

1 ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE PROBLEM SITUATION

In the center of Eindhoven lies Stratumseind, an old narrow street with cafés and clubs that is a party spot for young people (particularly teenagers). The reputation of Stratumseind is one of those urban myths: although the area was traditionally quite bad, the fact is that it has greatly improved in recent years through the joint effort of the city council, police, and club owners. But still, Stratumseind is seen by parents as a risky destination for their kids. And because of its location, an evening out for these young people generally begins and ends with a lengthy bike ride from the suburbs to the city center. When looking at the police statistics, one can only conclude that going out to Stratumseind is basically safe: nothing much happens. But the inevitable incidents are avidly picked up by the press, reinforcing the old reputation of Stratumseind as a place of evil and danger. So the good parents of Eindhoven are worried—to be precise, it is mostly the fathers that are worried about their daughters (even though, statistically, boys are more often the target).

2 ESTABLISHING THE CORE PARADOX

Distilling the core paradox that makes this a difficult problem:

Because girls like to go out, they bike into the city at night to party at Stratumseind.

Because they bike into the city at night to party at Stratumseind, their parents are worried.

Because parents are worried (and the media have picked up on this anxiety), the city has to respond.

The paradox arises because the intervening variable, the “the parents’ anxiety,” is largely a problem of perception. Clearly, improving the situation at Stratumseind (which is what the media are clamoring for) is not going to be a solution. Nor would it be wise for the city council to merely communicate to the parents that everything is safe, and nothing will happen—this would expose them to criticism if something should happen to one of the girls.

3 THE CONTEXT

The context for this problem is that the city wants to be seen as fulfilling its responsibility, and the police want to be seen as capable and in control of the situation. But the press likes to sensationalize headlines, and the spectacular