5. The Accessible City, Liveable

One year after holding a referendum for the first time on car-free Noorderplantsoen, the municipality of Groningen set about another new attempt in public participation, which had been strived for under the slogan “administrative renewal”. It tried to make a traffic plan through an “open planning process”, which was the textbookish application of participatory theory, particularly communicative planning theory. This process took about one and a half years until the municipal council approved its final product, The Accessible City, Liveable, in May 1997. It was regarded as a “unique example of participation” in The Netherlands in those days, because of the “relatively distant horizon” with its target year of 2010, the “large scale”, dealing with the whole city area, and “a great number of people involved” (Ministerie van Verkeer en Waterstaat [MVW], 1998, p.27) in the process. The third case study examines this process.

Because the central measure of the process was public participation, and political parties were dealt with just like various other organisations in the process, this chapter necessarily examines the process mainly in terms of public participation. After scrutinising what kind of opportunities for participation were provided and what kind of results emerged from these opportunities, this chapter separately examines how the PvdA, which had consistently taken initiative in traffic planning in Groningen, was involved in the process.

\[\text{Figure 5.1. The procedure of the Things May Change.}\]

241
Hasselaar abruptly resigned as wethouder and councillor due to “personal circumstances” in December 1994. The wethouder of both traffic and economy was succeeded by Joan Peters-Stam of the same D66, who was responsible for this traffic planning. As mentioned earlier, the B&W consisted of three PvdA wethouders, two D66 wethouders, and one CDA wethouder.

5.1 Public Support

5.1.1 Update Traffic Policy

On September 12th, 1995, Wethouder Pieters-Stam published the Starting Memorandum/Approach to Updating Traffic Policy, which announced the start of a traffic planning process for the whole city area. The existing traffic plan, the Plan Groningen Node of Traffic and Transport, was approved by the municipal council in 1991. The memorandum explains the necessity to renew this so quickly, referring to the structure plan, The City of Tomorrow: Groningen in 2005, which was in preparation. “Car traffic keeps on increasing and traffic problems emerge here and there”, it says, and “concentrating car traffic on main
arteries reaches its limits”. Also with regard to residential streets, “some neighbourhood opening roads increasingly function as main routes in terms of intensity”, and, as a result, “more and more neighbourhoods ask for preventing through traffic”. In addition, it is expected that car traffic will increase further in the future, “as a result of autonomous development, but also as a result of the implementation of The City of Tomorrow”. The draft of the structure plan, which was published in November 1994, predicted that the population of Groningen would increase from about 170,000 in 1994 to about 180,000 in 2005. To accommodate this increase in population, the draft plans to build about 7,000 houses from 1995 to 2005, and also sets aside about 100 ha of industrial areas, in addition to existing 40 ha. As a result of these developments, even “if we are regionally dedicated to the most mobility-limiting scenario” (GG, 1994, p.29), the draft estimates an increase in travelling distance by car at 40% in 2010. Therefore, the memorandum argues, “given this development, it is necessary to update the traffic policy in order to keep the city accessible and liveable also in the future”.

It successively emphasises that the new traffic plan has to ensure accessibility by car to the city from the region: “In doing this, it is important that measures must match possibilities. Many people in this region have turned to cars when they want to come to the city. The policy must take this into account. Groningen, as an urban node and centre of the north, must be well accessible, also by car.” The Gezinsbode, which had consistently stressed the importance of accessibility by car, reported this part as “new development”.

5.1.2 The Open Planning Process

In addition, the memorandum states that this updating is carried out through an “open planning process”. “It is important that the traffic policy can count on broad support in society”, and, “We, therefore, want to closely involve various groups of those concerned in updating the policy from the beginning”, it says. As the motive for taking such a process, Pieters-Stam mentioned the fact that municipal traffic policies had repeatedly incurred citizens' displeasure since the VCP:

Current Wethouder of Traffic Joan Pieters-Stam says that the first displeasure among parts of the public also emerged in response to the VCP of 1977.

“There have been quite a lot of complaints in the city, actually already since the VCP of 1977”, says Joan Pieters. (MVW, 1998, p.8)

The “ignition point” (MVW, 1998, p.8) for the B&W was the referendum over the closure of Noorderplantsoen. As mentioned earlier, by a narrow margin, it was decided to close the park to cars definitively. The B&W, however, derived another conclusion from this result. In its view, “many people voted against because of their dissatisfaction with the whole traffic policy of the municipality”. “We have found that we must return to the public” (MVW, 1998, p.8), said Pieters-Stam.

The B&W reasoned that this public displeasure had been provoked by the one-sided manner of making plans: “The traffic plans that have been made for the city in the past have characterised themselves by the always strong and sometimes one-sided control by
the municipality. (…) Also through the manner in which the discussions were conducted, the content is not equally understood by everyone.” (GG, 1996b, p.1) Therefore, this time, it had chosen to take a “different approach” to obtain “as broad support as possible from the public”:

We wanted to take a different approach this time. We mostly present a standpoint, everyone can react, and the municipal council subsequently takes a decision. Now, people are involved from the very beginning. Because we want as broad support as possible from the public for our new policy.10

The government has been firm for years in formulating problems for itself and proposing solutions. In the discussion over the traffic policy, we intentionally make a step further. We do not want to ask for opinions about an already existing plan, but make a plan together with those whom it concerns.11

In addition, the B&W, just like communicative planners, expected citizens themselves to learn through an open planning process. It intended to “foster more understanding among the public and interest groups about the limits to the latitude in a traffic policy and about each others’ standpoints” (MVW, 1998, p.29). For this purpose, “every participant must be challenged as much as possible to think together beyond their own boundaries”, and, that is why, “we want to let representatives of businesspeople’s, residents’, and environmental organisations, independent experts, and the provincial and central governments think together in an open planning process”, says the memorandum. Pieters-Stam expressed her “conviction”: “If you take others seriously - and we do this in this discussion -, understanding about others’ interests also follows. Finally, we are on speaking terms.”12

Therefore, the main objective of this planning was to obtain broad public support, and the central measure for this objective was an open planning process, which should incorporate public opinion from the beginning on one hand and change public attitude and views on the other. Public support constitutes one of considerations given by liberal democrats in pursuing the public interest. On the other hand, this concept is rather alien to participationists, for whom public policies should be decided by citizens themselves. Citizens do not have to support policies decided by someone else. Or, communicative theorists put emphasis on a consensus among citizens rather than on public support. That is why, the B&W tried to achieve a liberal-democratic objective through participatory, particularly communicative, measures.

However, the memorandum does not at all specify at which stages and how the public can participate. It just presents a broad flow of the whole planning process, which consists of three “phases”. Phase 1 would “establish problems to be solved and criteria to test” alternatives. Phase 2 would choose a “limited number of scenarios” and “work [them] out”. Finally in Phase 3, the B&W would select the “preferred model” from among those worked-out scenarios, and the municipal council would make a decision based on these alternatives. The decision by the municipal council is scheduled for October 1996.
The B&W assumed, “independence is important in an open planning process”, and “any semblance of premature municipal interference was avoided” (MVW, 1998, p.42). As a result, a different planning organisation was introduced than a usual one in which the municipal Department of Urban Planning had prepared plans under the direction of the B&W. B. Boersma was invited as project leader from outside the municipality, while the IPP in Amsterdam was commissioned “to lead the participation and communication process”\(^{13}\). In addition, “even if Groningen itself [had] sufficient expertise at hand”, technical assistance “was contracted out to an engineering bureau” (MVW, 1998, p.42), Heidemij Advies. As “intermediary and contact person” between these external agents and the municipality, L. H. in ’t Veld was appointed, “who was employed by the municipality as policy adviser for traffic a few months after the start of the process” (p.11). These four agents, namely, Boersma, the IPP, the Heidemij Advies, and Veld constituted the “project leadership” or “core group” of the project.

This process was named “Things May Change (Het Kan Verke(e)ren)”, and had provided various opportunities for participation since November.

5.2. Phase 1

5.2.1 Abolish Bus Lanes

Immediately after the Starting Memorandum was published, the local newspaper carried opinions about a new traffic plan expressed by representatives of business organisations.

In the Nieuwsblad dated September 13th, T. Venema, the chairman of the Groningen City Club (GCC), which was joined by almost all the shopping street organisations in the inner city, demands to abolish bus lanes that had been introduced to facilitate public transport: “As long as there is no solution to the southern ring road, which is increasingly silted up, and roads in the inner city get chocked up with great frequency, the municipality must again open some bus lanes for normal traffic.” He particularly insists on erasing bus lanes on Paterswoldseweg and Hereweg, which had been realised from 1992 to 1993. Both roads were substantial approach routes by car to the inner city. In the Nieuwsblad dated September 21st, A.M.J. Vogd, the chairman of the Royal Association for Small- and Medium-Sized Business (MKB), also urges the municipality to “paint away bus lanes” without delay: “You see traffic jammed everywhere, and you still have the nice broad bus lanes, where a bus runs sporadically. (…) In addition, there is frequently almost no one sitting in the buses. That’s painful. If the municipality wants to wait for a definitive policy, then temporary measures must be now taken to remove difficulties.”

In the inner city in those days, based on the plan Inner City Better\(^{14}\), which was approved by the municipal council in March 1993, the pedestrian area was being expanded, accompanied by huge refurbishment work, changing the pavement, replacing street furniture, and so on. In 1994, the Federation 8+\(^{15}\) (predecessor of the GCC), the KNOV and NCOV (later united into the MKB), and the municipality had reached an agreement to
build five parking garages within and along Diepenring, namely, on Ossenmarkt, Boterdiep, Damsterdiep, Gedempte Zuiderdiep, and Westerhaven. This agreement also stipulated that businesspeople of the inner city should contribute ten million guilders for ten years to the construction cost. The municipal council on July 6th, 1995, approved a proposal to accept this contribution through sales tax and the motion made by the VVD that these garages should bring about a net increase of “at least 1,600” parking spaces in the inner city, while the GroenLinks, GPV, and SP opposed both. Referring to these projects in the pipeline, Vogd stresses the urgency to ensure accessibility by car to the inner city: “We have five parking garages, we have a beautiful yellow stone pavement, we have an excellent inner city, but we have one big problem: we cannot come here.”

Part of shopkeepers had a strong objection to the above contribution, which resulted in the establishment of the Groningen Businesspeople’s Interests (GOB), apart from the GCC. At the municipal council committee that discussed the Starting Memorandum, the GOB also pressed for “realising sufficient approach routes to the inner city” and abolishing bus lanes. Moreover, it insisted that the VCP should also be arguable during the Things May Change.

Therefore, various views responding to the Starting Memorandum were reported one after another, which asked for securing accessibility by car to the inner city. However, once public participation started, it had become clear that the vast majority of opinions rather asked for restraining car traffic on one hand and facilitating public transport and bicycles on the other.

5.2.2 The Starting Meeting
The Things May Change started publicly with the starting meeting on November 7th, 1995. Two hundred of citizens gathered in the hall of the Department of Urban Planning and Economic Affairs, which was temporarily remodelled into a “living room of the family Ouwerflat”. After the Heidemij Advies presented the current and future traffic situation of Groningen and the IPP explained the participatory process, the meeting entered into the “traffic festival”. In this session, first, representatives of the GCC, the municipal bus company GVB, and the ROVER respectively presented their proposals concerning traffic. Venema of the GCC put forward an idea of opening bus lanes over a few hundred metres around three intersections for normal cars turning right. A rather modest idea, considering his previous statement. The GVB proposed issuing a special bus ticket, “guilder strip”, which would enable customers to go to the inner city at one guilder by bus on Saturday and the day for late night shopping, Thursday. The ROVER’s idea was to place bicycle stands next to bus stops on Emmaplein. Subsequently, forty-five “city advisers”, who were chosen at random from among participants, examined these three proposals. After receiving comments from “experts and politicians”, they selected the idea proposed by the GVB and recommended the B&W to implement it. Burgemeester Ouwerkerk, Wethouder Pieters-Stam, and Wethouder of Urban Planning Willem Smink (PvdA) attended the meeting. Although the objective of this meeting was to “show residents that something is really done with their advice” (MVW, 1998, p.34), the B&W did not adopt this
recommendation as it was. Those three of the B&W "promised that they adopted all three ideas", and "ended the role play with the announcement that they would try to realise all three plans". In fact, although experimentally, these three ideas were later turned into reality.

At this meeting, participants received the first number of the information bulletin Het Kan Verkeeren, which was edited by the IPP. At the end of this bulletin, a "TICKET" was attached, with which people could apply to "keep informed of the discussion over the traffic policy". This ticket was returned by 1,900 people in total.

5.2.3 The Poll
The starting meeting was quickly followed by a large-scale poll concerning traffic among residents of the city of Groningen and the region, namely, surrounding towns and villages. This poll consisted of the questionnaire and the telephone interview. The city and regional editions of Gezinsbode dated November 15th carried a full-page questionnaire, which included forty-four questions. The deadline to respond was put a week later, on November 22nd. The telephone interview, with almost the same questions as the questionnaire, was conducted among residents of the city of Groningen for six nights from November 13th to 23rd. In the hope that the interview could "make the callers (...) once again aware of their own and others' standpoints" (MVW, 1998, p.36), it was carried out by councillors of all the political parties, civil servants of the Department of Urban Planning and Economic Affairs, and representatives of business organisations, such as the GCC, GOB, and MKB, citizens' organisations, such as the ENFB, and residents' organisations. There were in total seventy-two interviewers.

The Result
The questionnaire was responded by 4,809 "citizens", namely, those who lived in the city of Groningen, and 841 "suburbanites" who lived in the region. To the telephone interview, among 870 citizens chosen at random, 660 gave answers. On December 11th, Pieters-Stam presented the result of this poll, which clearly showed what the majority of the citizens of Groningen wanted concerning traffic, as can be seen in the following. With regard to "Accessibility of the city of Groningen", to Question 7 ("How important do you find it that the city is well accessible by public transport?"), 87% in the telephone interview and 78% of citizens in the questionnaire answered "very important". On the other hand, to Question 9 ("Do you think that extra roads must be built for accessibility of the city?"), 30% answered "yes" and 59% answered "no" in the interview, while 33% and 58% of citizens respectively in the questionnaire. So, the clear majority of citizens rejected the construction of new roads.

With regard to "The use of cars in the inner city", to Question 13 ("To what extent do you think the inner city must be penetrable for cars?"), 17% in the interview and 19% of citizens in the questionnaire answered "freely penetrable". The overwhelming majority wished some measures to be taken against car traffic in the inner city. Confirming this
conclusion is Question 16 (“Only the most necessary traffic, such as visiting offices and supplying shops, can enter the inner city by car”). To this question, 50% answered “good idea” and 26% “reasonable idea” in the interview, while 35% and 26% of citizens respectively in the questionnaire. In the interview, only those who answered “limitedly permeable” to Question 13, 66%, were asked about this question. So, those who answered “good idea” or “reasonable idea” were actually 50% of the total interviewees. However, those who answered “not permeable” to Question 13 were 16% in the interview, who should mostly agree with the statement of Question 16. Although the examples of the “most necessary traffic” did not include shopping, this statement was supported by the clear majority.

Citizens wanted to restrain car traffic not only within the inner city but also in the city as a whole. To Question 15 (“Visitors who come from outside the city are encouraged to park their cars on the outskirts of the city and subsequently to go to the inner city by bus or bicycle.”), 72% in the interview and 58% of citizens in the questionnaire answered “good idea”, while 12% and 18% respectively answered “poor idea”. Again in the interview, only those who answered “limitedly permeable” to Question 13 were asked about this question. Therefore, actually 48% of the total interviewees answered “good idea”. However, again, those who answered “not permeable” to Question 13 would mostly agree with the statement of Question 15. Therefore, whether suburbanites came to the inner city for work or shopping, the clear majority of citizens thought that they should come to the inner city by bus or bicycle.

With regard to “Positions on traffic”, to Question 20 (“In place of taking measures for more car traffic, the municipality must ensure that car traffic does not increase further”), 61% answered “agree” in the interview, and 43% and 18% of citizens answered “completely agree” and “somewhat agree” respectively in the questionnaire. Conforming with the result of Question 9, the clear majority of citizens had an objection to the further construction of infrastructure for cars. To Question 27 (“The municipality of Groningen must give priority to bicycles in the traffic policy, even if this is at the expense of cars”), 62% answered “agree” and 28% “disagree” in the interview, while 40% of citizens answered “completely agree”, 21% “somewhat agree”, 9% “somewhat disagree”, and 22% “completely disagree” in the questionnaire. Again the clear majority opted for bicycles at the expense of cars. To Question 28 (“The municipality of Groningen must give priority to buses in the traffic policy, even if this is at the expense of cars), 64% answered “agree” and 27% “disagree” in the interview, while 37% of citizens answered “completely agree”, 22% “somewhat agree”, 10% “somewhat disagree” and 23% “completely disagree” in the questionnaire. So, it is evident that the demand to abolish bus lanes was rather a minority opinion.

It can be concluded from the above result that the apparent majority of responding citizens wanted to restrain car traffic and facilities for it, and facilitate the use of public transport and bicycles. On the other hand, there were some responses indicating, at first glance, that citizens also wanted facilities for cars. For example, to Question 6 (“Do you think that there is traffic congestion in or around the city of Groningen?”), 56% in the interview and 63% of
citizens in the questionnaire answered “yes, and I experience this as a problem for the city”. However, according to the responses to Questions 9 and 20, many of them did not want to solve this problem by providing new infrastructure for cars. To Question 8 (“How important do you find it that the city is well accessible by car?”), 59% in the interview and 48% of citizens in the questionnaire answered “very important”. However, again, many of them did not want to achieve this with new roads or parking garages. It may be more reasonable for them to improve the flow of car traffic by reducing car traffic itself. To Question 34 (“Would you like to live in a car-free neighbourhood where residents cannot come to the front doors by car?”), 73% in the interview and 65% of citizens in the questionnaire answered “no”. This question is not about a much more common car-limited neighbourhood where residents can come to the front doors by car but do not have their parking spaces there. There has never been such a neighbourhood designed in Groningen as mentioned in this question.

The respondents to the interview and questionnaire belonged to disproportionately many families with cars. Of all the families of the city of Groningen, 56% owned cars, while 62% of the families of interviewees and 68% of the families of respondents to the questionnaire owned cars. Those from families with cars could take a more sympathetic attitude toward cars than those from families without cars. But the result of this poll still shows that the clear majority chose public transport and bicycles, even at the expense of cars. The “anti-car” policy turned out not to be the “dogma of the PvdA”, as labelled by business organisations, but to be a policy based on “broad public support”, which the Thing May Change strived for.

As a matter of course, answers from the suburbanites revealed a more car-oriented attitude. For example, to Question 9 (“Do you think that extra roads must be built for accessibility of the city?”), 46% answered “yes” and the same 46% answered “no”. To Question 11 (“Do you think that the city of Groningen can demolish houses for accessibility of the city?”), 53% answered “yes” and 33% “no”. However, among these respondents, 92% belonged to families with cars. So, possibly, those who came to the city usually by car, experiencing inconvenience, especially responded to express their smouldering discontent. The result hardly reflected opinions of those in the region who came to the city by public transport, or did not come for lack of convenient public transport. Moreover, when the municipality of Groningen makes a traffic plan for the city, it should not equally treat opinions of those who just go through the city to reach the inner city and opinions of the citizens of Groningen. That is why, the most important conclusion that should be derived from the result of this poll was, as mentioned earlier, that the evident majority of citizens wanted to restrain car traffic and its facilities, and facilitate public transport and bicycles.

**Interpretation**

However, the local newspapers and B&W interpreted this result in an utterly different manner.

The *Nieuwsblad* dated December 11th, the day when the result was presented, carried an
The Accessible City Liveable

article with a headline, “Customer finds the city insufficiently accessible”. Relying heavily on answers from the region, this article reports as if the result of the poll had proved the necessity to improve accessibility by car to the inner city:

Customers in the wide surrounding area of Groningen experience accessibility of the city as such a huge problem that they regularly go shopping elsewhere. The shopping public also complain in unison about the poor parking facilities in the city. Both citizens and regional customers (more than 60 percent) say that they have difficulty in finding parking spaces. In addition, remarkably many regional customers find that the facilities for cars have gotten worse in the past years. That is clear from a poll that was conducted by commission from the municipality of Groningen among residents of the city and surrounding municipalities in the past weeks.

The questionnaire included a question only for suburbanites, “Some find the city insufficiently accessible. Is this sometimes the reason to go shopping elsewhere than in Groningen?”, and 63% answered “yes”. To the question, “When you go to the inner city by car, do you experience it as a problem to find a parking space?”, 63% of suburbanites answered “yes”. However, the phrase “Both citizens and” in the article does not tell the fact accurately. Indeed, 64% in the telephone interview answered “yes”, but only those interviewees whose families owned cars were asked about this question. So, actually 40% of the total interviewees answered “yes”. In the questionnaire, 44% of citizens answered “yes”, while 36% of citizens answered that they “never [went] to the inner city by car”.

The Gezinsbode also dated December 11th ran an article about this poll. It carries a headline, “Accessibility of City is important, but not at the cost of green and houses”, and argues, “this is, in a nutshell, the result of the traffic poll”. Subsequently, by presenting opinions of citizens and suburbanites side by side, this article stresses that there are differences of opinion between them:

Citizens, in the majority, find it a good idea to admit only necessary car traffic (namely, only visitors to offices and businesses) into the inner city. On the contrary, most suburbanites find this a poor idea. Citizens, in the majority, also find that the municipality must take measures to restrain car traffic, while people from the province do not agree with this. Whereas citizens welcome the idea of building transferia on the outskirts of the city, where motorists can park their vehicles to go to the centre by bus, suburbanites seem to be sceptical about it.

The Gezinsbode dated December 15th also ran an editorial about this poll. Again referring to the differences of opinion between citizens and suburbanites, this editorial argues that the poll could not show a clear tendency of public opinion:

The large-scale traffic poll, which was conducted by commission from the municipality of Groningen, provided no simple answer to the question what kind of traffic policy must now be adopted. (...) Another aspect of the poll is that everyone can cite it. Proponents of further car-limiting measures will now point out that “many citizens attach much value to the environment” and that they therefore are justified. Opponents of such measures will point out that “the customer from the region finds that the city is hardly accessible” and that they therefore are likewise justified.
On the other hand, according to the editorial, the result of the poll revealed, “The environment is important particularly for citizens, but good accessibility of the inner city for motorists is also very important for them”. In fact, the poll did include a question about accessibility by car of the city as a whole or penetrability by car of the inner city, but did not include a question about accessibility by car of the inner city. The editorial, after all, professes, “We have expressed our scepticism about the ‘administrative renewal’ in this paper”. “Government: governs!” is “our motto”, and it urges Pieters-Stam to exercise initiative: “The wethouder of economic affaires cannot also escape from her further struggling with the problem of accessibility of the inner city. If she ends this struggle quickly, then she can come up with measures and submit them to the municipal council for examination. Preferably as quickly as possible.”

Just after the poll had been conducted, Pieters-Stam expressed her impression about the result that “the questioned citizens [had] a fairly balanced view on the traffic problem”21. However, even after the result was officially published, she did not deepen her understanding about the result any further. When she presented the result on December 11th, she described the poll as a “terrifically good result”, based on the fact that many citizens and particularly many suburbanites responded. “It is obvious that traffic is a lively issue”22, she said. Concerning the concrete content of the result, however, her “conclusion” is just “that many residents of Groningen and surroundings struggle with the traffic problem just as residents of the region”23. Based on these statements by Pieters-Stam, the above editorial in the Gezinsbode argues that its understanding that “the traffic poll has provided no crystal-clear answer” was “endorsed by the initiator of the poll, Wethouder of Economic Affairs Ms. J. Pieters-Stam (D66)”.

**The Things Can Be Better**

Contrary to the expectation of the Gezinsbode, afterwards, the result of this poll had been quoted exclusively by citizens’ organisations, residents’ organisations, and political parties that argued for restraining car traffic to justify their standpoints. For example, the GroenLinks published its “vision on the traffic policy”, the Things Can Be Better24, as early as December, immediately after the result of the poll was presented. In the introduction, the party argues, “According to the temporary conclusion that can be drawn from the traffic poll, it is obvious that the solution must be based on restraining the use of cars”. In order to restrain car traffic, the party lists following “General objectives”:

1. First of all, no new roads, no new parking garages. These indeed directly attract extra traffic. Congestion and lack of parking spaces can make motorists ripe to choose alternatives. In addition, the money can be better spent on other traffic facilities.

2. Exclusive lanes for environment-friendly transport. A dense network of bus lanes and exclusive bicycle paths, priority over car traffic, and rapid flow at traffic lights are the most important ingredients for this.

3. Restraining urban car traffic with the car-free inner city and car-limited (30 km/h) residential neighbourhoods, and confining inter-neighbourhood traffic to the ring roads. (…)

4. Limited and pay parking possibilities for car traffic from the region within the ring roads, and
realising park-and-ride facilities along the ring roads, where people can transfer to rapid public transport in the urban area.

(...) Among proposed concrete measures is included an idea of applying the principle of the VCP to the neighbourhoods around the inner city, in response to the “increasing traffic pressure” there. According to this idea, the area between the ring roads and the inner city should be divided into three sectors with boundaries of Reitdiep, Oosterhamrikkanaal, and Noord-Willemskanaal so that motorists have to move between these sectors via the ring roads.

5.2.4 The Round-Table Talks
The questionnaire carried in the Gezinsbode asked at the end whether respondents wanted to participate in the "round-table talks", where the result of the poll was to be discussed. These talks were arranged on December 11th and 12th, with the same agenda for different participants. Six hundred in total applied for these talks, among whom three hundred in fact came forward. According to the agenda, after the result of the poll being presented, participants would be divided into small groups of about ten, where participants discuss, "What you think about the result of the poll, and what you think we must do further", and finally all the participants share the results of the small group session.

The Gezinsbode dated December 13th reports the round-table talk held on December 11th. According to this, the talk was attended by two hundred citizens, who were divided into sixteen small groups and discussed "eagerly under the chairmanship of councillors, civil servants, and staff members" of the IPP. Judging from the following conclusion on this talk, it seems as if conflicting opinions about cars had been put forward almost evenly: “Traffic is a lively issue in Groningen. Everyone has an opinion about it. And many of those opinions are completely contradictory: one wants to pamper motorists at the cost of public transport; the other wants precisely the opposite.” However, as to each discussion conducted in the small group, this article only mentions the “small group number 16”, which concluded, “Make public transport and bicycles more attractive. Then naturally less cars come in the city”. For the rest, it just lists opinions, without mentioning which opinions originate from which groups:

At the end of the evening, large sheets of paper with all the solutions for the traffic problem were hung on the wall: no parking garages in the inner city, more parking garages in the inner city, only parking on the outskirts of the city, scraping the sector boundaries, removing traffic lights or making them more flexible, better signposting, expanding the park-and-ride facilities, more bus lanes, smaller buses and metro lines from East to West and from North to South, adjusting regional and urban transport better to each other, and equality of rights between cars and cyclists.

From this list of opinions, it is impossible to read to what extent each of these opinions was shared among participants.

On the other hand, the IPP published the “Inventory of Solutions”, which summarises
results of the two round-table talks. This was intended to be used as a material for the next opportunity for participation, "working groups". However, this classifies opinions erasing the framework of each small group. Therefore, it is again impossible to see the tendency of opinions expressed during the talks. The following are opinions that the inventory classifies as related to "PARKING":

- parking mainly on the outskirts of the city
- parking on the outskirts of the city and then riding buses further
- small shuttle buses from the outskirts of the city to the inner city
- regulating transport of goods of the inner city dependent on cars
- the number of shops declines; creating more parking opportunities
- more parking garages along Diepenring
- no parking garages in the inner city
- pay parking in the inner city and along Diepenring
- if the five parking garages open on the outskirts of the inner city, then making the centre car-free
- a large parking garage, also for the German, who now occupy parking spaces for citizens
- using private car parks of businesses and institutions (University, Gasunie) for park-and-ride traffic weekends
- introducing parking disks again
- removing all the parking metres; parking garages were wrongly placed
- using the yard at the station
- studying parking policy of other cities

In fact, the B&W seems not to have learned a specific tendency from these talks. According to the above article in the Gezinsbode, Pieters-Stam "grinned from ear to ear", saying, "The turnout is amazingly high. It is fantastic that so many people want to think together". This turned out to be the only public remark by the B&W about these talks.

5.2.5 The Working Groups

However, officially published materials clearly show that, in the subsequent participation, working groups, which had been conducted from January to February 1996, opinions calling for restraining car traffic were dominant, as in the poll. At the end of each of the round-table talks, an application form for these working groups was handed out. This form informs, "In the coming months (January and February), three sorts of working groups will engage themselves in investigating solutions for traffic problems of the city", and lists the following possible working groups:

1. Possible themes (thema’s) for working groups (theme groups):
   1. Accessibility of the city of Groningen (t1)
   2. Penetrability of the inner city (t2)
   3. Alternatives to cars (t3)
   4. Effects of the growth of the city on traffic (t4)
   5. What must the municipality do, What can citizens themselves do? (t5)
   6. ...
   7. ...
2. Possible user (gebruiker) groups:
1. Commuters (g1)
2. Students/ pupils (g2)
3. Elderly people (g3)
4. Shopkeepers (g4)
5. Carriers (g5)
6. …
7. …

3. Area (Stadsdeel) groups (discussion groups at the neighbourhood level)

Those wishing to participate could fill in the name of the working group to which they wanted to be assigned. Based on this application, participants were assigned to each working group, which consisted of five to fifteen participants. Some participants asked to assign them to different groups than were at first assigned, and these requests were accepted. As a result, because there were many who wanted to work in t2, this group was split into two (t2a and t2b). To theme groups was added the working group “Traffic lights” (t6), and to user groups were added the working groups “Public transport” (g6), “Cyclists/ pedestrians” (g7), and “Industry/ businesses” (g8). For area groups, four working groups were formed, namely, “South” (s1), “Noorddijk/ East” (s2), “North/ West” (s3), and “Inner city” (s4). That is why, nineteen working groups in total were set up. In addition, t4 was to investigate effects not only on traffic but also on the environment.

The IPP explained the objective of this participation as follows, relating to the preceding participation: “The result of the poll and the inventory of solutions form, as it were, clay and water, from which building bricks must be made. It is, as it were, the task of the working group to bake these building bricks.” According to the schedule, each working group should meet three times. In terms of the title of each group, “first, problems are identified”, then “an inventory of causes is made”, and finally “solutions are discussed”26. Each group was to be chaired by those “mostly active in youth organisations or the University of Groningen”27.

The working groups started with meetings of t2a, t6, g3, s3, and s4 on January 18th, and all groups had gone through three meetings with meetings of g1, g2, g5, g6, and g7 on February 14th. The IPP published a report in March that summarised the end products, “solutions”, this time per each working group. According to this, fourteen of nineteen working groups submitted the final reports. Among them, g8, which was clearly dominated by businesspeople, pressed for improving facilities for cars, in place of public transport and bicycles:

\[
\text{g8 (Industry/ businesses)}
\]
\[
\text{infrastructure}
\]
\[
\text{Good signposting for parking has absolute priority. The municipality must not economise on this.}
\]
\[
The inter-neighbourhood connections must be again examined so that the pressure on the main route decreases.
\]
The southern ring road fulfills two functions. The ring road function must be accommodated on the ground level, and through traffic above it.

Facilitating the flow of traffic on Diepenring through 2 sectors in place of 4. Building parking garages on the outskirts of the city, namely, along Diepenring, and one in the centre for quality shops.

"Accessibility" means for businesspeople: reaching a destination, dependent on the objective of the visit, as quickly as possible in as short a manner as possible. Keeping short-time parking on streets of the city.

To make up for the lagging situation where Groningen falls, the flow of traffic must be optimised for economic traffic (cars to the city) in the short term. First of all, less emphasis must be placed on public transport.

The "city" in the above quotation should be interpreted as the "inner city". Concerning roads, this group demands to transform the southern ring road into a two-level road, and to streamline four sectors of the VCP into two sectors to improve the flow of traffic on Diepenring. As to the approach routes to the inner city, it calls for "less emphasis" on public transport there in order to facilitate "economic traffic". This can mean abolishing bus lanes and priority traffic lights for buses, both of which had earned the enmity of the business community. In addition, to ease the pressure on these main routes, the group asks to examine whether the "inter-neighbourhood connections" can also carry out the main route function. Concerning parking spaces, it demands to build parking garages not only along Diepenring but also in the middle of the inner city. The latter probably means the parking garage under Grote Markt. This garage constituted an essential part of a redevelopment project on the northern side of Grote Markt, which had been commanding public attention since the end of 1994. The financier and the land owners concerned with this project had made it a condition for joining the project that the municipality should realise this garage. When the business organisations agreed with the municipality to contribute to the cost of the five parking garages, they also made it a condition for this contribution that the municipality should investigate this garage under Grote Markt. On the other hand, this working group urges the municipality to keep on-street parking spaces for customers, which were being reduced based on the project Inner City Better.

Besides g8, t2a and g5 also asked for facilities for cars. It can be presumed that shopkeepers of the inner city were assigned to the former working group, while carriers were assigned to the latter.

Creating parking opportunities around the inner city (for example, on Cascade).
Equipping parking garages also with bicycle sheds.
A parking garage under Damsterdiep.
Clearer and more concrete signposting (particularly on asphalt itself).
mode/ vehicles
Orienting bus routes more toward transferia.
Improving dangerous crossings (...).
Introducing separate traffic lights for bicycles at more intersections.
Expanding and developing transferia further (...).
Making the time for supplying longer by one hour to 12:00.

human behaviour
(…)
People must be more prepared to walk.
People are afraid of change; the government must not always be influenced by that.

role of the government and citizens
Shopkeepers can provide customers with shopping trolleys or hand trucks in exchange for a deposit. (IPP, 1996b, p.2)

g5 (Carriers)

infrastructure
Abolishing bus lanes, but maintaining priority of buses at traffic lights.
Introducing a toll system on bridges to the inner city, where users to the inner city must pay.
(...)
Clear and uniform signposting.
(...)

policy
(...)
The municipality must let the city distribution centre work better.
More and earlier communication to carriers when roads are broken up.
(...) (p.7)

As can be seen in the above, although t2a asks for building parking garages, its demand for garages is modest in comparison with that of g8. In addition, judging from the remarks such as “People must be more prepared to walk” and “Shopkeepers can provide customers with shopping trolleys (…)", this group does not necessarily insist that customers should be able to park their cars in front of shops. It does not mention the VCP. While g5 demands to abolish bus lanes, it accepts priority traffic lights for buses. Moreover, it puts forward an idea of charging a toll for entering the inner city, a rather radical proposal to restrain car traffic.

The rest of working groups demanded neither additional parking garages nor new arteries, and asked neither for abolishing bus lanes nor for streamlining the VCP. They called, in unison, for restraining car traffic and facilitating public transport and bicycles. Regarding the former, they referred to measures not only based on traffic planning but also based on comprehensive urban planning, while, for the latter, they pressed not only for park-and-ride facilities (transferia) but also for measures to drastically improve public transport as a whole. The following are solutions put forward by t1, t4, t5, and g6. As can be seen, despite its title “Accessibility of the city”, t1 does not mention even the ring roads at all. This is an intentional choice, judging from the fact that this group concluded at the second
meeting on “causes”, “The expansion of infrastructure invites more traffic” (IPP, 1996a, p.2).

**t1 (Accessibility of the city)**

- **infrastructure**
  - More bicycle paths.
  - More opening roads for neighbourhoods.
  - Improving transferia for recreational traffic.
  - Public transport through canals.

- **mode/vehicles**
  - Charging cars for entering the centre.

- **policy**
  - Keeping on stimulating the use of bicycles.
  - Charging a toll dependent on time.

- **role of the government and citizens**
  - Locating residential and employment areas in such a manner that the flow of traffic is minimised.
  - Excluding, from the centre, institutions that attract much traffic.
  - Studying a toll system.
  - Exercising pressure upon surrounding municipalities not to let current public transport deteriorate.
  - Stimulating to work at home.

**t4 (Effects of the growth of the city on traffic and the environment)**

- **infrastructure**
  - Opening bus lanes to freight traffic.
  - More transferia and protected parking facilities.
  - Better signposting.
  - Obligatory provision of bicycle sheds under (public) buildings.
  - Wider bicycle paths, separated from road ways.
  - Improving bicycle facilities.

- **mode/vehicles**
  - A better coordinated distribution system, with smaller lorries entering the inner city.
  - Rapid and reasonable public transport from transferia to various places in the city.

- **human behaviour**
  - Bus stops no farther than 5- to 10-minute walk.
  - When moving within a distance of 7 km, people are prepared to take bicycles.
Bringing houses and workplaces closer to each other.
Raising the parking fee in the inner city.
Only short-time parking in the inner city.
Giving more priority to cyclists over other traffic.
More baggage spaces in buses and trains.
More fine-meshed and/or more frequent public transport network.

role of the government and citizens
Flexible working hours. (p.4)

**t5 (What must the municipality do, What can citizens themselves do?)**

**infrastructure**
Limiting parking spaces at new businesses.
Restricting parking around the centre.
Maintaining and expanding bus lanes.
Building more bicycle routes.
Better adjusting traffic lights for cyclists.
Car parks on the outskirts of the city, from which people can travel to the inner city by bus.

**mode/ vehicles**
Facilitating the car on demand.
The quality of public transport must be better.
Improving the image of buses.

**human behaviour**
A car is a status symbol.
(…)

**policy**
Enlarging the comfort of cyclists.
Stimulating carpooling.
Location policy for new businesses.
(…)
The central government should be able to force the municipality to work on restraining the use of cars.
Using parking garages in the city differently, for example for residents.
(…)
For example, the construction of more roads is a permanent solution for a problem that is limited to a few hours a day.

role of the government and citizens
(…)
The municipality must make disadvantages of cars more visible.
(…)
The municipality must make the results of working groups known to the broad public. (pp.4-5)

**g6 (Public transport)**

**infrastructure**
Regional traffic is absorbed by transferia.
Transferia must have an atmosphere like stations.
Tram facilities in the city.

**mode/ vehicles**
Regional traffic is absorbed by *transferia*, where travellers transfer to urban trams in place of buses in the city.

(...) The network of lines is replaced by a cobweb with ring lines.

Frequency on ring lines must be high.

Better information facilities for public transport.

(...) *policy*

A permanent advisory organ of users of public transport should be established.

(...) (p.8)

Therefore, through the working groups, citizens chose public transport and bicycles in place of cars even more overwhelmingly than in the poll. Precisely in this respect, the arguments put forward by g8 were highly exceptional. However, the results of these working groups were not reported by the local newspapers at all. The *Nieuwsblad* hardly reported this participation itself, and the *Gezinsbode* succinctly reported on January 26th that the working groups had been formed. After the working groups, the process had entered Phase 2.

5.3. Phase 2

5.3.1 The Scenarios

Phase 2 was to choose a “limited number of scenarios” and “work [them] out”, based on data obtained in Phase 1, and, according to the original idea put forward by the IPP, these scenarios themselves were to be chosen through participation. Facing the results of the working groups, however, the B&W and project leadership considered, “From the working groups came a great number of elements for solutions, loose elements that do not directly lead to some integral policy scenarios” (MVW, 1998, p.55). What they derived from Phase 1 after all was just an extremely general principle, “steering the development of mobility in relation to means of transport”, as a “gripping point for the newly formed policy” (Heidemij, 1996a, p.4). That is why, “Without intervention, there would remain too many loose pieces”, they thought. “Therefore, members of the core group distilled four simple scenarios from them” (MVW, 1998, p.55). The scenarios that they formulated are as follows:

**Scenario 1: Trend (“spacious roads for cars”)**

This scenario is based on a trend-based development of mobility, which means that automobility will grow sharply, not only absolutely but also relatively seen. This trend-based development means a growth (in the period 1996 - 2010) of about 40% in automobility.

**Scenario 2: Selective use of cars (“cars only when it is necessary”)**

This scenario takes a first step to restrain the use of cars. It works on the selective use of cars. This means that it is examined, dependent on target groups, time, and places, whether the conditions that motorists set can be met. In this scenario, automobility can grow by a maximum of 20% in the period 1996 - 2010.
Scenario 3: Public transport and bicycles ("priority to public transport and bicycles")
This scenario works hard on developing alternatives to cars: public transport and bicycles. The growth in automobility must be limited to + 10% in the period 1996 - 2010.

Scenario 4: The real alternative ("green light to rapid trams and other innovations")
This scenario works on and investigates all possible alternatives in order to curb the role of cars as much as possible. The growth in automobility should be limited to − 10% in terms of 1996, absolutely seen. (Heidemij, 1996a, pp.4-5)

Subsequently, they organised four “ateliers” consisting of participants, and assigned one scenario to each atelier, requiring it to “work out a traffic and transport system that [could] realise the given assignment” (Heidemij, 1996a, p.5).

In fact, however, Phase 1 had revealed that the majority of citizens wanted to restrain car traffic. If results of participation should be respected, it is impossible or even ridiculous to work out Scenario 1, which allows “spacious roads for cars”, and also Scenario 2, which takes only “a first step” to restrain car traffic. Indeed, afterwards, the municipal council committee “had difficulty in recognising the relation between the material produced in Phase 1 and the choice of the four scenarios” (MVW, 1998, p.50).

Furthermore, these scenarios were highly unrealistic and wrong. As mentioned earlier, the draft of The City of Tomorrow, just like Scenario 1, estimated an increase in travelling distance by car at 40% during the same period. However, this was by no means the result of the “trend-based development”. It can be achieved, “if we are regionally dedicated to the most mobility-limiting scenario”. That is why, “[t]o restrain the use of cars as much as possible”, the draft proposed a “multilateral policy”, which included “improving public transport in the city and region”, “stimulating parking on the outskirts of the city: park and bus” (GG, 1994, p.30), and so on. If this draft is correct, the assumption of Scenario 1 is utterly wrong. In addition, to achieve a 20% increase in automobility, which is assumed in Scenario 2, it is absolutely insufficient just to take “a first step”, and necessary to take extremely drastic measures to restrain car traffic. Those numbers such as + 10% in Scenario 3 and − 10% in Scenario 4 are simply impossible to achieve.

5.3.2 The Ateliers
At the third (final) meeting of each working group in Phase 1, an application form was handed out for the ateliers. It included a notice saying, “The number of participants in the ateliers cannot be unlimitedly large”, and, “If not all those interested can participate, we will invite representatives from as many working groups as possible”. In fact, the IPP selected participants in the ateliers, “also based on everyone’s contribution to the first phase”, from those wishing to participate among participants in the working groups, representatives of citizens’ and business organisations, councillors, and civil servants, so that it “realised an equal and balanced distribution of representatives of interest groups” (MVW, 1998, p.14). In total, about sixty were selected, whose breakdown was members of “organised interest groups (40%), employees of the planning institute and other experts (20%), members of political parties (20%) and others (20%)” (Seip & Vliet, 1998, p.10).
These participants were divided into four ateliers, each of which consisted of around fifteen participants, and were required to work out the above scenarios. When dividing the participants, however, “not pleasantly for everyone, participants were sometimes intentionally placed in a group that was uncomfortable for them” (MVW, 1998, p.14). For example, a councillor of the GroenLinks and a representative of the Environmental Federation were assigned to the atelier dealing with Scenario 1 (Trend), while this atelier included neither a councillor of the VVD nor representatives of business organisations. On the other hand, a representative of the KvK and a councillor of the VVD were assigned to the atelier dealing with Scenario 4 (The real alternative), while this atelier included neither a councillor of the GroenLinks nor representatives of citizens’ organisations in the field of the environment and traffic. The ateliers dealing with Scenarios 2 and 3 included both representatives of business organisations and those of citizens’ organisations. The reason for dividing participants in this manner was, “the discussion partners are forced to creep out from their own standpoints” (p.14). That is why, the project leadership tried to widen the perspectives of participants, as intended at the beginning. In addition, it seems that the B&W and project leadership believed that a plan resulting from such a learning process was superior to a plan made by “sharpening” views among those like-minded: “When, for example, a convinced cyclist must also think about facilitating 40% more use of cars, a different consideration of interests emerges than in the case where proponents of such a scenario sharpen their standpoint among themselves” (p.43).

Each atelier was supported by one or two staff members of the Department of Urban Planning or the Heidemij Advies, who were to offer professional advice. However, they “consciously kept some distance from the group process” (MVW, 1998, p.43).

The first meeting of the ateliers was held on April 3rd, 1996. Here, “loud dissonance” came from among participants. This was, for one thing, related to the fact that they were assigned to the uncomfortable ateliers. As a result, Councillor H. Groothuis (VVD), to whom Scenario 4 was assigned, left the meeting, and a participant, who had worked in the working group g6 (Public transport) and was given Scenario 1 this time, also left, saying, “As a user and advocate of public transport, I absolutely do not want to think about measures to make unrestrained car traffic possible.” In addition, some expressed a complaint that the results of Phase 1 were not used. They had already “made complete plans within the working groups”, and, therefore, “did not understand why they had to start all over again now”. According to the project leadership, however, “After the initial starting problem, four scenarios were enthusiastically worked out” (Heidemij, 1996a, p.7). At the second to sixth meeting, each atelier examined a traffic plan that could fulfil the assigned scenario, and, at the seventh (final) plenary meeting on June 4th, it presented its final product, the “direction of thought”, to all the participants. On June 15th, representatives of the ateliers presented their directions of thought to about two hundred citizens at the Grand Theatre next to Grote Markt. In addition, the Gezinsbode dated June 17th reported these “most important (interim) results of the open planning process” (MVW, 1998, p.45) in two coloured full-pages. The content of each direction of thought is as
5.3.3 The Directions of Thought

**Direction of Thought 1: Trend**

Consistent with its scenario’s title “spacious roads for cars”, Direction 1 proposes various measures to improve roads. Based on its “starting point” that car traffic must be able to move smoothly throughout the city, first of all it argues for a “system of distribution rings” that consists of three concentric ring roads. First, the “outer ring (buitenring)” corresponds with the existing ring roads, whose all intersections should be two-level crossings. The municipality should examine a “green wave” of traffic lights there, and the “extra lane” on the southern ring road, which had suffered heavy congestion. Second, the “middle ring (middenring or binnenrondweg)” is necessary to “distribute traffic further, limit extra circuitous travel, and limit traffic on the parking ring closer to the inner city”. Although residents along this route, which had been called an “inner ring (binnenring)”, had asked for keeping out through traffic for years, Direction 1 rather chooses to concentrate through traffic on this route, arguing for “widening it with results for houses (demolition!), if necessary and physically possible”. Finally, the “inner ring (binnenring or parkeerverdeelring)” “gives a direct connection to parking facilities (garages) in and directly around the inner city”. This ring is one-way traffic, and, as can be seen in Figure 5.3, goes through Noorderplantsoen, which had been closed to cars just before. In addition, business organisations had persistently demanded to improve the intersections of

![Figure 5.3. Direction of Thought 1: Trend.](image)
The Accessible City Liveable

Europaweg, Sontweg, and Damsterdiep, where congestion had been chronic. Direction 1 proposes making these intersections “two-level” or Europaweg “underground”. Concerning bus lanes, “[fewer bus lanes can be sufficient” in the future, and existing bus lanes can be “used by car traffic, where necessary”. On the other hand, Direction 1 proposes many new roads for the surrounding area in the city. It adopts not only “Euvelgunnetracé”, which would connect the eastern ring road directly to A7, but also “Zuidtangent”, which was being examined as the second southern ring road. It also argues for the extension of A7 toward Haren, a ring road on the west of Hoogkerk, a road running parallel to Damsterdiep, and so on.

However, while Direction 1 proposes thorough measures to make it easy for cars to move around at the expense of public transport, it puts forward a parking policy that rather facilitates the use of public transport. First of all, it states that the “starting point” is “realising the planned expansion of the parking capacity in and directly around the inner city (the number of parking spaces + 60%)”, that is, accepting the planned five parking garages. Subsequently, it argues that “three levels of parking should be distinguished”, including these garages. First, on the outskirts of the city, transferia should be built. These are “long-time parking, a low fee, quickly accessible from regional approach routes, having rapid and frequent bus connections with the inner city and employment areas”, and “effective in absorbing particularly commuter traffic”. As a result, “the ring road gets more room to breathe and, therefore, the better flow of traffic”, this direction says. Second, there should be “car parks with public transport” (“PO” in Figure 5.3) a little bit outside the parkeerverdeelring. These car parks are “a maximum of 4 hours, 1 guilder per hour, quickly accessible from the parkeerverdeelring, having rapid and frequent bus connections with the inner city (mini or city buses)”. Judging from the maximum parking time, commuters are already excluded from these car parks. Finally, the innermost level should consist of “car parks in the inner city”, including the planned five parking garages. A “very progressive fee” should be applied to these car parks, for example, “1 guilder for the first hour, 5 guilders for the second hour, etc.”. So, even customers cannot always use these parking facilities. Because of such a parking policy, those who actually do or can come to the inner city by car would be quite limited. Then, however, various measures mentioned to improve roads or those five parking garages would be obviously excessive.

Every atelier was required to list “Top 5 of measures that should be implemented first” at the end of its proposal. Top 5 of Direction 1 are as follows, although six measures are actually listed:

1. a new connection A7 – A28 – A7 (eastern part of Zuidtangent)
2. the parkeerverdeelring in combination with POs (parking and public transport)
3. transferia
4. making the ring roads two-level
5. the binnenrondweg
6. making a part of Europaweg underground

While POs and transferia are granted high priority, the planned five parking garages are
Direction of Thought 2: Selective use of cars

Direction 2 was to take “a first step” to restrain car traffic, but actually proposes rather thorough measures to restrain it. Concerning the inner city, this direction argues for making it not car-limited but car-free (*autovrij*). For this, “City Gates” are placed on Diepenring. Only residents of the inner city and the disabled should be given passes with which they could go through these gates to the inside of the inner city by car. Freight traffic is allowed to enter the inner city out of business hours, according to this direction. Existing parking garages in the inner city should be converted to those only for “specific target groups, such as residents, the disabled, and so on”. Direction 2 seems to accept the planned five parking garages, except for that on Zuiderdiep, but the inner city “gets fewer parking spaces than in the current policy”. It also proposes using the inner ring of Diepenring exclusively for public transport.

Also concerning the whole city area, Direction 2 assumes a clear position against car traffic. Entirely differently from Direction 1, it articulates a principle of “adding no new infrastructure” for car traffic, except for Euvelgunnetracé. Zuidtangent is granted at most the “second favour”. The “neighbourhood opening roads” must be used only as opening roads and not as through traffic roads. Congestion is “to a certain extent accepted”, except on the ring roads and approach routes. In addition, as a measure to facilitate public transport, it argues for “more 30 km/h zones; to improve the relation of travelling time

![Figure 5.4. Direction of Thought 2: Selective use of cars.](image)
between public transport and cars”. Particularly for the residential neighbourhoods around the inner city, it proposes a “large car-limited area”.

Concerning public transport itself, it repeatedly stresses the importance of transferia. “All commuter traffic and the recreational shopping public (long-time parking) from outside the city are absorbed here”, and they are transported “to the most important destinations” with “good high-quality bus connections”. While Direction 2 makes it a “[c]ondition of the quality of transferia” to be able to reach the inner city “within ten minutes”, their destinations are not limited to the inner city, resulting in the "crystal model". Transferia should also work as terminus for bicycle traffic. Therefore, Direction 2 argues for “protected bicycle sheds” at transferia and “high-quality bicycle connections (hoogwaardige fietsverbindingen)” from there, which should be “rapid, direct connections to the most important destinations”, “preferably one-way (but wide enough for two persons to run side by side and to be overtaken)”, and “safe”. There is “[a]s little stop as possible for cyclists at intersections”. In addition, there should be “clearly separated bicycle infrastructure” also through the inner city, according to this direction.

Therefore, Direction 2 has clearly chosen to restrain car traffic on one hand and facilitate public transport and bicycles on the other. However, as to whether Noorderplantsoen should be kept closed to cars or not, this atelier reached “no agreement within the group!”, it is reported. In addition, although each atelier was required to list Top 5 of measures, this atelier lists as many as eight measures as such. This fact again indicates the difficulty in reaching an agreement within this atelier.

1. information facilities/ informing (education in traffic)
2. adjusting Diepenring
3. adjusting the southern ring road
4. City Gates
5. improving the quality of alternatives and realising transferia
6. reducing on-street parking
7. optimising the main road structure
8. maintaining new policy

**Direction of Thought 3: Public transport and bicycles**

Direction 3 was intended to “work hard on developing” public transport and bicycles. However, it has quickly discarded the former as an alternative to cars. At the beginning of its proposal, “Starting Points”, it professes, “Within the city, public transport cannot compete with cars”. “The sketched public transport” in Figure 5.5 (“basislijn openbaar vervoer”) is “only intended for those who cannot ride bicycles (and have no cars)”. These “tangential lines”, which run through industrial areas, parks or along canals, completely ignoring existing bus lines, are said to be the “only large-scale public transport with fixed lines” and “hardly have centre-oriented relations”. As a result, “the inner city is not any more the ‘logical’ centre for travelling by public transport”.  

265
In other places, however, this direction argues that “public transport must score better than cars”, lists “exclusive lanes”, “conflict-free intersections”, and so on as “conditions to be set” for public transport, and insists that the above “basic network of lines”, which seems not to be able to attract many passengers, consists of “high-quality, high-frequent lines”. In addition, although these lines “hardly have centre-oriented relations”, these should be “particularly hung on the network of transferia”. More strikingly, besides the tangential lines, Figure 5.5 shows a “basic line (basislijn)” diagonally crossing the inner city, which the text does not mention at all. In fact, an “underground passage” is intended for its section in the inner city, according to the “Comment” on this direction by “experts”.

That is why, Direction 3 presents conflicting views on public transport in a muddle, and, as a result, it is almost impossible to understand what it proposes after all. A similar elementary problem can also be recognised in proposals related to cars. According to Direction 3, this atelier “does not choose to intentionally restrain car traffic (except for limiting parking in the centre to ultra-short-time parking (…)”). “However, it can be necessary to limit space for car traffic as a result of the wishes for bicycles and public transport, but this is a result, not a wish”. Therefore, Direction 3 is more passive in restraining car traffic itself than Direction 2. In addition, judging from the words in the above parentheses, Direction 3 allows customers to enter the inner city by car, although they can park only in “ultra-short time”. Successively, however, it argues for making “the
inner city car-limited (necessary traffic can enter by permission, comparable with permission for the disabled)). If it is allowed only "by permission", then the inner city becomes car-free, based on the definition of Direction 2, and customers cannot enter.

The measures that Direction 3 proposes for bicycles are more understandable. The "Starting Point" is, "in principle, people must move by bicycle within the city", and it argues for providing "super' bicycle routes ('super-fietsroutes)", which have "not only radial but also tangential (criss-cross) connections", with "very high-quality solutions, for example a tube on poles", for some sections. However, unlike Direction 2, Direction 3 adopts "no super bicycle routes through the centre".

Top 5 of measures of Direction 3 are as follows. Most of them are indeed related to public transport and bicycles, but too general to see the priorities of this atelier.

1. bicycle facilities
2. a transferium in the southeast
3. decentralising public transport (more tangential routes of public transport)
4. traffic management
5. customer-friendly and efficient public transport

Direction of Thought 4: The real alternative

Among four directions, Direction 4 ought to have proposed the most drastic measures to restrain car traffic. Its proposals to restrain car traffic itself, however, are quite modest. Unlike Direction 2, it argues, "Congestion does not lead to the extra use of public transport", and makes it one of "starting points" that "all traffic must be able to flow smoothly", whether it is on the ring roads or neighbourhood opening roads. While denying Zuidtangent, it adopts Euvelgunnetracé and argues for "as many conflict-free intersections as possible, particularly two-level, on the ring roads". There should be "traffic lights only on crucial points", by, for example, "replacing lights with roundabouts". In addition, although many cyclists were (and are) actually using the approach routes to the inner city, side by side with cars, Direction 4 proposes an idea of "cyclists through neighbourhoods and car traffic via main routes".

Like Direction 2, it supports the "completely car-free" inner city, and, again like Direction 2, argues for a "large car-limited area (autoluw gebied)" for neighbourhoods around it. However, it also tells to "set limits on the size and weight of lorries in the inner city during the day". In other words, Direction 4 allows small lorries to enter the inner city even during the day. In addition, it articulates, "The network of main roads in the inner city (Diepenring, approach routes) are maintained", and, "The parking spaces that are abolished by making the inner city car-free must acquire new places in parking garages around Diepenring (Westerhaven, Damsterdiep)". Also in these respects, Direction 4 seems to take more consideration of the interests of car traffic than Direction 2.

Direction 4 adopts a principle dictating, "No coercion (...). Making the alternatives (bicycles and public transport) attractive so that people change their traffic behaviour". Concerning
Figure 5.6. Direction of Thought 4: The real alternative

one of the alternatives, public transport, it advocates introducing a “light-rail system” on the model of Karlsruhe, with which “people can travel from the region to destinations in the city without transfer”. Like other directions, Direction 4 argues for connecting this system to transferia. In addition, it proposes the “opening network of public transport (ontsluitend OV-net)” for “inter-neighbourhood traffic”, where “modern city buses or small buses” run.

According to Figure 5.6, the proposed light-rail line runs straight through the inner city, ignoring the existing streets. Unlike Karlsruhe, this section is intended to be “under the ground”. Direction 4 does not at all explain why this section should be an underground line, which can be extremely difficult to realise, while existing streets in the inner city become free of cars.

For bicycles, it argues for “[d]eveloping the network of bicycle routes (comfortable, two-level crossings (…), no stop at traffic lights)”, or “[b]icycle paths: quality must be good (asphalt)”. Unlike Directions 2 and 3, however, Direction 4 does not draw its network of bicycle routes on the plan map (Figure 5.6), and, as a result, it is unclear where cyclists should ride, after being excluded from “main routes”, as this direction intends.

The following are Top 5 of measures proposed by this direction. Despite “The real alternative”, only this direction asks for realising parking garages next to the inner city,
mentioning their concrete locations.
1. implementing the integral plan
2. light-rail and complementary public transport
3. bicycle facilities
4. parking facilities outside the city (two parking garages in the city are still acceptable: Westerhaven and Damsterdiep)
5. rewarding for the use of the alternatives
6. more intelligent traffic control system (for the better flow of traffic)

To sum up, each of these directions includes serious contradictions and conflicts in some way or other. In addition, their relations with assigned scenarios are unclear. Concerning the given percentages of an increase or decrease in automobility, no directions examine whether they can really achieve these percentages. Moreover, it is simply impossible to make traffic plans precisely corresponding with the estimated change in automobility through this kind of meetings where many citizens participate. In fact, Direction 1 argues for clearly excessive facilities for cars in terms of a 40% increase in automobility, if the draft of The City of Tomorrow is correct, while Direction 2 seems to restrain automobility more effectively than Direction 3 or 4.

5.3.4 Theoretical Considerations
However, when Pieters-Stam received these results of the ateliers at the presentation on June 15th, she highly acclaimed them, saying in English, “I’m impressed”: “The approach with the ateliers has worked well. Many radical ideas have come to the surface (…). (…) I think that this turned out to be a good method to stimulate fantasies.” After she read these directions precisely, she strengthened such an appreciation: “As I already said during the presentation at the Grand Theatre: I’m impressed. And I must say that, after I looked at the four proposals better, I have just gotten more impressed with the amount, but also particularly with the quality of the proposals.” The project leadership also bestowed self-praise on the results of the ateliers: “With the help of the formulated and elaborated scenarios, it has become possible not only to structure all the available information from Phase 1. But also a clear perspective for solving the problem has been provided from various points of view.” (Heidemij, 1996a, p.7)

On the other hand, they announced that the B&W, which was to present its first proposal at the beginning of following Phase 3, would not choose one among the four directions of thought, as indicated in the Starting Memorandum, but aim at an “optimal mix” of all the directions:

We expect that the proposed measures in this “policy document on the basics” will not consist of one of the directions of thought. Moreover, it is not even the intention. It can be expected that the proposed solutions for the traffic policy will consist of a mix of measures from the various directions of thought. The directions of thought must be then also seen as the framework within which all possible options can be examined. These are subsequently used so that they can constitute the optimal mix (optimising stage). (Heidemij, 1996a, p.8)
However, each scenario is fairly different from each other. If each direction of thought were really consistent in its content and precisely corresponded with the assigned scenario, it should be impossible to “mix” them in order to create a consistent policy.

In addition, according to the B&W and project leadership, what was “remarkable” was, “the directions of thought have a great degree of conformity in some important items”. They listed the following common proposals among the directions:

1. The car-limited/ car-free inner city (…).
2. Steering parking policy.
3. Where possible, separating the main infrastructures for cars/ public transport/ bicycles.
4. The smooth flow of all traffic prevents a nuisance (economy, residential environment).
5. The current traffic capacity must not be limited further; extra infrastructure can be realised at some bottlenecks.
6. High-quality public transport as a solution in Directions of Thought 2 to 4 (…).
7. Improving the quality of bicycle infrastructure (…) and parking facilities for bicycles.
8. The concept of transferium is generally accepted. (GG, 1996b, p.15)

At the same time, they argued that the method of assigning participants to the uncomfortable ateliers “obviously contributed toward broadening their outlooks” (MVW, 1998, p.14) and enabled them “to see beyond their own boundaries” (Heidemij, 1996a, p.7) and that “the participants learned, particularly in the ateliers, to seek compromises with which people with different interests and views could agree” (MVW, 1998, p.54). Therefore, they seem to have understood that participants had reached common solutions by changing their “cultures” or becoming “other regarding citizens” through the ateliers, as participationists expect.

Indeed, even Direction 1 (Trend), for example, rejects the parking garage under Grote Markt and advocates “maintaining the current sector division” of the VCP. However, this atelier had chosen such a policy, absolutely not because representatives of business organisations discussed with those of citizens’ organisations and had changed their existing views. Many of those who had pressed for restraining car traffic in the working groups were forced into this atelier. So, it can be presumed that this atelier had chosen such a policy, because these participants tried to incorporate their existing views into the direction as much as possible even under this scenario. Or, indeed, even Direction 4 (The real alternative) emphasises the importance of the smooth flow of car traffic. But, as a matter of course, not because representatives of citizens’ organisations discussed with those of business organisations and had recognised the importance of the smooth flow of car traffic. Councillor J. Hekman (VVD) and representatives of business organisations were forced into this atelier. So, this atelier had chosen such a policy, probably because they managed to reflect their existing views even under this scenario. The atelier of Direction 3, which included both the business camp and the environmental camp equally, ended up proposing a woefully incomplete direction, because both camps did not compromise with each other. The atelier of Direction 2 included representatives of vocal citizens’ organisations, such as the ENFB and Friends of the Earth Netherlands, as well
as two councillors of the GroenLinks. As a result, it put forward a relatively consistent
direction, clearly oriented toward restraining car traffic. However, it still could not reach an
agreement on the crucial issue, the closure of Noorderplantsoen.

Therefore, neither because participants had grown as citizens nor because they had
created new cultures, but precisely because they had not changed their existing views
even through participation, the directions of thought included some common proposals as
well as contradictions and conflicts, while creating an upside-down situation in which
Direction 2 seems more thorough in restraining car traffic than Directions 3 and 4.

It is quite natural that, afterwards, participants in the ateliers had never asked the B&W to
adopt their own directions, which were after all unsatisfactory to them. On the other hand,
the party group of the VVD published its "traffic plan" on May 21st, 1996, that is, when the
ateliers had almost completed their activities. This plan insists on "finishing with the dogma
of the Traffic Circulation Plan (VCP)"; utterly the same as the previous argument by this
party. Particularly, now that "five new parking garages are built in the inner city of
Groningen", it says, "it is the high time to give the VCP burial" so that "a logical circuit route
for motorists can be created between the existing and the new parking garages". In
addition, in presenting this plan, Councillor Hekman, who had participated in the atelier,
expressed her irritation about the Things May Change:

The public discussion, which started with a traffic poll in De Groninger Gezinsbode, "takes too
long, and, as a result, participants decrease". The college must cut the knot someday, she thinks.
"I hear left-wing and right-wing participants in the traffic workshops say: 'What must result from
this?' The run-down discussion leads sooner or later only to disappointment."

The Gezinsbode dated June 19th, immediately after the directions of thought were
presented to the public, reported that the GroenLinks, Friends of the Earth, and ENFB had
launched a "united action" against the planned five parking garages. They argued that, if
those garages were built, "accessibility to the inner city [would] worsen, and liveability and
the environment in residential neighbourhoods around the centre [would be] undermined".
Each of them had separately expressed opposition to these garages before the Things
May Change started. Representatives of all these organisations had participated in the
ateliers, but again, after all, their views had not changed at all. However, by participating in
the ateliers, they had been certainly deprived of time to "sharpen" their own views,
although they should constitute "plural and diverse centers of influence and information"
for liberal democrats.

Moreover, the ateliers had compromised the objectivity and technical rationality of a traffic
plan. Theoretically speaking, it should be rather a purely technical work conducted at the
early stage of a planning process to show concrete measures that could achieve each of
some hypothetical scenarios. Then, some distinctive alternatives can be presented, which
cannot have so many common elements, and can become precious reference in the
following public discussion and political decision. In this case, however, the scenarios
themselves were extremely unrealistic, and it was left to the public to work them out. As a
result, the public as well as politicians had been deprived of the opportunity to acquire a realistic understanding of what kind of measures were technically necessary to achieve a certain degree of increase or decrease in automobility. This fact could ultimately undermine the public interest.

Although highly praised by those who organised them, the ateliers were not only short of the ideal of participatory democracy, but also harmful to liberal democracy.

5.4 Phase 3

5.4.1 The First Move for the College-Standpoint

After the presentation of the directions of thought, the Things May Change had entered a “relatively quiet period” for the public. “However, they kept on working hard behind the scenes”. Namely, “the four directions of thought were translated into their effects”, and a small group visited Straatsbrug to see the light-rail. Subsequently, at the starting meeting of Phase 3 just after the summer vacation, on September 30th, 1996, the B&W announced its first proposal, the First Move for the College-Standpoint. The content of this plan will be seen in the following.

Necessary Car Traffic

Concerning the objective of the plan, the First Move refers in chapter “1. Traffic and Transport, The City of Tomorrow” to this structure plan, which had been just approved by the municipal council on May 29th, 1996. Its “main objectives”, namely, “enhancing the city economy and improving the residential and living environment” (GG, 1996b, p.2), also direct this plan, says the First Move. It also defines the “central task” of the new traffic plan as follows: “The central task for which the new traffic policy is made is then also to steer the mobility that is important for the social function of the city in the right direction so that the city is not silted up (...)” (p.4).

These objectives, however, are too general, and particularly the latter “central task” is what every traffic plan basically strives for. The objective of the First Move is more appropriately indicated in the chapter dealing with concrete measures, “3. Working out the Traffic Policy to 2010”. At the beginning of section “3. Steering parking policy” of this chapter, the plan states as follows:

In order to be able to continuously guarantee accessibility for necessary car traffic (business and freight traffic and the shopping public) on one hand and alleviate a nuisance of unnecessary car traffic (commuter traffic and recreational visitors to the inner city) in neighbourhoods around the inner city on the other, we work on a highly steering parking policy, besides a good public transport system. (p.8)

That is why, regarding car traffic by “business and freight traffic and the shopping public” as economically “necessary”, the First Move strives for ensuring maximum accessibility for it. Judging from proposed measures, this is the main objective of the First Move, although
Concerning the inner city, this plan substantially argues for dramatically increasing parking spaces in and next to the inner city for customers coming by car. According to chapter "4. Strategy", the planned five parking garages should be realised “faster” in the “short term (to about 2000)” (p.14), bringing about a net increase of 1,600 spaces or 60% in parking spaces. Indeed, on-street parking spaces were being reduced by a few hundred as part of the project Inner City Better, but far more than compensating this loss were to be provided in the parking garages. In addition, the First Move finds the parking garage under Grote Markt “discussible” on the following condition, and states that this underground garage is investigated: “A possible underground parking garage in this area is discussible only as part of a remarkable spatial and functional enhancement of this area. If such a facility is decided, then its capacity is limited by Diepenring’s possibility of managing traffic from and to this garage.” (p.9)

At some distance from the inner city, “P+R City Bus” facilities should be provided for customers who stay in the inner city for many hours on Saturday and the day for late night shopping. They could park their cars free here, and go to the city centre by “small-scale public transport (city buses)” (p.7). Such facilities had already been successively introduced on Sontweg, Peizerweg, and Zaanstraat since 1992.

The First Move has taken a substantial step toward deregulating the VCP. According to this plan, “the sector boundaries are open to freight traffic out of business hours” (p.9), and this change should be enforced in the “short term (to about 2000)” (p.14). When the VCP was modified early in the 1980s, the B&W flatly rejected the demand of business organisations to open the sector boundaries to freight traffic, whether it was in or out of business hours.

It also tries to improve approach of “necessary car traffic” to the inner city. For this, first of all it aims at excluding commuter traffic from the approach routes to the inner city. One of the measures proposed is to quickly introduce pay parking in the “shell neighbourhoods”, namely, the neighbourhoods around the inner city. In those days, commuters to the inner city and its surroundings left a large number of their cars for free in these neighbourhoods during the day, so that residents there had even difficulty in finding spaces to park their own cars. Throughout these neighbourhoods, parking metres should be installed, where visitors have to pay a parking fee, while residents there would receive pay parking permits, according to the plan. Based on this idea, the municipality had already started consultation with residents. This measure would restrain commuters from coming to the inner city by car, while it would guarantee parking spaces for necessary car traffic also in these neighbourhoods.

As an alternative means of transport for commuters, the First Move repeatedly mentions the necessity for “high-quality public transport (hoogwaardig openbaar vervoer)”, which
consists of five transferia on the outskirts of the city and the following “public transport axes (ov-assen)” between these transferia and the inner city:
- via Nieuwe Ebbingestraat/ Boterdiep, Kastanjelaan, Eikenlaan, Zonnelaan, Zerniekecomplex to Reitdiepsplein
- via Oosterhamriktracé to Kardinge
- via the route along the railway line from the central station, Paterswoldseweg to the location of Van Swieten
- via the existing railway line (light-rail) to the transferium on the railway line between Haren and Groningen (at the crossing with Zuidtangent)
- via Peizerweg and from the crossing with the western ring road, along the railway line, to the central station (p.7)

On these axes, the municipality should “work on separating means of transport as much as possible” (p.7), and high-quality public transport would realise the “rapid connection” (p.6) with the inner city. With regard to vehicles used, the municipality “should proceed as soon as possible to the use of new high-quality material (quiet, clean, comfortable)”, and, based on a “[m]ore detailed study”, which is said to have already started, the B&W would choose between a “tram system” and a “renewed bus concept” (p.7), says the First Move.

However, these public transport axes should not reduce the capacity of the approach routes to the inner city, which should be used by necessary car traffic by excluding commuter traffic, according to the First Move. Therefore, this plan strives for “separating the main infrastructures cars/ public transport, where possible” (p.9). In fact, as can be seen in Figure 5.7, the approach routes by car to the inner city, such as Hereweg and
Emmaviaduct, are not designated as axes for high-quality public transport, although these were existing main bus routes. The same consideration can be recognised in the “high-quality bicycle structure”. Figure 5.8 shows that this structure, which consists of the following routes (hoofd fiets routes), thoroughly avoids the approach routes by car:

- the route Heerdenpad – Korreweg – Noorderplantsoen
- the route along Eemskanaal
- the route along Reitdiep
- the route along Noord Willemskanaal
- the route along Oosterhamrijktracé
- the route Helperzoom – Verlengde Lodewijkstraat (p.8)

The First Move also proposes some “adjustments” of the approach routes themselves. It argues for “streamlining the approach route” to Westerhaven, where a redevelopment project with a huge parking garage was planned. It brings up again the idea of interposing Rodeweg in the approach route Bedumerweg – Boterdiep, which had been shelved facing the opposition among residents. Business organisations had insisted on improving the flow of traffic on Stationsweg, and this plan promises to examine whether it “can be improved by changing the routing of public transport”. Business organisations had also pressed for easing congestion at the intersections of Europaweg, Sontweg, and Damsterdiep. In response, the First Move proposes a “short-cut (running parallel) connection Bornholmstraat – Damsterdiep (via a bridge newly built over Eemskanaal)” (p.10).
In addition, in order to facilitate the efficient use of this improved infrastructure by customers, the First Move argues for introducing “dynamic traffic management”. Its “dynamic parking route information” would guide “traffic from the outskirts of the city” “with the help of real-time information” (p.10) to the transferium, P+R City Bus facilities, and parking garages in and next to the inner city. If customers could see, in a real-time manner, which parking facilities are vacant, they would go to the vacant parking facilities nearest to the inner city. In other words, the transferium would be the last resort for customers, unless they are encouraged to use them through an effective fee system.

On the other hand, concerning the surrounding area in the city, the First Move emphasises the necessity to improve the ring roads, saying, “A well functioning ring road structure is a vital condition for the economic development of the city”. The “final goal” is to “convert the whole ring to a 2x2 lane urban motorway with two-level crossings”. It is particularly important to improve the southern ring road, considering the industrial development of the south-eastern part of the city. The First Move states that “temporary measures to improve” the southern ring road would be taken in the “short term”. In the “medium term”, it “seems to be the most effective” to construct “Zuidtangent (a tunnel under Laan Corpus den Hoorn and an opencut connection between A28 and A7-east, just to the south of the city via the soil of the municipality of Haren)” (p.12). Apart from this, the First Move regards it as the medium-term task to “improve the opening structure of South-East” (p.14), by, for example, constructing Euvelgunnetracé.

**High-Quality Public Transport**

The First Move repeatedly uses such terms as “high-quality public transport” and a “powerful qualitative impulse” to public transport, and its chapter “3. Working out the Traffic Policy to 2010” starts from the section for public transport, “1. Greatly improving public transport (qualitative impulse)”. Therefore, at first glance, this plan seems to be dedicated to improving public transport. However, the actually proposed measures by no means guarantee the improvement of public transport. Moreover, these measures can even cast doubt on the seriousness with which these were examined.

As mentioned earlier, the First Move argues for realising public transport axes between the transferia and the inner city, on which high-quality public transport runs. However, because these axes are designated so that they do not overlap the existing approach routes by car, they necessarily include sections that should be extremely difficult to realise. For example, two axes from the south and west run along and to the south of the railway line, approaching the central station. There was (and still is) no road along the railway line here, and a bridge must be built over Noord Willemskanaal. Even if these axes could cross this canal, it would be almost impossible to connect these to the existing bus terminal on the northern side of the station. More problematic is the axis passing through the inner city. Although the text does not articulate where this axis runs in the inner city, this goes straight forward after crossing the Herebrug, according to the plan map (Figure 5.7). Therefore, this axis runs on Herestraat, the pedestrian and busiest shopping street in Groningen. In addition, presumably after passing by the city hall on Grote Markt, this axis runs through
the residential blocks, completely ignoring existing streets, all the way to Eikenlaan. To go out from the inner city, a bridge must be again built over the canal, somewhere between the Ebbingegrug and the Maagdenbrug. Or, because high-quality public transport does not run on Hereweg, the axis from Haren is proposed on the existing railway line. While the "light-rail" should run here, the plan does not at all answer basic questions such as whether the light-rail shares the existing railway lines with trains, or new lines are added for the light-rail, including possibilities for these measures.

Figure 5.9 is a plan map for public transport in the Plan Groningen Node, and Figure 5.10 is a plan map for traffic and transport in The City of Tomorrow. It is clear that those axes proposed by the First Move hardly take into account these existing plans as well as the existing structure of the city. Concerning the transferia, only that on Kardinge was realised in 1995, while the rest had hardly been examined.

In addition, highly questionable is the financial feasibility of high-quality public transport. Judging from the proposed measures, the possible passengers in this public transport are mainly commuters from the region. In fact, while the First Move repeatedly mentions high-quality public transport in relation to “commuter traffic” or “unnecessary traffic” including “recreational visitors to the inner city”, it never states that this transport should or would carry customers. However, it is absolutely impossible to maintain “high-quality” public transport only with commuters in the rush hours. That is why, formidable difficulties are anticipated in realising high-quality public transport as proposed in the plan (in fact, it is not realised at all even now), but the First Move announces that its “realisation will have to take place before the year 2005” (GG, 1996b, p.14).

While emphasising the importance of imaginary high-quality public transport, whose feasibility is highly questionable, the First Move does not at all mention how to improve existing bus lines serving the citizens of Groningen. Besides the axes with high-quality public transport, it lists the following “rest of public transport axes”:
- Hereweg
- Friesestraatweg – Vinkhuizen – Reitdiepsplein
  - when realising Middelbert, developing the public transport axis via Sontweg – Driebondsweg or via Bornholmstraat - Bremenweg (p.7)

The existing main bus routes, Hereweg and Friesestraatweg – Vinkhuizen, are included here, and, therefore, they are not served by high-quality public transport in the future. In addition, according to the plan map (Figure 5.7), the latter line takes a remarkable route in the inner city. In those days and still now, after crossing the Emmabrug, this bus line goes straight into the inner city, passes by the back of the A-kerk skirting the western border of the pedestrian area, turns left, and goes out of the inner city through the A-brug, going out of the inner city. Considering the width