

Experiencing “Post-Pandemic” Transportation Situation in the Netherlands cities

1. Is this post-pandemic? Surprisingly, it looks like it!

In May 2022, the opportunity of accompanying the delegation from Serbia to visit and have third country training to the Netherlands revealed itself. As far as these eyes could see, people (local citizen and tourist) were packed at the public facilities such as airports, train stations, bus stops, etc. and with less pandemic countermeasure actions (i.e.: no mask, no distance, and conversing freely) as those things are mandatory by the regulation in Europe. I realized the big gap of norm of responding the pandemic in Europe than that of in Asia. Finally, the question is: “Are Asian countries too paranoid?” or “Are European countries too relaxed?”

2. Amsterdam, the Cyclist City



Figure: Bicycle Parking Facility in Metro Station

There is a funny quote, “you are most likely to get hit by bicycle than to get hit by car in Amsterdam.”

The City has been applying the push policy of reduction of the use of private vehicle in downtown area for over 10 years now. And it has been showing great impact on the share of both public transport and the non-motorized (i.e. walk, cycling, and otopad).

Pull policies are also applied; the city gives discounted price to the owners of

bicycles and consecutively gives appreciation towards the ecofriendly environment by providing better services in the various sectors of governances.

3. The Place of Creativity and to make Mistake

Huge chunk of public transport development in Amsterdam, Rotterdam, and The Hague is affected by the demand in the touristic side. Trams, bus, metro, and train lines are placed strategically to meet all the dynamic demand generated by world-known event and activities in the Netherlands throughout the year. One can easily google the transportation map of Amsterdam and realize how they are well integrated.

My point of interest to express here is about how both operators and authorities give quite enormous space for creativity in the development of the public transport. And more to that, they, somehow, have big tolerance for mistakes (i.e.: mistakes in design, functionality, etc.).



Figure: The Hanging Pole

One of the creativities that is just recently developed and applied is the design of the pole in the bus that is made hanging. Main reason of why this thing was proposed is because there was incident where one disabled person with cane fell down as the cane was stuck to the regular pole. The artistic side of was then added and narrating the hanging pole is actually the upside down Eiffel-Tower-like design.

More to this creativity, operators of public transport is also given freedom to change some standards of the attributes in the vehicles as long as it does not pass the basic and safety standards. For example, lighting can be changed to luminescent rather than just straightforward white or other one-tone color. Those things are attraction to the visiting tourists, too.

4. Proud of the Tram System

Like many other European cities, tram system is somewhat the most proud of. In some discussion, the even mentioned that tram is irreplaceable for the longest time. Tram is “treated” like part of their daily life and, surprisingly, it is designed by totally mixing the lanes with the pedestrian with minimum to non-existence barrier.



Figure: Tram Line and Pedestrian

Even though it was not shown in the photo, some people were enjoying summer time in picnic style on the grass along the line of the tram. It was unique and quite scary scenery for foreigners/tourists, probably.

Summary:

It was great opportunity to experience how public transport is operated in other countries. Of course, there is always of pro and cons in our minds, and such diversity makes this world colorful. The experience of this training is mainly to communicate the needs of developing public transportation and to display what would be best direction of the development in Belgrade for the Serbian counterpart.

Such message was firmly delivered and received throughout the trainings with the sense of camaraderie between the Netherland, Japan, and of course the Serbian side.