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## Political Science: London Cycle Crew

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## **Introduction**

Cycling Culture in the Netherlands and specifically in Amsterdam is extremely different than many other places in the world. Biking is the second most common method of transportation and is seen as engraved in Dutch culture. There have been significant economic and environmental benefits from becoming a cycling prominent area.

Population of Amsterdam: 1.2 million

Number of Cyclists in Amsterdam: 900 000

## **Laws and policies**

The Netherlands has several specific bike rules and regulations based upon the hope for a safe and efficient biking culture. To begin, the bicycle policy is municipally regulated and financed, making it more efficient to govern based on regional needs. In relation to Amsterdam in specific, there are seven main focuses of bike policy;

1. Creating more and better bicycle parking facilities.
2. Persistently combating bicycle theft.
3. Constructing the missing links in the 'Hoofdnnet Fiets' bicycle network.
4. Promoting traffic safety for cyclists.
5. Proper management and maintenance of the 'Hoofdnnet Fiets' bicycle network.
6. Reinforcing weak links in the 'Hoofdnnet Fiets' bicycle network.
7. Formulating and implementing a communication strategy directed at specific target groups and themes.

One interesting policy related to cycling culture is Article 185 of the Road Law which relies on strict liability of the driver in a collision with a bike. This notion helps relieve the financial burden of those choosing to bike for transportation and emphasizes that drivers are required to be insured where non-motor vehicles are not.

## **What makes this city's cycling culture unique?**

Cycling culture is extremely unique in the Netherlands and specifically Amsterdam because of how integrated it is into modes of transportation. To begin it is engraved in the Netherlands culture and it is known to receive a bike by one's 4th birthday. Cycling is the second most used transportation venue after walking for the Dutch; The flat landscape makes it easier to travel by bike to many destinations. As well, there are three main recreational bike options; National Bike Routes, Round Trips and Regional Networks. There are also 25 cycle superhighways. As biking is becoming more popular, a safe route for longer travel allows bikers to continue the use of the

bicycle for transportation. Cycling is part of Dutch culture and has a unique culture in the Netherlands.

### **What can be done to improve cycling culture?**

Although cycling culture in the Netherlands is extremely advanced in comparison to the rest of the world, there are some improvements that can be made. With the increase of cyclists, congestion is becoming an increased problem. Therefore, there is increased bike traffic, lack of storage or places to lock your bike, and rampant bike theft due to lack of security. As well, tourists are often unfamiliar or unaware of the cycling culture therefore it would be beneficial to inform other states of the progression of cycling in the Netherlands. Some major differences include their own parking, traffic lights, insurance etc. The bike culture in the Netherlands has significantly improved economic and environmental concerns around driving and has made cycling extremely accessible and part of their everyday culture.

### **How does the Netherlands/Amsterdam compare to London?**

Overall, the Netherlands has similar rules and regulations to the rest of the cycling countries; where they differ is how cycling is part of their culture and as well their landscape making it an easier transportation route. In comparison to London in specific, there are more designated biking routes in Amsterdam (highways, bike paths, bike lanes on roads etc.). There are 767km of bike paths in Amsterdam compared to 350km of bike paths in London. Significantly more cyclists reside in the Netherlands; In Ontario there is 1.2 million cyclists yet close to 900 000 in Amsterdam alone. Another major difference is that helmets are required in Ontario yet are not in Amsterdam. The only true similarity between both cities is the safety equipment required (must have lights, a bell/horn, brakes, etc.) as well as similar prices of fines.

### **Resources and Further Information**

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