Bicycle as a part of town planning in Lelystad

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Summary

The town of Lelystad is a young town, build as a super-centre for urban growth in the newly reclaimed polder Flevoland in the Netherlands. After a quick and prosperous growth the town consolidated and after that the town has even known a brief period of slight decline. The poor years are over now and the town is flourishing again. The town is growing again, both employment and housing. Ambitions for Lelystad are described in 'vision on a special town'.

The is characterised by a seperated-traffic system: slow traffic only merges with other traffic in urban areas. Slow traffic crosses the traffic arteries (an orthogonal system of 'dreven') by bridges of tunnels.

The town is crammed for growth in next decennia. The urban growth demands both a re-organisation of the traffic department of the council of Lelystad and the wording of a new policy and vision on mobility and the traffic-system. The introduction of human standards is brought in practice in a town that was designed by a group of mechanical thinking engineers.

This contribution describes two practises: a revaluation of the traffic-arteries and a revaluation of the bicycle-network based on the principle of 'local traffic achievement'. In this approach fast traffic and slow traffic are seen as complementary in the town planning.

1 About Lelystad...

The town of Lelystad is a young town, build as a super- centre for urban growth in the newly reclaimed polder Flevoland. In her brief existence the town has known several stages of growth and development. After an initially quick and prosperous growth a special town was developed. The town can be characterised by its low density –for Dutch standards!- because of which the town is rather extensive. The town is also known by its special traffic-system: a traffic system in which slow traffic is separated from fast traffic. Only in urban areas both kinds of traffic merge.

Traffic arteries are build up with two by two lanes in an orthogonal network. Connections to the traffic arteries are made T-shaped junctions and slow traffic can only cross the traffic arteries by bridges or tunnels. The structure was supposed to be suitable for a town with 100.000 inhabitants, Lelystad has now about 60.000 inhabitants.

After the growing-period the town consolidated and even declined a little. Housing in the cheap segment and criminality made the town unattractive. By now the town has re-achieved a new period growth and that means that high demands are made for the traffic department, who made a new start.

2 Current tendencies

Now that the town of Lelystad is growing again, working and housing demands the attention of the traffic department. Reasonable priced houses and –again for Dutch standards- spacious lots are the base for success. The change of development of the town demands a different organisation of the traffic department. The few man that were working on traffic used to be fit in the civil engineering department; both the limited number of workers and the organisation made it inefficient and ineffective. Reason to give an own status to the traffic department and to significantly increase the capacity.

As the new traffic department can play a role in town planning, relations with urban planning department and department for economy improved, whole a good relation with civil engineering was consolidated. The traffic department now focuses on mobility rather than traffic itself.

A new product of the traffic department is a policy document, a conceptual vision on sustainable traffic for the town of Lelystad.

3 Revaluation of traffic arteries

In the scope of 'sustainable safety' a discussion on the revaluation of the traffic arteries was started. It is a brake-through in town planning: the orthogonal network will be changed into a radial network with two rings: one ring directly around the town-centre, one ring through the outskirts. Consequences are bundling of fast traffic and making the traffic system affordable as traffic arteries cost a fortune for maintenance. At the same time the number of barriers will decline for slow traffic, especially near the town-centre. Such a change of town planning is remarkable.

The ring through the outskirts is now under study for reconstruction, with two possible scenarios:

First there is a scenario in which the current maximum speed of 70km/h is maintained, but because of growth of the traffic volume most T-shaped junctions will lose their function: traffic simply can not join in the mainstream anymore in the rush hours. This should result in more traffic in the urban areas. Secondly there is a scenario in which the maximum speed is reduced to 50 km/h and all t-shaped junctions can be maintained. Both scenarios will influence the ease of reaching the town by car, but increase the liveability and sustainability of the town of Leystad. The study now takes place based on dynamic traffic modelling and scenic architecture.

4 Local traffic achievement

The Local Traffic Achievement (LTA) was an initiative that was initially meant for energy-reduction in traffic by means of spatial planning. But it appeared to have a positive influence on road safety, liveability and potential for high quality of the urban planning. The leading thought in the LTA is that al means of transport are complementary: small distances are to be walked easily while for distances up to five kilometre the bike is the logical choice. For longer trips the car and public transport are in the picture. Urban planning is the basis for a network for slow traffic. This LTA-initiative comes from NOVEM and will be discussed elsewhere in this congress by Albert Jansen. The principles of the LTA were brought into practice on two locations in Lelystad: the new housing estate 'Lelystad-South' and the restructuring 'WOP' (in which two residential areas between the town centre and the coast are restructured). In Leystad-South the network for fast traffic was reconsidered and adjusted. Without the LTA the new housing estate would suffer from traffic taking a shortcut. Also the climate for slow traffic has improved remarkable and chances for opening a new train-station have improved.

In the restructuring 'WOP' the relation between the coast and the centre of Lelystad had to be improved while. In this study the cyclist federation ENFB joined in. Results appear to fit in the existing philosophy of the urban planning very well so far. About the effectivety of the LTA in this case it is too early to make statements.

5 Remarkables

Although the traffic –as a part of urban planning- has become more and more sustainable and environmentally friendly, things sometimes turn out different from what be expected. In urban planning the restructuring of the centre was done with much attention for possibilities of safe crossing of pedestrian and slow traffic. Possibilities for storage of bikes were fully integrated in the program: some electronically guarded, some guarded by guards. Prices are low. The cyclists federation ENFB turned out to be positive at first hand. Then the green socialist –a party that has a positive attitude to cycling- appeared to stand against this plans. The moral of this contribution appears: no matter how sustainable your urban planning is, always keep expecting the unexpected!