traffic situation'. The GroenLinks was also 'very glad that the original function of the underpass [wa]s maintained'. And the PvdA, adopting the

idea put forward by the RdO at the committee meeting, proposed an amendment with the local party AA/DG and GroenLinks to make sure that the conditions were followed. The Testing Criteria in the draft prescribes that the layout plan must fulfil the conditions, but the building permit is issued not for a layout plan, but for a building plan. Therefore, those parties proposed adding to the criteria another criterion: 'The building plan must not make the intended bicycle path as described in the Conditions for the Layout Plan Passage (subsection 4.3.4) impossible.' This amendment was approved unanimously at the council meeting, and the RAK as a whole was also approved, with two local parties — ZPB (3 seats) and VOZ (1 seat) — opposing mainly because of the relaxed building regulations (SrAOZ, 2005).

4. The District Council's Decision to Exclude Bicycles

(1) Delay of the renovation

The museum made a new design for the underpass with two entrances on each side of the glass walls, which led to the light courts below. The design was 'completely in accordance with the RAK' (SrAOZ, 2006), except that it placed the curbs of the sidewalks in the 'logical place' of the original RAK, leaving a 7.50 m wide bicycle path in the nave, too wide for the modified RAK. In March 2006, using this design, the Government Buildings Agency applied for the building permit for the renovation with the district. The renovation plan was in conflict with the existing land use plan (*bestemmingsplan*) Museumplein 1995, which allowed only depots under the underpass and did not allow so large buildings as the planned Aziëpaviljoen and Studiecentrum in the museum garden. Therefore, this application was equivalent to the request for exemption from the land use plan according to the former Spatial Planning Act (*Wet op de Ruimtelijke Ordening*). This meant that the district had to follow procedures prescribed in the act, such as public inspection for six weeks.

However, the Rijksmuseum is the national monument, so the district argued that the museum should receive advice from the city's Committee for Urban Design and Monuments 'before the district [put] its own machinery in motion'. In addition, renovating a national monument requires the monument permit, which was granted by the National Monuments Agency. Consultation between the museum and these organisations took more time than expected (SrAOZ, 2007), and it was on 7 September 2006 that the DB made its proposal for the decision on the exemption available for public inspection, which lasted through 18 October. After the local election in April 2006, the GroenLinks and PvdA formed the DB.

According to the proposal, the adjustments that the building plan has made 'have led to a design that actually leaves the function of the Passage as such intact'. Specifically, those testing criteria in the RAK, including the one added through the amendment, 'were taken to heart' when the museum prepared the definitive building plan (SAOZ, 2006, 8-9). The DB's conclusion therefore is that 'there is no reason to reject the requested exemption' (SAOZ, 2006, 23).

This conclusion was hardly controversial. The proposal was discussed at the district council's Committee of Space and Safety on 16 January 2007 and at the district council on 31 January. At these meetings, all the political parties except for the two local parties — ZPB (1 seat) and VOZ (1 seat) — that opposed the RAK supported the exemption, and the district council approved it on 31 January.

On the other hand, although pedestrians and bicycles were forced to go around the museum for nearly three years, it was by now evident that the renovation would not be completed by the planned deadline, 1 January 2008. Therefore, at the meeting of the committee, Marjolein de Lange, on behalf of the RdO, argued that the underpass should be reopened by the deadline even if the renovation was not completed. In response, one party after another argued that the underpass must be opened by 1 January 2008, not only to pedestrians but also to bicycles, needless to say (SrcAOZ, 2007).

The underpass, however, remained closed beyond the deadline. Moreover, it turned out in March 2008 that the start of the construction work had significantly been delayed, let alone its completion. The bidding for the construction work failed because the bidding price was too high and, as a result, the bidding must be redone. Contractors were selected in October, and the construction work finally started in July 2009 (NRC, 2009).

(2) The Plan Pijbes

Meantime, in 2008, the Working Group on Accessibility in Oud-Zuid proposed the ‘optimisation of the permitted design for the Passage’ (RdO, 2009). The group advocated the accessibility of handicapped people and its members were also active in the RdO. It proposed narrowing the bicycle path in the nave from the permitted 7.50 m to 5.00 m so that there was still space for pedestrians inside the columns. This proposal was what the Cyclists’ Union had demanded, and more fully met the conditions prescribed by the RAK than the permitted design.

While this proposal was not taken seriously by the DB, the museum itself proposed a new design that was also intended to bring about an ‘improvement’ (FAA, 2012a) in the permitted design, although in an utterly different way. In 2008, Wim Pijbes became director of the museum, and soon started to campaign for a new design for the underpass. He was not satisfied with the planned four entrances on the glass walls in the underpass because, in his view, the ‘original concept’ of the renovation was ‘to get rid of the existing two unclear entrances and to make a single clear entrance for the museum’ (SAOZ, 2009, 4).

At the request of Pijbes, Cruz and Ortiz made a new design, which dedicated the eastern half of the underpass to a two-way bicycle path, with two ways divided by a row of columns. Pedestrians were to use the western half, where the staircase for the entrance was placed in the nave. Therefore, passing pedestrians were to use the western aisle alone, instead of both aisles according to the permitted design. In addition, a glass fence was erected in the middle of the nave to physically separate pedestrians and bicycles. This design appealed to chief government architect Liesbeth van der Pol as well as Pijbes.

However, it obviously violates the RAK’s ‘principle’ of ‘cyclists through the nave; pedestrians through both aisles’, deviating from the ‘traditional road division’, and ignores its repeated condition that the ‘maximum capacity of the profile of the Passage’ should be maintained even if the main entrance is planned there. The RAK also discourages the use of fences in the underpass considering their danger in a panic situation.

In July 2009, the museum submitted a building advice application ‘concerning a modified proposal for the entrance’ (SAOZ, 2009) with the district. Once it received a positive advice from the DB, the museum could proceed to the formal application for a building permit for the new design.

Receiving the advice application, the DB referred it to several organizations such as the city’s Committee for Urban Design and Monuments for advice, and also commissioned the consultancy firm Goudappel Coffeng to examine the effects of the new design on traffic.

The Goudappel Coffeng submitted its report Traffic Assessment on the Passage of the Rijksmuseum to the DB on 8 October 2009. In terms of traffic safety and flow, the report compares three ‘variants’ of the design for the underpass (Figure 4): the permitted design, called variant 1

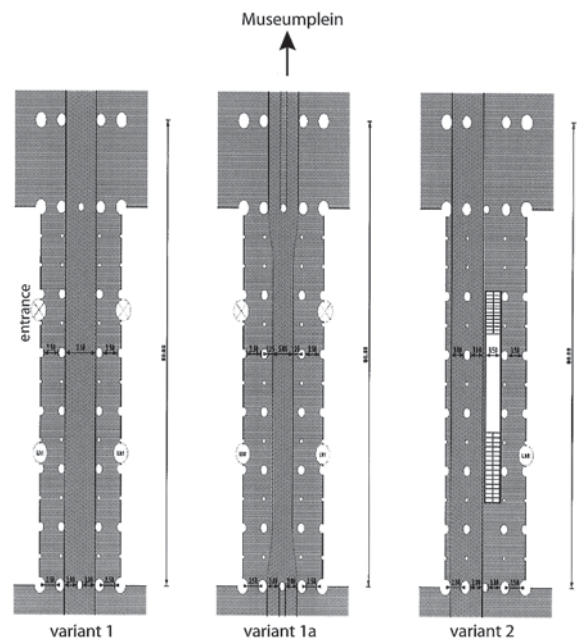


Figure 4 Three variants of design for the underpass (Base map: Dijkstra, 2011, 14)

in the report; the new design submitted by the museum, called variant 2; and the optimisation proposed by the Working Group on Accessibility in Oud-Zuid, called variant 1a, which was included in this assessment 'at the express request of' (SAOZ, 2009, 1) the RdO.

The 'most important conclusion' of this report is that 'both variant 1a and variant 2 provide a good situation in the passage'. However, '[t]here are differences in accent between both variants'. Regarding traffic flow, both variant 1 and variant 1a have almost no problem, although the latter, with extra space for pedestrians, are favourable during peak hours. In variant 2, '[t]he flow for cyclists is more vulnerable' since the bicycle path is physically divided by a row of columns into two narrower paths. This variant, however, still meets the 'minimal conditions'. This variant also performs poor for pedestrians, with slower flow during peak hours, but 'the flow still remains at an acceptable level'. Regarding traffic safety, in variants 1 and 1a, 'there is the possibility that, for example, visitors cross toward the other entrances' across the bicycle path, which 'can lead to undesirable conflict situations' with bicycles. Of these two variants, variant 1a ensures 'a clearly safer situation' for pedestrians crossing the bicycle path as the Cyclists' Union had argued. Since there are no crossing pedestrians in variant 2, this variant 'scores better in the aspect of (pedestrian) safety than variants 1 and 1a' (Goudappel Coffeng, 2009, 11-14).

On 23 October, two weeks after it received the report from the Goudappel Coffeng, the DB drafted the advice letter addressed to Pijbes. After introducing assessments by the Goudappel Coffeng and other organisations, which also made positive responses to variant 2, the DB draws its 'conclusion' saying, 'we are prepared to lend our cooperation' to the variant. Throughout the letter, the DB does not assess variant 2 according to the RAK. Instead, in making this 'positive assessment' of variant 2, the DB considered that 'the entrance proposed now does more justice to the status of the Rijksmuseum as a monument of (inter)national importance and allure'. In addition, for the DB, 'safety for cyclists and pedestrians' is more important than the 'flow capacity' (SAOZ, 2009, 7-8), on which the other two variants score better according to the Goudappel Coffeng.

In the face of this letter, on 5 November, the RdO sent a written opinion to the members of the district council, asking them not to agree with the letter. Although Pijbes has 'worldwide collegial support' as 'his trumps', 'there is every reason not to succumb to the arguments, motivations, and trumps of the Rijksmuseum', says the RdO. The 'most important argument to reject the new design' is that variant 2 'cannot bear examination' according to the RAK, since the staircase of the variant 'reduces the maximum capacity' of the underpass and 'is contrary to a traditional road division'. In addition, the RdO argues that the estimation of pedestrian traffic by the Goudappel Coffeng is based on unrealistic assumptions about, for example, the number of visitors and the walking speed of pedestrians. Correcting these faults can reveal that variant 2 ends up 'congestion, stoppage, and blockage' of pedestrian traffic, concludes the opinion (RdO, 2009, 2-3).

The district council's Committee of Space and Housing discussed the letter on 10 November. At the beginning of the session, two participants were given an opportunity to voice their opinion about the letter. First, a participant who spoke in his personal capacity stated that the letter seemed to 'have been drafted not independently of the Rijksmuseum', with the 'terminology of the Rijksmuseum', such as 'international allure', adopted 'one-on-one'. According to variant 2, 'the space for pedestrians is halved', and the 'proposed stairwell in the busy route can bring danger in a fire', he pointed out.

Second, museum director Pijbes advocated his variant 2, which ensured 'greater safety for pedestrians, cyclists, and museum visitors' than the 'old' plan and was 'supported by fifty — mostly prominent — parties', according to him. Although the chair told Pijbes to stop his presentation again and again because he far exceeded the time allotted to each participant, three minutes, he continued to speak, pointing out faults in the reaction by the RdO and describing the entrance of the Louvre Museum.

After Pijbes' speech, each political party put forward its view on variant 2. It was only local parties, including

those two parties that opposed the RAK in 2005, that clearly preferred variant 1 or 1a to variant 2, where ‘all the conditions prescribed in the RAK are just brushed aside’. Other political parties expressed interest in variant 2, and, among others, the PvdA and VVD, the largest and second-largest parties with 12 and 6 members of 30 in total, respectively, strongly supported variant 2. According to the VVD, ‘the Rijksmuseum [was] very happy with variant 2; [t]herefore, the VVD was ‘enthusiastic’ about the variant. For the PvdA, rather than safety or traffic flow, ‘the discussion must concentrate on the entrance of the Netherlands’ most important museum, which deserves an entrance with grandeur’. And ‘the allure comes into its own with the plan Pijbes’, that is, variant 2, ‘as opposed to the earlier (“clumsy”) variant’. Like Pijbes, the party also cited the example of the Louvre to support variant 2.

Subsequently, responsible district-*wethouder* Egbert de Vries (PvdA) was given an opportunity to defend the letter. According to variant 2, ‘the entrance will become significantly more beautiful’, and ‘people can be enticed to take the steps in order to visit the inner courts (museum shop, café, lectures)’. His ‘conclusion’ was that ‘the plan Pijbes [met] almost all the conditions/desires’. Therefore, he wanted to ensure that this variant could ‘be incorporated into the building without further delay’ (SrcAOZ, 2009).

With the DB and the majority of the district council supporting variant 2, the museum ought to have submitted the formal application for a building permit for the variant. In April 2010, however, Pijbes withdrew his variant because he feared, ‘the implementation of this plan entails a too great risk of delay’ by adding ‘complicating factors’ to the renovation, which was already significantly delayed (*de Volkskrant*, 2010).

(3) Decision to close

1) TU Delft

Including variant 2, proposals by the museum had so far always let bicycles go through the underpass although their design was not necessarily satisfactory for cyclists. The citizens of Amsterdam, however, had increasingly come to accept that cyclists had to go around the museum instead of going straight through the underpass. The leader of the RdO recalled in the interview, ‘I wouldn’t be surprised even if half of Amsterdam’s population was against the’ bicycle underpass around 2009. Early in 2010, the Cyclists’ Union itself conceded, ‘there are also people, even cyclists, even those who are members of the Cyclists’ Union, who argue that cyclists can ideally go around’ the museum (FAA, 2010, 5). During more than five years after the underpass was closed to bicycles, many people moved into Amsterdam, most of whom had never seen a stream of cyclists going through the underpass, let alone themselves cycled through it. They could accept going around the museum easily. In addition, to those who did not ride bicycles near the museum, it looked as if cyclists had adapted to the new situation, going around the museum without problem. Therefore, the longer the underpass was closed, ‘the more people said, “Let it be closed. You can close it permanently”’, according to one of the interviewees. And some of them launched a campaign for its closure almost at the same time as variant 2 was proposed.

They were mostly prominent figures in the cultural sector, among others, former chief government architect Tjeerd Dijkstra and former Minister of Welfare, Health and Culture Hedy d’Ancona; they established a group called the Rijks on the Square (*Rijks op het Plein*, RohP) for the campaign. According to Dijkstra, ‘The new Rijksmuseum will become a jewel, the pride of Amsterdam. But it will become a mess’ with bicycles going through the underpass (*Fietsen123*, 2009). On the other hand, the group argued in the newspaper *de Volkskrant* that going around the museum was ‘hardly a detour’, with extra ‘less than 50 metres or only 15 seconds of cycling’ (FAA, 2010, 5). In 2009, the group started a signature campaign for ‘a bicycle-free pedestrian zone under the Rijksmuseum and a new bicycle route outside’ (*Fietsen123*, 2009). In addition, it commissioned Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) to examine ‘whether it is possible and desirable to combine pedestrians and cyclists in the passage after the completion of the renovation’ (TU Delft, 2010, 5).

TU Delft published the report *Study on the Passage of the Rijksmuseum* in January 2010. In the study, TU Delft assumes variant 1a as a profile for the underpass — the variant that was supported by the RdO and found most favourable in terms of traffic flow by the Goudappel Coffeng. As opposed to the findings by the Goudappel Coffeng, TU Delft predicts that the sidewalks are so crowded around the beginning and end of the opening hours on the ‘85 peak days a year’ that ‘pedestrians move on the bicycle path in large numbers and in an uncontrolled manner’. In addition, on ‘busy days’, a queue of visitors can be formed at the entrances, which ‘can grow to a length of 350 metres’ on the sidewalks. As a result, ‘[a]ll the visitors (about 60 per minute in peak hours) must cross the bicycle path to be able to connect to the end of the queue’. Its ‘CONCLUSION’ is, ‘For the sake of the safety of pedestrians and cyclists, the passage through the Rijksmuseum will have to be closed to cyclists for at least 85 days a year after the completion of the renovation’ (TU Delft, 2010, 3–4).

2) SWOV

Therefore, the Goudappel Coffeng and TU Delft reached different conclusions, and, in the view of the HNR, both mainly addressed the ‘traffic flow aspects’. The HNR asked the research institute SWOV to ‘evaluate both documents in the light of their merits and in particular to study the traffic safety aspects closely’ (Dijkstra, 2011, 3).

The SWOV conducted literature review for this study, and submitted the report *Pedestrians and Cyclists in the Passage of the Rijksmuseum* in August 2010. In this report, first in Chapter 2, the SWOV reviews existing studies on three kinds of interactions between cyclists and pedestrians:

1. Shared use of paths, where cyclists and pedestrians use the same path or two adjacent paths at the same level;
2. Crossing of paths, where pedestrians cross bicycle paths; and
3. Shared use of areas, where cyclists use pedestrian areas.

For the second kind of interactions, the SWOV refers to Dutch statistics on traffic accidents, pointing out that the number of accidents between cyclists and crossing pedestrians is ‘significantly lower’ than the numbers of accidents between cyclists and motor vehicles and between pedestrians and motor vehicles. It also cites the Dutch organisation CROW’s findings that crossing pedestrians regard waiting time of longer than 15 seconds as ‘poor’. For the third kind, the SWOV cites Dutch and German recommendations on the maximum number of pedestrians to admit bicycles into pedestrian areas. According to the observed intensity of bicycle traffic in existing pedestrian areas, ‘the number of cyclists in pedestrian areas in practice does not reach more than 600 per hour’, the SWOV also states (Dijkstra, 2011, 11–13).

The next chapter, Chapter 3, reviews the reports by the Goudappel Coffeng and TU Delft. While introducing the conclusions of both reports, the SWOV argues that both are based on ‘deliberate overestimation’ of pedestrian traffic. The Goudappel Coffeng assumes that the peak hours of museum visitors coincide with the peak hours of passers-by, although the latter pedestrians can in fact reach a peak earlier than the former. TU Delft assumes a further larger number of pedestrians because it assumes a larger number of visitors per year than the Goudappel Coffeng. Incorporating the findings from Chapter 2, this chapter concludes, ‘It is practically excluded that cyclists and pedestrians can share parts of the passage’ since ‘many more pedestrians and cyclists are expected in the passage’ than the maximum numbers for pedestrian areas. Although ‘there is hardly a safety problem when pedestrians must cross bicycle paths’, if the waiting time exceeds 15 seconds, pedestrians can regard this waiting time as ‘poor’, and ‘[t]his will be the case in the passage’ with a large amount of bicycle traffic (Dijkstra, 2011, 18–19).

Therefore, the SWOV so far does not provide any evidence to justify closing the underpass to bicycles for safety reasons. The last chapter, Chapter 4 ‘Conclusions and advice’, however, puts forward arguments that are not validated in the preceding chapters. First, the SWOV repeats the conclusions in Chapter 3, saying that cyclists and

pedestrians cannot share parts of the underpass and that pedestrians will find waiting time to cross the bicycle path poor. It also refers to the assumptions of the Goudappel Coffeng and TU Delft that include 'large margins that may have led to unrealistic results'. It 'recommends scrutinising the assumptions once more regarding the numbers of visitors, passers-by, and those waiting'. However, it cites the findings of TU Delft, which are based on those suspicious assumptions, as if they are the SWOV's conclusion:

Because of the slow walking speed of a large number of passers-by, the density of pedestrians extra increases, and because of long queues, space available to passing pedestrians decreases. This can lead to repeated crossing of the bicycle path and/or deflecting of those waiting to the bicycle path. As a result, given the large numbers of cyclists and pedestrians, cycling becomes almost impossible.

The SWOV also advises 'entirely separating the bicycle path from the pedestrian areas, for example, with a fence', although it does not provide any reason why sidewalks, as proposed in variants 1 and 1a, are not sufficient. Finally, it argues that, 'months just after the reopening' of the museum, when 'a high peak in the number of visitors can emerge', it is 'advisable to not yet allow cyclists in the passage and to open the passage also to cyclists again just after the peak flattens out' (Dijkstra, 2011, 20).

3) Campaign for closure

As if encouraged by these conclusions and advises, which recommended 'closing the passage to bicycle traffic in busy hours' in his view, museum director Pijbes started to argue for excluding bicycles completely from the underpass through various media in August 2011. Now that he had to accept the four entrances on both walls of the underpass, he wanted to create an entrance hall outside the entrances as well as below the entrances. In his view, the underpass itself was 'architecturally the natural entrance hall', which ought to become the 'most beautiful hall in the Netherlands'. This 'passage', as he wanted to call the underpass, should be 'used for street musicians, small book fairs, fashion shows, and other cultural events' (*Het Parool*, 2011), with 'no room for a bicycle path' left (*de Volkskrant*, 2011a). In addition to these arguments for aesthetic and cultural experience, he put forward arguments for safety. According to him, bicycle traffic had become more dangerous than before, and 'large social dissatisfaction increasingly dominate[d] over the bicycle (moped), cargo bike, and scooter traffic, which ha[d] increased its speed and intensity' (*Het Parool*, 2011). Furthermore, he repeatedly stressed, 'Everybody has already ridden around the museum for ten years, and it goes excellently' (*de Volkskrant*, 2011a), although cyclists actually had ridden around for seven and a half years at that moment.

4) Programme of Conditions

In the meantime, the number of the districts of Amsterdam was reduced from fourteen to seven in May 2010, and the District of Oud-Zuid was merged with the District of Zuideramstel to form the District of Zuid. The former DB, consisting of the GroenLinks and PvdA, had already been prepared to give up the principle of the RAK, and the newly formed DB of Zuid, consisting of the D66, PvdA, and VVD, started to show its preparedness to give up the more fundamental principle of the district policy, namely, the principle of allowing bicycles to go through the underpass.

In August 2011, when Pijbes started his campaign to exclude bicycles from the underpass, there was "no longer any taboo within the district council" on the disappearance of the bicycle underpass' (*de Volkskrant*, 2011b), and Pijbes was 'in talks with the District of Zuid in order to revoke the bicycle path right through his museum' (*AT5*, 2011).

After these talks with Pijbes, the DB decided the Programme of Conditions on 30 August 2011, which presents design principles for the 'public area directly adjacent to the Rijksmuseum', including the underpass (SAZ, 2011, 5). The programme mentions the desire of Pijbes to 'fully use the passage and not exclusively see it as traffic space'. After dismissing the 'permanent use of the passage for expositions and the like', which was not what Pijbes had

demanding, the programme says, 'Therefore, the passage will be closed to cyclists multiple times a year to be used for events'. Next, as Pijbes did, the programme examines the use of the underpass in terms of traffic safety. And again as Pijbes did, the programme interprets the conclusions of the SWOV incorrectly, saying, 'The study by' the SWOV 'has revealed that the number of expected visitors, combined with the number of cyclists in peak moments, will exceed the thresholds for the safe use in the passage' (SAZ, 2011, 12). Therefore, according to the programme, 'the SWOV advised closing the passage to bicycle traffic in peak moments' (SAZ, 2011, 18). In fact, the SWOV stated that the numbers of pedestrians and bicycles would exceed the thresholds for pedestrian areas with no physical separation to admit bicycles. Relying on such interpretation of the SWOV's study, the programme adopts the principle that 'in any case, no bicycle traffic is possible in the passage during busy days and times' (SAZ, 2011, 12). Specifically, according to district-*wethouder* De Vries, who was responsible for the renovation also after the merger of the District of Oud-Zuid, 'in any case, the passage will be closed to cyclists during weekends, vacations, and the opening of expositions' (NRC, 2011). This meant that the underpass would be closed far longer than the 85 days recommended by TU Delft.

In addition, in accordance with the SWOV's recommendation, the programme argues that the underpass should remain closed to bicycles for the first month after the museum reopens. Whereas the SWOV recommended opening the underpass to cyclists after these peak days, however, the programme states that during this period, the behaviour of pedestrians will be studied, and the results will decide 'whether and at which moments the passage can be opened to cyclists during the opening hours of the museum' (SAZ, 2011, 12). In other words, as De Vries explained, '[i]f the museum is closed, cyclists will just be able to go through it.' They will also 'probably in other times that are not too busy' during opening hours (*De Telegraaf*, 2011). However, by saying 'whether', the programme leaves room to entirely close the underpass to cyclists except when the museum is closed.

Faced with this programme, the Cyclists' Union found it regrettable that the programme 'produce[d] an atmosphere of "not cycling, unless"', rather than "cycling, unless", as it ha[d] always been the case' (FAA, 2011). On the other hand, Pijbes called this programme a 'breakthrough' (NRC, 2011) and hoped that the district would 'further shift toward his goal in the coming days: a passage without cyclists' (*de Volkskrant*, 2011c).

On 13 September 2011, when Pijbes again presented his view in the newspaper *Het Parool*, the district council's Committee of the Environment discussed the Programme of Conditions. Among nine participants who were allowed to voice their opinion, Dijkstra, the member of the RohP, stressed the 'importance of the Rijksmuseum for the city and country' and asked the committee members to take into account the 'experience value and safety of and in the passage'. The other participants, including the representatives of the Cyclists' Union and RdO, regarded the programme as an attempt by the museum, particularly director Pijbes, to 'annex' the underpass to the museum, and argued for maintaining the underpass as a public road that cyclists could naturally, not exceptionally, use.

In the subsequent committee discussion, the GroenLinks and local parties demanded that the underpass should be opened to bicycles immediately after or even before the museum opened, and throughout the year. Among the coalition parties, the PvdA, like Pijbes, argued that bicycle traffic had changed since 'ten years' before: 'cyclists now use a cart (with children in it) or have a motor', and 'bicycle traffic has explosively increased', it said. The PvdA, therefore, did 'not exclude the closure of the passage to cyclists', and the D66 and VVD also took the same position. The three parties, however, did not express support for the programme itself, and the PvdA and D66, with the CDA and SP, pointed out that the study by the SWOV provided only the 'thin basis', exclusively relying on literature review, and the programme was 'not sufficiently worked out' (SrcAZ, 2011).

5) Preliminary Design

Surely, the DB could not rely on the study by the SWOV to justify closing the underpass to bicycles; it could on the study by TU Delft, which had so far been the only study arguing for closing the underpass on a regular basis.

At the request of the Cyclists' Union and RdO, De Lange re-examined assumptions used by TU Delft, which was also what the SWOV actually recommended. In November 2011, De Lange published the report *The Underpass of the Rijksmuseum*, which reached the opposite conclusion to one by TU Delft.

According to De Lange, the study by TU Delft is based on 'very large margins', for example, assuming that all the museum visitors walk the whole length of the underpass twice. Correcting these unrealistic assumptions reveals that 'there is always more than enough space on the sidewalks for pedestrians' according to variant 1a. In addition, since 'there are two museum entrances on both sides of the underpass' and these entrances 'have more than enough capacity', 'waiting time will be minimal', with few visitors crossing the bicycle path. Her conclusion is that 'cyclists and pedestrians can coexist excellently in the underpass' and recommends providing a difference in height between the bicycle path and sidewalks or extending sidewalks one metre beyond the columns so that 'pedestrians and cyclists have an excellent view on each other' (De Lange, 2011, 8-9).

On 17 January 2012, the DB decided the Preliminary Design, which presents design proposals in detail for public space directly around the museum. Regarding the underpass, this design seems to accept the prediction and recommendation by De Lange, although it refers to other documents than the report by De Lange. The bicycle path in the underpass 'is bordered by 30 cm wide stone bands with a difference in height of 4-6 cm', since the 'heightened bands' 'are an internationally recognized border between the sidewalk and street'. Although 'no queue will emerge in the passage', some pedestrians will undoubtedly cross the bicycle path. 'This crossing is made as safe as possible by placing the band line along the bicycle path beyond the column line' (GA, 2011, 19), the design states. However, the design sticks to the plan to close the underpass to bicycles on a regular basis, although it has reduced the number of days when the underpass is closed. According to the design, the underpass should be closed for '30 days or parts of day' a year; when 'large events' are held on Museumplein, eight times a year; and when the museum uses the underpass for 'special cultural events' (GA, 2011, 23). Therefore, with the Preliminary Design, the DB yielded to the demand by the Cyclists' Union and RdO to a certain extent, although far from enough for the RdO.

6) Lobbying

The Preliminary Design was to be made available for public inspection from 22 March to 11 April. With the final decision on the design by the DB looming, 'the supporters and (particularly) opponents of cycling under the Rijksmuseum' sent 'a steady stream of e-mails' to the members of the district council (Wals, 2012). Among the opponents, museum director 'Pijbes was lobbying very, very hard', according to the leader of the RdO, through the media and, according to some, 'behind the scenes' (SrcAZ, 2012). He insisted that if bicycles were admitted into the underpass, 'a chaos [would] emerge' and 'cyclists [would] collide with pedestrians'. He also dismissed the idea of creating a difference in height between the sidewalks and bicycle path in the Preliminary Design, saying, 'a contiguous sidewalk comes that can be no longer changed because of technical reasons' (*de Volkskrant*, 2012b).

On the part of the supporters, in 'reaction to a large piece in *Het Parool*' (AT5, 2012) written by Pijbes, '69 citizens of Amsterdam who live and/or work on, around, and in the vicinity of Museumplein' submitted an open letter to the members of the city council as well as the district council on 25 January 2012. The letter indicates that there was broad support for the view of Pijbes:

A lot of people who do not live and/or work in the vicinity of Museumplein, neighbours who rarely or never ride bicycles, and even those who live outside Amsterdam (...) are of the opinion that these routes Hobbemakade-Stadhouderskade and Stadhouderskade-Jan Luijkenstraat are safe enough for cyclists.

In fact, the letter says, 'there are many residents on and around the square and those working there who experience first-hand on bicycles how dangerous both "detour routes" are'. Therefore, '[i]nstead of now rigorously following Pijbes' wish to close the underpass to cyclists entirely', the district should allow the citizens to go through

the underpass on bicycles for ‘355–360 days’, except for ‘five to ten times a year’ when large events are held, the letter insists. It concludes by asking the district and city councils ‘not to let themselves be impressed by the personal opinion of the most authoritative museum director of the Netherlands’ (Lubbers, 2012, 1–3).

7) DTV

To address the view shared by ‘[a] lot of people’ mentioned in this letter, the Cyclists’ Union published the report *Problems with the Detour Routes in March*. The union argues that ‘the chance of conflict between different modes of transport is considerably larger on the detour routes’. It qualitatively predicts traffic at each of ten places along the detour routes where ‘the conflict points are concentrated’ (FAA, 2012b, 2). It concludes that ‘the nuisance and danger as a result of admitting cyclists into the underpass is much smaller than the problems that will arise if cyclists must go around’ the museum (FAA, 2012b, 9).

Through a quantitative study, the DTV Consultants reached a different conclusion, publishing the report *Public Space of the Rijksmuseum* on 18 April. This study was commissioned by the DB after the meeting of the district council’s Committee of the Environment in September 2011, where the Programme of Conditions was criticised for not being based on sufficient study. The DTV assumes two ‘route variants’: route variant 1, where the underpass is closed to cyclists, who use the eastern and western routes around the museum; and route variant 2, where cyclists use the underpass. For each variant, the DTV calculates the ‘severity of conflict’, which is also called ‘accident risk’, for pedestrians and cyclists at fifteen ‘conflict locations’ around the museum, including the underpass (Figure 5). The result is that the overall accident risk is larger with route variant 2, that is, the ‘open passage for cyclists’ than route variant 1. However, ‘the variants do not differ so much in accident risk’: route variant 2 is 5% less safe than route variant 1 (DTV, 2012a, 43). Moreover, it turns out that the underpass does not contribute to this difference so much because ‘[t]he severity of conflict is relatively low’ there. The top three contributors to the overall risk of route variant 2 are the ‘crossing point with Stadhouderskade’ (conflict location A) on the northern side of the museum and conflict locations M and O on the southern side of the museum (DTV, 2012a, 45–46). In addition, the DTV puts forward measures to improve traffic safety for three routes: ‘the route through the museum passage, the route along the western side, and the route along the eastern side of the museum’ (DTV, 2012a, 51). Regarding the third route, it proposes a ‘two-way bicycle path from Johannes Vermeerstraat to the intersection Stadhouderskade – Museumbrug’ as a ‘very clear improvement of the bicycle route along the eastern side of the museum’. Using this bicycle path, ‘[c]yclists can go around the museum almost conflict-free’. To realise this bicycle path, however, ‘space must be created by moving the fence along the museum’, the DTV states (DTV, 2012a, 56).

8) Decision for closure

During the public inspection for the Preliminary Design, nine opinions in total were submitted, among which only one argued for banning bicycles from using the underpass (SAZ, 2012). Relying on the study by the DTV, however, the DB decided to close the underpass to bicycles completely and create a contiguous flat floor of a ‘pedestrian area’, as Pijbes had demanded, in the Definitive Design on 27 April. The ‘precondition’ was that a ‘full-fledged’ two-way bicycle path was created ‘around the Rijksmuseum’. The coalition parties expressed their support for this decision the same day. According to the parties, the DTV’s study ‘reveals that traffic safety is considerably improved if cyclists and scooters have no access to the passage *and* a new bicycle path is created around the Rijksmuseum’ (VVD et al., 2012).



Figure 5 Conflict locations around the Rijksmuseum (DTV, 2012a, 14)

What the study in fact revealed, or what is written in ‘Conclusions’ of the study, is that route variant 1, namely, closing the underpass to bicycles is 5% safer than route variant 2. Although not in ‘Conclusions’, it indeed proposed a two-way bicycle path as a measure to improve the route along the eastern side of the museum. However, it did not compare route variant 1 with route variant 2 taking into account this improvement. Moreover, it did not examine the feasibility of this improvement, which was regarded as ‘no genuine option’ in the RAK. According to a document published by the Zuid division of the PvdA on 2 May, which explains why the PvdA opted for closing the underpass to bicycles, the museum was ‘not in favour of’ sacrificing its garden for this bicycle path.

Focusing on the real conclusion of the DTV, the Cyclists’ Union published the report DTV Report Closely Examined on 7 May, which challenges the conclusion. According to the union, the study by the DTV committed ‘some errors’. The ‘most important’ ones are related to the three top contributors to the overall accident risk of route variant 2. The DTV assumed too much car traffic at conflict location M, too serious potential injuries at conflict location O, and, for route variant 2, too much bicycle traffic at conflict location A, the union argues. Correcting these errors reveals that the ‘underpass that is open to cyclists is not 5% less safe, but about 25% safer’ ‘not only for cyclists but particularly also for pedestrians’, it concludes (FAA, 2012c).

About a week later, on 15 May, the DTV sent a letter to the Cyclists’ Union to answer the ‘three major points of fundamental criticism’ of its report. While refuting the third criticism, the DTV admits the first and second errors regarding conflict locations M and O, and corrects them as the Cyclists’ Union did. The new conclusion by the DTV is that the ‘open underpass is in total 7% safer than the closed underpass’. Therefore, the DTV admitted that opening the underpass to cyclists was safer than closing it, although not so safe as the Cyclists’ Union argued.

The DTV, however, tries to trivialise this fundamental correction in the preceding and following paragraphs in the letter, by substantially arguing that quantitative assessment of accident risk, whose procedures it laid out in detail in its report, is useless. The DTV ‘wants to emphasise that the unsafety in and around the Rijksmuseum is difficult to quantify’, and because ‘many assumptions were made for the calculation’, the results include an ‘error of margin of 20%’, which was not mentioned in its report. After all, what it can say with certainty is that ‘the total difference in risk between the variants is small’. Furthermore, at the end of the letter, it inserts the unfounded argument made by the coalition parties, saying, ‘The difference, however, becomes significant if a choice is made for a two-way bicycle path on the garden side of the museum around the museum’ (DTV, 2012b).

At the district council’s Committee of the Environment on 15 May, where the Definitive Design was discussed, the DB and coalition parties defended their decision by resorting to these arguments about the error of margin and two-way bicycle path in the letter, which was handed out to the committee members. Among nine participants who were allowed to voice their opinions, former Minister d’Ancona, representing the RohP, argued for ‘a beautiful bicycle path around the museum’ so that the underpass would become ‘suitable for many initiatives’. Except for her and another person, the other seven participants, including the representatives of the Cyclists’ Union and RdO, opposed closing the underpass to bicycles, saying that cycling through the underpass was safer. District *wethouder* Marco Kreuger (VVD), who took over the responsibility for the renovation from De Vries, explained the DB’s decision. He said, ‘on the basis of the traffic study’ by the DTV, ‘the DB has taken the position that it is desirable to arrange the underpass as a pedestrian area, on condition that a full-fledged two-way bicycle path is realised around the Rijksmuseum’. As the DTV argued in the letter, ‘there is an error of margin of 20% in’ the study, so ‘no hard conclusion’ can be derived from it. However, he said, the study ‘reveals that the balance shifts toward the closure of the passage to cyclists with the optimisation of a two-way bicycle path on Hobbemakade and Stadhouderskade’. In addition, it will ‘provide enormous opportunities’ to create a pedestrian area from the underpass, which should have ‘larger experience value for pedestrians’, he said. Concerning the following procedures, once the committee agreed with the Definitive Design, he planned to officially ask the city to move the Main Network for Bicycles from

the underpass to the detour routes, without presenting the design to the district council.

The local parties and GroenLinks opposed closing the underpass to bicycles and argued that the district council, not the committee, should be able to decide this issue. They also asked when the two-way bicycle path was available. In response, Kreuger conceded that it was not yet available when the renovation was completed in April 2013, saying, 'About a year later, the two-way bicycle path will be completed'.

Among the coalition parties, the VVD and D66 exactly followed the DB's line. According to the former, the study 'shows that it cannot be said with certainty whether keeping the underpass open for cycling is more or less safe', but 'it becomes very safe if a detour route for cyclists is created'. Admitting 'making a 180-degree turn' compared to its previous position, the PvdA also argued that the study 'brought no unequivocal results'. The party, however, attached to the closure an even more difficult 'absolute condition that a two-way bicycle path [should be] created on both eastern and western sides of the museum', although it was 'not guaranteed at this moment'. With the CDA also supporting the Definitive Design, a 'large majority of the committee' agreed with the design, including the following procedures (SrcAZ, 2012).

On 29 May, the DB sent the B&W of the city a letter asking 'to move the bicycle route under the museum to Stadhouderskade/Jan Luijkenstraat and/or Stadhouderskade/Hobbemakade', which means that 'the underpass under the Rijksmuseum is accessible only to pedestrians, and no longer to cyclists' (Wiebes, 2012).

5. The City Council's Decision to Admit Bicycles

(1) Rejection of the district council's request

A week later, on 6 June, *wethouder* of traffic Eric D. Wiebes, who was from the VVD, sent the city council a letter that presented the decision by the B&W on the request from the District of Zuid. Here, the B&W mentions the exchange between the DTV and Cyclists' Union during the preceding two months. First, the study by the DTV showed that 'the two variants (keeping the passage open and closing it to bicycles) [were] both safe and show[ed] little difference — cycling around would be marginally safer'. Then, 'the Cyclists' Union pointed out two (sic) errors in the study', and the DTV modified the conclusion, saying, 'keeping the passage under the Rijksmuseum open to cyclists would be somewhat safer than closing it', the B&W confirms. Without mentioning the arguments about the error of margin and two-way bicycle path, which were used by the DB and coalition parties of the district to justify closing the underpass to bicycles, the B&W concludes, 'On the basis of the above-mentioned study, the *College* sees no reason to change the Main Network for Bicycles decided by the city council.' Therefore, 'the underpass would remain open to cyclists and the bicycle route would be built according to the plan', it states. In addition, the B&W asks the district to take measures in order to 'further improve traffic safety' while keeping the underpass open to bicycles, such as a 'flexible separation between pedestrian and bicycle paths so that crossing by pedestrians is prevented' and 'banning light mopeds in the passage and enforcing the ban' (Wiebes, 2012).

At the meeting of the city councillors of the PvdA, the largest party with 15 councillors of 45 in total, on 11 June, the 'largest part' of the councillors agreed with the view of Emre Ünver, the party spokesperson, that 'the underpass must remain open to cyclists' (PvdA Amsterdam, 2012) — a view contrary to that of its counterpart of the district council. In a letter addressed to them by Ünver, he, like the B&W, follows the exchange between the DTV and Cyclists' Union, and confirms that the 'safety argument is stronger for not closing and thus keeping the passage open to cyclists.' And again like the B&W, without mentioning the arguments about the error of margin and two-way bicycle path, he concludes 'with the *college* that the arguments presented by Zuid give no reason to approve such a fundamental change of the main network for bicycles'. He sees 'no reason not to follow our promise to the citizens of Amsterdam to reopen the underpass of the Rijksmuseum to cyclists after eight years of detouring' (Ünver, 2012).

The minutes reporting this meeting of the PvdA as well as the letter by Ünver indicate that supporters and opponents of the bicycle underpass also lobbied the city councillors. According to the letter, ‘you were probably approached from all sides during the past weeks’, and the minutes report that museum director Pijbes invited the councillors of the party for a visit to the construction site. In addition, the District of Zuid continued ‘to categorically state to the councillors that a two-way bicycle path is the safest solution’ (FAA and RdO, 2012).

At the meeting of the city council’s Committee for Traffic and Transport and Infrastructure on 5 July, which discussed the decision by the B&W, however, neither the supporters nor the opponents of the bicycle underpass brought forth the arguments about the error of margin and two-way bicycle path. First, eleven citizens were allowed to present their opinions, and ten of them supported the bicycle underpass. In the following discussion, the VVD (8 seats), contrary to their *wethouder* Wiebes, and the D66 (7 seats) opposed admitting bicycles into the underpass. In opposing the bicycle underpass, safety was ‘not the most important argument’ for the VVD; it opposed from an ‘aesthetic view’ that people ‘must opt for the Rijksmuseum and square with international allure’. ‘Besides the allure’, for the D66, ‘the issue of the safety [wa]s most important’. According to the party, more and more people have used bicycles, cargo bikes, and scooters, which ‘people can’t control well.’ On the other hand, the PvdA supported the decision by the B&W because ‘opening the passage to cyclists is safest, according to the reports’. The party ‘doesn’t give in the bicycle lobby and the museum director, but takes its own consideration’, it emphasised. Also contrary to its counterpart of the district council, the CDA expressed support for the decision by the B&W; so did all the other parties (GARC, 2012). Confirming support by a ‘large majority of the city council’ (*de Volkskrant*, 2012c), the chair concluded the meeting by stating, ‘A letter would be sent to the district’ to convey the decision (GARC, 2012).

(2) The bicycle underpass revived

Therefore, after all, the underpass was renovated as part of the Main Network for Bicycles, in accordance with variant 1a supported by the RdO. The Rijksmuseum reopened on 13 April 2013, when the underpass was still opened only to pedestrians. The plan was to first study traffic around the museum after the reopening, and after taking some additional safety measures, to open the underpass to bicycles one month later, on 13 May.

After observing traffic, on 2 May, the Working Group on Blackspots of the city’s Department of Infrastructure, Traffic, and Transport recommended some measures such as stretching ribbons between the bicycle path and sidewalks around the entrances to prevent queues from deflecting to the bicycle path (AN, 2013, 8). Faced with this recommendation, the DB argued that the underpass should be opened to bicycles only in the evening and at night, from 18:00 to 8:00, from 13 May because it could not meet the recommendation in time. *Wethouder* Wiebes, however, immediately dismissed this idea, saying, ‘it is related to small measures’ (*de Volkskrant*, 2013). As a result, the underpass was finally opened to bicycles at 18:00 on 13 May, after a full nine years of detouring, and for 24 hours a day from the next day, except for weekends, when it was closed to bicycles from 11:00 to 15:00.

At the request of the city, the consultancy firm Arcadis observed traffic for about one month after the underpass was opened to bicycles, and published the report Evaluation and Advice for Museumstraat on 4 July. According to its conclusions, even [a]t busy moments, with queues in the passage, the situation is manageable with the use of ribbons and the limited use of personnel’. Since the ribbons cannot cover the entire length of the passage, ‘there are many crossing pedestrians around the entrances to the passage’. ‘This, however, leads to a conflict only in 0.3% of the crossings’, and ‘59% of these conflicts are a very light conflict and 33% is a light conflict’. In fact, from mid-May to mid-June, ‘no incidents involving injury were confirmed in conflicts between cyclists and pedestrians’ on the underpass, the Arcadis argues. Therefore, ‘[a]s long as the system with ribbons and traffic controllers is continued, no additional measures are necessary’. In addition, regarding the closure on weekends, it argues that ‘a

confusing situation emerges after opening the bicycle path at 15:00 because cyclists suddenly start to mix with pedestrians', who are still walking on the bicycle path (AN, 2013, 3–4).

In response to the last argument, the underpass was opened to bicycles for 24 hours a day also on weekends from 20 July. Taking this measure, the spokesperson of the district said, 'It all goes excellently' (*De Telegraaf*, 2013). Since then, it has been open to bicycles all day long throughout the year. Nowadays, no organisation or individual expressly argues for closing the underpass to bicycles, and even museum director Pijbes, a fervent opponent of the bicycle underpass, is expressing satisfaction with cyclists, including many tourists on rented bicycles, going through his museum.

6. Conclusions

This study has revealed that the policy about the underpass of the Rijksmuseum had dramatically changed since the discussion on the renovation started about ten years before.

At first, the issue for the District of Oud-Zuid was not whether but how the underpass should be opened to bicycles, assuming that it should be naturally opened to bicycles. And the district council unanimously adopted the motion demanding a 'permanent and unobstructed underpass for cyclists and pedestrians' in January 2004 and, as far as the underpass was concerned, again unanimously approved the RAK in June 2005, which espoused the 'principle' of 'cyclists through the nave; pedestrians through both aisles' and emphasised the importance of keeping the 'maximum capacity of the profile of the Passage'.

While the renovation was significantly delayed thanks to other reasons than the dispute over the underpass, however, museum director Pijbes proposed a new design for the underpass in July 2009. Although the design substantially violated the RAK, devoting half of the width of the nave to the entrance of the museum, the DB and the majority of the district council supported the design.

In August 2011, when closing the underpass to bicycles was no longer 'taboo' for the district council, the DB decided the Programme of Conditions, which banned bicycles from using the underpass 'during weekends, vacations, and the opening of expositions' and even left room to completely close the underpass to bicycles.

With the Preliminary Design in January 2012, the DB put forward the design for the underpass that assumed bicycle traffic there, although it still proposed closing the underpass to bicycles for more than 30 days a year.

After all, however, in April 2012, the DB and the majority of the district council decided to close the underpass to bicycles completely, transforming the whole underpass into a pedestrian area. To realise this closure, it sent the city's B&W a letter asking to move the Main Network for Bicycles from the underpass.

In response, the B&W decided to reject the request from the district, and the majority of the city council supported this decision in July 2012. As a result, the underpass was designed as a bicycle route, and reopened to bicycles in May 2013.

Therefore, the city, not the decentralised district, played a decisive role in reopening the underpass to bicycles, and protecting the public interest: the underpass now serves not only as a convenient and impressive bicycle route for citizens but also itself as an internationally popular tourist destination, without any serious accidents.

What affected the changing or conflicting policy choice made by the district and city?

Throughout the controversy about the underpass, the DB and HNR repeatedly commissioned consultancy firms to conduct traffic study, and various technical reports were made, including reports by the Arcadis and Incontrol in 2005, the Goudappel Coffeng in 2009, the SWOV in 2010, and the DTV in 2012. Theoretically, the findings of these technical reports should be used to guide policy choice, not vice versa. The fact is, however, that the findings of these reports were arbitrarily interpreted and used to justify predetermined policy choice. This can be clearly seen in the use of the study conducted by the SWOV and DTV. In addition, the museum used the study by the

Table 2 The party composition of the top executive branch in Amsterdam

years	DB of Oud-Zuid or Zuid	B&W
1998–2002	D66, PvdA, VVD	D66, GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD
2002–2006	D66, GroenLinks, VVD	CDA, PvdA, VVD
2006–2010	GroenLinks, PvdA	GroenLinks, PvdA
2010–2014	D66, PvdA, VVD	GroenLinks, PvdA, VVD

Arcadis and Incontrol to prove that pedestrian and bicycle traffic can be managed in the underpass even if the staircase is placed on the nave; it used the study by the SWOV to prove that pedestrians cannot share the underpass with bicycles even if the whole profile of the underpass is used for traffic. Furthermore, in some cases, the study itself seems to have been politically influenced, with unproven conclusions inserted, as seen in the letter submitted by the DTV. According to Flyvbjerg (1998, 2), these are inevitable because '[r]ationalization presented as rationality is shown to be a principal strategy in the exercise of power'.

The party composition of the top executive branch (Table 2) and coalition in the council must have naturally affected the policy choice. For example, the GroenLinks is generally believed to be the most dedicated pro-bike party. Therefore, its participation in the coalition may have contributed to the adoption of the motion in 2004 and the RAK in 2005 by the district council, and the decision by the city council to turn down the request from the district in 2012. However, the same coalition parties of the D66, VVD, and PvdA that decided to close the underpass to bicycles in 2012 sent the state secretary a letter emphasising the importance of the bicycle underpass in 2001. In 2009, the DB including the GroenLinks supported the plan Pijbes, which undermined the 'unobstructed underpass for cyclists and pedestrians'. In addition, whereas the PvdA and CDA of the district council opted for closing the underpass to bicycles, their counterparts of the city council supported the B&W's decision to keep the Main Network for Bicycles on the underpass. Therefore, the party composition cannot explain the whole story of policy choice.

The policy choice made by the district and city may reflect the trend of public opinion, pressure from authorities, which is inseparably linked to the former, and the vulnerability of the district and city to these trend and pressure, to which the district was more vulnerable than the city.

Until around 2005, when the RAK was decided, the underpass was available or just closed to bicycles. Since the citizens of Amsterdam vividly knew how convenient and impressive it was to bicycle through the underpass, there was 'massive support for keeping the underpass open' among them. Therefore, except for a small circle of architects, no one, including authorities, could openly argue for closing the underpass to bicycles. As a result, it was 'self-evident' for the DB and district council, including the VVD, which is generally regarded as a pro-car party, to opt for keeping the underpass open to bicycles; the issue was how to open it.

As the renovation was significantly delayed, however, public opinion had become more diversified, with many even accepting the closure. Emboldened by this trend of public opinion, the 'most authoritative museum director of the Netherlands' Pijbes proposed a new design that significantly reduced the 'maximum capacity' of the underpass in 2009, and at the same time, other authorities such as the chief government architect and the former minister launched a campaign to entirely close the underpass to bicycles. The DB and the majority of the district council praised the plan Pijbes using the 'terminology of the Rijksmuseum', and fully advocated the interests of the museum, saying, 'people can be enticed to take the steps in order to visit the inner courts (museum shop, café, lectures)'. The scene of the district council's committee where Pijbes kept on speaking far beyond his time limit represented his superiority over the DB or district council. After withdrawing his plan, Pijbes joined in the campaign to close the underpass to bicycles and repeatedly presented his view in media. The Programme of Conditions,

which was decided after ‘talks’ with Pijbes in 2011, cited the desire of the ‘director of the Rijksmuseum’ and without examining the appropriateness of his desire, it stated, ‘Therefore, the passage will be closed to cyclists multiple times a year’.

Faced with mounting criticism of the museum’s attempt to ‘annex’ the underpass, and the technical counter-argument commissioned by the Cyclists’ Union and RdO, the DB took more account of the interests of cyclists in the Preliminary Design. Lobbied by Pijbes ‘very, very hard’, however, the DB and the majority of the district council ultimately opted for closing the underpass in 2012.

Subsequently, the B&W of the city refused to close the underpass to bicycles, focusing on the DTV’s first report and its correction in response to the criticism from the Cyclists’ Union, without consideration for the additional arguments to justify the closure. Although lobbied by the district as well as Pijbes, the city council also considered ‘(rightly) that the chance of two-way bicycle paths was quite small’⁽³⁾, and supported the decision by the B&W.

Therefore, it seems that the DB and district council continually shifted their position in response to the trend of public opinion and pressure from authorities whereas the B&W and city council made their decision rather independently and rationally.

Every interviewee pointed out the importance of the role played by *wethouder* Wiebes in reopening the underpass to bicycles. Indeed, the GroenLinks was part of the coalition, but Wiebes seems to have taken the initiative in the B&W’s decision not to move the Main Network for Bicycles. He also flatly rejected the idea to open the underpass to bicycles only in the evening and at night, an idea put forward by Pijbes after the B&W’s decision and succeeded by district-*wethouder* Kreuger, the VVD colleague. He was so talented, so popular — even among left-wing parties — and so intelligent that he could take a somewhat independent position of his party, according to the interviewees. He became State Secretary of Finance in 2014. On the other hand, there was Luud Schimmelpennink among the city councillors of the PvdA. He was one of the founders of the non-violent anarchist movement Provo in the 1960s, when he also launched a bike-share system called *Witte Fiets* and an electric-car-share system called *Witkar* in Amsterdam (Roegholt, 1993). As a strong believer in bicycles, he told Pijbes to stop lobbying when he was personally approached. These politicians with firm, independent views must have helped the B&W and city council to resist the trend of public opinion and pressure from authorities.

And it is not a coincidence that they were representative of the city, not the district, since if they are really talented politicians, capable of attracting support from many party members, they are necessarily nominated for a superior position. As a result, the B&W and city council are more ‘professional’, as some interviewees pointed out, than the DB and district council, which are easily influenced by pressure from outside.

In addition, the original aim of the district system included reflecting citizens’ views or needs in policy more accurately by bringing government closer to them. Indeed, local citizens or citizens’ organisations have more opportunities to meet district *wethouders* or district councillors than *wethouders* or city councillors, who have to deal with a much larger area and population with much more diverse issues. Therefore, district *wethouders* and district councillors can be certainly more responsive to public opinion. This, however, also means that they are more intensely subject to and, as a result, more vulnerable to pressure groups or authorities as well as public opinion.

These problems, which are inherent in the district system, must at least partly explain why the district agreed with the closure of the underpass to bicycles, and the city rejected it. And the city could reject it because the city reserved the power to decide the Main Network for Bicycles. Therefore, this case indicates that delegating excessive power to neighbourhoods entails the risk of undermining the public interest.

Notes

(1) These are based on article 87 of the Local Government Act in force from 1 April 2010 through 31 August 2010.

- (2) Answer by Michael van der Vlis on 10 March 2016, in response to the author's question by e-mail.
- (3) Answer by the former leader of the Amsterdam division of the Cyclists' Union on 20 August 2015, in response to the author's question by e-mail.

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