

Walk'n'Roll Cities Guidebook

Innovations in mobility
and public space



European Union
European Regional Development Fund



Where streets
belong to people



Walk'n'Roll Cities Guidebook

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URBACT drives change for better cities using participatory and integrated tools. Since 2002, it's the European Territorial Cooperation programme, which is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund, the Member and Partner States. Building on the exchange and learning experience from its beneficiary cities, the URBACT Knowledge Hub brings together thematic insights, good practices and policy recommendations about mobility and other hot topics at European level.

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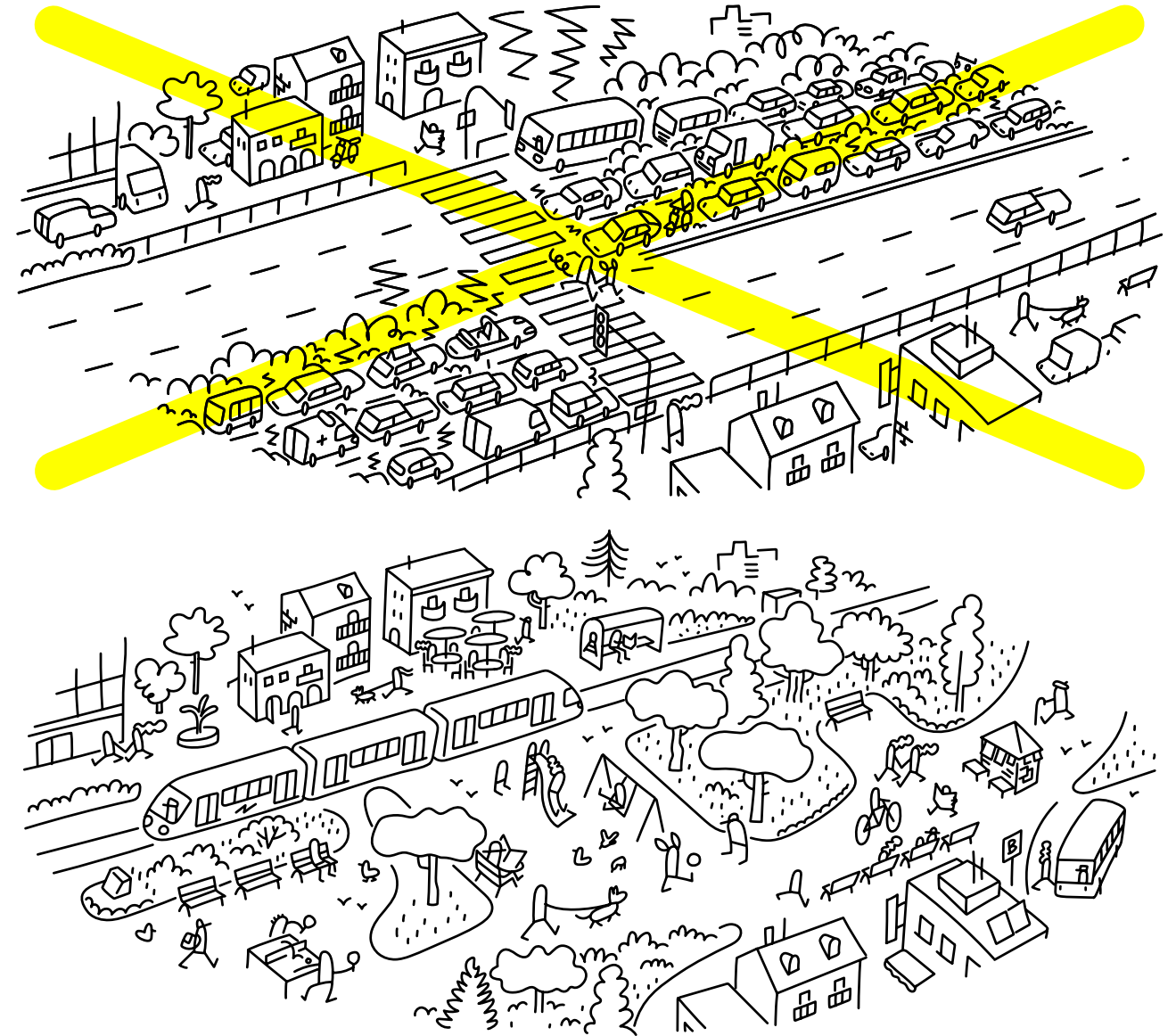
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What is Walk&Roll cities?

28 European cities of different sizes, coming from 16 different countries have come together to face today's mobility challenges. In the framework of three URBACT Action Planning Networks, the city partners from the **RiConnect**, **Space4People** and **Thriving Streets** networks decided to start a close cooperation. Their work focused on the reflection of how public space aspects can improve urban sustainability and livability, on different spatial scales, from metropolitan areas down to neighbourhood and street level.

The collaboration of the three networks passed beyond the objective of creating local integrated action plans. Together, these cities explored visions and interventions that could contribute to massive reduction of car use in our cities. Under the URBACT Knowledge Hub Walk'n Roll initiative, they have drawn many connections between topics related to mobility and the use of public space.



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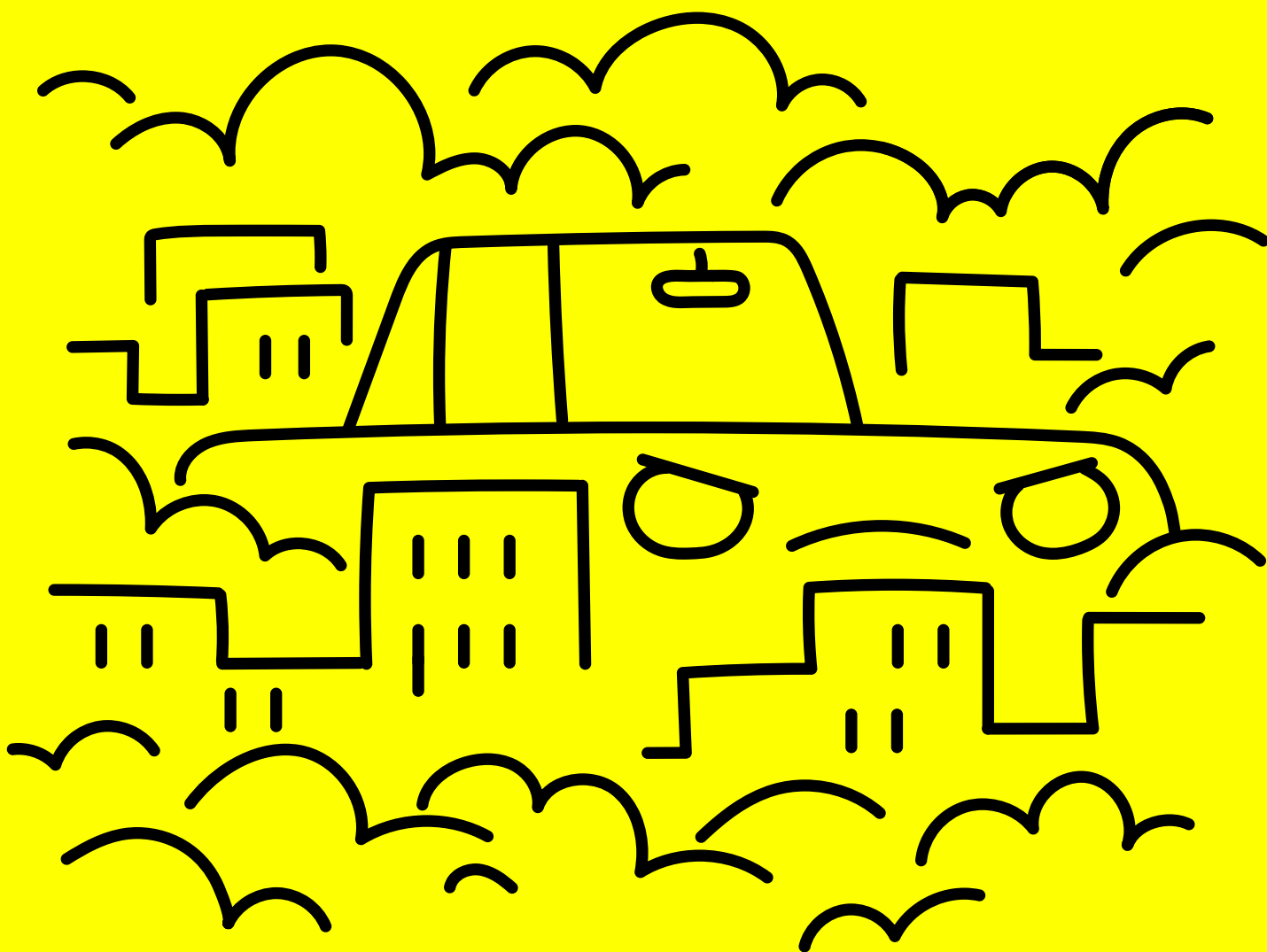
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why?



Introduction

Booklet 1: WHY

This document primarily focuses on the **WHY**. It explains what are the problems and corresponding contexts, by describing what were the main causes that led to the current situation and what are the negative consequences of extreme car-dependency in most cities. It also presents an inevitable new way of thinking to face adversities, solve the main challenges from its roots and eradicate other negative outcomes.

This guidebook includes the systemic overview of innovative solutions and good practices, which were collected and further explored in the course of two webinars and a final conference in Barcelona (ES), organised in 2022, as part of the Walk'n'Roll project. One of the purposes of this guidebook is to summarise the findings from this experience.

The guidebook has three separate, but strongly connected parts.

- Booklet 1 primarily focuses on the **WHY**
- Booklet 2 focuses on **WHAT** cities can do
- Booklet 3 presents **HOW** cities can make the transformation happen

Booklet 2: WHAT

Focuses on **WHAT cities can do**. In addressing challenges cities have a variety of possibilities. This guidebook introduces **four high-level visions and nine innovative specific interventions** cities can adapt to their use – their descriptions follow a standard structure.

Regarding the **visions**, first the main aspects of the problem are presented, then the vision is described in detail, as well as its relevance for different categories of cities.

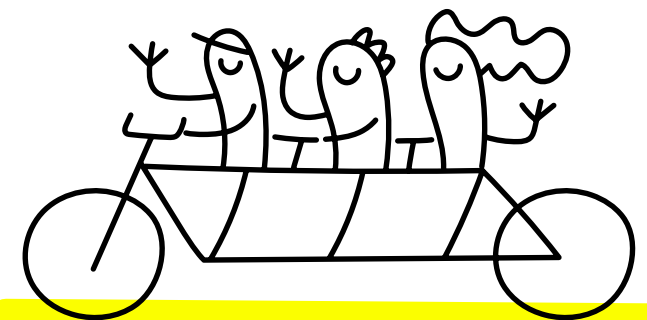
The practical **interventions** gather the following elements:

- the identification of the problem;
- the specific steps cities can (and need to) do to address;
- the less obvious aspects and issues cities need to keep in mind while implementing the intervention;
- the impacts cities can expect;
- and the relevance of the intervention for the different categories of cities.

Furthermore, most visions and interventions are also complemented with at least one illustrative city example.

Booklet 3: HOW

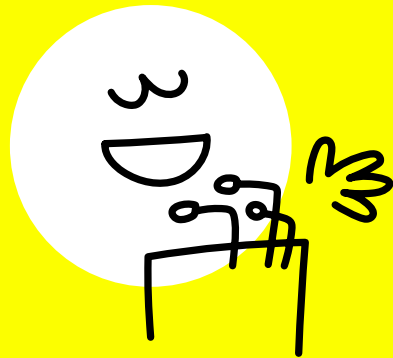
Presents **HOW cities can make the transformation happen**. It presents the way forward, **the most important governance and policy recommendations** cities need to take to deliver long-term change. The content is supported by **case studies from six selected cities**, all coming from city partners from the RiConnect, Space4People or Thriving Streets networks.



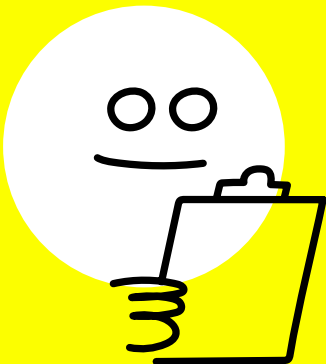


Who's this guidebook for?

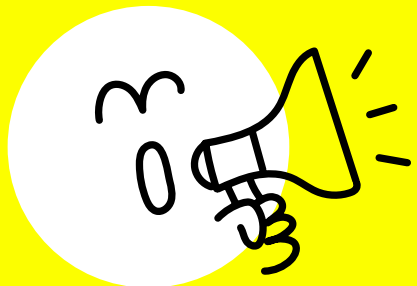
From the very start, this document has been conceptualised to be thorough and detailed, while also being concise and accessible to a non-technical audience. It's a useful resource for **anyone who has an interest in sustainable mobility and better public spaces**.



More particularly, its content can come at hand for **local politicians and decision-makers** as mayors and council members, who can use it to better understand what are the mobility and public space related challenges that affect sustainability and livability in their own city and, most importantly, why it's so crucial to tackle these issues. The different booklets can also help them to have a high-level overview of the innovative visions and interventions local authorities can adapt, together with citizens in a participative way.



Professionals and city practitioners can also benefit from this guidebook, especially the ones from small and medium-sized cities, where capacities and resources may be limited. Virtually anyone whose work involves developing public spaces and improving mobility can harness the Walk&Roll knowledge. They can use it as a reference document to review the possible measures that can be relevant to their city. They can also use it to build their narrative when arguing with local politicians or heads of other departments about the importance of transforming public spaces and the traditional mobility system.



Last, but not least, while the guidebook is not written specifically for the wider civil society, its content can still be used when **designing messages and arguments for awareness-raising campaigns** promoting sustainable urban mobility.

There is no right or wrong way to use this guidebook.

If you are interested in the overall topic, you can read **all three booklets**. They can guide you from the challenge through the overall visions and specific interventions to the governance aspects of planning and implementation, and can provide you a good understanding with plenty of useful bits of information. However, **the visions and interventions** are written in a way that they **can also be used as standalone content**.

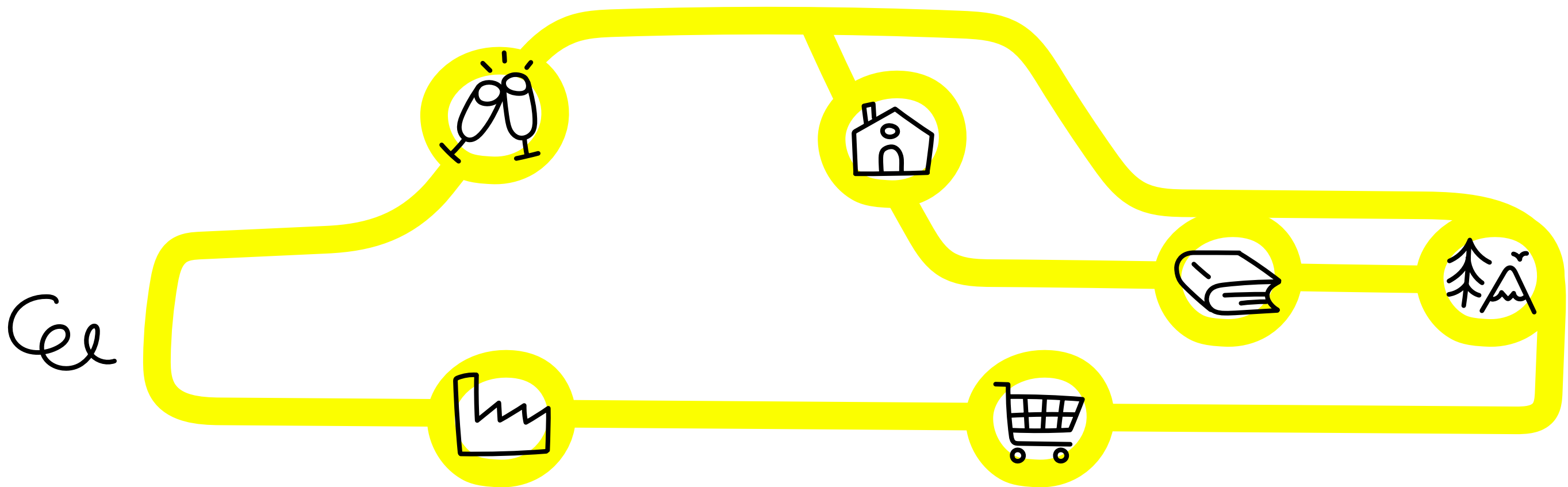
So, if you would like to explain to local politicians or fellow professionals – or even to residents in your city, for that matter – what a specific intervention is and why it is good for the city, the chapters in Booklet 2 provide plenty of useful ammunition in a concise, accessible format.

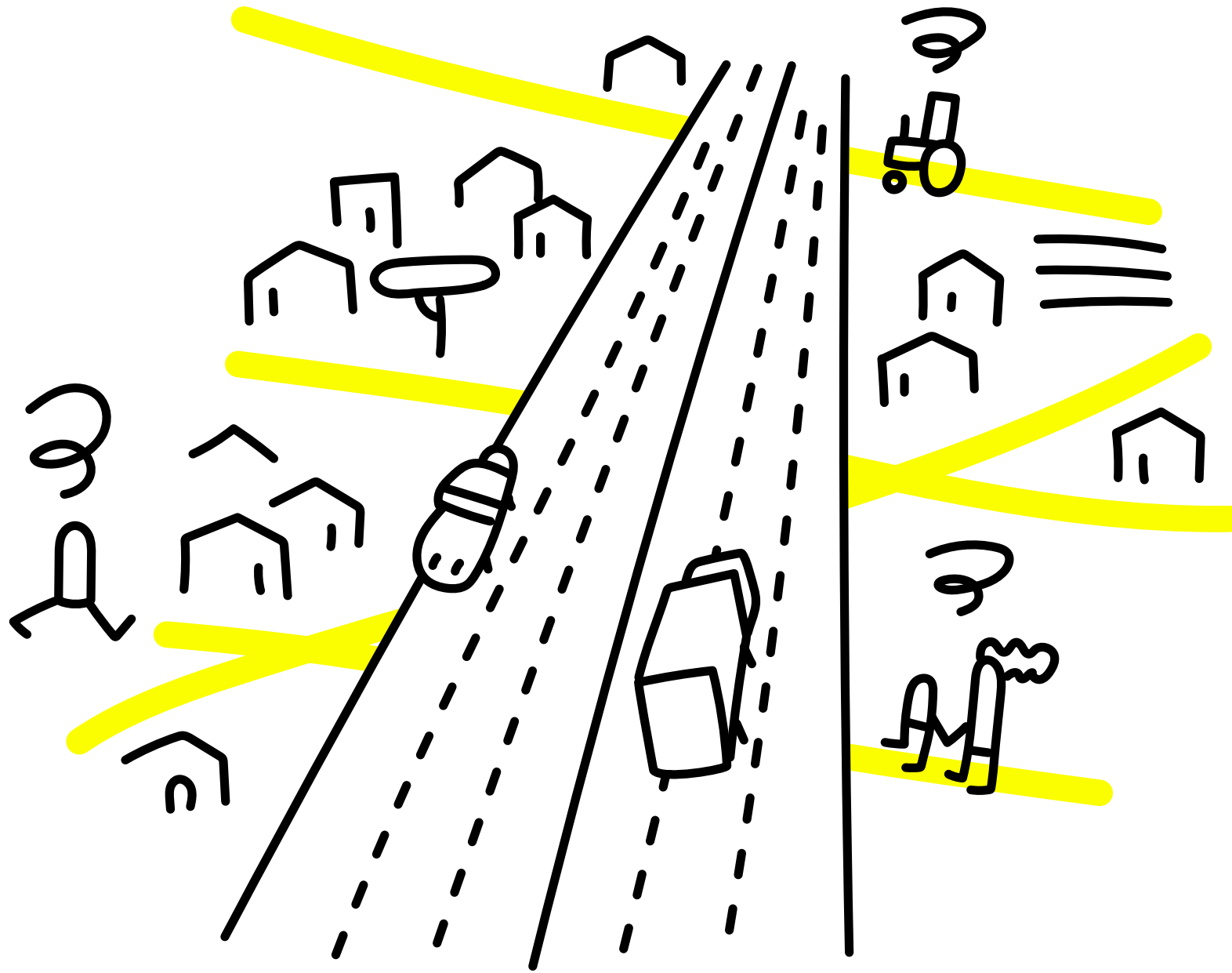
So, what are you waiting for?

Go ahead, **take a ride** with us and make the most of your journey!

The Challenge

Today's cities suffer from a lot of problems, which are deeply rooted in their past and ever-changing principles of urban development. For example, the physical separation of functions within the city, creating the need to move longer distances between these functions, which makes car use a necessity, not an option. Most of today's cities look like **they have been designed for cars**, taking over substantial urban space away from people. How did this happen?





In 1958 a six-lane freeway was built in Stockholm through the middle of a garden-city suburb, replacing the existing tram connection to the city slicing the neighbourhood, cutting the organic flow of streets.

The combustion engine cars became affordable for middle class families in the 1920s, when the mass production of the Ford model T started in the USA. However, **it was not the car itself, but the systematic political and planning interventions favouring the car use** that has led to the car-oriented urban development in the second half of the 20th century.

In the **USA**, 44 thousand miles of **publicly-funded motorways** were built in the 1950s, interlinking large cities and splitting their city centers. In many cases, like in Detroit, new highways were constructed through the historically "non-white" neighbourhoods. For the planners, the highway was a tool to intervene and "regenerate" these neighbourhoods, intentionally producing massive displacement of citizens to other areas and increasing the socio-spatial cleavage between communities. Moreover, the **price of oil** was kept at an artificially low level, **large mortgage subsidies** were given to builders of **single family houses** and **infrastructure subsidies were provided to the suburban areas**.

The consequence of these public policies in the USA was widespread suburbanisation and urban sprawl, followed by the redevelopment of downtown areas: public transport systems were reduced and roads were widened for cars. With some delay, similar tendencies started to influence the development of European cities.

In many **European countries** the public sector managed to retain some control over land-use changes, and public subsidies for car-oriented development were less direct. Even so, the results of the interventions were dramatic, for example wide streets replaced demolished historic areas in central Stockholm (SE), in northern Brussels (BE) and in a number of British inner cities. The notion of spatial segregation of city-functions and the construction of car-friendly cities originated also in the modernist principles for architecture and cities since the early 1930s, when the progressive architect for its time, Le Corbusier reinforced such values in the Athens Charter.

By the 1960s and 1970s, the car-oriented urban development radically changed the way cities were built and functioned in the free market dominated European countries. This “**new modernity**” has spread quickly, although its problems became more and more visible: **traffic jams, air and noise pollution, loss of walkable public space** are among some of the tangible outcomes. As a consequence, the quality of life has deteriorated dramatically in dense urban areas.

Due to the mounting problems, **from the last decades of the 20th century onwards, cities started to develop more sustainable forms of urban transport.** Previously liquidated tram lines were rebuilt, underground transport has been developed. Gradually public transport regained its priority in the eyes of city administrations, and also the infrastructure for the active travel modes, such as biking, started to be developed. All these changes, however, had limited effects, until **car owners could preserve their earlier privileges.**

By today the threat of environmental collapse is more evident than ever, greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions have to be cut dramatically. To achieve this, urban mobility has to be changed fundamentally, among other measures. **New interventions are necessary, a new wave of urgent systematic political and planning interventions, to reduce car use in urban areas.**

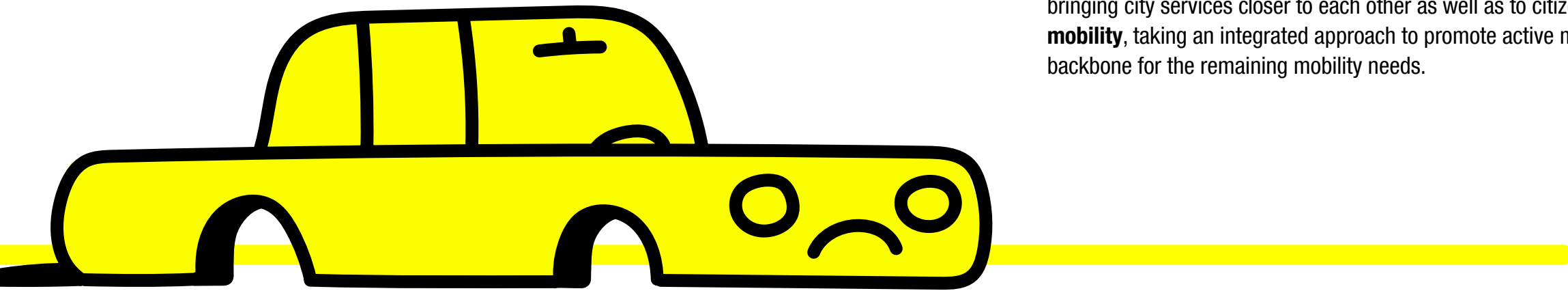
A new approach

Reversing the dominance of cars in our cities is not impossible: systematic political and planning interventions are needed, this time in the opposite direction from the 1950s public policies.

The parallel and interlinked changes in mobility, urban planning and public space development have to aim for reducing travel distances by creating a **better mix of functions** (residential, work, leisure and public facilities), **limiting car use**, supporting **active mobility and public transport**, while also **transforming public space** to benefit citizens.

For such a re-humanising agenda, the overarching concept of “**accessibility shift**”¹ can be a starting point. The idea is that transportation planning, and the transportation dimensions of land-use planning, should be strongly connected, and based on **people’s ability to reach destinations, rather than on their ability to travel fast**. The primacy of mobility – how far you can go in a given amount of time – should be replaced by the priority given to access: how much you can get in terms of services within your vicinity in a given amount of time.

The new approach should be based on **connectivity**, like being connected to online tools and networks, which enables some activities to be done remotely; **proximity**, as in bringing city services closer to each other as well as to citizens in space; and **innovative mobility**, taking an integrated approach to promote active mobility and public transport as a backbone for the remaining mobility needs.



1. Jonathan Levine, Joe Grengs, Louis A. Merlin, 2019: From mobility to accessibility: transforming urban transportation and land-use planning. Ithaca [New York] : Cornell University Press, 2019.

Different cities, different stakes

Cities can be very different, a factor that needs to be taken into account and which requires cities to adapt in different ways, creating their own combination and mix of principles and interventions. The Walk'n'Roll guidebook will provide you with the right understanding of local challenges, so you can find a good balance of practices and ideas to put into practices. The guidebook presents a **simple categorisation of cities**, indicating the relevance of suggested solutions for each type of city.

There are many possible methods to categorise cities according to their size. One of the most widely accepted definition comes from OECD², which makes the distinction between urban areas according to **population number**, as it follows:

- **large metropolitan areas** if they have a population of 1.5 million or more;
- **metropolitan areas** if their population is between 500 000 and 1.5 million;
- **medium-sized urban areas** if their population is between 200 000 and 500 000;
- **small urban areas** if their population is between 50 000 and 200 000.

This is a good starting point, still, **further considerations** are necessary. So to better categorise cities, other elements were taken into account, like:

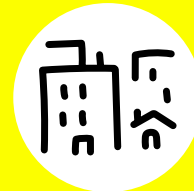
- the dimension of a **mobility-related element**, so it is easier to visualise your own city and to translate the recommendations from Walk'n Roll;
- the use of the **population size** as an overall guidance, rather than fixed limitation;
- and by **embracing smaller towns and villages** that, according to the original OECD classification, are below the urban area threshold.

2. Source: data.oecd.org/popregion/urban-population-by-city-size.htm

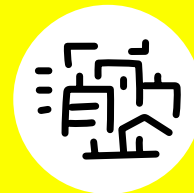
As a result, four main categories were defined and used throughout this guidebook, when considering the relevance of certain ideas according to city size:



Small: cities without a real network of public transport, the population is roughly below 50 000 inhabitants.



Medium-sized: cities with a network of public transport, but typically without an extensive network of fixed track transport modes like trams, subways or suburban trains. Their population is roughly between 50 000 and 200 000 inhabitants.



Large: cities with a real network of public transport that, most usually, include fixed track modes of transport, but not necessarily a subway system. Their population is roughly between 200 000 and 500 000.



Metropolitan areas: cities with a wide network of public transport that also extends to subway lines. The population is usually above 500 000 inhabitants.

The relevance of visions and interventions to different city size categories

This guidebook draws particular attention to the concepts of **proximity and innovative mobility**. Examples of **visions** on how to approach these aspects are the following:

The visionary ideas towards proximity and innovative mobility have to be translated into concrete interventions which can be considered by cities to implement. The following **interventions** are described in the guidebook.

The following classification matrix shows with the signs **0**, **+**, **++** the typical relevance of the visions and interventions on the level of the main city size categories.

	Small	Medium	Large	Metro
Visions				
4.1 The 15-minute city	+	++	++	++
4.2 Pedestrian priority: liberating city streets from cars	++	++	++	+
4.3 City-wide network of calmed down places	0	+	++	++
4.4 City agglomerational concept for mobility and public space	0	0/+	+	++
Interventions				
5.1 Reducing car access to city centers	0	+	++	+
5.2 Introducing Tempo 30 in the city	++	++	++	++
5.3 Applying parking management	+	++	++	++
5.4 Applying a cycling strategy	+	++	++	+
5.5 Transforming highways to urban boulevards	0	+	++	++
5.6 Creating mobility hubs: integrating public transport with micromobility	0	+	++	++
5.7 Superblock: radical transformation of public space in the neighbourhood	0	+	++	0
5.8 Protecting school areas from motorized traffic	+	++	++	0
5.9 Creating shopping street	+	+	++	0

What?



The visions

4.1 The 15-minute city

4.2 Pedestrian priority: liberating city streets from cars

4.3 City-wide network of calmed down places

4.4 City agglomerational concept for mobility and public space

The 15-minute city



What is the problem?

The development of urban spaces in the second half of the 20th century followed the functional city approach, physically separating the basic functions of living and working areas. At the same time, cars became relatively affordable, allowing people to cover large distances in the shortest time possible. The proliferation of cars pushed cities to develop massive car infrastructure in urban areas, like wide roads and parking places. All this resulted in largely monofunctional city neighbourhoods and large shares of public space dedicated to transport. The cities' territorial expansion, usually led by car use, has further increased car traffic levels and, consequently, the need for even more car related infrastructure.

What can cities do about it?

The **concept of the 15-minute city** stipulates a complete overturn in this general approach. Its underlying principle **is to provide all basic functions people use regularly** –living, working, shopping, education, healthcare and leisure services– **within a 15-minute walk or bike ride**. Alternatively, within a 30 min journey time in less dense cities and towns. The 15-minute city concept replaces the previous approach of “accelerating trip speeds to get to as many places as possible within the travel time budget¹” with “providing an inclusive city of access, proximity and safety for all”. It represents an antidote to the car-oriented urban vision.

This can be achieved by **creating dense and mixed-use urban neighbourhoods**, which will eventually replace monofunctional areas. This approach leads to exchanging the, so far, prevalent model of the functional city by **a more human model of a mixed city**. A crucial aspect of the concept is to avoid applying the 15-minute approach only in selected neighbourhoods, as for instance in the city centre. Quite the opposite, **this approach needs to be rolled out to most, or preferably, all different parts of the city**. In this way, not only can all (or most) inhabitants enjoy the benefits of accessibility, but also the city can prevent the gentrification process. Creating only a selective number of 15-minute neighbourhoods will inevitably lead to the gentrification of these areas, due to the higher quality of life they can provide, which in turn results in higher costs of living, ultimately driving away low-income citizens.

The 15-minute concept addresses the creation of mix-use areas, not just by purely mixing how space is used in a neighbourhood, but also by **using the same space or building for different purposes** over the course of a day. Paris (FR) is the forerunner and originator of the 15-minute city model. In this city, **school yards** take a central role in this approach, with the idea that school yards **should extend to public spaces** in their immediate proximity, like squares and streets. On the one hand, this improves the experience of pupils during breaks and outdoor time, on the other hand, the school yards are accessible to the public outside school time and serve as attractive locations to meet, socialise and play. It's a win-win situation. In most cities, schools hold the potential to serve as centres for public life in (aspiring) 15-minute neighbourhoods.

Remodelling various neighbourhoods to become a proper 15-minute city requires **massive interventions**. Using tactical urbanism interventions can sometimes also be useful to make quick and inexpensive changes, as the city of Bielefeld (DE) demonstrated by remodelled public space use in its Old Town to showcase how permanent changes could look like. The **road network needs a major revamp to create liveable streets** that meet the needs of residents and mainly accommodate active mobility options for their traffic function, as well as a comfortable space for pedestrians and possible activities ([see 5.1 - Reducing car access to city centres](#) and [5.7 - Superblock](#)). Cities need to support retail and service providers to decentralise some of their facilities, as well as give incentives to businesses investing in co-working spaces to avoid longer commutes of employees. With all these in mind, it's crucial that cities use participative processes and co-creation – involving all different stakeholders, if possible – while implementing the 15-minute city concept ([see 6.4 - Participative approach](#)).

1. In the 1970s transportation engineer Yacov Zahavi came up with the concepts of the travel time budget (TTB) and the travel money budget (TMB). Zahavi argued that travellers tend to combine these budgets in order to maximize the distance they can travel within their constraints of time and money.



How does city size matter?

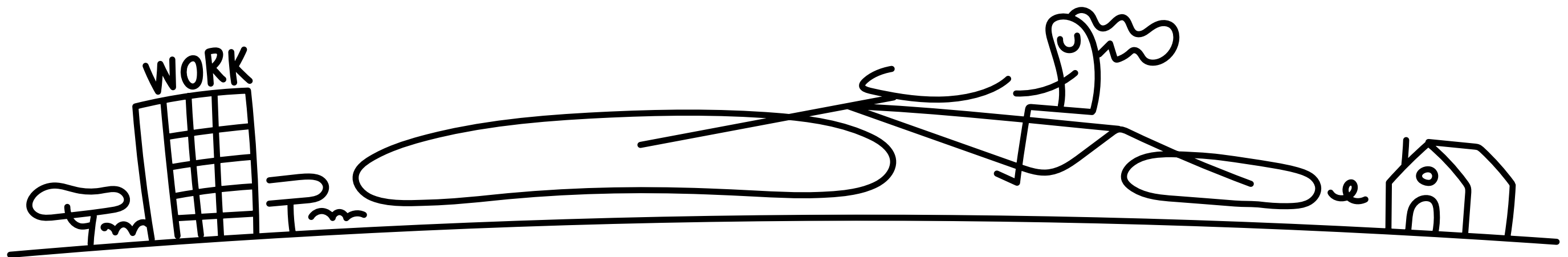
The 15-minute city idea is relevant for all city-size categories.

Small towns can develop most of their urban area as one 15-minute city, as they can almost be entirely crossed in a similar amount of time. In fact, most of the foundations are probably already in place, but usually they need to address challenges like reducing out-commuting, as in creating attractive co-working spaces, and reintegrating retail and services that migrated out of town. They also need to re-orientate their entire road network to meet the needs of active mobility as a default option.

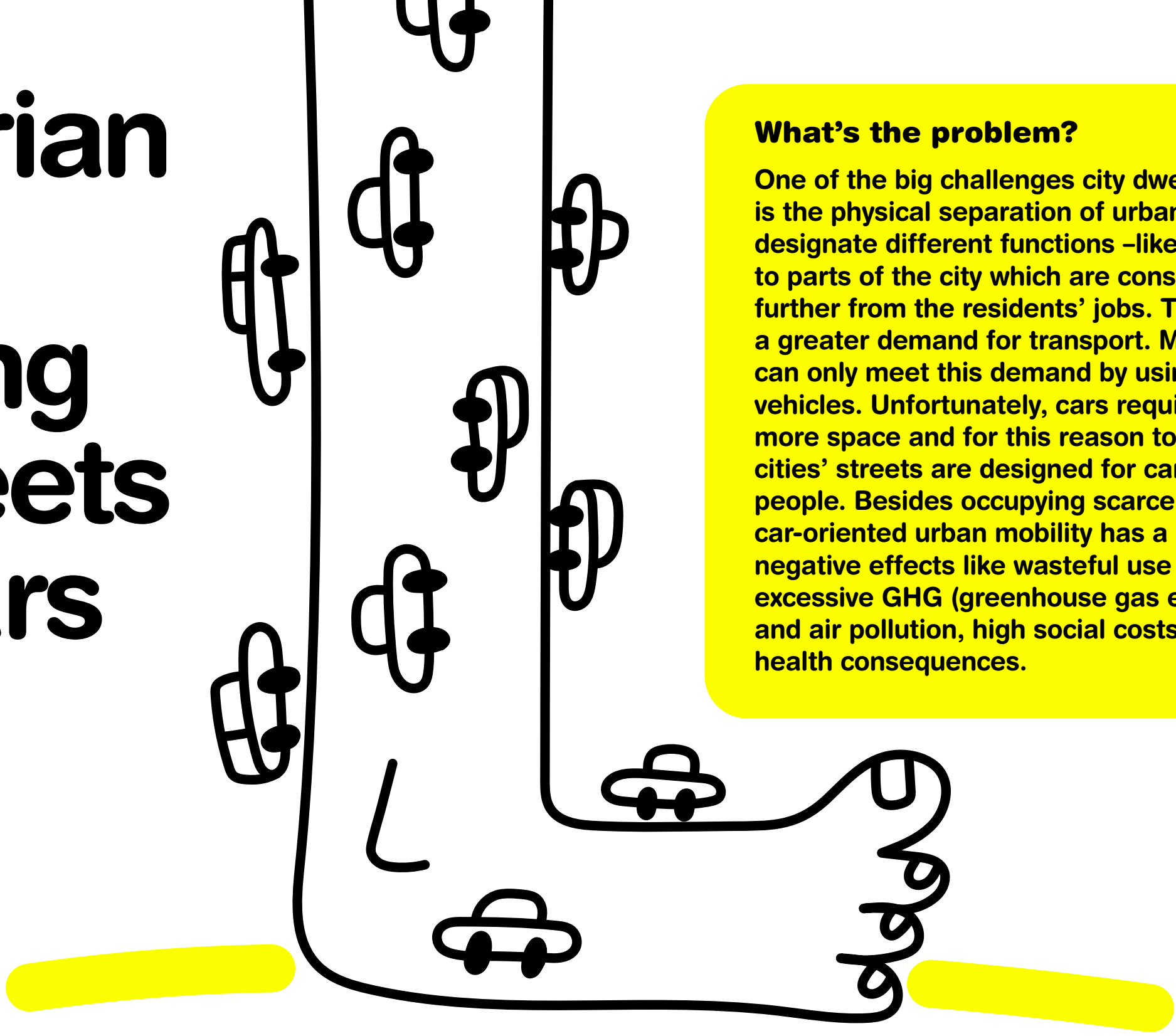
Cities of **medium, large and metropolitan scale** need to identify a structure for the different centres of the 15-minute areas and address the full scope of tasks as described above. They can however exploit the advantage of better density.



Rue Montorgueil in Paris - Iván Tosics



Pedestrian priority: liberating city streets from cars



What's the problem?

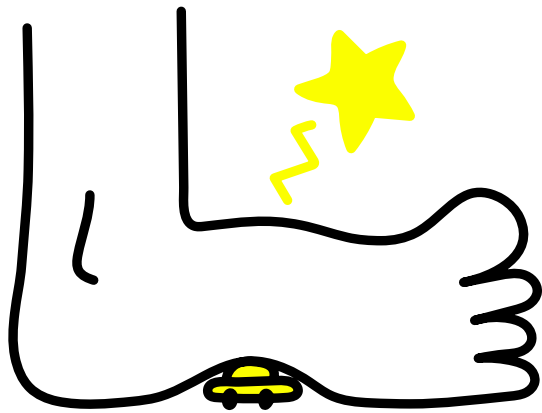
One of the big challenges city dwellers face is the physical separation of urban areas that designate different functions -like housing- to parts of the city which are considerably further from the residents' jobs. This leads to a greater demand for transport. Many cities can only meet this demand by using motorised vehicles. Unfortunately, cars require more and more space and for this reason today, most cities' streets are designed for cars, and not for people. Besides occupying scarce city spaces, car-oriented urban mobility has a range of other negative effects like wasteful use of energy, excessive GHG (greenhouse gas emissions) and air pollution, high social costs and harmful health consequences.

What can cities do about it? What is the vision?

Cities need to be designed for people, not for individual motorised vehicles. In this regard, **accessibility should be the priority, not mobility**. Certainly, planned mobility is key for more accessible cities. There's increasing need for **compact cities and neighbourhoods** where most services and functions are easily accessible by walking, cycling and by public transport. When planning for sustainable mobility, the fundamental principles should reflect this commitment by **prioritising transport modes that ensure inclusivity, while providing a better use of space, energy efficiency** and cost effective investments. These principles require “reversing” the mobility pyramid – giving **priority to walking, cycling (and public transport) at the expense of cars**, both in terms of resources and space.

Pedestrian priority **does not mean that cars need to totally disappear from our cities**, there will still be plenty of situations when the use of a motorised vehicle is inevitable. Nevertheless, by significantly **reducing their share in the mobility mix** can lead to positive changes and make our public spaces better places for people. This reduction can be done by completely banning them from certain streets, severely limiting their access to other streets, reducing their speed and limiting parking options, for instance.

But this is not all. Making the use of cars less convenient, more expensive – and in certain situations even impossible – is not enough. Cities need to offer **viable alternatives to individual motorised vehicles**, while simultaneously improving the conditions and user experience of active mobility and public transport, which ultimately make **leaving the car behind an easier decision**.



It's also important to note that **public spaces do not automatically become “places for people”** by simply taking cars out of the equation. Changing the perception of these places, actively stimulating new uses are also important. The combination of physical and soft measures is fundamental. These include implementing visual improvements, greening, installation of urban furniture, organising events that attract people and using incentives that could encourage certain activities.

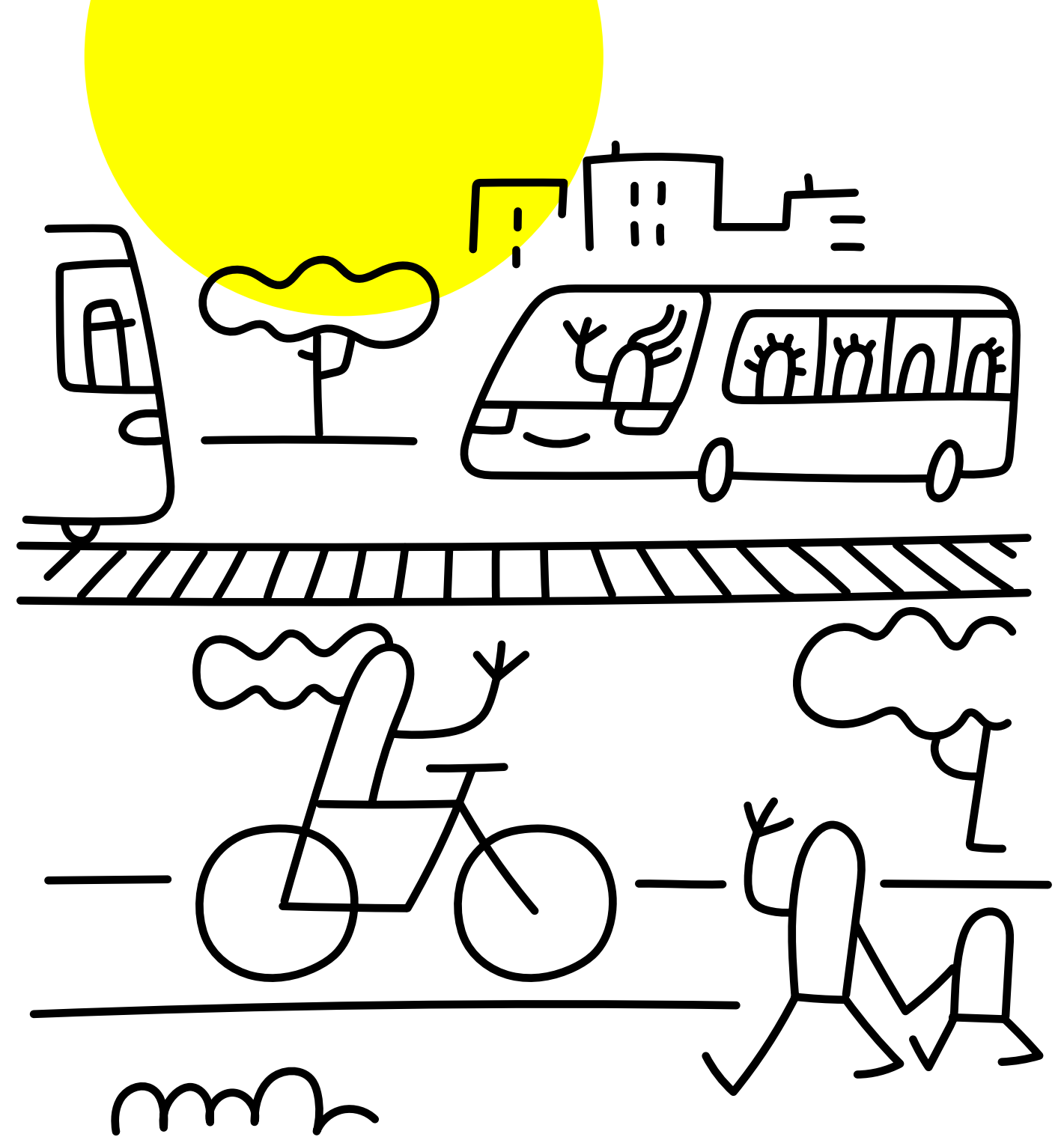
While all cities need to adapt the mix of interventions to their **unique local circumstances**, specific actions can include:

- Applying a **citywide approach of pedestrian priority** by creating pedestrian-only zones, co-existence streets and allocating at least 50% of the street space to people, not cars, (with wide sidewalks, narrow lanes, physical traffic calming).
- Introducing **road traffic restrictions**, discouraging – or even banning – cars to speed through inner city areas in a straight line by introducing circularity regulation ([see 5.1 - Reducing car access to city centres](#)).
- **Acknowledging the occasional need for car use** even in pedestrian-priority streets (delivery, loading-unloading, transporting people with mobility impairments, etc.) but applying strict limitations.
- Using strategic **parking management to regulate traffic flow** and to discourage people from driving to certain neighbourhoods ([see 5.3 - Parking management](#)).
- Setting and enforcing **strict speed limits** in all streets (pedestrian only streets - no cars allowed; coexistence streets - max 6 km/h, segregated streets - max 30 km/h) ([see 5.2 - Tempo 30](#)).



How does city size matter?

In **small and medium-sized** cities it is easier to manage such measures through a citywide plan. In smaller cities cycling alone can be a viable alternative to car use in most cases, while in **large cities and metropolitan areas** public transport plays an increasingly important role. Sharing schemes and on-demand public transport can also be part of the solution, with bikes, e-scooters and cars. However, these are only viable in larger urban areas. Regardless of the city size, it is important that the various alternatives to individual motorised vehicles are put in place **simultaneously with traffic restriction and pedestrianization measures**. In big cities and city regions parking can be a significant challenge (especially resident parking).





Pontevedra

The city of Pontevedra (ES) started its journey in 1999 with the objective to improve urban life quality, mainly **through the drastic reduction of motorised traffic in the extended city centre**. Instead of totally prohibiting car use, the city has applied the **principle of necessity**: anyone can use a car, even in the city centre, but only when it is really necessary, and only for a limited time.

Through-traffic was totally eliminated by introducing circularity and **parking was also transformed**: surface parking in the city centre is only allowed for 15 minutes or long-term in (paid) underground garages; otherwise, anyone has the option to use the free municipality parking facilities located within 10/15 minute walking distance from the centre. To encourage active mobility, a **metro-style walking map** has also been developed, which indicates the distances between various spots in the downtown area, as well as the estimated walking time to get to each one of these destinations.

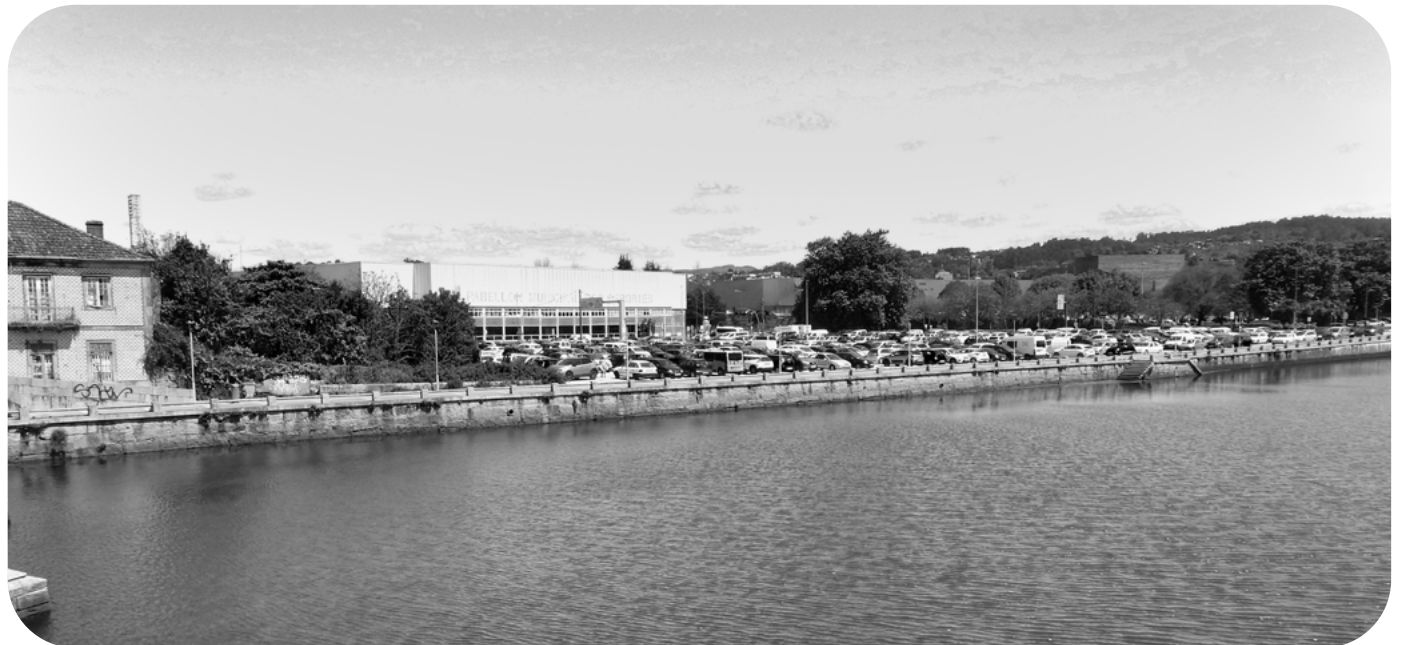
As a result of all this, **motorised traffic in the heart of the city decreased by over 90%** and it dropped by nearly 80% in the extended centre. Urban **noise level has also been drastically reduced**, similarly to fatal road accidents in the city centre. As a bonus, Miguel Anxo Fernández Lores, **the Mayor who started this urban transformation process, is still in office**. To find out more about the project check the [video explaining the Pontevedra mobility model¹](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_WS05BJfT8) and the [Euronews article²](https://www.euronews.com/next/2022/09/20/how-pedestrianization-halted-a-spanish-citys-decline) and footage about the city's transformation.

1. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8_WS05BJfT8

2. <https://www.euronews.com/next/2022/09/20/how-pedestrianization-halted-a-spanish-citys-decline>



The former main road cutting through the inner city of Pontevedra (now a pedestrianized street) – Béla Kézy

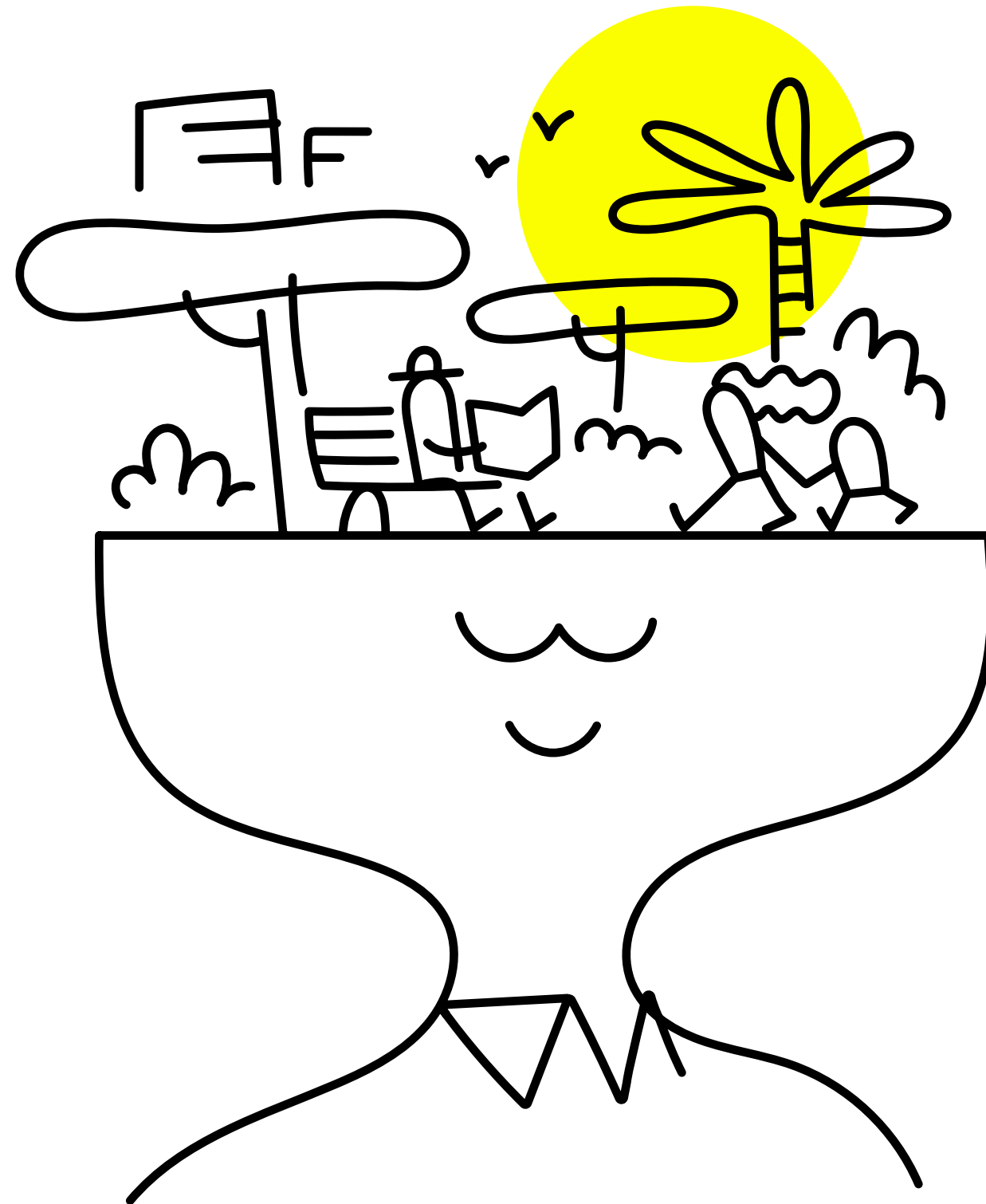


Free municipal parking in 10-15 minutes walking distance from the center – Iván Tosics

City-wide network of calmed down places

What is the problem?

Due to the car dominance in cities, the public spaces in cities got more and more disconnected and active mobility lost significance. More humanised and neighbourhood-based strategies are needed to reverse the earlier trends. People need places where their need for tranquility is the first priority. If such places, necessarily without car use, are created in many parts of the city, this might have an effect on the city as a whole.

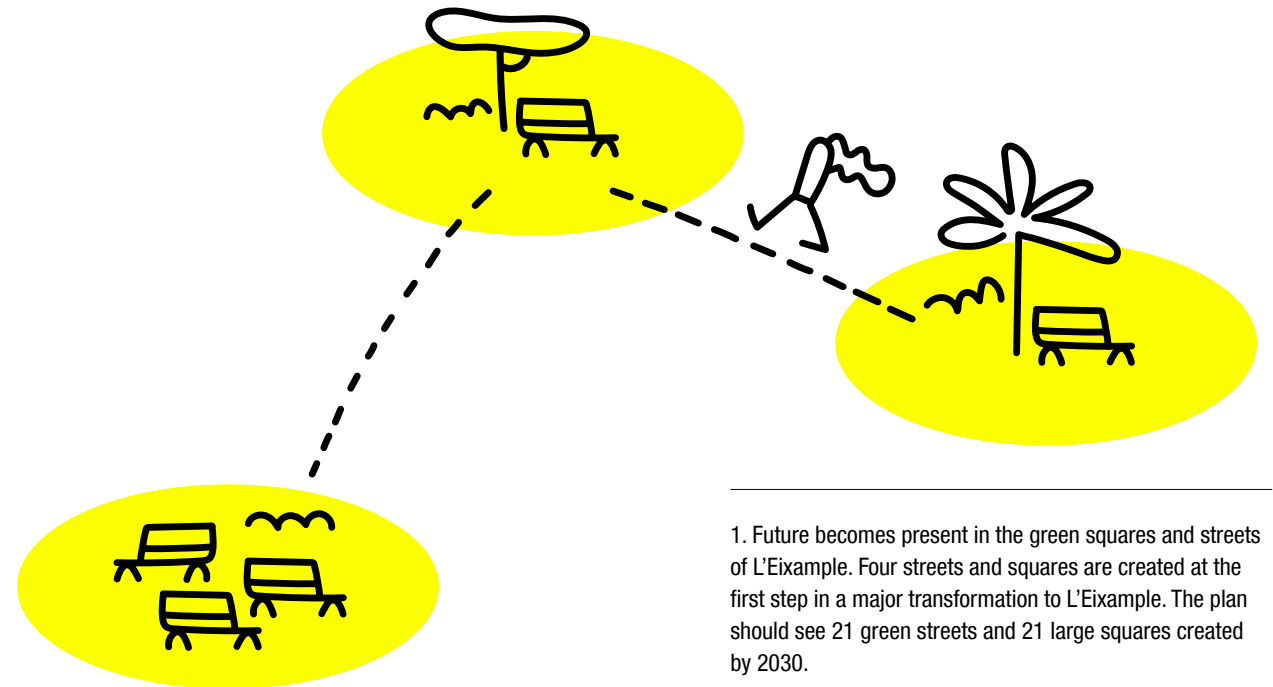
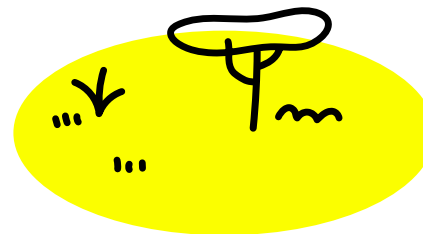


What can cities do about it?

A network of “calmed down spaces” is a **system of pedestrian-priority squares and streets that spreads throughout the city in a coherent way**, benefiting the environment and public health. It improves connectivity and accessibility, and it can also transform the image of the city as a whole. The emphasis is put on high quality, liveable and active public spaces that give priority for pedestrians and cyclists, offering meeting places for everyone. To further promote different activities and create better accessibility, **these places have to be connected across the whole city tangibly on a human scale**: they need to be easily reachable by foot, bicycle or public transport. Calmed down spaces call for a co-creative reorganisation of the roads (see 5.4 - [Cycling Strategy](#) and 5.5 - [From highways to boulevards](#)), shifting to a model towards **sustainable and active mobility**, well linked to public transport.

This can only be achieved - besides regenerating the **selected places themselves** - through investments in public transport and **sustainable infrastructure**, to compensate for the reduction of space for motorised traffic. High quality infrastructure and access with soft mobility need to be developed simultaneously to present acceptable alternatives – as shared-bikes, e-mobility and public transport services (see 5.6 - [Mobility hubs: integrating public transport with micromobility](#)). These spaces can be further visually enhanced if the city weaves elements like **public furniture for resting, tactical urbanism measures marking spaces as places for people or greenery and garden elements into the network**. Such interventions can improve public health physically, but also psychologically, once it promotes outdoor activities. In a nutshell, it creates a relaxed and slowed down pace within the city for local people. The city also becomes **more equal and sociable** because new, accessible places for gatherings can happen organically, away from city stress.

A network of **calmed-down public spaces** could be easily developed if there are public spaces already available. It's always a **challenge to find available areas in densely populated zones, where no (public) green spaces are available**. In this case, longer distances have to be taken into account and connections with the city centre can be created. Of course, it remains a challenge to link these spaces with active mobility corridors among them. However, it is not impossible to find space even in areas, which seem to have none: the city of Barcelona (ES), for example, introduced the green street model¹. This is based on superblocks, taking out cars from some roads and turning the intersections of these roads into green public spaces, while **further enhancing the effect by calming down streets, to connect the superblocks to each other**. Naturally, all this takes a lot of political willpower, commitment and cooperation between the concerned stakeholders – might they be from a public or private background. In this matter, taking an integrated participatory planning approach is the first step towards change (see 6.4 - [Participative approach](#)). (see 6.4 - [Financial resources, regulations](#)).



1. Future becomes present in the green squares and streets of L'Eixample. Four streets and squares are created at the first step in a major transformation to L'Eixample. The plan should see 21 green streets and 21 large squares created by 2030.



How does city size matter?

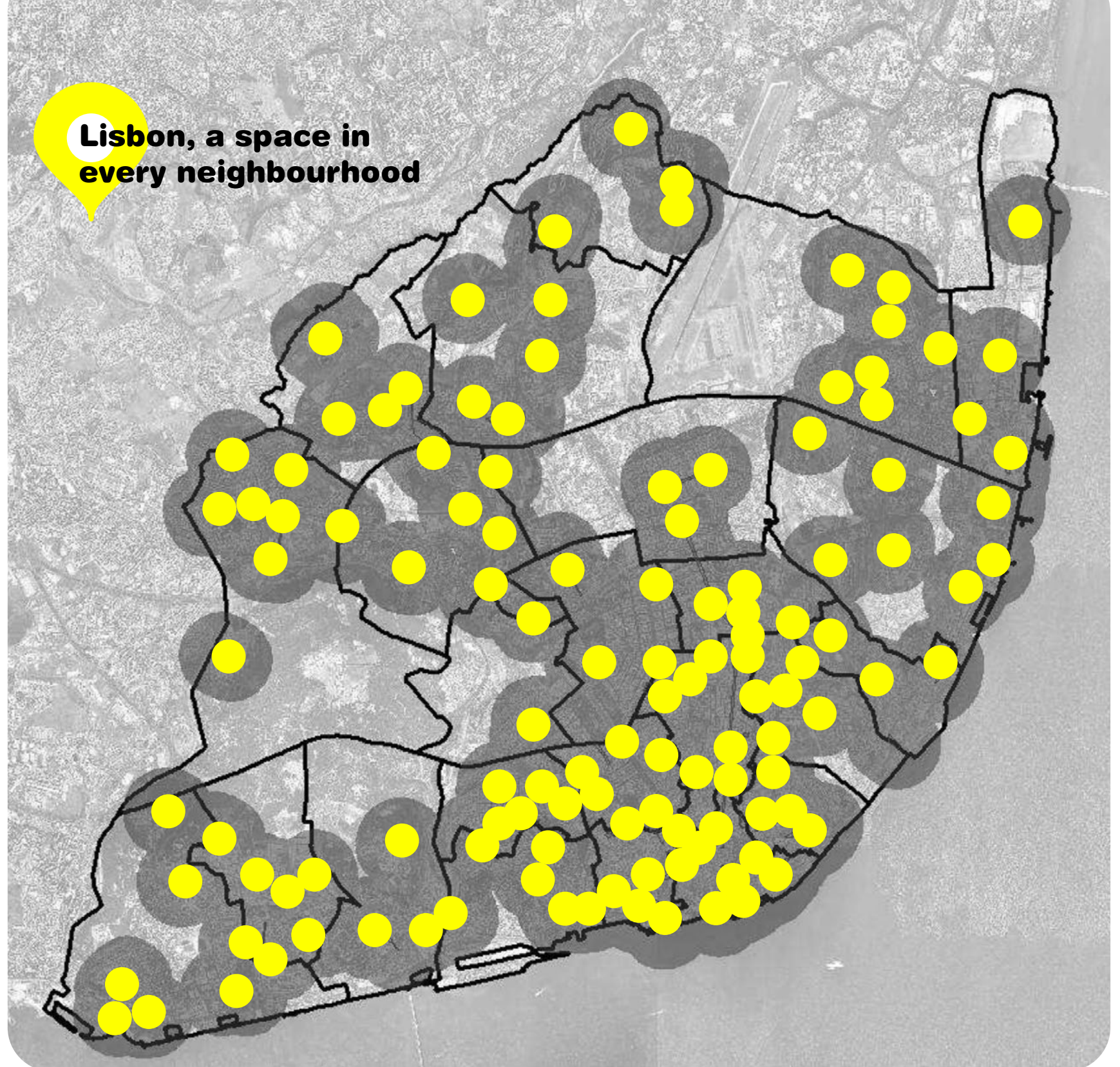
In **small cities**, a citywide network of calmed public spaces is relatively easy to implement, as the potential places are most likely already within walking distance. However, the preference for cars in these cities tends to be higher than in bigger cities, making it harder to get people on board.

In **medium-sized cities**, there are different neighbourhoods that need to be connected with a green network. Investments in pedestrian zones and shared spaces will help push for the connection of these public spaces.

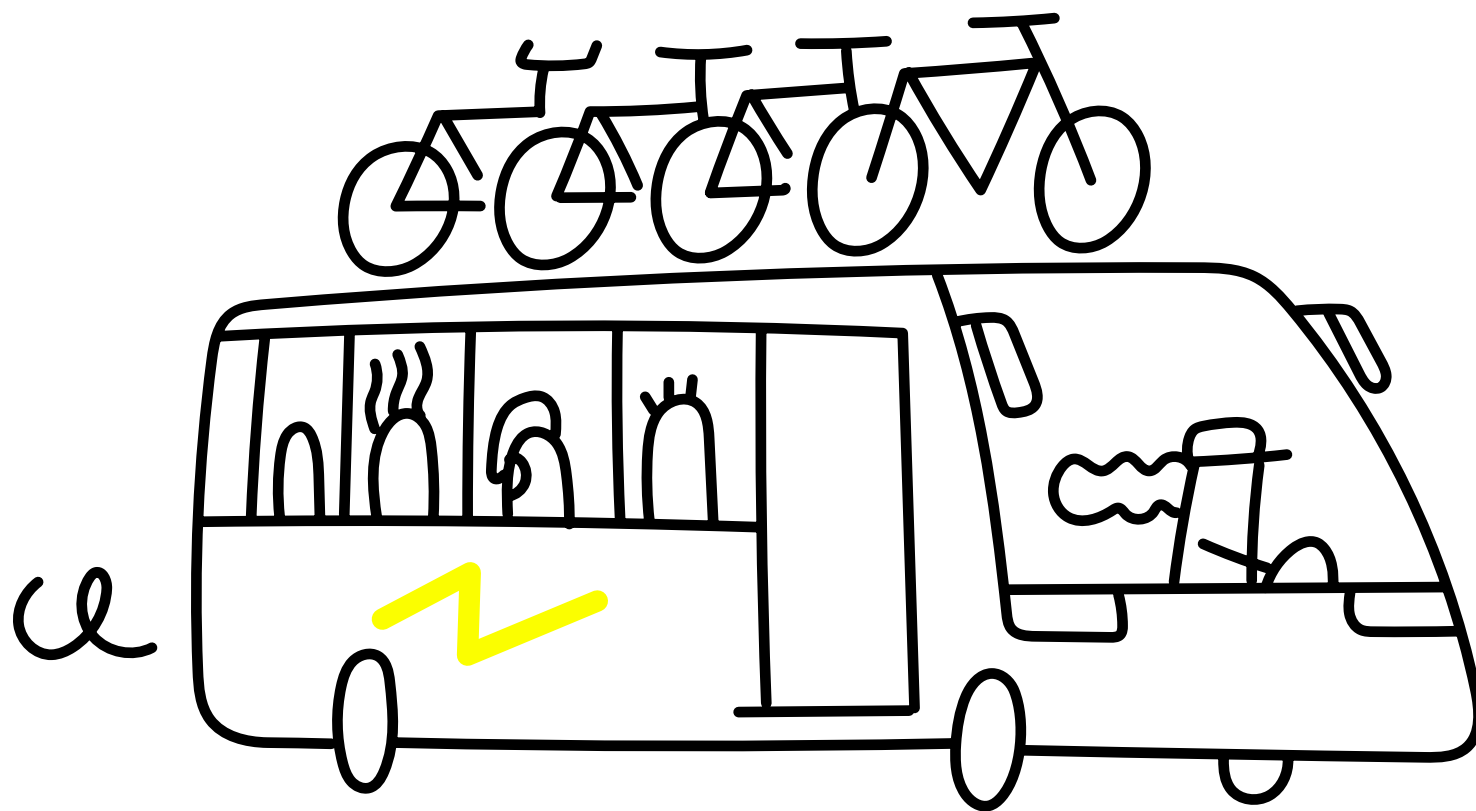
Large cities and metropolitan areas, in the opposite direction, have longer distances between public spaces and points of interests. It's crucial to fill those gaps, by expanding green walking and biking corridors, and connecting calmed-down places gradually in all parts of the city.

In the Lisbon program "A space in every neighborhood" key public spaces are rehabilitated in each neighbourhood of the city with the aim of getting people out of cars and turning squares/roads into public spaces to become meeting points of the local community.

Lisbon, a space in every neighbourhood



City agglomerational concept for mobility and public space

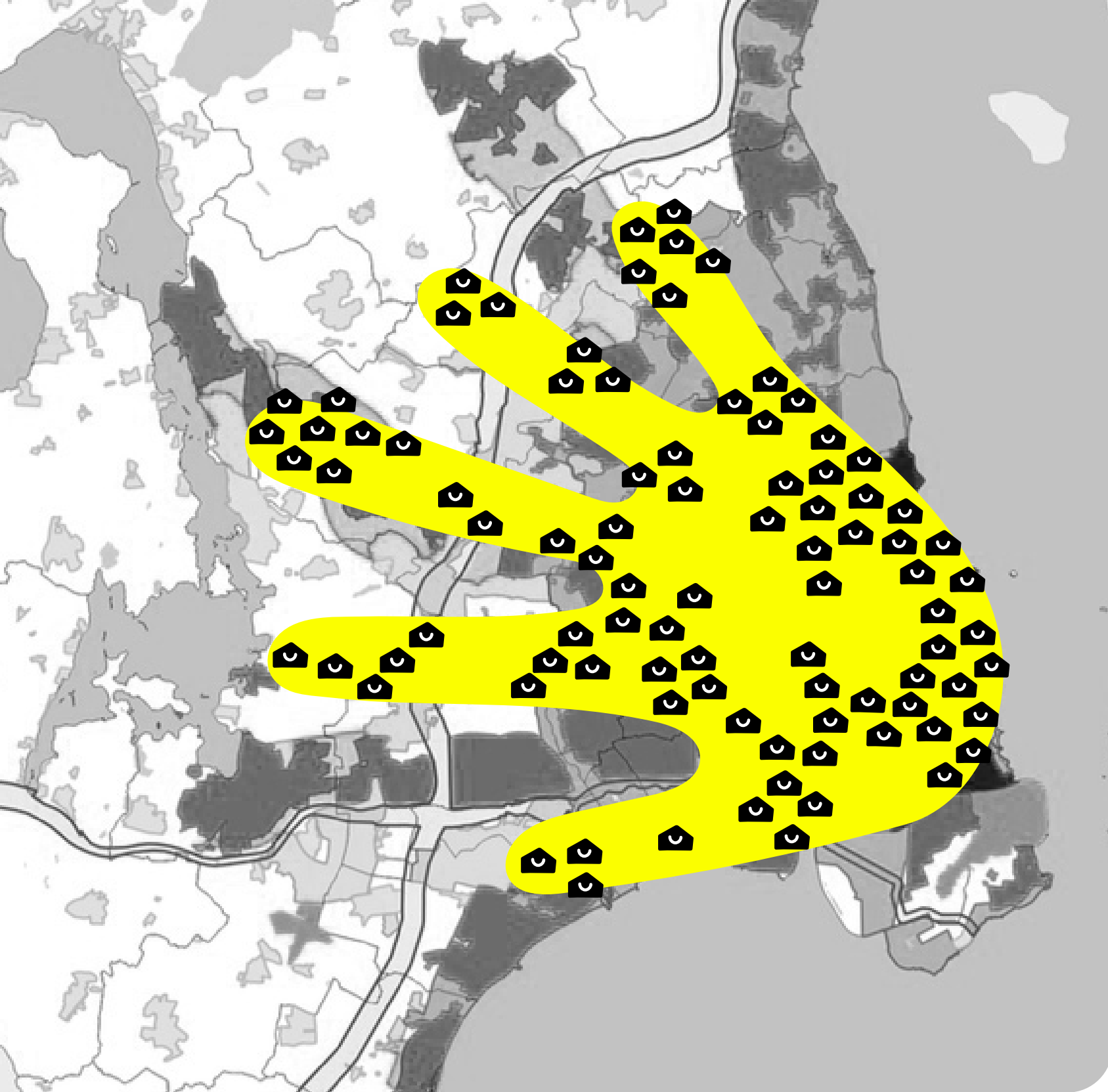


What is the problem?

Many city regions and metropolitan areas are characterised by dispersed functions, low density patterns –also known as “sprawl”– and disconnection between those areas, due to their expansion with less attention to land consumption and use of energy to move. In such urban areas people are forced to use cars because public transport is not serving those areas well enough. Active and soft modalities of transport are a challenge, because it’s expensive to build the infrastructure to connect these places, and quality public spaces in close vicinity are missing.

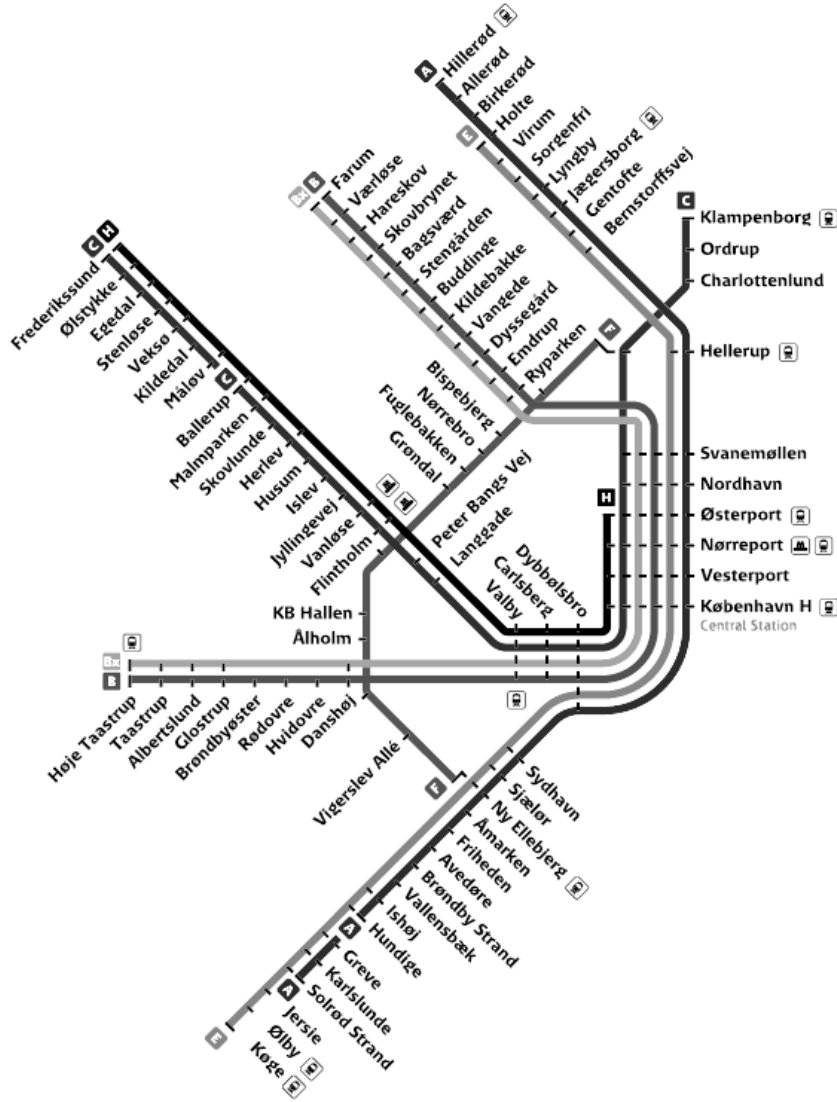
What can cities do about it?

Through establishing an affiliated network of public spaces and a tangible mobility system linked to it, a city can improve towards an active, accessible and people-friendly public conception, which is comprehensible and easy to navigate through. **Providing mobility infrastructure that uses public transport as a backbone creates a network of people-oriented and sustainable urban spaces that promote the use of sustainable modes of transport over that of private cars.** Meanwhile, the development of each sector on its own can positively impact other sectors and even facilitate them. In return, high quality mobility options and public spaces can thrive. Simultaneously, local commerce can be stimulated through cooperative measures and enhanced accessibility.



Copenhagen finger plan

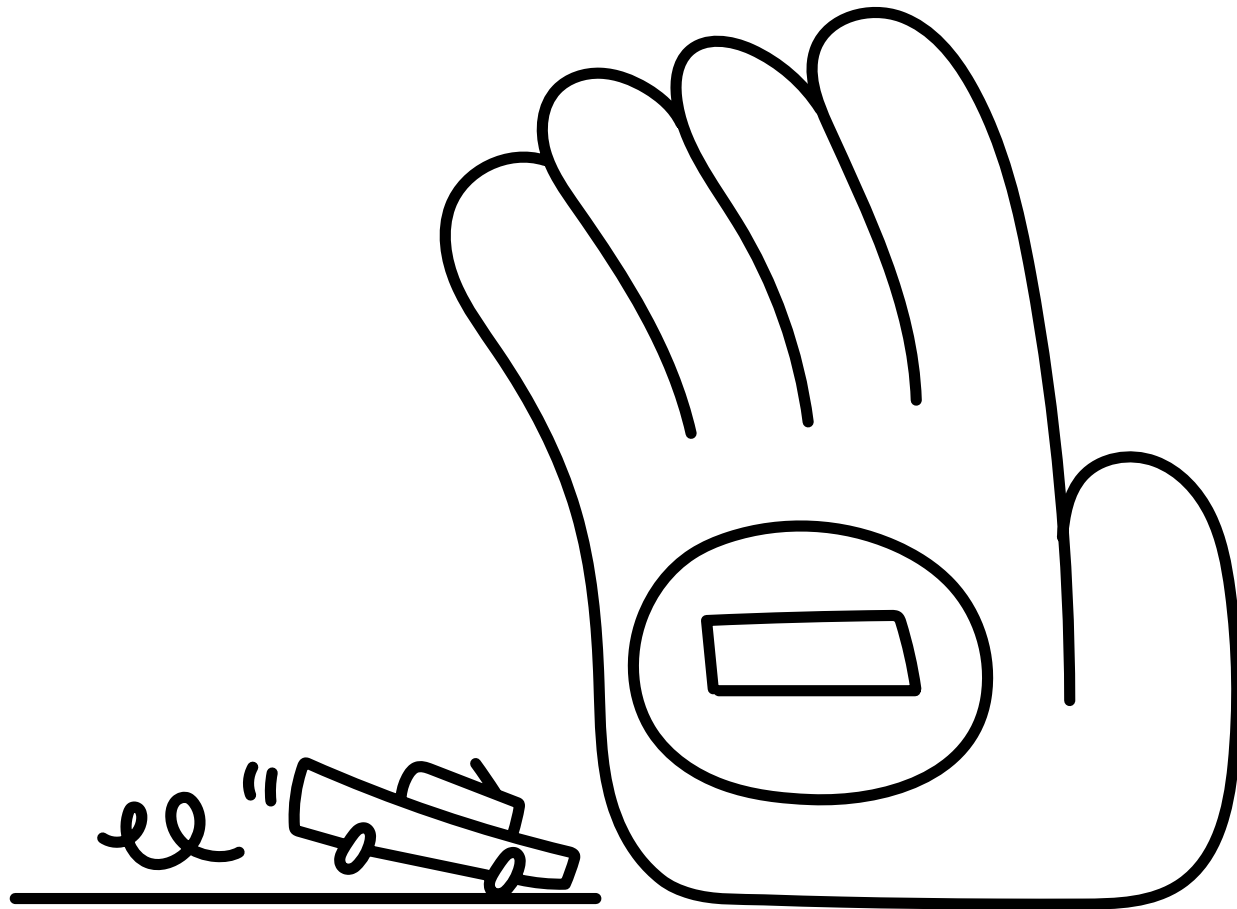
The case of the Copenhagen "finger plan" clearly illustrates how public transport can become the backbone of urban development in the built-up area of the region



The interventions

- 5.1 Reducing car access to city centres
- 5.2 Tempo 30
- 5.3 Parking management
- 5.4 Cycling strategy
- 5.5 From Highways to boulevards
- 5.6 Mobility hubs: integrating public transport with micromobility
- 5.7 Superblock
- 5.8 School area
- 5.9 Shopping street

Reducing car access to city centres



What is the problem?

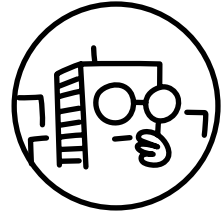
Most larger cities have some car-free areas in the very core of the urban area. In dynamic, growing cities, however, the good quality of life for residents and visitors cannot be assured by simply closing down for cars only a small inner core area. The transit traffic through the surrounding central areas also needs to be regulated and, consequently, reduced. In addition to parking management, the movement of cars also needs to be limited, making it difficult for motorised traffic to cross the central areas with other destinations in mind.

What can cities do about it?

Making the core area of the city car-free is an important step but not enough to achieve substantial reduction of car use in the dense central areas. To achieve that, restrictions have to be introduced in a larger area around the car-free core zone. This should allow only those who have a clear destination there to enter a given part of the inner city, but not give access for those who would like just to cross it to get to another part of the city.

What are the key elements?

- In the city core **car-free areas** the aim is to ban motorised traffic, with carefully defined exceptions allowing justified travels. The car-free and pedestrian areas should be designed as big as possible. Likewise, the delienation of such zones needs to be revised (and if politically possible, extended) regularly. It's possible to split this area into various parts, requiring separate permits to enter and leave each of those.
- In order to exclude transiting motorised traffic from larger central areas surrounding the car-free core area, an **extensive restricted traffic** needs to be well delineated and signposted. This can be divided into different parts (e.g. sectors), restricting the direct passage from one area to another, by changing traffic directions within streets or even prohibiting the crossing of roads which are separating the different parts.
- For those who need to move from one part or sector of the restricted traffic area to another one, **alternative routes should be offered** outside the restricted area. This might make the car journey less convenient, while it still guarantees direct access for all types of non-motorised transport. All this might discourage drivers from taking their cars and forcing them to consider other transport modes.
- The different levels of restrictions of car use must be **widely communicated**: the necessary permit procedures should be well defined, transparent, having plausible rules, while the control of the regulations should be strict (e.g. by cameras) and the fines should be preventive.



What do cities need to have in mind?

The prohibitions and restrictions need to serve the main objective without hindering or limiting the mobility of vehicles that serve public interest or attend an emergency situation. Therefore, a carefully defined list of exceptions is necessary, including emergency services, public transport (e.g. tramways and buses), waste collection and freight vehicles, taxis, healthcare providers with permits, (electric) bikes, mopeds and even cargo bikes. A clear map with detailed explanations, as well as an easy-to-use route planner should be made available to the public with maps spread over the vicinities, information online and possibly mobility apps. The increase of motorised traffic on the escape roads needs to be frequently monitored.



What are the impacts on the city?

With cars disappearing from the car-free zones and a substantial decrease of motorised traffic in the restricted areas, more space will become available for pedestrians, cyclists, buses and trams. There will be more space to enjoy the city and move safely, in a more healthy living environment. At the same time, it will be easier for motorised vehicles that really need to be in the city (e.g. suppliers, emergency vehicles, health care providers carrying people with mobility impairments) to reach their destination.



How does city size matter?

In **small towns** the density and congestion problems might not be as substantial as in bigger cities, thus a small car-free central area combined with some parking restrictions around it might be enough. The restrictions of transfer traffic are much more relevant for **medium and large cities**. For the **metropolitan scale**, in particular, it might not be enough to introduce local restrictions, the key solution might be to develop intra-regional detour roads. Consistent enforcement is a central element for **all city-size categories**.

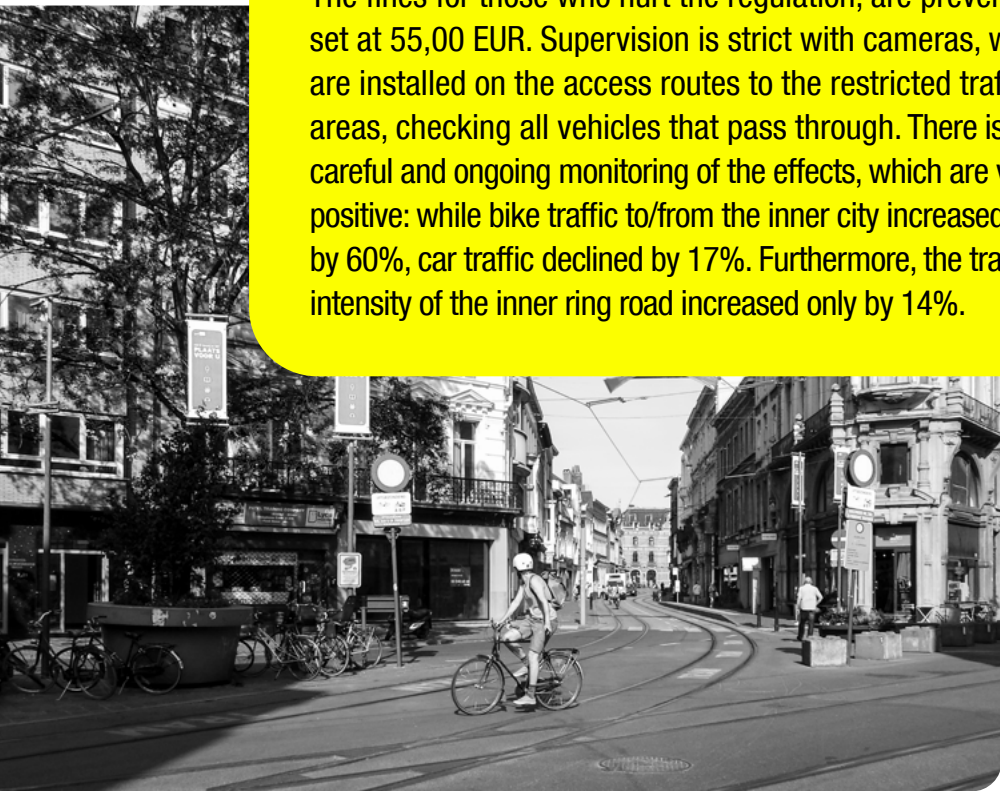
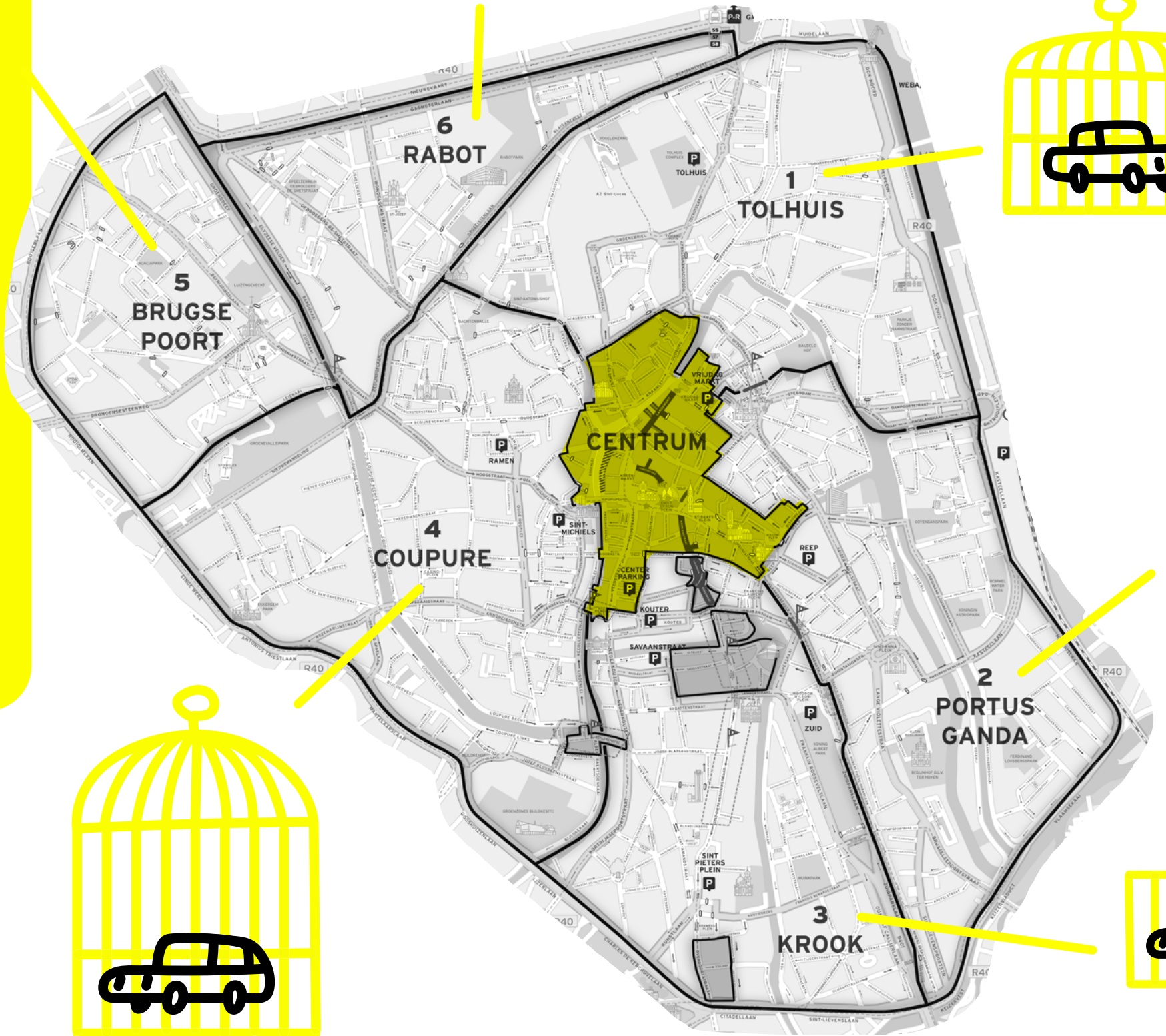


Ghent Circulation Plan

The Ghent (BE) Circulation Plan became effective on 3 April 2017, with the aim to unburden the city centre of ongoing traffic. It is remarkable that the information about the new regulation has been written in a very simple, plain language, avoiding complex explanations and always emphasising the positive effects of the restrictions.

The map shows the car-free central area and the six sectors which have been assigned around it. The new regulation made it impossible to directly cross from one sector to another by car.

The fines for those who hurt the regulation, are preventive, set at 55,00 EUR. Supervision is strict with cameras, which are installed on the access routes to the restricted traffic areas, checking all vehicles that pass through. There is a careful and ongoing monitoring of the effects, which are very positive: while bike traffic to/from the inner city increased by 60%, car traffic declined by 17%. Furthermore, the traffic intensity of the inner ring road increased only by 14%.

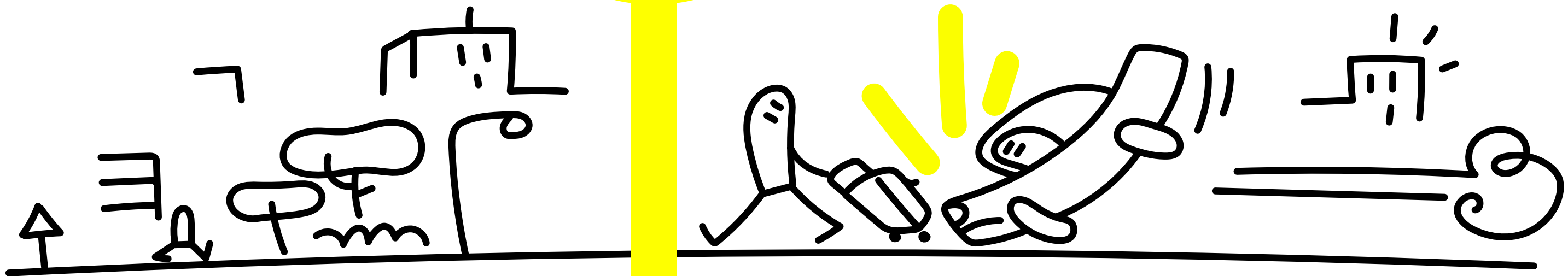


Ghent – Iván Tosics

Tempo 30

What's the problem?

Our city streets historically were developed to ensure safe and uninterrupted mobility of people. With the proliferation of cars, streets were redesigned to prioritise the movement of motorised vehicles, compromising the safety of vulnerable street users, as pedestrians and cyclists. Designing streets to accommodate high car traffic flows, can result in increasing pedestrian injury rates and even fatalities in cities.

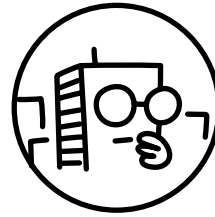


What can cities do about it?

Reducing traffic fatalities and severe injuries requires an integrated set of measures, including changes in street design, awareness-raising actions, and even completely banning cars from certain streets. Speed has a significant impact on pedestrian safety, so **limiting the speed of motorised vehicles in streets is one of the most impactful interventions to prevent severe incidents**. There is increasing evidence that simply **reducing the speed limit from 50 km/h to 30 km/h** in most streets in a city, can almost immediately **bring about positive results**. It's an **inexpensive intervention**, but still, a very significant one.

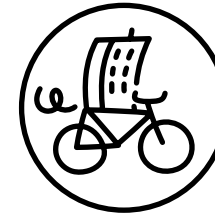
What are the key elements?

- **Ensure political consensus and support.** Changing speed limits is a major change, which affects most citizens, so you need a strong commitment and a clear timeline.
- **Talk to stakeholders.** Using a participative approach is crucial: from the beginning of the process involve key stakeholders. These include, but not exclusively, the police, the public transport company, the fire department and employers, unions.
- **Adapt legislation and prepare a map.** Depending on your local circumstances, you might probably need to change regulations. In addition, draw a map clearly indicating the speed limit in each city street.
- **Sell your story.** Communicate widely, reach as many citizens as possible, prepare people for the change. Use clear messages and focus on the benefits.
- **Make it visible in the streets.** Make sure that the speed limit is clear for drivers in every street. Use consistent signposting and paint visibly on the streets at the entrance of areas with different speed limits.
- **Enforce.** Use control, like speed cameras, police presence and sanctions to show drivers that you take it seriously.
- **Evaluate and adapt.** Select key metrics relevant to your city (most widely used metrics include speed, journey times, accidents, air and noise pollution) and monitor them regularly. Use results to adapt and fine-tune the system.



What do cities need to have in mind?

Reducing speed limits is controversial, most drivers consider it a serious limitation of their given rights. **Expect resistance**, bad press and negative comments, which can even get personal. That's exactly why **political will and selling your vision** – improved safety, reduced traffic fatalities and more liveable streets – are so **important**. Implement measures in a consistent and transparent way, using test periods, adapting certain elements when necessary and using warnings instead of more serious sanctions at the beginning. Experience of cities like Graz show that **after seeing the positive effects the majority of citizens wouldn't want to go back**.



What are the impacts on the city?

The results coming from cities that have already introduced Tempo30 to their urban fabric are very promising, with a range of positive impacts. Most importantly: **low-speed streets save lives**. All cities reported a significant **drop in the number of traffic accidents** resulting in fatalities or severe injuries (In Toronto, for instance, there was a 28% decrease in the number of collisions between pedestrians and motor vehicles and a 67% decline in the number of fatal and serious injuries on streets with speed limit reductions from 40 km/h to 30 km/h)¹. In addition, most cities measured a noticeable decrease in noise level. One of the main arguments against Tempo30 is that it increases the travel time of motorised vehicles, but in reality, this **increase is mostly negligible** (Brussels, for instance, has only experienced modest – 3-6% – increase of travel time after introducing a citywide 30 km/h speed limit).²



How does city size matter?

Tempo30 may be a harder sell in **smaller cities**, where congestions are rare and the average speed is higher. Even there, however, it is easy to argue for the importance of limiting speed around schools, kindergartens, residential streets or simply where pedestrian density is higher. In **medium, large and metropolitan cities** with higher absolute number and rate of serious accidents reducing speed limits is really a must, not an option. Other than those distinctions, Tempo30 is a highly relevant, relatively inexpensive and high-impact intervention for cities of all sizes.

1. www.bmcpublichealth.biomedcentral.com/counter/pdf/10.1186/s12889-019-8139-5.pdf

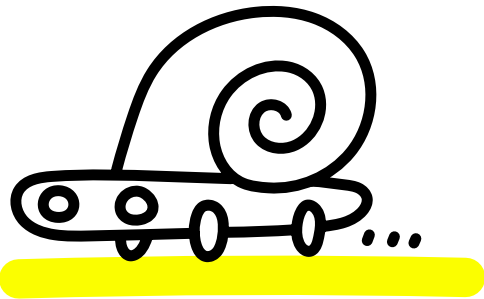
2. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SjzbbwkUjv0>

Brussels City 30

In 2019, the new city leadership of Brussels (BE) launched a new mobility plan called “Good Move” with 50 actions, one of which is the “Brussels City 30”. The implementation of the plan started in January 2021, following extensive consultation processes with a wide range of stakeholders. The city managed to change the legislation: 30 km/h became the new “default” speed limit even for many of the major corridors (see the photo to the right). Communication was a crucial element with ads running in all possible channels. While there was strong resistance at the beginning, the evaluation shows that even the early results justify the interventions, and most people are now in favour of the new system. For more information, [watch this presentation](#).



The speed control display blinks red indicating a car surpassing the 30 km speed limit – Iván Tosics



Road-markings reminding drivers of city-wide speed 30 – Claus Köllinger

Graz Tempo 30

Graz (AT) was the first city to introduce the Tempo 30 at a citywide scale in Europe. There were tests of Tempo 30 zones dating back to 1986 and 1987 in some areas. This experience resulted in a high demand to extend the Tempo 30 zones to more city districts. Opposition against citywide Tempo 30 was high at first, opponents called for a local referendum to decide on whether it should have been taken forward. However, the local authority argued that it is not smart to vote on something you don't have the necessary expertise, or knowledge about. Instead, the city launched a 2-year test phase – combined with an extensive communication campaign. At the end of the test phase, it was clear that the measure created a better quality of life for the residents of Graz, while also improving road safety. After that, not keeping the Tempo 30 speed limit was not even considered as an option.

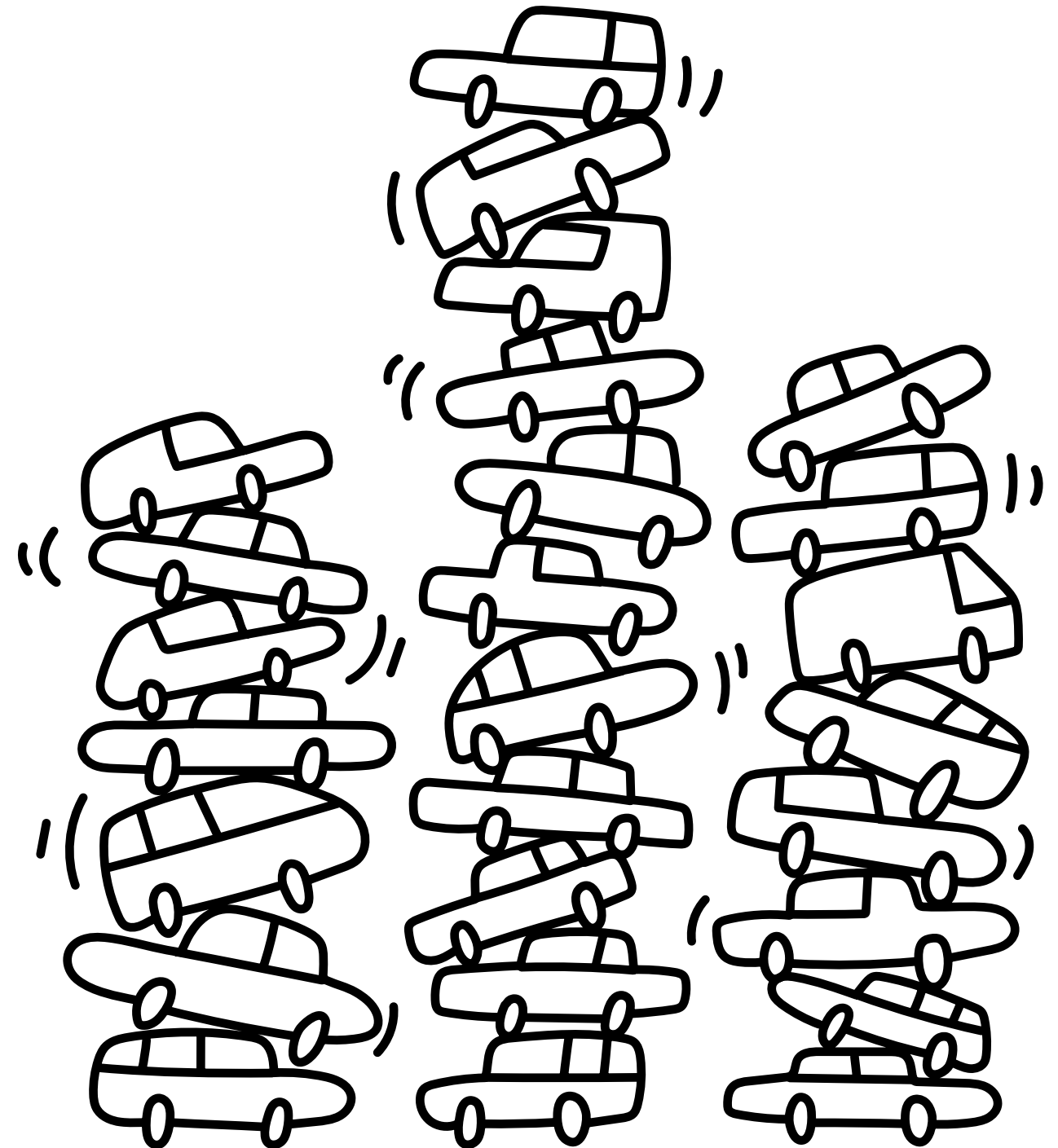
Parking Management

What's the problem?

On-street parking is a challenge in all cities across Europe, since favourable conditions for car access were granted through car-friendly mobility policies. Parking management addresses this as a strong tool, which influences how people move in the city and how public space is used. However, it needs to be a part of a wider integrated urban development strategy. Unsurprisingly, this is best when co-created by political decision-makers, public administration units, private stakeholders and civic organisations, who can jointly define objectives and take the related necessary actions.

What can cities do about it?

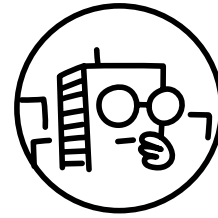
A city can use a wide range of measures for parking management. Classical ones are to point out where parking is allowed and where is not, or to put **time limits** on parking for a higher turnover of cars per parking space and even to define **paid parking zones** as stand-alone measures or in combination with time limits. Cities can as well apply **dynamic pricing** in paid parking to impact how long cars can stay in one spot, use a **workplace parking levy** as an instrument for reducing car commuting and run regional **P+R (Park and Ride) schemes** that intercept car trips as early as possible.



What are the key elements?

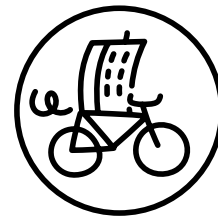
Crucial aspects of parking management include:

- **the 85% occupancy rule for metered areas**, which involves increasing parking fees to a level that ensures approximately 85% of parking spaces to be occupied. This results in lower traffic volumes to the area and less parking space search traffic. **If occupancy is lower than 85%, cities can reduce on-street parking spaces to meet this target.**
- **Shifting on-street to off-street parking** is another solution, using time limits and contractual agreements with developers, owners of parking garages and shopping centres. Pricing schemes can also be set, getting fares more expensive each hour and pushing people to use off-street facilities.
- Likewise, **constraining residential parking** is another aspect to be considered. Permits safeguarding residents' parking are necessary in high pressure areas, but they need high enough prices to reflect the value of public space – like the revenue that outdoor gastronomy would create. It is important to **change the mindset of people to accept parking solutions a bit further away from their homes** and even to consider **giving up car use totally.**
- Parking interventions depend on well-functioning **enforcement**. It shall be up to the local authority to manage it, either by doing the enforcement itself or by contracting a third party company. This needs to include the responsibility for controlling fees and fines to make enforcement efficient.
- **Parking management costs** shall be **covered by revenues** of fees, fines and permits. Any surplus coming from it, shall be invested in sustainable mobility projects or for upgrading public space.



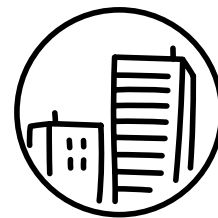
What do cities need to have in mind?

Parking management measures can be highly controversial in a city's society. Even the idea to eliminate a few parking spaces might result in fierce opposition from retail, commuters or residents. Therefore, it is crucial to well explain the objectives of parking policy and mobility strategies to help stakeholders understand the reasons why the measures are taken in the first place – and why they are so crucial. It is also important to show in a transparent way what parking revenues are used for - namely for visible improvements in the metered area or for improving access by sustainable mobility means.



What are the impacts on the city?

Parking management offers a bunch of benefits, it reduces car traffic levels, especially parking space search traffic, and supports modal shift from cars to sustainable means. It also creates open spaces available for sustainable mobility modes or public space functions other than transport – like meeting or market places. Overall, it helps to create more liveable neighbourhoods: it benefits the local economy by adjusting parking to customer frequencies, fights air and noise pollution and contributes to energy efficiency and just transport.



How does city size matter?

In small towns, people often use their cars despite the short distances that are fit for walking or cycling. Using parking spaces for multiple functions, setting time limits, and introducing paid parking creates conditions that encourage active modes of mobility. For cities of medium, large and metropolitan scale, measures like the 85% occupancy rule, shifting parking to off-street facilities and well elaborated P+R (Park and Ride) systems allow cities to reduce on-street parking alongside car traffic volumes. Consistent enforcement is a central element for all city-size categories – since it can ensure that people actually comply with parking regulations.



Sofia – Robert Pressl

Improving public space with paid parking revenues in Sofia

The city of Sofia (BG) uses a 2-zone model for its paid parking approach. A blue zone combines fees with time limits in the central area, while a green zone surrounding the central blue zone applies paid parking without time limits. Whenever paid parking zones are installed, the city invests revenues in upgrading pedestrian spaces and sidewalks, a very tangible investment to all locals. Neighbourhoods in the outskirts of the green zone are increasingly asking for an extension of paid parking to their area, once the inhabitants can experience the visible positive effects of the parking management on traffic load and public space quality. Find out more about such measures in this [video here](#)².



Ghent - Iván Tosics

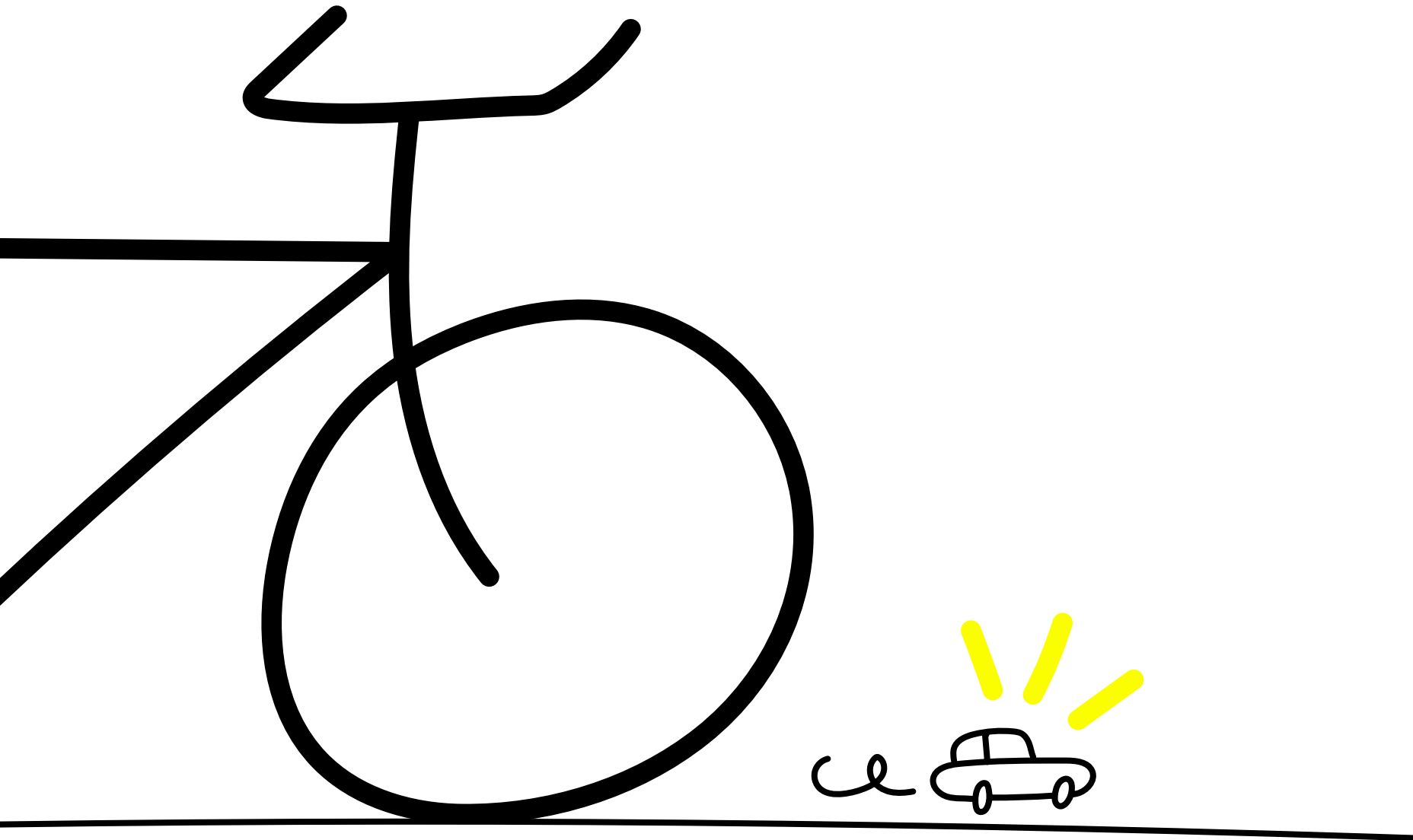
The Mobility Company of Ghent

In Ghent (BE), the mobility department was responsible for designing and delivering mobility strategies. Parking management, however, was enforced by a city-owned parking company. Besides the lack of a common approach to roll out sustainable mobility in the city, the interests of the two parties were not always in line and assets could not be combined for a higher impact. In 2011, Ghent merged the two entities into a new Mobility Company. Today the company operates rather independently based on a mission statement defined by the city. It is in full control of all aspects of mobility and can invest revenues from paid parking in sustainable mobility projects, thus optimising the delivery of the city's mobility objectives. To get a glimpse of this project, see the [“The Ghent Mobility Company” video](#)¹.

1. [Horizon2020 project Park4SUMP \(grant agreement no. 769072\), The Ghent Mobility Company.](#)

2. [Horizon2020 project Park4SUMP \(grant agreement no. 769072\), Parking Management in Sofia.](#)

Cycling strategy



What is the problem?

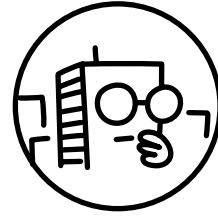
Cycling is on the rise in many European cities and beyond. It delivers solutions to a wide range of urban challenges by contributing to more efficient use of scarce public space, climate change mitigation, reducing air and noise pollution, improving public health or providing better accessibility for all. However, creating optimal conditions for cycling has not been in the forefront of urban planning agendas during the late 20th century when cities were practically (re)built for cars.

What can cities do about it?

Cities need a holistic approach to convince a significant share of its population to consider cycling as their default mode of transport. Stand-alone measures, like the improvement of infrastructure only or motivating cycling commutes without providing good conditions to cycle would likely fail to deliver the expected results. Consequently, cities need to use a **clever mix of measures** that combine investments in infrastructure, organisation of traffic, supportive regulations and motivational activities to spark change.

What are the key elements?

- A **cycling network** is best structured in a primary network of standalone tracks that ensures the most important and fastest connections. Also secondary networks are needed that feed the primary network, using a wide range of cycling lanes and streets with a 30km/h speed limit.
- Providing **bike parking facilities** at main destinations and transport hubs –preferably with shelter to protect bicycles from rain, good options to lock the bicycle and easy access – complement the good coverage to access the city as a cyclist. Adding bicycle parking racks at frequent portions of the city and neighbourhoods ensures short walking distances from the racks to the ultimate cyclists' destinations.
- **Network coverage** and **direct connections** for cyclists are improved by applying contra-flow lanes and bicycle overpasses. **Services** linked to the network infrastructure, like a bike sharing system, bicycle repair stations or well visible counters encourage people to feel at ease when biking.
- An easy to understand **signposting and wayfinding** system helps cyclists to navigate in the city. The main routes should use colour coding, numbering and stops alongside the biking lane, similar to a metro map. Signs use these features, give direction, and tell distances in minutes.
- All this is part of applying a **comprehensive branding approach** with logo, colour coding and regular messages to cyclists to inform on achievements and the latest activities.
- Awareness activities are essential in this running **motivational actions** like cyclists' breakfasts, repair services, bike to work campaigns or a bicycle festival to showcase the city's commitment to cycling.



What do cities need to have in mind?

When it comes to **cycling infrastructure**, the most important thing is **safety for all users** – especially for children. Besides, cyclists are sensitive to detours: routes need to **provide the shortest distance** and parking options need to be close to the destination and easily accessible while cycling. Mixing use areas for pedestrians and cyclists only works with low traffic volumes and sufficient path widths to avoid conflicts. Mixing cyclists on main roads with motorised traffic or providing insufficient lighting at dark hours discourages people from cycling, as do poorly lit parking facilities, once they create the perception of insecurity. Hilly cities can meet the concerns of people to cycling by promoting the use of e-bikes.



What are the impacts on the city?

A successful cycling strategy offers a range of benefits for cities: **cyclists need less space than motorised vehicles**, resulting ultimately in the option to repurpose public space for better uses. **Cyclists do not emit any GHGs**, nor produce considerable **noise loads**, helping to fight climate change as well as to improve public health levels of the population. The **cyclists** themselves are **healthier** thanks to their daily dose of physical activity. In addition, **cycling addresses a larger share of the population than car drivers** and contributes to the objective of ensuring accessibility for all. More people using bikes ease the traffic conditions for captive car users, like for people with physical limitations.



How does city size matter?

In **small cities** most destinations are accessible by a 15-min bike ride. With cycling as the main modal choice, these cities could revamp their entire public space to cater for the needs of people. Interventions to use include designation of Tempo 30 zones (see 5.2 - Tempo30), developing cycling tracks for the main connections, installing parking facilities and traffic-calming infrastructure. In **medium-sized cities**, interventions need to focus on creating main cycling routes, providing good wayfinding and signposting, large parking facilities at main destinations, as well as separating cyclists from motorised traffic and pedestrians. These recommendations apply to **large cities** and **metropolitan areas** as well, where adding interventions like cycling superhighways, overflies, Bike and Ride facilities, attractive bike sharing services and traffic priority options is also needed. Irrespective to city-size, **promotional actions are crucial to change the overall mindset**, encouraging people to start or continue cycling.

Bici Bolzano

The city of Bolzano (IT), which has 106 000 inhabitants, used a comprehensive approach to promote cycling. The city created a cycling strategy that combines providing excellent infrastructural conditions with creative branding and promotion. For this, **Bolzano developed the brand “Bici Bolzano”** which is always present in the roll-out of their interventions. Based on an analysis of citizen’ mobility demand, the city created a main cycling network using wayfinding and signposting similar to a metro line plan, for easy understanding and use. Decisions on where to place main cycling routes considered factors like speed, quality and direct connectivity, as well as the idea **that cycling needs to be a fun and pleasant experience**. Complementing good cycling conditions, Bolzano catered for high quality (bicycle) parking facilities at frequent intervals. Their promotional activities include movie clips, game-style videos, wall covering banners, postcards and annual bicycle festivals. You can find more information [here](#)¹.



Bolzano, Italy – FootToo



Barcelona – Robert Ramos

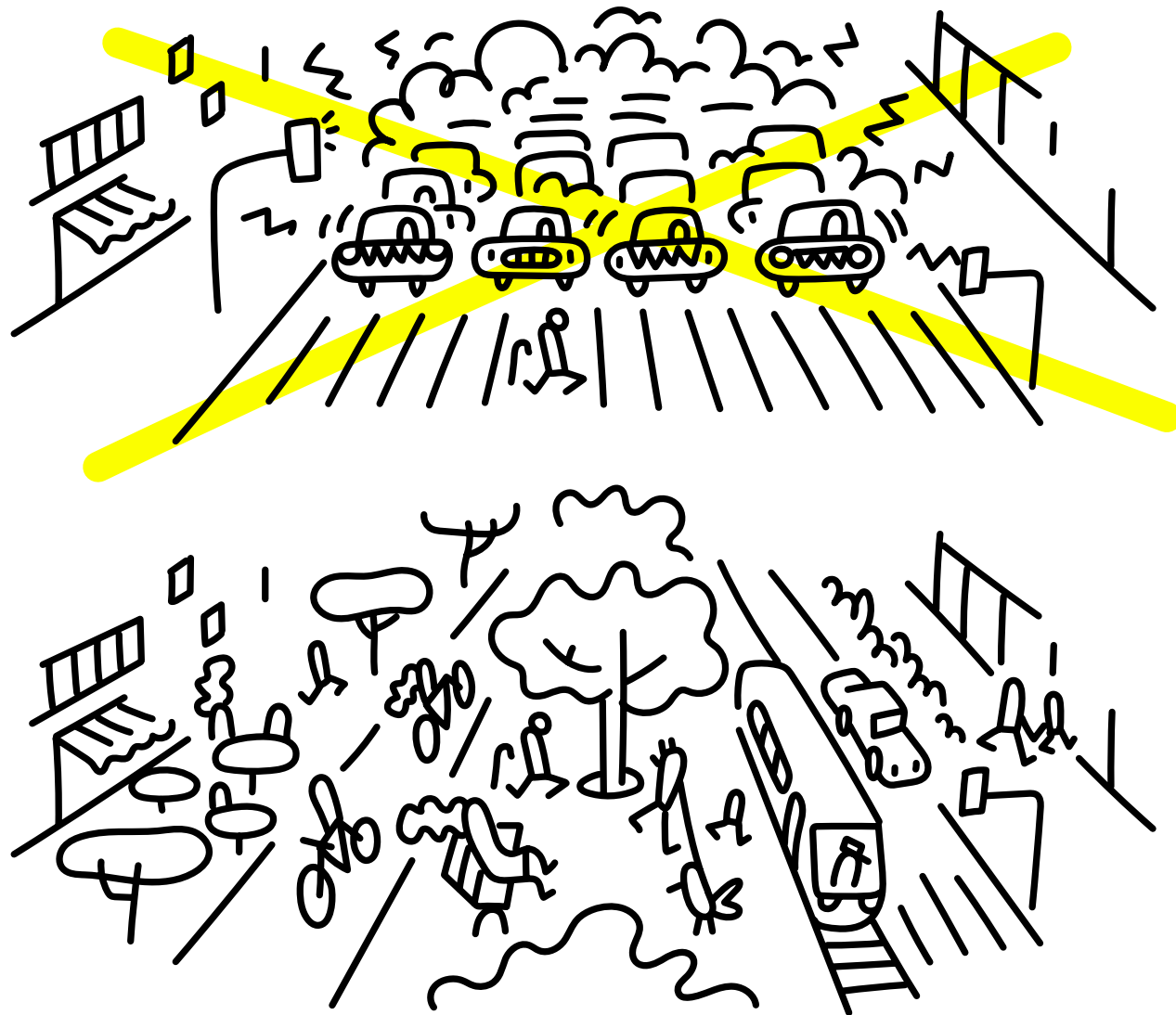
Bicivia, the bike network of the Barcelona metropolitan area

Bicivia² is a metropolitan network with the aim of connecting the entire Barcelona metropolis (ES) by bike infrastructure. The **network consists of a primary and a secondary network** covering a total of 414 km outside the city of Barcelona. It has a distinctive visual identity with clear signages that facilitate the navigation through the entire network. Linked to the Bicivia and the transit gates, the riders can find the Bicibox, a public, safe and free bikepark system to facilitate multimodality with public transport. And, a new metropolitan electric public bike sharing system, AMBici, will be implemented to further promote the use of bicycles.

1. Intelligent Energy Europe Programme, Travel Trendy Travel Resource Pack, Improvement and promotion of bike mobility: a specific marketing strategy, the example of Bolzano/Bozen.

2. Area Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB), Bicivia.

From highways to boulevards



What is the problem?

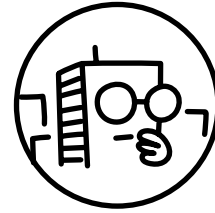
Car-oriented policies led to cities being cut through by wide roads dedicated to quick motorised commute, causing massive noise and air pollution. Not only do these highways use a lot of space and display insuperable barriers that cut through neighbourhoods, they also encourage the use of individual motorised vehicles further. Facing the climate emergency, a shift towards more humanised and sustainable planning approaches is necessary. But in order for cities to offer alternatives, radical changes need to be implemented.

What can cities do about it?

The **transformation of highways into urban boulevards** is a radical measure towards the recovery and re-democratisation of space for citizens. The goal is not to get rid of cars, but to slow them down and make the highways more appreciable for people, both as public spaces and as a transport option for active mobility. In the mid and long term view, this intervention will lead the way towards a modal shift towards more sustainable modes of transport.

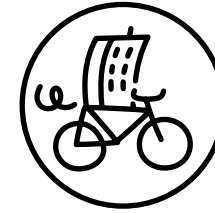
What are the key elements?

- The first step is to **reorganise big axes** and retrofit them into urban green corridors or boulevards. The task is to distribute the space in a more equal way between different forms of use and make it suitable for multiple modes of transportation – like soft and active mobility.
- **To reorganise the space** it's necessary to cut car lanes to turn them into public transport paths, bike lanes, space for pedestrians and greenery, outside sitting or commercial places, which all result in more quality in urban space, promoting walkability and street life.
- **Improving conditions for crossing is also a key element.** Setting up traffic lights, signage, signposting and guidance systems make roads more accessible for all users of public space.
- Likewise, street life and overall livability can be further improved by installing urban infrastructure such as lighting, urban furniture, water elements and greenery, and enabling other uses. This shall also **enable children to play**, enforcing a visible focus on the needs of the most vulnerable social groups, which can result in a more cautious and aware perception of the space by all other users.



What do cities need to have in mind?

Transforming a highway implies **downscaling the role of this particular road in the whole street network.** This might be challenging and must be accompanied with a programme that calls for a mobility shift to public transport and active mobility. A Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) might help to clarify the changes in traffic flow and distribution of future loads. Economic development will potentially profit from this intervention, however, the businesses that are already there might not have the same vision as the municipality, therefore it is important to launch a **participatory planning process.** Another problem might be that the highways might not be the responsibility of the municipality but of the region or state, in the case of which **wider governance collaborations** need to be explored.



What are the impacts on the city?

Through the **reorganisation of main roads and more equal distribution of space between different modes of transportation,** accessibility is enhanced more evenly between users of various means of mobility. This helps to achieve a shift towards sustainable modalities with less traffic and, therefore, also less accidents. It also **enables the development of high quality public space in areas where it wouldn't have been imaginable formerly.** This can enhance urban quality and even build renewed identity. As spatial barriers are reduced by this measure, social cohesion is promoted as neighbourhoods can grow together and even converge, which can also reduce urban vulnerability.



How does city size matter?

The transformation of highways to urban boulevards is suitable for **cities of all sizes,** but it might be easier to be implemented in **medium-sized and large cities.** The traffic load must be disbursed through the arterial and feeder roads. But even for **small cities** it's essential to think about how to create a more peaceful core with less traffic. If ring roads or bypasses are already there, it could be a quick win to decrease the load of cars in those cities.



A new metropolitan avenue, Barcelona metropolitan area

The C-245 used to be a heavy traffic road that crossed five municipalities in the periphery of Barcelona: Cornellà, Sant Boi de Llobregat, Viladecans, Gavà and Castelldefels. In the 1990s this highway was built outside the cities, however, due to urban growth these municipalities constitute by today an uninterrupted urbanised area in the region. The highway, with more than 35 000 daily car users and 20 bus lines, became a large barrier, making it almost impossible to walk from one municipality to the other.

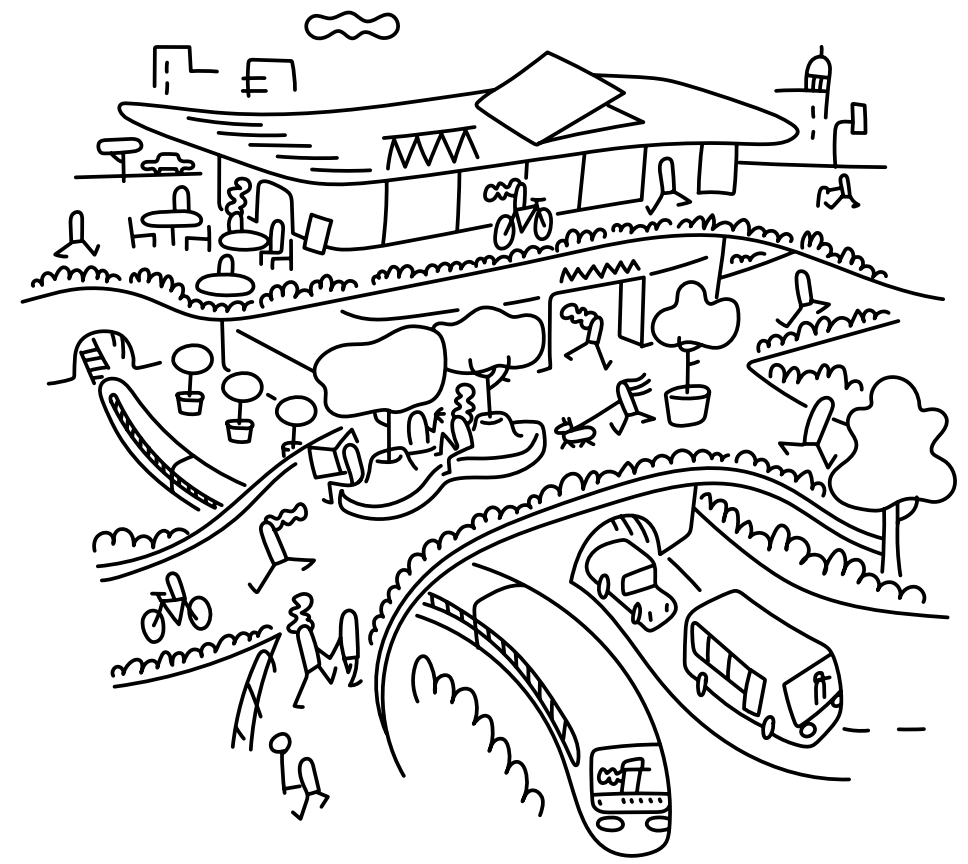
The project transformed this busy road into a new metropolitan avenue that prioritises public transport, implementing a high-occupancy express bus line (BRT) and active mobility with a continuous pavement and bike lane. This new avenue is part of an evolving network of metropolitan streets, avenues and green axes designed by the new metropolitan urban masterplan (PDU) that aims to shift how the metropolis is structured: from highways and roads to civic and public transport corridors.

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), together with the municipalities and the Catalan government designed and executed the transformation. The intervention, with a total budget of around 40 million EUR, was co-financed with local and regional budgets. The same strategy will be applied to other roads, like the B-23 Diagonal to the sea and the Avinguda del Vallès, Humanizing the N-150 road, where an Integrated Action Plan was developed in the framework of the URBACT RiConnect Network.



(up) Previous C-245 Barcelona – Joan Guillamat
(down) New bus line and bike lane, C-245 Barcelona – Simón García

Mobility hubs: integrating public transport with micro mobility



What is the problem?
Cities are striving to turn around the decades old transport paradigm of a town for cars to a more people-oriented vision. A central objective is a major modal shift from car use to sustainable modes like public transport, walking and cycling. These classical alternatives face some limits though: public transport is affordable and attractive in dense urban areas, where it can provide short intervals between stops, good service times and carry sufficient passenger numbers. Outside these areas, services either get less attractive, due to long intervals and short service times, or simply don't exist at all. Using walking to move in the city also requires a certain level of proximity. And it's, as cycling, still perceived by parts of the population as stressful, uncomfortable and prone to sweating.

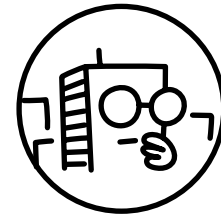
What can cities do about it?
Micromobility holds solutions to the challenges of the traditional transport modes. It addresses dockless and docked sharing systems of e-bikes and e-scooters, but also other forms of light mobility. Its main potential is to extend the range of public transport coverage when compared to walking. It supplies a viable alternative to car trips, especially in less dense urban areas that are not well covered by public transport. Micromobility needs careful regulations to protect vulnerable traffic users, like pedestrians but, foremost, to create favourable market conditions to micromobility companies that allow them to contribute to the objective of high accessibility at low car dependency within a city.

What are the key elements?

- **Micromobility is a range extender:** e-bikes, e-scooters and other forms of light mobility strengthen the public transport network and services where it is weakest, as in less dense areas that are not covered well by service intervals and distances to the next public transport stop. Most shared vehicles can then be taken onboard and used to cover the last part of the trip.
- **Thus, micromobility can help replacing car use**, via shared mobility options that are a faster travel choice, especially for shorter trips in dense urban areas compared to car use. Approximately half of all car trips in cities are less than 5 km long¹ and could easily be done using shared mobility services. Furthermore, electrified features – as e-bikes and e-scooters – can help fighting negative perceptions as challenges related to comfort and sweating.
- **Mobility points and hubs are strategic for the setup of micromobility systems.** Whether in combination with a public transport stop or as a stand-alone option, shared mobility is the backbone of any mobility point to provide people with multimodal travel choices. Mobility points combine sharing services for (e-)bicycles, (e-) cargo bikes, (e-)scooters or (e-)cars with parking facilities for private use, light vehicles and further activities like for repair boxes, storage or electric charging options. A good coverage of the city by mobility points provides people with a viable alternative to private motorised vehicles.
- **All the above can only be properly achieved with corresponding regulations:** shared mobility services need to be regulated carefully to avoid unintended effects, like unsafe conditions for pedestrians. The rules need to address the mobility objective of a city before anything and then use micromobility as a support to fill the gaps. Restrictive legislation on static terms might defy existing potential, so it's very important **to use flexible performance indicators** that can dynamically steer fleet volumes, docks and present service providers in the city to help realising the benefits of micromobility.

1. www.ikorkort.nu/en/vk_korkortsfraga_en_396.php

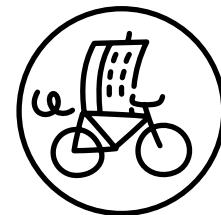
www.irishtimes.com/news/ireland/irish-news/more-than-half-of-travellers-use-cars-for-journeys-under-2km-1.2303451



What do cities need to have in mind?

Shared mobility services need careful planning to avoid certain effects, for instance, a major risk is that only people who **already used public transportation, cycled or just walked, switch to shared mobility while car drivers do not.** This means that extra efforts have to be taken to reach out to the intended audience, people who often use cars to move in the city.

Electric vehicles that drive 25 km/h or even faster **need rules on equipment, use conditions like age and on where to ride.** A frequent solution for e-scooters is to treat them as bicycles which might create conflicts with bikers. Dockless sharing services need clear rules like where individuals can park, the city must also ensure that these rules are enforced. The local authority should also consider giving incentives to service providers to cover less attractive (and less dense) urban areas, where the potential of micromobility is the largest.



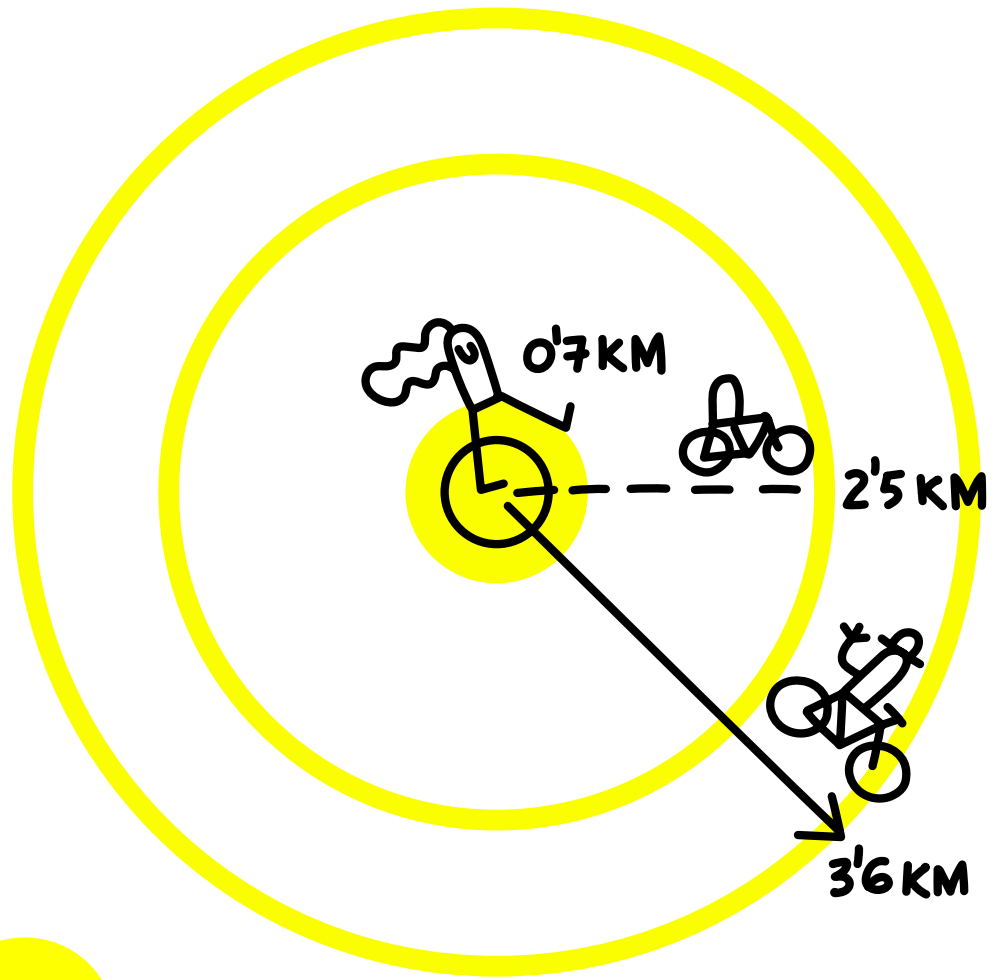
What are the impacts on the city?

Micromobility supports replacing car use by either standalone shared-use devices or in combination with public transport. Specifically for the latter **micromobility holds the advantage of a drastic extension of fast public transport services like metro, light rail or regional train.** Sharing services at mobility points and hubs foster multimodality in travel choices, once different vehicles in the range of micromobility are close at hand for people to use instead of their own car.



How does city size matter?

In **small cities**, micromobility can add to a modal shift from car use to active mobility. To do so, it needs to strategically address people that are not prone to walk or cycle. It increases the attractiveness of public transportation, more specifically, regional public transport services for commuting as well. This is also reflected in **metropolitan areas**, where regional connections are particularly crucial. **For medium-sized, large cities and at metropolitan scale**, sharing services and their combination with corresponding local public transport hubs can bring further benefits to all inhabitants – provided that regulations and parking conditions are clearly set in place. **A close cooperation between public transport providers** is fundamental to connect and use micromobility at all city levels.



Showcasing the potential of e-scooters as first/last mile access to public transport stations in Munich

The city of Munich (DE) compared the coverage of public transport access by a 5-min walk with a 5-min e-scooter ride for: high-frequency public transport stops; and all high-frequency rail stations – with more than 288 departures per day. Looking at all public transport stops, 80% of the population live within a 5-min walk to a station and 99% within a 5-min ride by e-scooter. **For the rail stations, the potential of e-scooters to extend the geographic coverage is significantly higher: a 5-min walk covers about 21% of the population, while 68% of the population live within a 5-min ride to the next high-frequency rail station.**

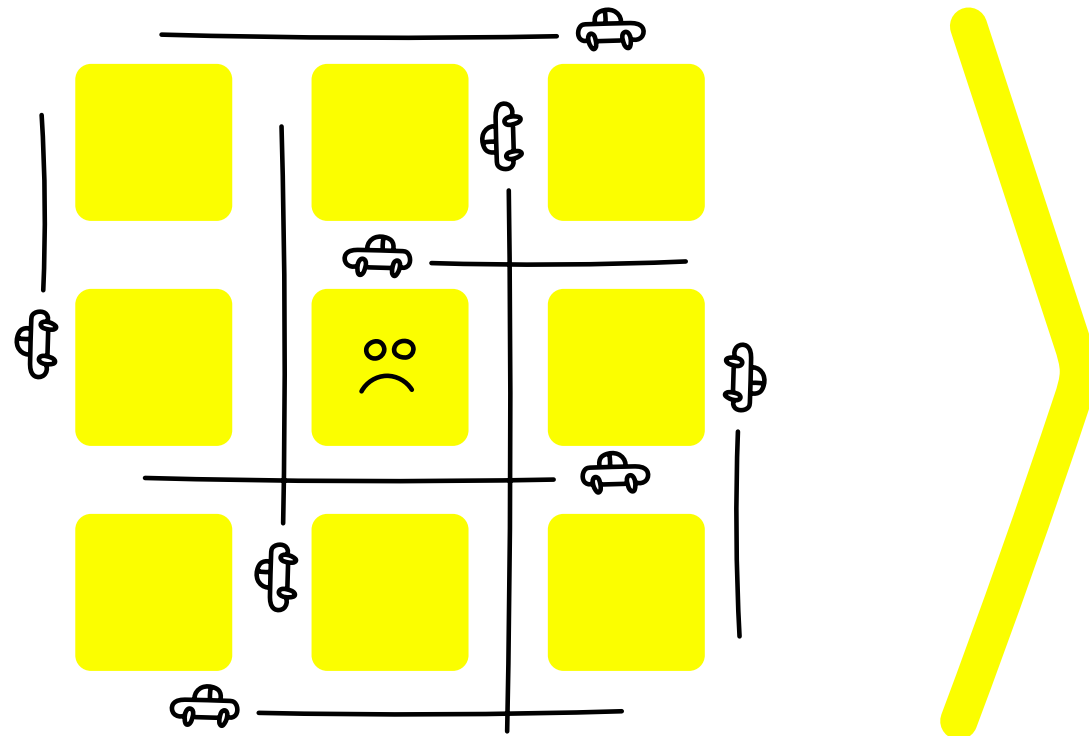


Bike parking in front of train station, Molins de Rei, Barcelona –María José Reyes

Metropolitan bike sharing in Gdansk and Barcelona Metropolises

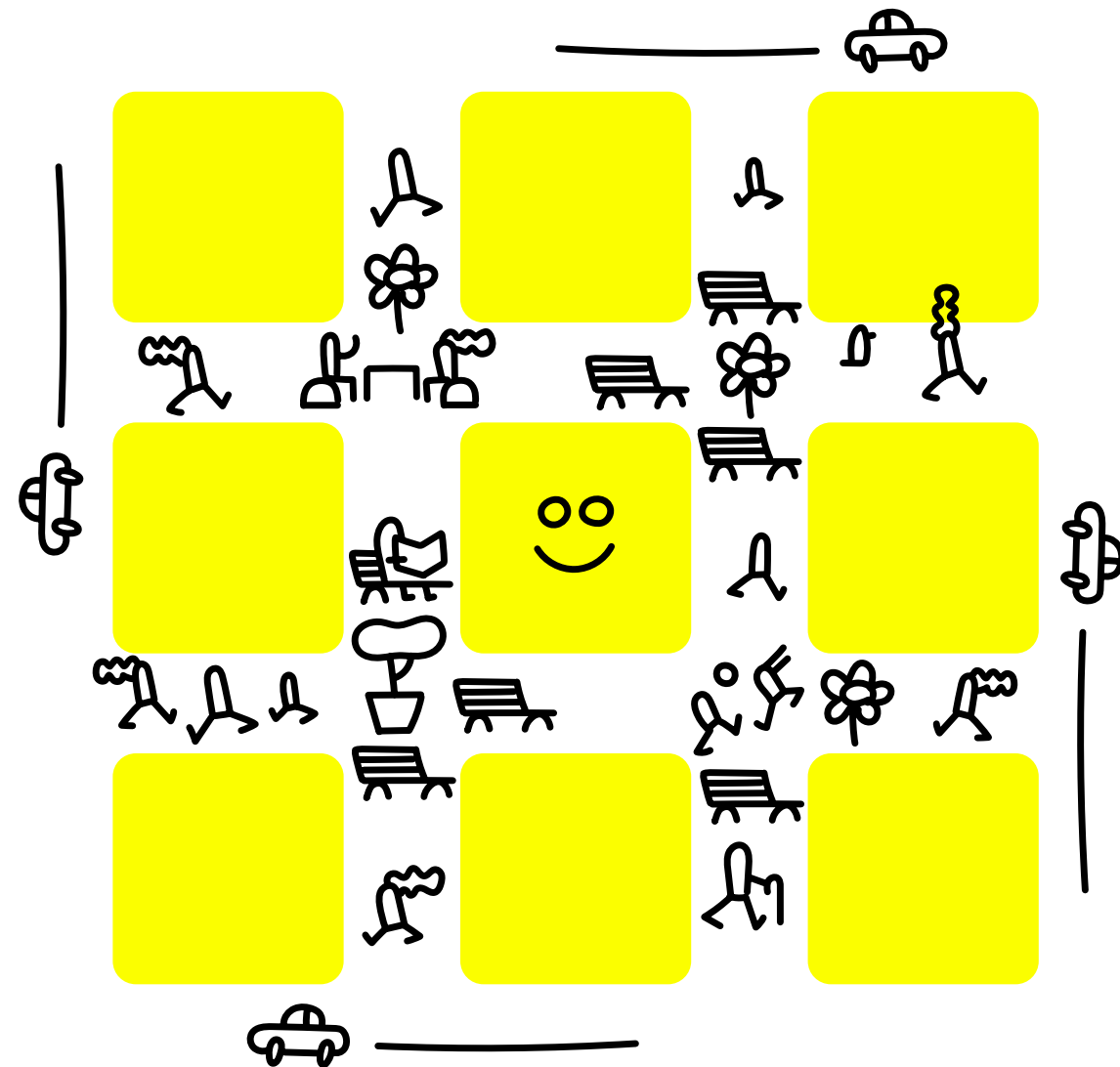
In large metropolitan areas like the Gdańsk, Gdynia and Sopot Metropolis (PL) or Barcelona Metropolis (ES), there are areas outside the city core that are not sufficiently covered by public transportation. **Public e-bike sharing systems** with good bike infrastructure could help to make public transport more competitive, **reducing the time and effort from non-well-connected neighbourhoods to the transit gates.** Following this idea, both metropolises are currently working to launch in the following months a public e-bike system. Mevo, with 3 099 e-bikes and 1 000 bikes in the Polish area, and AMBici with 2 600 and 236 stations. The idea for both cases is to expand the reach of the projects in the following years while covering more municipalities.

Superblock



What is the problem?

The vast majority of dense European cities suffer from negative externalities of car use, like noise, air pollution, high temperatures, traffic jams, subsequent accidents and the lack of green spaces. In order to handle this situation radical interventions into the use of public spaces are needed.

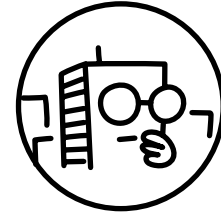


What can cities do about it?

In response to this challenge, Barcelona (ES) has developed the Superblock concept, which affects all aspects of traffic around a certain area of the city, prioritizing soft and sustainable means of transportation and public urban life in inner streets, ousting cars from the inner parts of specific blocks. The creation of a Superblock can be, at first, a temporary solution that aspires to stay flexible and adjustable. In essence, these places can be shaped and resized in terms of design, but they can also react to different local needs from a social perspective. The Superblocks are developed at a local scale as a strategic intervention, with the subsequent aim to gradually transforming the streets in all neighbourhoods and districts of the city.

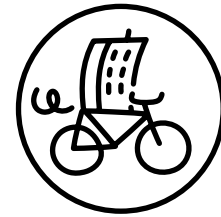
What are the key elements?

- The ideal Superblock model envisions a healthier, greener, liveable, safer and equitable city. The basic idea is to delineate a shared-use space for walking, sitting, playing, among other activities, **where parking and non-resident car traffic are forbidden** except delivery and emergency vehicles.
- **Tactical urbanism and placemaking** experiments offer an opportunity to upgrade a place quickly and at minimum cost, where resources are limited. These interventions can also enable bottom-up processes and create a sense of ownership for the local community.
- By **testing exemplary superblock** models on a smaller scale, a city can learn from the process and upscale these lessons to other parts of the city. **Experimentation, the use of temporary, tactical interventions first, allows city practitioners to minimise mistakes and to be better prepared to overcome certain challenges.** The Superblock model is a systematic vision, which is adaptable to the local contexts. It's an approach that is flexible enough to recognise and incorporate the specificities of different places. The ultimate goal should be to apply the Superblock model citywide to achieve measurable results and support the modal shift with evidence-based experience.
- **Collaborative participatory design** is a key element to integrate local stakeholders, especially the local community. This will promote a stronger sense of ownership towards the changes and, usually, it generates a higher acceptance of the project within the neighbourhood.



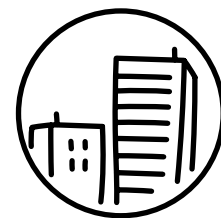
What do cities need to have in mind?

The Superblock looks like an intervention that is easy to implement, however in **reality it's a complex measure**, because solutions for parking spots for residents, visitors and local businesses have to be found. It requires an integrated view, including the improvement of public transport to enable a sustainable mobility shift. If executed poorly, the Superblock model can be at risk of being perceived as a pure marketing strategy, with few tangible results. To avoid this, **political decisions need to be taken gradually, with a strong and coherent agenda that involves the local people.**



What are the impacts on the city?

The implementation of Superblocks in neighbourhoods imply **radical changes on social, ecological and economical levels.** Air and noise pollution can be reduced drastically, which has a positive impact on public health. Once space is put in favour of pedestrians, street life will consequently thrive, creating a sense of belonging within the local community. This can help to discover new uses and activities in public spaces, as well as stimulating local retail. **To prevent gentrification effects, further public interventions are needed from the side of the municipality, notably in the housing market and in the regulation of the use of street level commercial functions.**



How does city size matter?

Superblocks **can be implemented** in cities of all scales, as the concept is designed to be flexible and adjustable to local needs. In **small cities** it can be an option to create one superblock in the city core – like in the historical city centre. The larger the city gets, the more superblocks it needs, in terms of numbers but also variety in typology and types of activities. **Metropolitan areas** can organise a network of overlaying superblocks, a structure to enable a coherent model all over the city ([see 4.3 - City-wide calmed down places](#)). This also calls for integrated urban development with a tight cooperation vertically (with upper levels of government), horizontally (collaboration between city departments) and in territorial sense (with neighbouring municipalities).

Barcelona Superblock - The city we want

Barcelona (ES) is one of the densest cities in Europe. Unsurprisingly, the need for public space has become even more visible after the pandemic. For this reason, the city is committed to adapt public space and mobility to become a more liveable city. The Superblock Programme, launched with the 2013 Urban Mobility Plan, provides a vision and a citywide transformative capacity.

The initial idea was to set an area of roughly three-by-three blocks as shared-use space. Non-resident car traffic was excluded. Now, it has evolved to a more integrated approach, where its application defines a new map of Barcelona. It highlights the spaces and streets that have become greener and that give priority to pedestrians, bikes, playgrounds, sitting areas and much more.

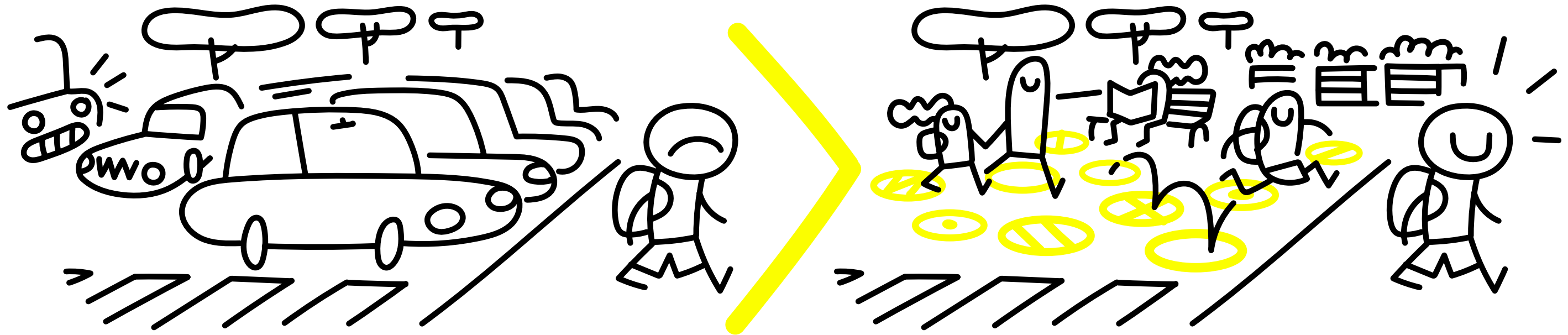
The Barcelona Superblock Programme has shown that it's possible to move towards a healthier, more equitable and safer public space that favours local social and economic relations. As of today, the programme has presented very positive indicators in relation to the reduction of pollution, noise and accidents. In the long run, it aims in the Eixample district of the city by 2030 to create 21 green axes (33 km); 21 squares (3.9 ha); increase of 33.4 ha of space for pedestrians; 6.6 ha of urban green, ensuring access within 200 m to the entire population. The first four green axis (4.8 km in total) and 4 new squares will be completed in mid-2023.

The superblock model is widely discussed in the realm of urban development. For example, it has inspired other cities like Vitoria-Gasteiz in Spain and Vienna in Austria to elaborate similar mobility and public space solutions that favor public space over car-oriented mobility.



Barcelona – Edu Bayer

School area



What is the problem?

Schools are among the most important public facilities. Throughout different hours of the day, they concentrate a large number of people even after school hours – in most cases, youth groups from vulnerable social groups. At other times, however, the school areas' stay empty. The local context and urban design play a large role on how these spaces are used, for instance, sometimes the entrances are located in busy streets with narrow pavements. Lack of safety, pollution and space for children to play and socialise are the main problems.

What can cities do about it?

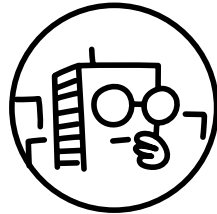
School areas offer great opportunities for sustainable urban development (see 4.1 - The 15 min city). Schoolyards can be extended to public space, thus, they can create areas to socialise and being active. They support the creation of livable streets around the schools' premises. These streets and the schoolyards hold lots of potential in terms of use, like for pupils during schooltime and for the local residents for the rest of the day. The most important ingredient to unlock this potential is enough safe public space for pedestrians. Cities of all sizes should focus on transforming the school's surroundings, in order to provide safe and healthy neighbourhoods, with places for gathering and leisure as a consequence.

What are the key elements?

- **Traffic-calming measures** work as a way to reduce traffic and set speed limits (see 5.2 - Tempo 30). The closure of a school street to traffic is of utmost importance, either in a time-limited way (e.g. at school start and finish hours) or as a permanent intervention. This requires rethinking how people can move around the school or even the entire city. At the same time, sustainable mobility infrastructure, like bike lanes and bike parking nearby, must be improved.
- Likewise, **the expansion of areas for people has to be ensured**. It increases the space that people can use and enjoy. For example, the city can allocate part or all of the space around the school to be used by children, parents, teachers or any other visitors, instead of being used for cars and parking. These spaces should be safe enough and comfortable to allow families and locals to spend time there socialising, resting, playing or simply eating a snack. The redesign of the road space is fundamental, as is the construction of urban furniture – benches, greenery, children’s play elements, stands or parking facilities for bikes.
- **The installation of safety elements is also a key element**. Safety against car traffic is, perhaps, one of the most important elements to improve the urbanity and spontaneous use of these places. It works with designing safe places that reduce accident risks and increase motorists’ awareness, notably on the presence of children in the area. Use of fences, plant stands, benches can also be taken into consideration to create a safer environment.
- **Organisational improvements** have also to be considered by cities. The introduction of school districts, a regulation that assigns young children to the primary school that is closest to their home address, might lead to substantial reduction in traffic. Traffic jams across the entire city can be eased once parents don’t need to drive their children to far away schools.

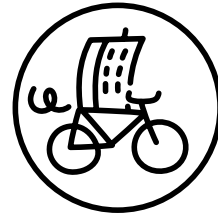


Barcelona – Ajuntament de Barcelona



What do cities need to have in mind?

School surroundings are sensitive areas. Transforming them, even if the objective is to improve their safety and health with spaces for gatherings and exchange, can awake huge opposition, specifically from parents who represent the largest part of traffic around schools, dropping off and picking up their children by car. Transforming school premises requires a **co-creation process with families, teachers, retailers, local police and other stakeholders.** The cost of these interventions is not necessarily high, and tactical urbanism could be a good solution to achieve cheap and quick transformations.



What are the impacts on the city?

Healthier and safer school areas improve social interactions, sustainable mobility, a culture of public space and air quality improvement at local level. The calmed down school areas reduce traffic accidents with all their consequences, and contribute to a network of public spaces to stay, relax and meet, not only for the school community, but for all people within the neighbourhood. Schoolyards can offer new public spaces, **if opened up after school time for the general public in a regulated way.**



How does city size matter?

Schools are present in cities of all sizes. **How safe and healthy they can be does not depend on whether the city is smaller or larger, but rather on the relative location of the school,** how kids get to school and how close it is to hazard elements – like busy roads. In denser cities or metropolises with heavy traffic, it might be more difficult to implement the traffic calming strategies, especially in main roads. In less dense urban areas, pupils face longer distances and their school commute is often done via their parents' cars. This might result in higher resistance to reduce access to schools by car and redesign the area to a people's space at the cost of parking spaces.

Protegem les escoles (Let's protect the schools), Barcelona

In 2020, the Barcelona City Council (ES) launched the “Protegem les escoles” programme (Let’s protect the schools), with the objective of making these spaces healthier and safer as areas for gatherings and occasions to play. In total, taking into account also earlier pacification projects, 216 schools will be impacted by the programme until 2023. The main idea is **to put schools as the priority axis of all actions to transform public space, to pacify the city, improve air quality, reduce environmental noise and accidents, and ultimately to prevent high temperatures.** The benefits of these actions will have a positive ripple effect beyond the school’s staff, students and their parents. This programme also includes other initiatives, such as making schools into climate shelters, add more public space to school. Until now, almost all interventions have been developed using tactical urbanism, furthermore, they have involved different stakeholders during the design process.



Barcelona – Àlex Losada

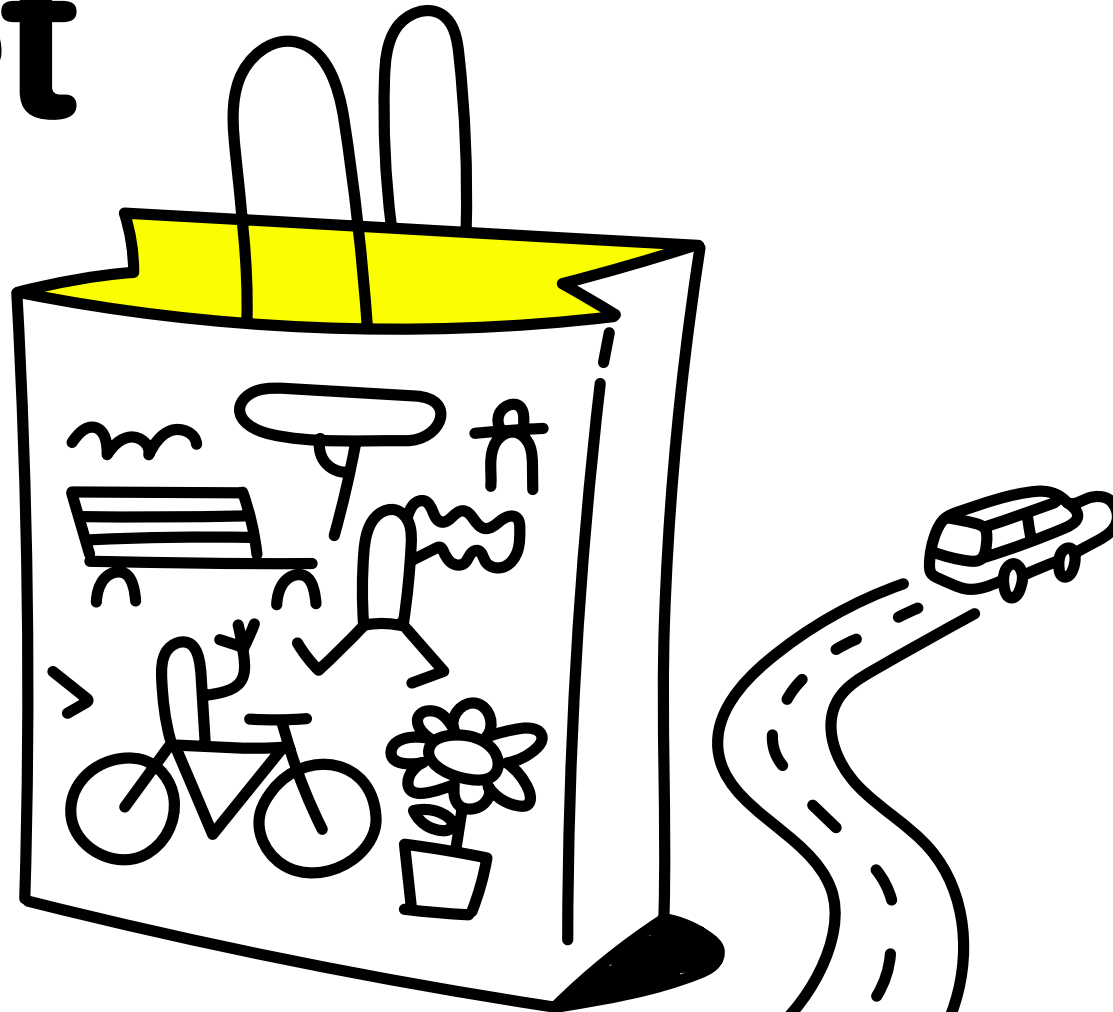


Vereinsgasse in Vienna is closing twice a day to ease pedestrian flow for pupils and parents – Roland Krebs

School streets of Vienna

In 2019, the city of Vienna (AT) started to pilot a project called “Schulstraße” (school streets). The idea was to cut out car traffic near schools 30-minutes before and after the school hours (thus closing the school streets for cars between 8 and 9 in the morning, and respectively around school closing hours), to create safe conditions for pupils to circulate. Measures were taken in schools’ streets with signposts and removable barriers. This pilot was a successful experiment, as it drastically reduced car traffic at specific parts of the day. It increased the number of students who came to school walking, cycling or using public transport. Today, the pilot was transformed into a long-term project, a standard solution. It’s present in many schools in Vienna. In the summer of 2022, schools’ streets have officially become regulated under the Austrian Traffic Code. Henceforth, local authorities can create school streets that exclude motorised vehicles with some exceptions, like public transport of services either permanently or focused at school drop off and pick up hours.

Shopping street



What is the problem?

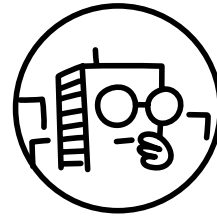
As people increasingly choose to shop on the internet and in shopping malls located in the outskirts of cities, many commerces in the city centres lose their customers and are eventually forced out of business. Undoubtedly, this has severe negative effects on the local economy. In addition, as city centres gradually lose their traditional shopping function, they become less attractive destinations. This in turn further reduces the number of visitors, resulting in unused public spaces, empty streets and squares.

What can cities do about it?

Shopping streets represent an important backbone of daily urban life, not only for grocery shopping and running errands, but also for a wide range of other urban activities –like strolling, meeting friends and so on. Therefore, commercial and non-commercial functions are equally important, both on public spaces and at shop fronts. To revive declining city centres and shopping streets, cities require integrated approach. This, notably involves engaging the local community, businesses to organize activities, limiting car access and reallocating spaces previously dedicated to cars, retrofitting and shifting new facilities as attractions– for instance public institutions, cultural centres.

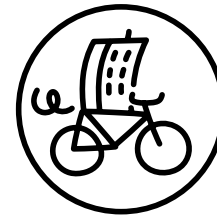
What are the key elements?

- **Eliminating, or at least significantly limiting, car traffic** by transforming streets into pedestrian areas ([see 5.1 - Reducing car access to city centres](#)) or shared mobility hubs is a necessary step. Parking and transition spaces for cars can then be shifted towards more active mobility. It is also important to develop further accessibility by public transport simultaneously.
- **Establishing new functions and attractor elements** can particularly benefit places suffering from low visitors' frequency. Establishing major public or civic institutions in their proximity is a suitable option to bring new life to these areas.
- **Temporary use** is another way to encourage the temporary use of empty shops. It can contribute to locating non-profit and cultural associations, pop-up-shops at ground floor level, which in turn act as additional public hubs, boosting the diversity and the quality of urban experiences.
- **Bottom-up initiatives can arise with soft measures to activate possible uses.** Engaging the local community and business owners, as well as potential new users to organise activities, events, can strengthen identity and the sense of community, and also integrate multiple new forms of usage.
- **Active neighbourhood management** of the ground level zone can provide a centralised contact point, which eases communication between all stakeholders. It helps to ensure the diversity and quality of shopping experience. It can offer services to current and future shop owners, support the image and sense of community in the area. A more structured approach to managing shopping streets can be resolved through Business Improvement Districts (BIDs).



What do cities need to have in mind?

It is crucial to use a participatory approach – **integrating stakeholders, especially the local community** who will promote a stronger sense of ownership and generate a higher acceptance towards change. While major physical transformation of shopping streets requires significant investments and time, **places can be upgraded quickly and at minimum costs using tactical urbanism and placemaking initiatives** that facilitate the involvement of the local community. It's also important to think of **what's beyond the ground level zone**, as this can distinguish undiscovered target groups and help to reduce displacement of those groups, preventing unfortunate gentrification processes.



What are the impacts on the city?

Supporting the improvement of shopping streets can rehabilitate a city's centre or create new centrality and spaces with identity, high quality urban life, while stimulating local commerce. **By limiting or prohibiting car access, shopping in these streets can be rendered a high quality urban experience.** A decrease of vacancy at the ground floor zone will be quickly visible, so strong and diverse business structures and a growing local economy can thrive. At the same time, non-commercial areas have to be programmed to satisfy the needs of all residents.



How does city size matter?

In **small and medium-sized cities** there might only be one or a few streets that can fit the bill, acting as hotspots of urban quality, attracting people towards the city centre. The ReGrowCities URBACT network provides examples of pop-up shops, reviving central areas of declining cities. **Larger cities**, on the other hand, usually already have a structure of different centres and shopping streets. Carefully analysing the network of different centre points can bring to light the particular qualities of each street. By handling these accordingly, defining and strengthening characteristics and unique selling points, the city will thrive based on a diversity of public urban spaces without competing among the shopping streets.



Vienna's Mariahilferstraße: transition into a quality street for all

The Mariahilferstraße is a central street in Vienna (AT), connecting the Museum Quarter with the Westbahnhof, an important regional train station. With the development of the metro line U3 in 1993, following the existing Mariahilferstraße underground station, the street already experienced an increase of pedestrians. In 2010 the process for a complete redesign of the street began. The construction work finished in 2015, transforming the whole street into a shared mobility zone, while giving priority to those who choose to walk. Greenery such as planters and high trees, urban furniture and opportunities for childrens to play enhanced the quality of this place even further. These days the “MaHü” – as the locals fondly call this place – is a vibrant and flourishing shopping street, which offers a colorful mix of businesses, services and also a diversity of gastronomy options. Even though voices opposing the plans forecasted a negative impact on local commerce, with the undoubtedly higher frequency of pedestrians strolling by, most of the shop owners are enjoying growing revenues. Today, the MaHü is the only street in Vienna where shop vacancies are decreasing.



Herrengasse Shared Space – Roland Krebs

Herrengasse in the city center of Vienna as a follow up - using a private business model

With the learnings from Mariahilferstraße as a fully publicly funded project, Herrengasse followed as the second renewed shopping street. The project was planned and implemented between 2014 and 2016 with a completely different business model. Unlike Mariahilferstraße, the process was initiated by the private owners of shops located there. The goal of the project was to remove all parking spots in the street, while driving was still allowed, but quite limited with fewer lanes and lower speed limits. The rather short Herrengasse street has only 14 shop owners, numerous public governmental buildings and a number of palaces. The investment was 100% financed by these private owners. The project has prioritised walking, cycling and creating a lot of new public space with benches, as well as some trees providing shade to residents and visitors.



Mariahilferstrasse used to be a highly congested bottleneck in the 6th district of Vienna – Hans Porochelt



Mariahilferstrasse after the transformation into a pedestrian and biker friendly street – Christian Fürthner, MA28

How?



How can we make it happen?

- 6.1 Political will & commitment
- 6.2 Knowledge, expertise
- 6.3 Shared vision and strategy
- 6.4 Participative approach
- 6.5 Financial resources, regulations

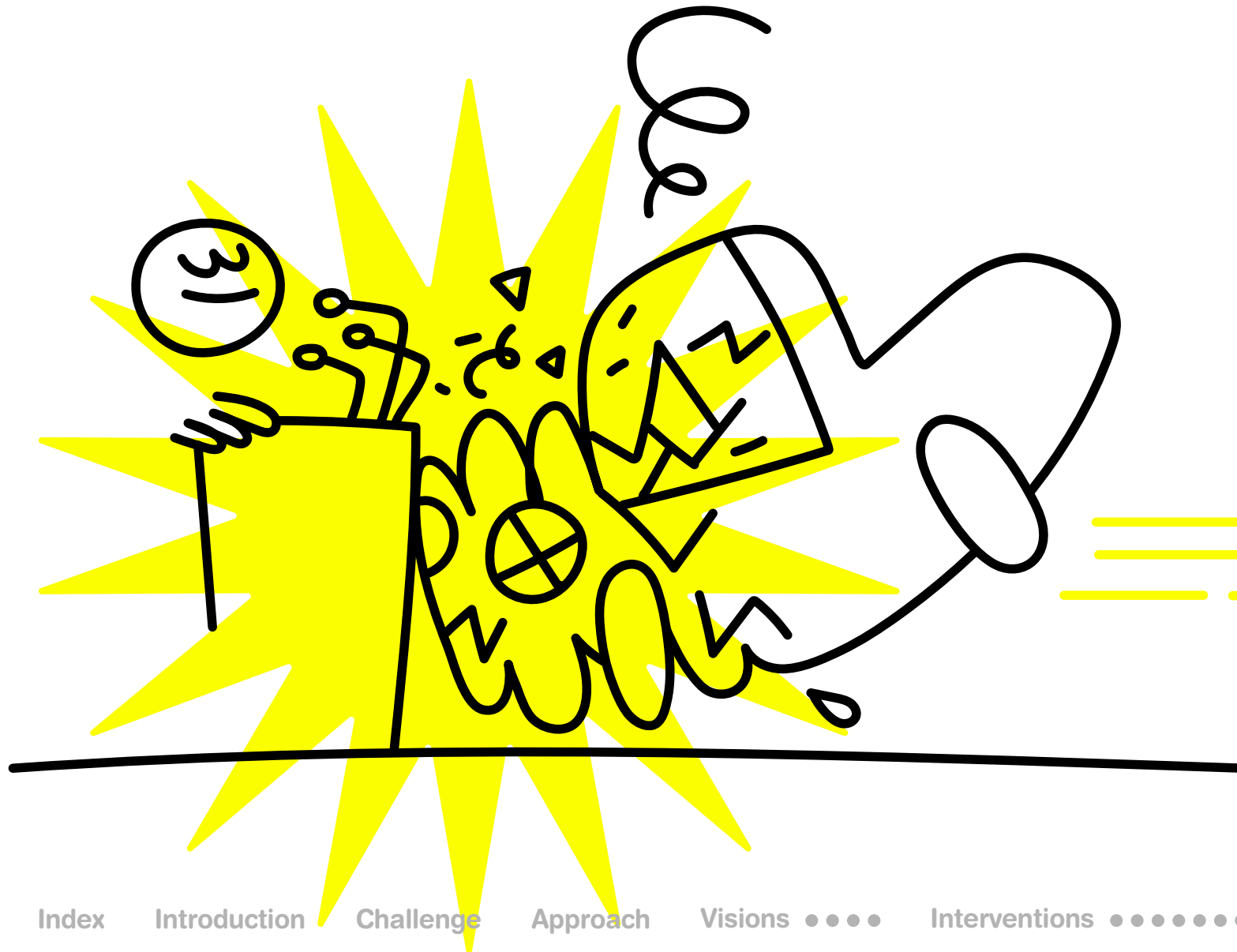
Political will & commitment

Local politicians like mayors, aldermen and city councillors have a central role in reversing how our cities developed since the second half of the past century. They are the ones who can drive the development of policies and strategies, adopt these and, by the same mandate, initiate (and monitor) what's delivered.

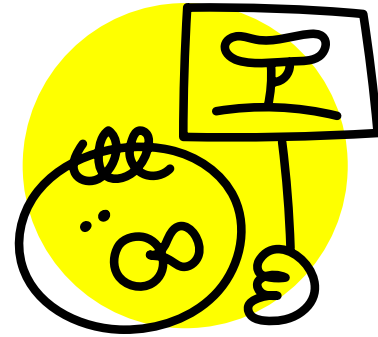
To reverse the functional city with its traffic network designed to facilitate quick and uninterrupted movement of cars **means to have strong political will and commitment**. Most cities worked for a long time to establish exactly these structures – that today need to be ripped down in response to emerging challenges at global and local level, such as the climate crisis world-wide or emission loads, segregation of spaces and people at closer scale. **These very structures became an integral part of today societies' values and habits**, something that is clearly visible by people's affinity to car use. Consequently, politicians can expect to meet **controversial reactions and heavy opposition** from some **citizens and stakeholders** once they challenge the use of cars and the space it needs. In addition, this negative effect may also bring about heavy consequences at the next elections.

Unsurprisingly, many politicians prefer staying away from really challenging the status quo and try to get away with making minor (often cosmetic) improvements – for instance adding a few km-s of protected bike lanes here and there – instead of drastically rethinking the entire car-oriented mobility structure. **Why should politicians commit to transforming cities** to places for people, of proximity and of accessibility **given these possible consequences?**

The answer is simple: these investments **pay off for the city, its residents and for themselves**.

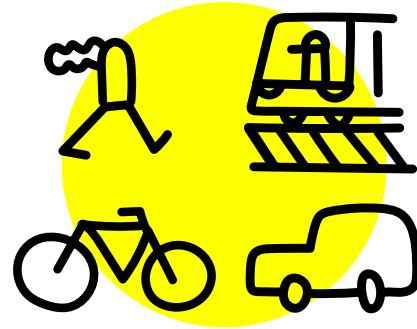


What arguments support political commitment?



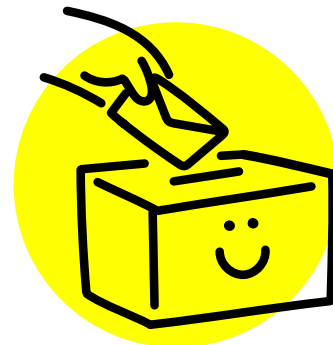
The claim of future generations

Politicians are responsible for driving a long-term sustainable development of their city: to create conditions for a high quality of life, for a vibrant local economy, for social cohesion within the city society, **not only today but as well for the next generations.** This often comes along with the need to challenge privileges of today's generation, like access to the city area by car, which damage the conditions for the next ones. This change **requires a strategic view, clear commitment and strong will by politicians** to argue and push for an integrated urban development that – while making the city a better place for its current residents – also safeguards it for future generations.



The need to take care of all citizens and stakeholders

Clearly, elected representatives are responsible to set the frame for good living conditions and a healthy local economy for today as well, holding the decision-making process. They have to take **care of the needs and concerns of all population groups and stakeholders and provide equal opportunities for all.** They need to carefully assess and balance the different –and often contrasting – needs and have to avoid giving priority to certain groups. When it comes to urban mobility **they should follow the “accessibility for all” principle instead of giving priority to car users.** Similarly, it is important to create a fair distribution of public space amongst the many user claims instead of focusing on transport and in this motorised individual modes.



Engagement for a liveable city pays off

There are many good examples of political leaders who drive a major change to how traffic is organised in the city. **The mayors of Pontevedra (ES) and Ljubljana (SI)** are two good examples. Both **are engaged and still work for large scale pedestrianisation projects that heavily cut back car use and access.** Both are **in office for decades** today and their efforts are highly valued by the local population.

What do politicians need to keep in mind?

These **key elements are essential for local politicians and decision-makers** to address people in the transition to a city of proximity:

A Communicate your vision and objectives

Talking on car-restrictive measures right away usually creates an emotional debate with fierce opposition. Instead, **communication needs to focus on the objectives that shall be achieved.** Like liveable streets for residents. An attractive city centre. Or good air quality, better road safety and public health conditions. **People understand these objectives** and are most generally likely to agree to them. The need for measures like a citywide speed 30 km/h policy are easier to communicate, once objectives are well explained and clearly set out.

B Concentrate on the positive aspects of changes

Stakeholders opposing the transition to a city of proximity and accessibility usually exaggerate on perceived negative consequences. In answer, **leading the communication efforts with stakeholders**, looking out to the public needs to **focus on the positive aspects at stake.** And take up arguments and activities of stakeholders in support of the transition. **Using arguments and objectives that nobody can oppose** adds to the positive narrative. Like improving road safety conditions for children.

C Showcase your commitment by presence

Elected representatives are best suited to explain the need for the transition to a city of proximity and accessibility themselves. They **use a language that citizens and stakeholders understand**, while experts might talk in a too “technical” manner. Moreover, presence and active communication by politicians increases their credibility.

D Lead by example

Politicians who lead by example improve the legitimization of their commitment. If they walk and cycle or use public transport themselves, people recognise that they stand true to their values and their objective to improve life in the city, by pushing sustainable mobility use and creating public spaces for people.

E Give time for people to recognise the benefits of change

Change creates, in many cases, **concerns or fears**, since established structures and habits get challenged. Politicians need to give people the opportunity to experience that **change is to their benefit.** Applying **tests to demonstrate what this might look like** is highly valuable to give people time to recognise the pros and cons. They as well hold the appeal to **be reversible if needed.** Test periods need to be long enough to allow people to get used to change though, like 3-6 months .

F Exploit ‘windows of opportunity’

Commitment to major changes like transforming the city into a place for people **gets contested at times where the public opinion is critical to politicians.** Typically, this is during **elections** at local level, but as well at regional or national elections. The best window of opportunity to **start change is directly after local elections** to exploit the full term to produce visible results. **“Quick wins” interventions** and pilot projects present good options to come to **tangible and accepted results** in a short time span.

Knowledge, expertise



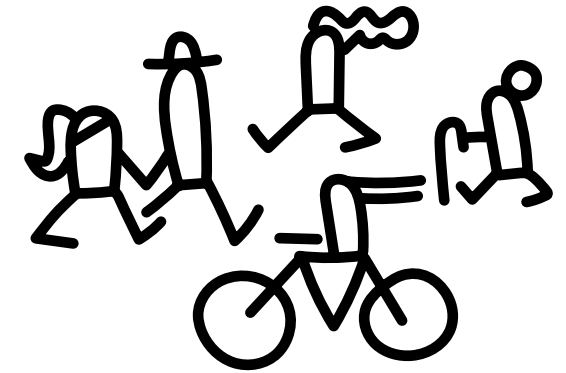
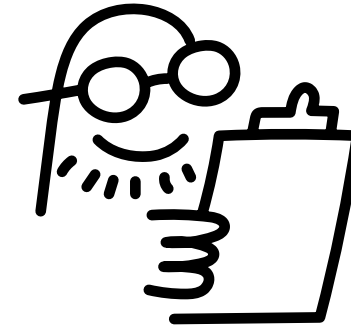
A strong political will and commitment is crucial to initiate transformative processes, when allocating and using urban public spaces, and shifting from car dependency to active forms of mobility. Once set in motion, however, thoroughly planning and making the change happen is impossible without extensive and up-to-date thematic and methodological knowledge and expertise at hand.

In fact, if **key decision-makers** don't have **at least a basic understanding** of the problems and their implications for the future of the city, as well as the possible solutions in the first place, it becomes difficult to imagine that they would commit to making the (often unpopular) decisions, necessary to initiate and follow through the interventions to rehumanise urban public spaces. Therefore, the successful implementation of the necessary interventions needs **consistent knowledge transfer and management, the continuous development of the knowledge base**, as well as the use of **awareness-raising and education** to disseminate the knowledge to all relevant groups.

Certainly, external experts can be an important source of detailed thematic and methodological experience. Using external expertise at various steps of the transformation process is inevitable. However, ultimately it's the local politicians who take responsibility for the decisions and the local professionals who manage the delivery of the various interventions on a daily basis – and confront with opposing opinions. Therefore, if **there are no in-house capacities on different levels of the local authority**, and even at the various stakeholders in the city, **the change process is likely to fail**, despite the best intentions.

It's not just the professionals...

It is not just politicians and professionals in the field who need to be the target groups of knowledge transfer. Below you will find the main groups and their respective importance:



Politicians, decision-makers

As it has been already indicated, **at least a basic understanding of the topic is essential** if politicians, decision-makers are expected to commit to the transformation. This cannot be taken for granted, so **local politicians** – the mayor and the council members – **need “education”**, certainly not in the traditional sense of the word. Since it's very rare that local politicians participate in formal education in urban issues, this should usually be initiated from inside – although there are examples where a group of residents, advocacy groups raise and bring attention to the issue. Politicians don't need detailed thematic knowledge, but they definitely need to see **the problems, what is at stakes if they are not addressed and how the city can become a better place as a result of the interventions**. They need to see evidence, real-life success stories from other cities, but they also need to understand the difficulties and risks of taking away perceived privileges from people. They usually prefer not too technical, concise information.

City practitioners in municipalities

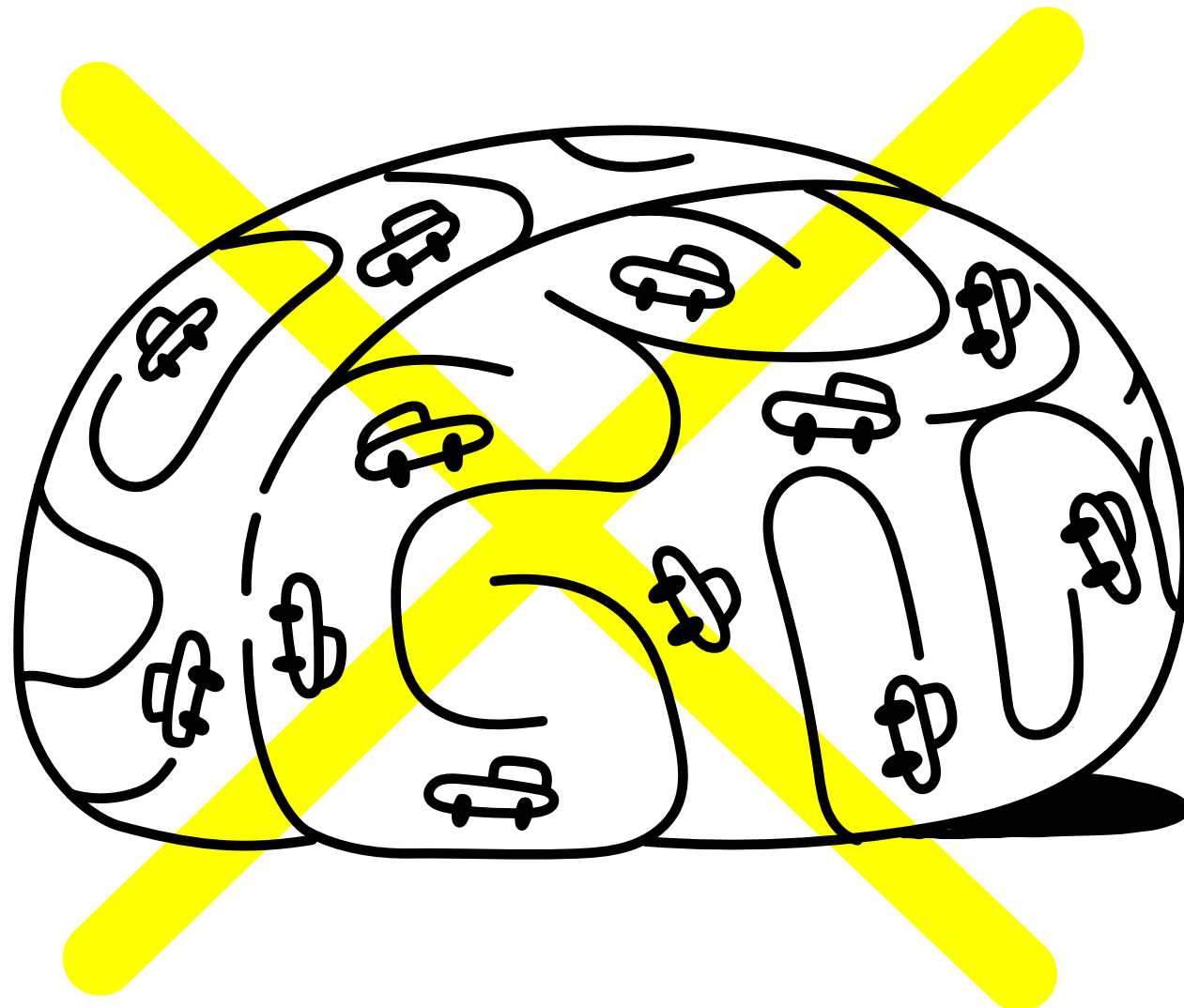
Professionals at the local authority dealing with public space development and mobility issues need to possess thorough thematic and methodological knowledge. These professionals need to be up-to-date regarding the most recent **innovative approaches and solutions in the field**.

Having committed decision-makers with at least basic understanding of the challenges and possible solutions and a knowledgeable team of specialists in place is crucial. That being said, mobility issues and the public space realm definitely require an integrated approach and affect a number of other areas: economic development, housing, education, even cultural services. Rehumanising streets, implementing a shift to sustainable urban mobility is also a cultural change, requiring the contribution of most departments at the local authority.

Therefore, it's important that there's **at least awareness and basic knowledge** (similar in the level of detail for politicians but more specific to the respective departmental profession) **across the entire organisation**. Besides, this broad understanding needs to be present at organisations like the public transport company, the company responsible for the management and maintenance of public spaces, among other stakeholders.

Residents

Last, but not least, there's a major difference between trying to sell the idea of transforming public spaces and limiting car use to an uninformed public, and actually having a meaningful dialogue with **locals and other stakeholders**, who understand the challenge and its implications, as well as the potential benefits of the planned interventions. Therefore, using innovative approaches and various channels **to raise awareness and educate the population** are also key to success.



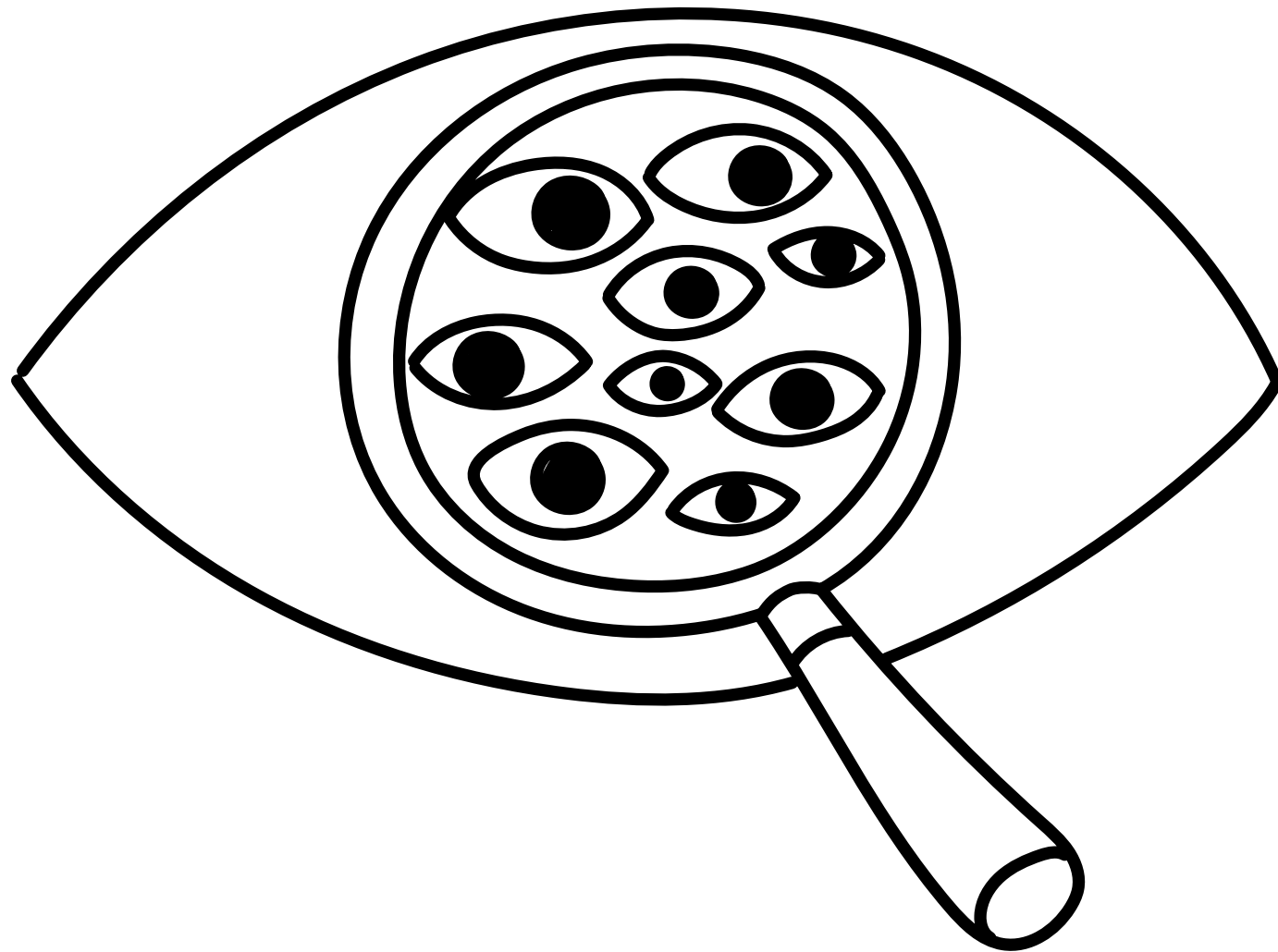
What can cities do?

Assuming there is a political intention to deliver transformative measures, **the most important step is to build a strong team of professionals with solid thematic**, like urban development, mobility, traffic planning, public space development; **and methodological**, as participatory practices, communication, project management, monitoring and evaluation **knowledge and skills**. Building such a multidisciplinary team and having most of the necessary capacities in-house is usually easier in larger cities. Small and medium-sized cities might need to involve more external expertise.

Once this team is in place, it's paramount to **keep the team's knowledge up-to-date**, and to follow the latest trends and innovative solutions. Attending **thematic conferences**, even though these events sometimes seem waste of time; **becoming members of thematic networks**, like for instance Civitas, Placemaking Europe, POLIS; **subscribing to thematic newsletters and publications** are all important. **Learning from other cities** is also an excellent source of knowledge! Participating in transnational networks, take for instance URBACT Networks or Interreg programmes, provides inspiration, ideas, good practices and knowledge. Studying in detail the case of other cities that have successfully made the transformation is also invaluable. If done properly, organising study tours is also a modest investment that offers significant returns. In fact, field visits where politicians can see the changes and benefits of the transformation and hear the story from their peers can also play an important role in strengthening their engagement.

If there's a committed in-house team with up-to-date knowledge, their job is not just to manage the transformation process and deliver the interventions, but it's at least equally important **that they share their knowledge – constantly communicate, educate the various target groups in the city.**

Shared vision and strategy



Integrated projects need visions and strategies to build a robust framework for sustainable public spaces and mobility. Some of these visions have been presented in Booklet 2 and can potentially be part of a specific urban vision for your city. Urban strategies and plans tend to support any ambitions and overall visions, but with more practical elements, specific alignment and a project narrative.

Particularly with mobility projects, **the narrative is a decisive factor** to transform the public space and create quality innovation, as well as carbon reduction measures. Your ideas and solutions need to get accepted by the public opinion. A **common understanding is needed to create a shared vision and strategy**. Ideally, you create ownership within the stakeholder groups, who might join your cause and defend the same ideas as you and, most importantly, may help you co-design and further develop joint actions. Both visions and strategies are stronger when locals are involved in their creation.

Inviting and engaging a variety of different stakeholder groups into the design process of your city's mobility strategy will most certainly pay off. It will develop a solid and considerably common vision that is more inclusive, more resilient to foreseeable obstacles, and it will build up the trust between the stakeholders who are able to support actions and strengthen the sense of community. As a matter of fact, the vision becomes a part of the community's identity, with messages being carried out beyond the usual suspects – like the municipality staff. The URBACT Method, which is based upon the principles of participative and integrated planning shall come at hand.

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The first step in the development of a joint vision is to find a clear overview of all the interested parties who could be involved in the process, private and public alike. It's vital to conduct a **stakeholder mapping**, which will evolve as the project progresses and new stakeholders are added to the planning process. A detailed analysis of those groups and their **interests**, as well as their respective level of **influence** is needed. Also, this will help to overcome **any inequalities in terms of power between interest groups, gain acceptance and enable compromises**.

Continuous **management and interaction** are helpful factors for transparency throughout the whole process. Consistent communication and stakeholder involvement shall be put into place throughout the whole process – until the final decision-making phase and even beyond. This can make everyone feel included and can, therefore, create a feeling of ownership, trust and foster the collaboration from all parties. By also leaving space for **bottom-up initiatives** and making room for **co-creation processes**, stakeholders should be empowered to internalise the project's desires and ensure an effective implementation. This can also create more acceptance and willingness to uptake the vision and overall interventions. Reducing obstacles, like language barriers or a variety of educational and social backgrounds beforehand, can reduce stress and minimise negative effects. The goal should be to maintain flexibility within the process and be prepared for different scenarios.

Providing solid **expertise and knowledge about the intervention's area**, while also keeping an open ear to new inputs from different stakeholders, further empower all people and prevent a patronising top-down hierarchy. Opposing voices are naturally welcome, they might bring important insights to light. However, if too much room is left for opposition credibility, willpower and assertiveness might be reduced. This is the reason why transparency and facilitation are so crucial when co-creating strategies.

How about strategies and political cycles? Whenever there's a change in the government's leading political parties, project visions and strategies are under threat. They can be rejected, changed or just get less attention. **The more a vision and a strategy are mainstreamed in stakeholder groups, the more realistic it's for them to survive in the city's political agenda.** Furthermore, **governance structures** are key to ensure integrated strategies can be upscaled and, yet, adapted according to location and scale.

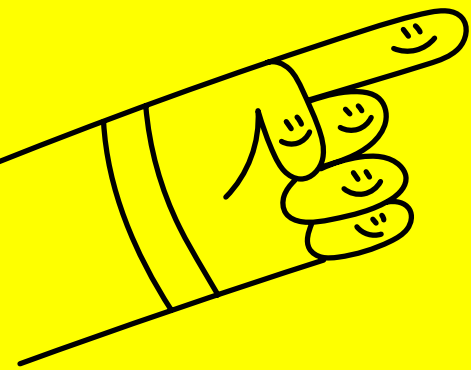
To maintain an **integrated planning approach** a multidimensional analysis is recommended, considering **vertical cooperation** between different levels of authorities of metropolitan scale, city region and municipalities and local communities, while also taking **horizontal policy** to ensure the collaboration between multiple municipal services and local agencies. The different **sectoral approaches**, the social, economic and planning aspects should be considered equally important. **All sectoral policies should be checked on their potential externalities on others** – like external social and environmental effects, for example, if parents can choose a school geographically located anywhere in the city, it might result in additional car use.

Funding is often perceived as a daunting step within any strategy, still, it's an aspect that **must be considered from a very early stage**. It needs to be reflected in taking into account different governance levels whilst keeping a balance between hard and soft investments. To foster realisation and successfully achieve the common vision, goals can be aligned with funders and implementing actors. This can be backed by a set of legal rules to ensure implementation, allowing for the development of a quality control system, enforcing existing and new measures.

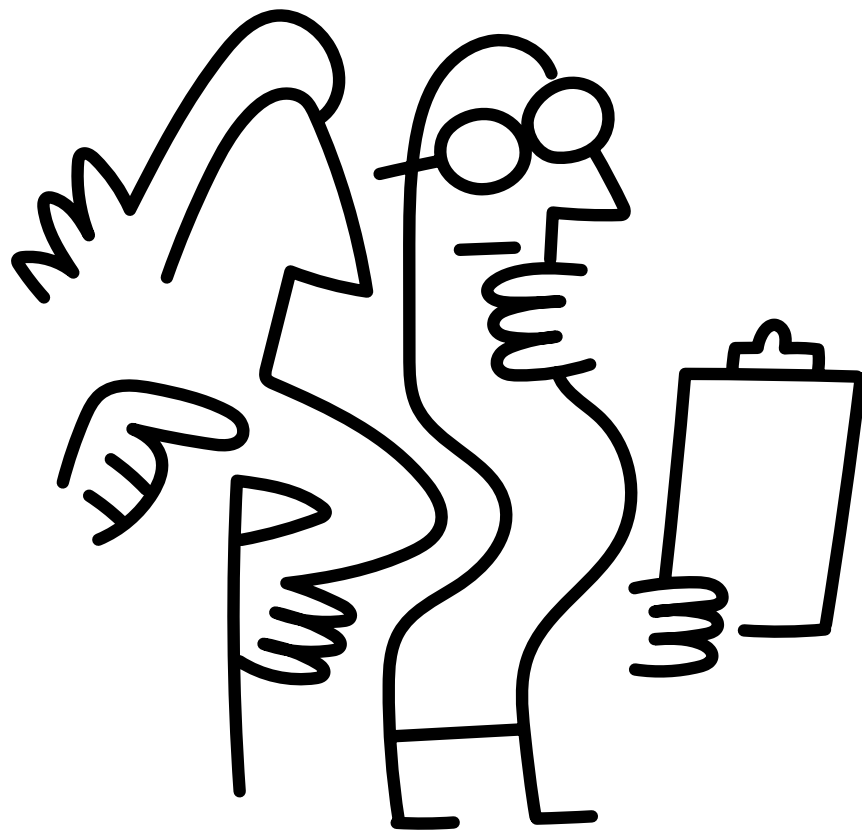
Participative approach



Most urban development interventions affect the life of citizens, especially when it comes to spatial changes through urban projects. The local communities have to live with the consequences of new buildings and infrastructure in the city for decades to come, whether they like it or not. That's exactly why it's important to plan and implement physical interventions in a way that enables all concerned parties – civil society included – to play an active and influential role in decisions that affect their lives.



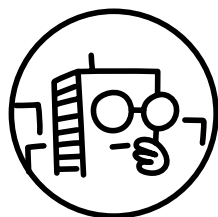
Participation is **one of the key principles of the URBACT Method**, being defined as follows: a participative approach is based on the strong partnerships between public bodies, the private sector, knowledge institutions and civil society – including associations, NGOs, citizens. It's recognised as a **cornerstone of local democracy** and efficient urban development policies.



Most people move around in cities on a regular basis and have frequent interactions with public spaces. Consequently, **any transformation of public spaces and mobility systems directly affects their everyday life**. In addition, the shift towards more sustainable urban mobility and more human spaces often leads to measures that **hurt the real or perceived interests** of a (very vocal) group of residents: the car users. Unsurprisingly, mobility and public space interventions are often controversial and spark strong opposition.

Having said that, it's important to use a participatory approach when designing and implementing interventions that transform public spaces and contribute to a shift towards more sustainable means of transport. This must be done by **involving all stakeholders from the start of the process**, explaining what is intended to be achieved. Having an honest dialogue also helps to better understand the real needs and motivations of various actors. Giving them the opportunity to influence the transformation process **has a range of benefits:**

- The interventions designed and implemented in this way, enable decision-makers to better take into account the most important needs of end users.
- It can contribute to changing the mind of some opposing stakeholders.
- It brings in a range of new ideas and perspectives.
- It gives an opportunity to a wide range of stakeholders - not just the "loudest" groups - to have their voice heard.



What do cities need to keep in mind?

Communication to promote actions – especially one-way communication – does not equal participation. Real participation involves a genuine dialogue, co-design and even co-creation.

Stakeholders will only be ready to actively participate if they feel that they are not only listened to, but also heard. In this sense, their contributions can actually shape the outcomes.

That said, **developing and using a positive narrative of the change process is fundamental**. This narrative should concentrate on the vision: the positive changes, the improvement in the quality of life the city wants to achieve. If **consensus can be consolidated around the vision**, it will be much easier for all stakeholders – the local authority included – to make the necessary compromises regarding the details of the specific actions leading to the vision.

It's crucial that you **give the opportunity to all stakeholders**, in fact, encourage all and not just a select few or the usual suspects, **to participate and have a voice**. In addition, make an extra effort to actively involve those groups that normally have a **“weaker voice”** – for instance children, women, lower income residents and people with mobility impairments.

Be aware and prepared that the **opposers are usually the loudest and most vocal**. Still, that doesn't necessarily mean that they represent the majority's opinion. By all means listen to their arguments too, but when there is no consensus and a decision is needed, **always choose the option that is in the interest of the wider public** – as opposed to the particular interest of certain groups.

During the participatory process you usually discover that, besides the opposers, there are **many who agree** and support the proposed changes. Make sure to **“recruit” them as your allies**. They are powerful and credible messengers, besides being living proof that the local authority is not the only one that represents certain ideas.

When transforming public spaces, the way we use streets, **temporary solutions and tests can be useful** ways to demonstrate the changes in real life for a limited time – and with the option of reversing those changes. These experiments also **provide better context for a more meaningful dialogue** with people. There's a significant difference between discussing something in theory and actually experiencing change and its effects. Such interventions are also useful in **improving and fine-tuning the final design**, before the city commits to costly and irreversible mistakes.

It's also important to note that people are better equipped to make a meaningful contribution when the subject of dialogue is a specific public space, street or neighbourhood. Even more so if the dialogue is actually taking place in that specific place. So, instead of convening in a room at the municipality, it is better to **set up tables, mock-ups, and maps in the physical space that is the subject of the planned changes**.

Finally, properly applying a participative approach is not easy: **it requires time and significant resources** from the part of local authority. Nevertheless, when it comes to interventions affecting public spaces and mobility, it's the right path to follow.

Financial resources, regulations



Legal framework

Local municipalities have a wide range of competences, among them, the **duty to comply and enforce regulations**. For example, urban design rules are important means to translate visions into reality, which might have impacts that are even more tangible than costly new infrastructure. During Covid-19 pandemics, there were many examples of tactical urbanism interventions, which could even be turned into permanent solutions. The Barcelona Superblocks ([see 5.7 - Superblock](#)), for instance, provides an interesting approach of how innovative ideas can be tested with inexpensive interventions, which can then be followed by more expensive measures and developments.

In many cases, however, **local authorities face barriers that keep them from achieving the objectives that were originally intended with the regulations**. Common challenges include the conflicts of different kinds, for instance, a municipality might improve a public space by restricting and limiting car use in certain streets, but as a consequence, generate a gentrification process. As rent regulation is often a national government responsibility, at the local level there's little cities can do to control the increase of rents. All this means that municipalities have to carefully count the externalities of their regulations.

Taxation is an important part of local governance. Cities are in very different positions across countries, to what extent they can determine different types of taxes. For example, real estate taxes can provide an important opportunity to get a partial return of the public money that had previously been invested in the development of public infrastructure. However, such real estate value dependent taxes are not allowed in some countries as part of the local taxes.

Financing the implementation of actions

In light of the first-ever thematic URBACT e-University, in early 2022 the programme has delivered to Action Planning Network's partner cities a capacity-building curriculum, which focused on funding and resourcing. Participants got a glimpse, tips and knowledge on **how to put together a funding strategy for actions that were planned under their local Integrated Action Plans**. A set of very useful tools was consolidated and all materials can be found at the [URBACT Toolbox](https://www.urbact.eu/toolbox-home)¹. This includes a step-by-step explanation on how to implement the action plans, and a comparative analysis on financial opportunities, how to access funding and resources at European, national, and regional level or through public private partnerships. In addition, there you can find references to the most relevant EU funds for the 2021 - 2027 programming period.

Sharing examples and ideas of **financial engineering measures** and the EU **mechanisms for cities** is also recommended. Potential beneficiaries should analyse the InvestEU Fund², which aims at stimulating long-term economic growth and competitiveness in the European Union, by combining funds, in the form of loans and guarantees. This fund is structured around four areas of intervention: sustainable infrastructure, research, innovation and digitisation, SMEs and social investments and skills.

In order to implement different projects and turn plans, visions and interventions into reality, it's essential to have the knowledge **to combine direct and indirect funds – structural and investment funds**, ESI funds and the funds managed by both National and Regional authorities, such as National Operational Programs and Regional Operational Programs. Synergy among the diverse EU funds is crucial to concretely and more effectively implement the action plans, which partners have developed along the URBACT networks.

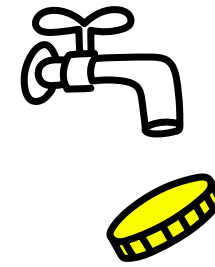
1. www.urbact.eu/toolbox-home

2. https://investeu.europa.eu/index_en

What can cities do?

Cities should look out for financial resources and ensure their use also for “unusual”, experimental and innovative ideas. One way for that is to **establish a fund** for such ideas, with a jury to select the most promising ones from the incoming bids, enabling cities to try out new solutions with enough flexibility. Another option is **to streamline an integrated idea within different budget lines from the city** – parks and green space divisions, transport and mobility department or even social inclusion programmes.

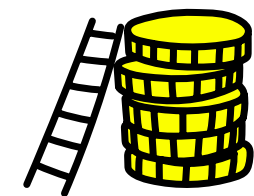
In order to create additional financial resources for projects of public interest, cities might **cross-finance** such projects by revenues gained from profitable investments. An example for this is the **inclusionary zoning**, where the city might oblige developers of free-market housing to transform a given share of the dwellings into the affordable housing units. There's a myriad of innovative ways to finance strategies built around interventions and visions – such as People - Public - Private - Partnerships (PPPP), Social Impact Bonds (SIB), crowdsourcing, community bonds or Corporate Social Responsibility. These possibilities should be carefully examined by local authorities, taking into account advantages and constraints.



What potential sources of co-financing?



How to identify these sources of funding?



What tools are there to help us through the URBACT methodology?

Experiences from cities

7.1 How cities are using these visions and interventions?

7.2 Turku

7.3 Bielefeld

7.4 Greater Manchester

7.5 Krakow Metropolis

7.6 Parma

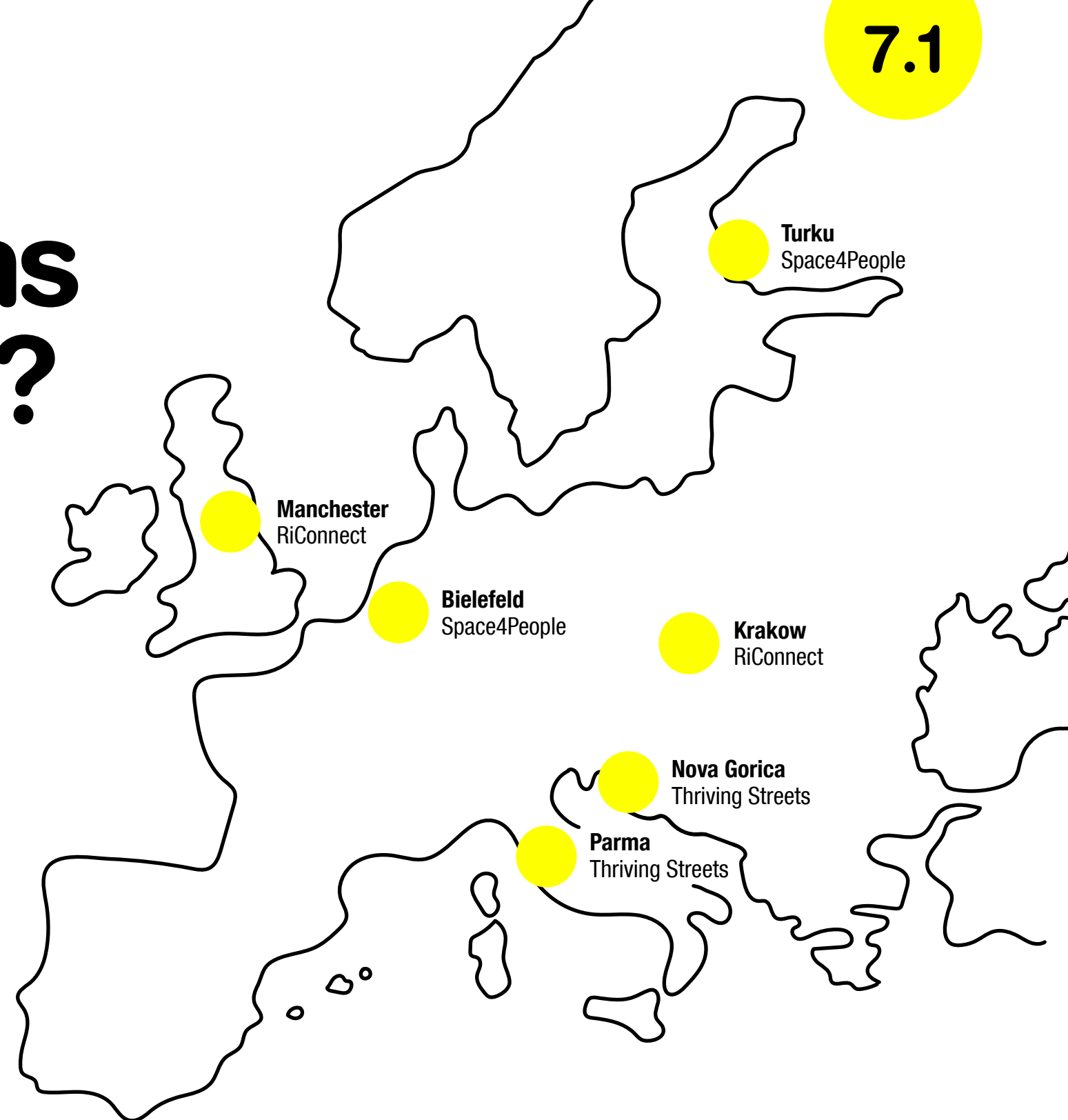
7.7 Nova Gorica

How cities are using these visions and interventions?

Walk'n'Roll helps cities find **inspiration to make the most of their streets and public space while calming down car traffic**. Some readers might have had an easier time relating to the visions and the interventions that were described and illustrated in the first two Booklets. However, the results and final figures from the showcased cities are just a glimpse into a much larger process: from endless discussions, finding compromises, planning, designing, making decisions, securing resources to actually putting actions into practice, there's a whole lot of questions and challenges that unfold in the backstage.

This is precisely the reason why the **last part of Booklet 3 summarises the experience from URBACT cities**. Through **interviews**, city practitioners, metropolitan authorities and decision-makers from all over Europe share their thoughts on things that go far beyond any specific intervention. They rather reflect on the **complexity of mobility issues and the potential for public space's transformation**.

In practice, different visions and interventions need to be combined and adapted at the local level. The present interviews delve into the **importance of political support, suitable governance models, participative methods, thematic knowledge**, as things that can be perceived as potential challenges – like changes in core teams or management, ensuring funding and legal frameworks. Thus, the experience from these cities does not always transpire success stories, but also real-life difficulties and other lessons learnt.



Turku

Interview with Marie Nyman



Marie Nyman

Landscape architect at the city of Turku (FI)

Space4People

Action Planning Network

On November 21st, 2022

What are the main challenges on public space use and sustainable urban mobility in Turku?

Our city centre has a block design, a square shaped structure. Streets are very wide, and they were built for car use over the last decades. With the use of cars being made so easy and practical, many people opt to simply use the car. Our general plan and city strategies indicate that the share of sustainable modes should be increased though. Especially active modes like walking and cycling. Our main challenge here is that streets need to be re-designed to accommodate other transport modes than cars.

What do you expect to be the trickiest part in this process?

The most crucial part concerns the accessibility of the city centre by car. In the last years, we developed a big change with the opening of a parking garage, directly below the main square in the city centre. We want to create less need for on-street parking, so that this space can be used for other purposes. But when you challenge the way people are using the street, you can expect a big follow up discussion and resistance, since they are used to parking on the street and to drive basically everywhere they want to go.

“Big discussions” sound like a source for potential conflicts. How do politicians address this issue? What is their position on this challenge?

Our politicians are well aware of this challenge, but they also acknowledge that the city has set certain goals, like the modal shift in favour of sustainable modes. And they are aware that keeping to these goals means making decisions. Of course, there are different perspectives among decision-makers, as they represent different population groups. But they appreciate well-discussed and thought-out visions on why we should make changes. Like in the case of our Space4People Action Planning Network’s pilot project: the Summer Street, which was done in 2021 and 2022 and well backed-up by our politicians, even when facing some backlash from the public opinion first.





Some people welcomed the idea to have a more people-focused use of the street, others thought it was a waste of resources. Decision-makers favoured the option to run the ideas as a soft way to test a new street design, without permanent consequences. Testing public space changes has proven to be a good approach. We are now moving this test experience to a new location, which is called the Winter Plaza, where a small street in the Old Town is shut for traffic and used as a plaza for lights and seating.

When testing is done and results are at hand, what is the next step towards permanent changes?

All our pilots are based on the strategic idea that places – or streets – should somehow be used in a different and better way than how they are used now. But to actually achieve a permanent change can sometimes take a long time. First, necessary resources need to be secured, then, using public consultations, the street design needs to be developed. All that, while the necessary political decisions are put into place. It takes time, but changes happen. The transformation of Kristiinankatu, where the Summer Street pilot ran, is now part of our traffic strategy. The goal is that this street will have pedestrian priority with car access limited to residents and local retail.

How are you financing the permanent intervention?

It's almost 100% local funding. We have concrete plans for the next few years and we are able to balance these with the available budget. But we need to see which projects can be done in a realistic timeframe. This is one reason why the implementation of projects can take some time, as there are many projects and other subjects that need to be done at the same time. We get support, though sometimes for temporary installations, like for the Summer Street from entrepreneurs. They were very excited about it and brought activities and events to the street. We have some possibilities to apply for state subsidies or EU funding as well, but we use this only if they are applicable for a certain project at that time.

When you plan new street designs like for the Summer Street, do you face any regulatory limitations, like national legislation?

We have some freedom to decide on the design of the streets at local level. Still, the design needs to be based on the bigger vision within the transport development plan, of course. But this is of our own making again. Design can vary considerably, from shared space principles to a road of fully separated spaces per mode – or to implement a cycling street, as we already did in Turku. There are rarely limitations coming from national level. National authorities rather provide specific streets designs that we can use, but the decision on how the design and functionality looks is done at local level. Limitations are more from practical needs at local level, like costs for maintenance or the necessity to cater for municipal or emergency services.

“Decision-makers favoured the option to run the ideas as a soft way to test a new street design, without permanent consequences. Testing public space changes has proven to be a good approach”

How do you decide which locations are subject to street design and public space interventions?

We have an overall plan for our streets and, for some of the streets, the plan defines a need for redevelopment to meet our objectives. That was the case for Kristiinankatu, as there was already the objective to create a more pedestrian-friendly space. There are other streets with similar goals, like for closing a gap in the pedestrian network. But there are other factors to change a street as well, like for the coming Winter Plaza. Residents want to create a calmer place by regulating through traffic in this street. The road is Y-shaped for some part, like a fork, and the idea for one of the branches is to transform into a plaza. Pilot projects are always set up on what we might want to change in the long-run, while giving locals a chance to first-hand experience the changes in the short-term.

To which extent does participation play a role?

This is an area where we still need to do some work, but we are active. All plans and strategies are put together according to the legally defined level of public consultation, of course. But we invest in more intensive ways of participation, like in the case of our online participation platform, which is called “State your opinion”. In this website, people can comment and share their views on different projects. We started two years ago and, today, this is the more usual way to do consultations.

People can see each other’s comments and can react to each other by their comments. “Commenting” turns into a kind of dialogue and not just simply one’s opinion. Examples include online discussions for projects to renew playgrounds, or presenting different options to renew a street and collect opinions and arguments on that. A prominent example is the development of the current harbour area, where the 15 entries for the idea competition were presented to a wider audience. People could review all bids and do their own rates and share their impressions.

Do you look for inspirations and ideas from other cities?

Yes, we are always searching for inspiration from other cities. Most generally, we look at other Nordic cities, since they share similar conditions, especially the long winter months. Like in Denmark, Sweden, Norway or other Finnish cities. We take a look beyond the Nordic areas as well of course, but mostly the first view is to comparable situations.

What would you like to see within the next five years?

I would like to see people use public space more often, even more if they just use it without any specific regulation or initiative telling them to do so. I would call that a kind of a “use your city” mentality. As a landscape architect, I would like to see more greenery to make the city centre more enjoyable, walkable and resilient. I would like to see public space that serves other activities than traffic, and which is used in different ways than today. There’s a lot of activities going on in Turku and I’m confident about positive outcomes. ●



Turku – Marie Nyman

Bielefeld

Interview with Olaf Lewald



Olaf Lewald

Head of Office for Mobility in Bielefeld (DE)

Space4People

Action Planning Network

On November 18th, 2022

What are the main challenges on public space use and sustainable urban mobility in Bielefeld?

We share a challenge with many other European cities: to maintain the centrality and attractiveness of its inner city that is home to a diverse set of functions and stakeholders. At the same time, we need to react to emerging global problems like climate change and public health conditions. Today, public space use in the inner city is a mix of pedestrian areas, roads and parking spaces, squares and to – to a minor extent – greeneries and green surfaces. We need to find a way to transform the city centre, especially the Old Town area, to maintain its appeal to people and to meet the challenges presented by climate change, like urban heat islands. But this has to meet the different and contrasting views of a wide set of stakeholders.

Can you tell us more on the contrasting views of stakeholders?

Contrasting views focus on topics of traffic: some people want to go by car directly to the entry for shops, others favour a calmer city centre with less traffic. A strong stakeholder group is the retailers, who want to keep the city centre and their shop accessible by car. Shop owners tend to think that customers coming by car are their main clients. We know that this is not the case, but retailers are hard to convince otherwise. Gastronomists agree with retailers on the need for good car access conditions. That being said, they also see that there is additional profit in nice outdoor gastronomy. In this view, transforming parking to outdoor seating or reducing car traffic is welcome.

Another expressive group is the residents, who want to maintain access to their homes for parking and deliveries. At the same time, they say that the Old Town area is too noisy with too much through traffic, especially at night. Visitors, yet, take another position. They come to the Old Town for shopping, for gastronomy or simply to walk and stick around. Cutting back on-street parking is no major problem, since there are parking garages. Many visitors do not take the car at all. Instead, they walk, cycle and use public transport. They appreciate space for playing, sitting down and meeting each other.

How do you create a common vision for public space use with all these contrasting viewpoints?

We ran an intensive participation process for the case of the Old Town. First, we listened to all groups to understand how they imagine changes in the area. Then we invited stakeholders for workshops to jointly develop ideas on what interventions could be done and where these could be tested, while we worked with the public as well and created our own website (www.altstadtraum.de) for the project. There anyone could read on present ideas, become aware of the state of play of potential actions and on the next steps. They could also come up with their own proposals and comments. The website complemented the workshops, so we got a good coverage of all opinions from different groups, even from those who did not have the time to join a long workshop or did not feel comfortable with it. All in all, the process was a success, but we also had some participants who were a bit disappointed that their ideas were not fully taken up.

Do you have suggestions on how to cope with people that are disappointed from that?

Yes, stay in touch with them and try to explain why the proposal was not taken up. In the end, it is about a participative, democratic process. Also in the workshops, not all decisions count with a consensus and, in the end, it's the city council that has the final say. People accept how participation processes work, as well the role of the city council, even if they voted for other parties than the ones in power.

What kind of role did politicians take in the participation process?

Not all of them are happy with transforming public space and traffic calming, as in the Old Town project. But they are all aware of the climate crisis and the need to find answers at the local level. The real difference between political parties is more in the speed of change and how ambitious local objectives and interventions should be put in place. For the Old Town participation, the political party members took part as observers in the workshops and acted as facilitators. They left decisions on what to test, where to test it and how to test it to the participants. If needed, they also talked with particular stakeholders if they voiced doubts or fears during the process. Their main input was the mission statement for the project: to find solutions to make the Old Town more attractive to people – like for shopping or gatherings, with more space for seating, greeneries, and less space for parking.

“It’s a successful approach to have a concept or idea that should be implemented and turn it into reality using additional funding that complement local resources”

The pilots in the Old Town are finalised today. How will you finance the permanent changes to come?

We have some experience in using external budgets for our projects. In 2015 and 2016, our work to approach climate change and how we would move in the city was integrated to our mobility strategy. And in this process, we planned and delivered a large-scale project to redesign the main local transport hub, the Jahnplatz. The budget of the project was 20 million EUR. We reduced the number of car lanes, added space for walking and cycling, renewed neighbouring streets and revamped the public transport node, which sees almost 1 000 buses crossing the square each day. This project was only made possible thanks to **European Regional Development Funds (ERDF)**.

It was a very significant project, since people could see that something was being changed with the implementation. It went beyond pure thinking and dreaming, there were tangible results like the rapid growth of cyclists and more space at hand for people. Our politicians recognised that we were on the right track and dedicated further budget to more projects thanks to this. Not only big interventions like the Jahnplatz reconstruction, but smaller ones too like banning cars from a street or reducing on-street parking in another one. Likewise, politicians increased our capacities at the Office for Mobility. They appreciated our work



City of Bielefeld– Stadt

efforts. But clearly, political leaders are both interested in and happy about additional funding from regional, national or EU sources for projects that are on our agenda. It's a successful approach to have a concept or idea that should be implemented and turn it into reality using additional funding that complement local resources.

When you look at all the sites with potential for future projects, where do you get your ideas from?

We are very interested in examples from Europe, but also the USA and Canada. There are very good examples at hand and we are keeping in touch, networking and participation in EU funded transnational projects. Not just to exchange experiences, but also to learn and transfer solutions. This is important for us, since our political goal is to cut by half the share of cars until 2030. We developed a set of concepts for this: for walking, cycling, car use and public transport. These are our “bibles” for the coming tasks. Since the overall goal is very ambitious, we compare the concepts with other cities’ visions and projects that are implemented.

What would you like to see happening in the next five years?

This is difficult to say and hard to predict, just look at this year's events. But if I can simply tell my wishes, I would like to see more and larger pedestrian zones. Public space redesigned for and by people. To turn car lanes into bike lanes and to transform parking space in the street to other uses by adding more green and also water in the city – like for cooling down temperatures in the hot summers. My bigger wish is that living conditions in Bielefeld are improved for people, not only in the centre, but also in the other districts. So, people appreciate living in Bielefeld, that they see and use public space as a community. Bielefeld is a growing city with lots of change coming up in different areas. So, conditions for living should be as comfortable and nice as possible for the Bielefelders. ●

Greater Manchester

Interview with Jonathan Marsh



Jonathan Marsh

Acting Head of Strategic Planning & Innovation,
Transport for Greater Manchester, UK

RiConnect Action Planning Network

On November 14th, 2022

What are the main challenges you face regarding public spaces and sustainable urban mobility in the Manchester metropolitan area?

Within our local transport plan, Greater Manchester's Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, we have this policy and strategy called “streets for all”. This strategy builds up on four main parts: improving quality of life, protecting our environment, supporting sustainable economic growth and developing innovative city regions.

One of the main challenges is to stimulate behavioural change, getting people out of their cars and shifting their travel modes towards public transport and active mobility, like walking and cycling. By these means, many policy targets would be met simultaneously, like improving public health and air quality and boosting decarbonisation. This is part of the Bee Network agenda in Greater Manchester.

It seems to include mobility measures as well as other matters. Do you have a policy that integrates different topics? Is TfGM the only agency involved?

The “streets for all” approach is looking at people and places alike. Quite a lot of the projects we work on are linked to the changes that are happening on the surrounding space as well, so it could be improving walking and cycling routes as a part of town centre regeneration that includes enhancing the public realm.

Within the Greater Manchester area, there are ten different local authorities, which work closely together. The mayor of Greater Manchester acts as the lead of the combined authority. TfGM deliver the transport policies set by the Greater Manchester Mayor and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority.

We help with the development of strategies initiated by the local authorities, which are aligned to the local transport plan objectives. Together, developing cases for funding or ways of working around design from a “streets for all” perspective. For this, we are developing a design guide with an integrated design review panel to ensure a collaborative and design-proof approach. It is the Local Authorities that design and deliver the projects, making them happen.

How does funding work? Is it a purely public investment or does the private sector also contribute?

The main funding source for infrastructure projects is the Government, an example of this is the **City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement**. We are designing and developing business cases for a broad range of transport and place making projects, many of which are **Streets for All** type projects. Some transport improvement funding also comes from the private sector through urban development projects. Currently there is no formal framework for potential land value capture that could support infrastructure delivery. Some local authorities do have a community infrastructure levy though, which is a fixed amount which developers contribute towards specific infrastructure – e.g. transportation or education sectors.

To which extent does participation play a role?

One of the key principles in the “streets for all” strategy is to engage people from an early stage and throughout the whole planning process. For example, within our **RiConnect** Action Planning Network in **Oldham** in Greater Manchester, we are working with stakeholders including public representatives, politicians and local authority officers, taking them all on this journey. For example, we undertook some corridor studies where we engaged with stakeholders to test the approach using interviews, co-creation and sketching up ideas with the help of a local artist.

What are usual difficulties and challenges in the transformation of streets and mobility initiatives?

The key challenge is that we have a quite constrained urban environment with narrow streets. Often, there won't be enough space to accommodate all mobility needs, those of active travel, public transport and motorised vehicles, at least, not simultaneously. One of the challenges is to keep the balance between some of these needs and the required objectives. Sometimes it will be a choice we need to make: how we collaborate and work collectively to get high quality infrastructure in limited space. Another challenge is the high car dependency within the polycentric structure of Greater Manchester, which increases as you move away from the dense core.

“within our RiConnect Action Planning Network in Oldham in Greater Manchester, we are working with stakeholders including public representatives, politicians and local authority officers, taking them all on this journey.”



How about knowledge exchange, do you get inspiration from other cities? Which ones are important for you to learn from?

We are always looking at what different cities and places within the UK, Europe and around the world are doing. We were particularly interested and learnt a lot from the healthy streets agenda in London. It also helps working with European partners and organisations, especially those focusing on Metropolitan Areas, an example being the URBACT RiConnect Network.

What are your ambitions for the next five years?

As part of delivering our Bee Network commitments we are keen to focus on our participatory approaches, as we learnt this helps building consensus and delivery of strong schemes. By delivering the right proposals, we can learn for future projects, and secure future funding as well. But above all, continue to support behavioural change as part of the Bee Network¹ and maximise the benefits for society as quickly as we can. ●

Through the Integrated Action Plan of Transport of Greater Manchester a program for public space improvement in the City of Oldham was developed Source: TfGM

1. <https://beeactive.tfgm.com/bee-network-vision/>

Krakow metropolis

Interview with Daniel Wrzosczyk and Paweł Guzek



Daniel Wrzosczyk
Executive Director at the Krakow
Metropolis Association - KMA (PL)

RiConnect
Action Planning Network
On November 14th 2022



Paweł Guzek
Coordinator at the Krakow
Metropolis Association - KMA (PL)

Please describe the main challenges that you faced in terms of sustainable urban mobility in the city of Krakow and the metropolitan area?

Daniel: The Krakow Metropolitan Agency is not a formal institution, but a metropolitan association, which is not created in the framework of our national Polish law. One big challenge concerns the variety of authorities, having 15 municipalities responsible for an organised mobility system. This makes it hard to find common ground and establish shared goals. It requires a lot of coordination to establish collaboration and achieve compromises. There's also a big problem of car-dependency in our area, causing congestion and delays. The suburbanisation process also adds on to this and creates new challenges concerning interconnectivity. Funding is an issue, especially now with the inflation, which unfortunately leads us to think about raising prices for public transport users, for example.

What's the vision you developed for the metropolitan area with the park and ride (P&R) that was implemented in the region?

Paweł: The process was originally stimulated by integrated territorial investments from the European Commission. This led the city of Krakow to invest in infrastructure to meet the challenges of congestion. The main idea was to create a P&R system in the region, in connection with fast agglomeration railway, the tramway stops or the bus stations in the municipalities from the metropolitan area. We believe that these interventions, especially P&R connected with fast agglomeration railway as a backbone of our mobility system in the functional area, becomes the impulse for further development.

This is only one element of the bigger vision, of course, with the goal in mind to transform mobility towards public transport and away from individual car dependency. In every P&R project, Bike and Ride facilities are an obligatory element. This is the first level of creating an integrated system, connecting active mobility with the mobility nodes. The second are projects connected with cycle paths that connect with the mobility nodes. We think about the last mile in mobility. The two levels also refer to spatial relations, as there are different circumstances in the city of Krakow compared to its surroundings – e.g. the density of public transportation or cycling networks.

What ideas did you co-create with the municipality of Skawina, from the Krakow metropolitan area and URBACT beneficiary city? Do the mobility projects you work with have an impact at local level?

Daniel: In Skawina, the connection between urban and mobility planning was very visible. We have built the mobility infrastructure of a P+R but we also co-created ideas that take care of the development of the city centre. This was done with a consultation process with local stakeholders. By including passengers as well as residents, we were able to think ahead and create strategies that consider future developments and needs of inhabitants and commuters alike. The creation of the P&R in a brownfield area in Skawina and the reconstruction of the local train station also brought with it an urban transformation. This was clearly visible over the years: where there once was an empty – and sometimes scary – train station, we now have a café and a public library. It's now a lively and cultural place that people appreciate visiting.

What about challenges and difficulties in the implementation of such projects in the metropolitan area?

Paweł: The variety of different scales, levels of infrastructure and specific needs of the municipalities is a big challenge when it comes to explaining our aims and maintaining a stringent narrative. Therefore, first we need to build a common understanding of the problem at a wider level. And, if you want to build a common understanding, you need the data and you must show the bigger picture from a metropolitan scale. If all the municipalities that have a railway would build a P&R, for example, we could see an effect in Krakow, too, with less congestion and less traffic in the surrounding areas and the city centre.

“Our main vision is to create an infrastructure that makes the mobility shift easier for people.”



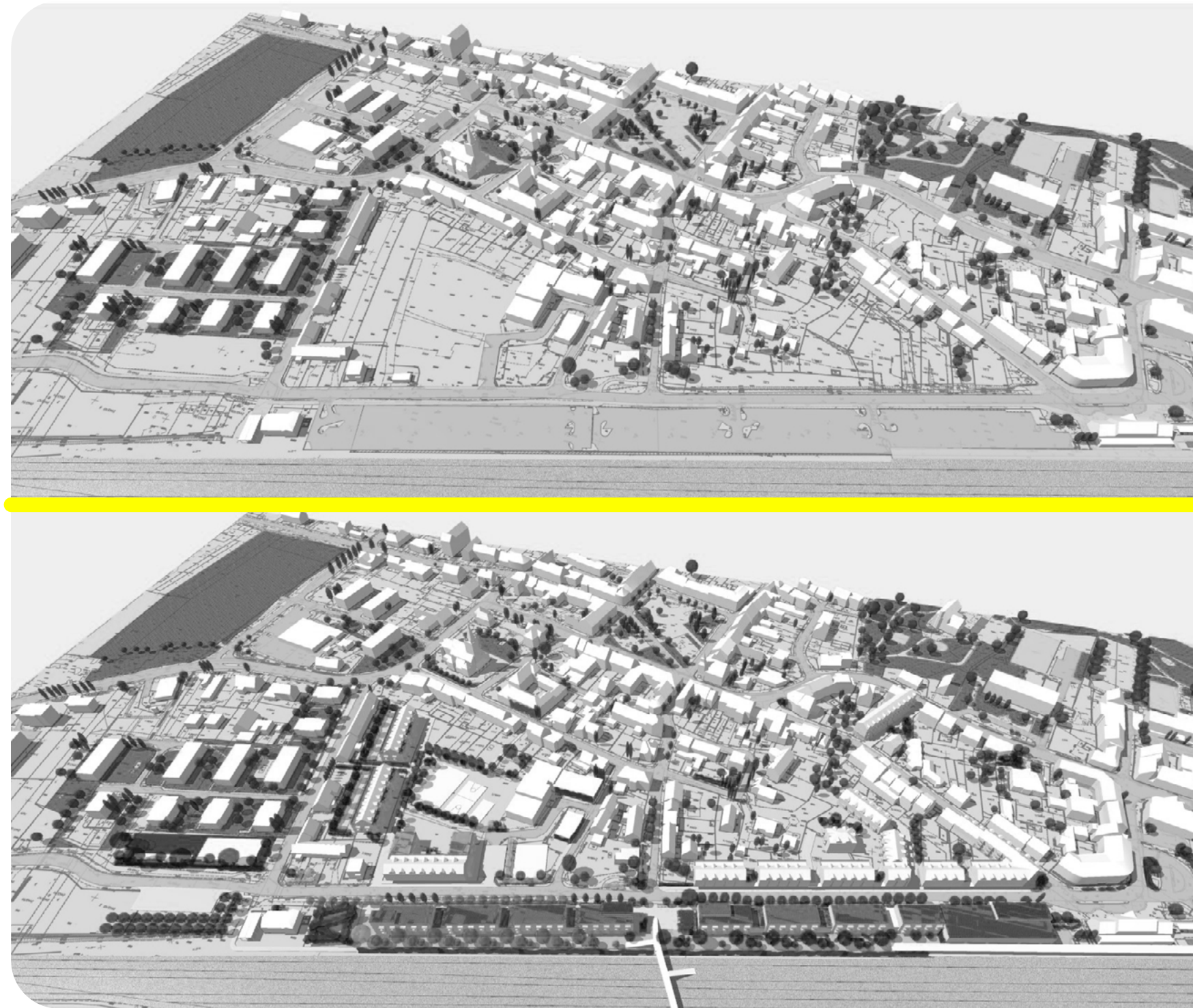
Workshop – KMA

What is your long-term vision for the Krakow metropolitan area?

Daniel: We would like to see full public transport and empty streets with no or fewer cars. And we would love to see that people believe and rely on public transport and see the possibilities that come with mobility as a service. To achieve that, we need to progress and continue our development with those elements that are structuring the mobility of our region. So first of all, the progress of our P&R system should be fully connected with cycle paths and other means of public transport.

Also, when it comes to solutions for our passengers, for example, the integrated ticket price for the region – or a combined organised transport of the city and the municipalities by trains, buses, and trams. In general, we wish for less car dependency, not only in Krakow, but all over Europe. We are talking about the future of our environment and climate in general. In the next five, ten years, it can be too late to react if we don't start now. ●

KMA developed a smart growth scenario for the city of Skavina in the Metropolitan Area of Krakow
Source: KMA



Parma

Interview with Patrizia Marani



Patrizia Marani

Senior Project Manager, European projects - Parma (IT)

Thriving Streets

Action Planning Network

On November 24th, 2022

Tell me about your city. What's the city's background and what are the main challenges you face when it comes to urban mobility and public space use?

Parma is a typical Italian medium-sized city, located in the Po valley. It's dense with a traditional city centre and narrow streets, which were not originally designed for car traffic. On the one hand, it's a really nice place to be with historic buildings, beautiful landscape and a strong identity. On the other hand, we certainly have our own set of problems. The most pressing is poor air quality: **the Po valley is one of the most polluted areas in Europe due to the combination of its geographical position, strong industrial activity, density, and the extensive use of motorised vehicles.** While our city centre is a limited access zone, the share of walking, cycling and the use of public transport is quite high and is slowly increasing. Nevertheless, **Parma is still a very car-oriented city**, with all its negative implications. We also experience conflicts in the use of public spaces, not just between cars and people, but also between different groups of residents. Finally, Parma – just like many other cities – **suffers from the closing of shops in the city centre**, due to the combined effect of shopping centres located in the outskirts and the increasing role of e-commerce.

Most of these challenges are very similar to the ones many other cities face. What has Parma done and plans to do to address those challenges?

The city has been aware of these challenges and working a lot to better understand the specific problems and identify the possible solutions. Parma is one of the early signatories of the Covenant of Mayors, the city has a sustainable energy and climate action plan (SECAP) and was one of the first cities in Italy having a sustainable urban mobility plan (SUMP). Most recently, we have been selected as one of the 100 climate neutral cities. We even applied for the green city award. While we did not win, the thorough and detailed evaluation has provided us with invaluable insights.





Parma has accomplished a range of significant improvements in the past couple of years, including the **extension and improvement of its cycling network**, as well as of micro-mobility and sharing systems – e.g. bike, car, e-scooter. **Public transport has also been developed and the city centre has been designated a limited access zone.** Other successful initiatives include the network of mobility managers, coordinated by the local authority or the bike-to-work programme.

We had local elections in June this year, and sustainable urban **mobility remained a top priority for our council.** The city’s mobility strategy has not changed significantly - we still pursue the plan to improve sustainability, livability, and security in Parma. An important goal is to **turn the area within the ring-road into a low-emission zone.** That’s a major change, also involving the improvement of multimodality and parking management, the expansion of the cycling network in the city and in the suburbs and the introduction of incentives for public transport. The new vice mayor, who’s responsible for mobility, is committed to extending the Tempo30 zone to all neighbourhoods and continuing pedestrianisation in the inner city. The city also keeps on changing the allocation of public spaces and introducing traffic-calming measures around schools, using the school-street approach.

It’s clear that you have a range of strategic documents, plans. Do these strategies really reflect a common vision?

When it comes to making Parma more livable and improving the quality of life of residents by reducing car traffic and implementing a shift towards active mobility, there’s clearly a **strong political commitment** in place. Most members of the city council understand the need for transformation and support the relevant interventions. And, if prior experience is any indication, we can say that our city council is willing to push changes even when there are different views from certain groups of the residents.

The area where we can still improve and do more is the engagement of citizens. While the city used a participatory approach when preparing the strategies mentioned above, there is still a long way to go to ensure more active involvement of all residents – not just in the planning stage, but also in the implementation of actions. However, the new mayor is really committed to significantly strengthening citizen participation. So, the various innovative participative methods that we learnt through our URBACT Networks will be really useful. In Thriving Streets, for instance, we successfully used gamification to raise awareness and to better mobilise school-children and their families to choose active mobility.

Do you have up-to-date thematic knowledge in place at the local authority?

The city of Parma is very fortunate: we have professionals in all relevant departments with extensive knowledge and experience. Numerous young people have been recruited recently and they are a good source of ambition and innovative new ideas. Also, it’s important to keep the knowledge up to date, for this matter the regional and national governments are of great help. **We learn a lot from our peers, too – other Italian cities share their experiences through various platforms** – mainly through the thematic working groups of the National Association of Italian Cities. Finally, we also learn from **the various European**



“In Thriving Streets, for instance, we successfully used gamification to raise awareness and to better mobilise school-children and their families to choose active mobility.”



networks – like the Covenant of Mayors, Civitas, Energy Cities – and our own transnational cooperation projects financed by URBACT, INTERREG and Horizon 2020. These are **also great sources of inspiration and innovation. Where we need improvement is the more effective dissemination of this knowledge within the organisation.**

What's also important to mention is that, in order to address mobility and public space challenges, an integrated approach is needed. From this perspective it's really helpful that we have a new leadership that's pushing for a better integration of departments and strategies.

What about human resources, capacity and financial resources?

In most cases, capacity per se is not a problem. However, the challenge is that significant capacities are needed to deal with small, less strategic – albeit important – tasks like, for instance, evaluating and issuing permits to enter the limited access zone in the city centre. This leaves very limited time for developing creative solutions.

In urban development, money is never enough, especially when it comes to transforming transport infrastructure and public spaces. Having said that, Parma has been traditionally quite successful in obtaining regional, national and European funds. **The lack of money has rarely been a major obstacle to implementing changes.** Most recently, the European Commission's Reconstruction and Resilience Facility (RRF) has been instrumental in developing our active mobility infrastructure and public space improvement projects in the city.

Speaking about funding, it's also important to highlight the role that **grants can – potentially – play in orienting cities' actions towards important goals like more sustainable urban mobility.** Requiring the widening of sidewalks or the addition of protected bike lanes or not allowing the addition of new car lanes, as a condition of funding, when a city street is redeveloped, for instance, could be more effective than simply recommending the application of certain general principles. ●



Parma, Oltretorrente neighbourhood – Consultation in the street

Nova Gorica

Interview with Aleksandra Torbica and Natasa Kolenc



Aleksandra Torbica
Investment Department,
Municipality of Nova Gorica (SI)



Natasa Kolenc
Development Office,
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Thriving Streets
Action Planning Network
On November 14th 2022

Can you tell us a few words about Nova Gorica?

Aleksandra: Nova Gorica is a **cross-border town, located at the border between Slovenia and Italy**. After WWII, the area was split into 2 parts: Gorizia in Italy and what, later, became Nova Gorica in Slovenia. While Gorizia has an old town, most of Nova Gorica was newly built after the war, hence the dominance of modernist architecture. However, thanks to its history and location, **the city still exhibits a distinct mediterranean vibe**. The urban core has approximately 19 000 inhabitants, but the cross-border urban area has as many as 60 000 residents.

What are the main challenges regarding public spaces and sustainable urban mobility in your city?

Aleksandra: When speaking about public spaces, we need to differentiate between the old settlement and the newly built neighbourhoods of the city. **In the old parts the main challenge is to reclaim and regenerate public spaces now almost totally occupied by cars** –moving and stationary – displacing other important functions. The “new town”, however, was built as a modern city, **designed for cars from the ground up, with wide roads, abundant parking places**. The challenge, therefore, is to transform a city designed for cars and turn it into a city for people. Unlike many other cities, though, we don’t have that collective memory of a more human place we can refer to. There’s hope however, a major street was pedestrianised and parking places were eliminated as early as in the nineties. If it was possible then, at the height of car dominance, it should definitely be possible now.

Natasa: But it is still difficult. We have an **extremely strong car culture**, people want to use their car wherever they go, and want to keep the car as close to their residence – or their destination – as possible. This endangers green spaces and creates conflicts especially in older parts, which have originally not been designed for cars. On the other hand, the **nice climate offers great potential for active mobility**.

How about your city leaders? Is there a political will to transform your city into a more human place?

Aleksandra: The “**strategic intention**” is there. Politicians understand the need for a greener city, better public spaces, less car-oriented mobility and even communicate this vision. However, **when it comes to translating this vision into practical measures**, interventions that are often unpopular and involve taking away certain privileges and rights of the residents, political calculation and the fear from negative reactions often interfere.

Natasa: When decisions are needed, investment projects need to be approved – that is the moment of truth and unfortunately politicians often back off if they sense opposition.

Aleksandra: Also, there is a **knowledge and understanding deficit**, sorry to say. Politicians understand the need for more sustainable urban mobility and better public spaces. Yet, they **don’t see the more indirect, longer term benefits, like for instance improved public health, stronger communities**. In fact, sometimes they don’t seem to be aware of even basic economic realities or simply ignore them, like the astronomical investment and maintenance costs associated with building and providing free parking places and wide roads. On top of that, many of them simply don’t even want to hear these uncomfortable facts.

Natasa: **Seeing the example of other cities would be important.** Before our study visit to Pontevedra (ES), even I was sceptical. I was totally convinced that Nova Gorica needed to change, but I also thought that those changes would require time, and that we were not ready yet. Then came our Thriving Streets study visit to Pontevedra and it made me realise that change can actually happen! It requires commitment and dedication, but there is no need to wait for an indefinite amount of time, until the city is “better prepared”. Imagine, if I was sceptical – what do we expect from decision-makers who have less information, experience, and knowledge?

This brings me to the issue of having a shared vision and strategy. Do you have those? In what documents are the vision and strategy manifested?

Aleksandra: **The Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP) was prepared** and approved by the City Council back **in 2017**, clearly articulating our vision, strategy and key projects. Some of those projects have already been implemented, like the cycling paths and regeneration of certain public spaces, the rest is yet to be done. The city’s **parking policy is being prepared now**, it’s a difficult process that is full of confrontations. Especially when it comes to residential parking. At the moment, we have an abundance of free public parking in residential areas, but this cannot be maintained forever.

Whether or not what is manifested in these documents is a **shared** vision and strategy, that is an entirely different question. Politicians definitely know the content, but most of them – very pragmatically – try to pick and implement the interventions that they believe to generate less conflicts, are more popular, or at least less unpopular, and postpone the harder stuff to the remote future.



“To have a meaningful dialogue with people, they need to have at least a basic level of understanding. Otherwise, the conversation will be controlled by emotions and particular interests”



And let's not forget about the **role the national or regional governments – or even the European Union – can play in orienting cities towards the right direction**. Honestly, I am grateful to our government for demanding the preparation of a SUMP and then only financing projects that are in line with this plan. This is a very powerful instrument to positively influence and steer local actions and gently push local politicians to take decisions they would otherwise keep postponing and avoiding.

When it comes to changes that directly affect people's everyday life, participatory approach is crucial.

What are your experiences?

Natasa: Participatory approach is vital. It's a difficult and time consuming aspect, but you still have to do it – and **do it from the very beginning**. If you honestly share your plans, facts and arguments, **it helps to build trust**. This is something that cannot be done at a later stage.

Aleksandra: Another important thing to keep in mind that using a **participatory approach does not equal marketing**. It's not about selling your ideas and narrative. It's about having a dialogue that sometimes leads to outcomes, which are quite different from what you envisage at the beginning. Take the **example of the Solkan neighbourhood**, where we implemented our Small Scale Action in Thriving Streets. There is this beautiful small square in the old neighbourhood, in front of a church, potentially a great place for people to hang around, meet, and enjoy themselves. This place today is completely occupied by cars and useless for other functions.

The idea was to reorganise the square and create a real community space by repositioning some of the parking places. We started a dialogue with the people in the area, and many welcomed the temporary changes we introduced. In the end, however, the opposers – e.g. residents and church-goers who insisted on parking right in front of their house or the church – were the loudest and the original state in the square was restored. One may say that the participative process has not been successful, as we did not reach a consensus or a solution that was acceptable for the majority.

Looking back, however, it was a really valuable lesson in terms of the information we received, the issues we understood, the trust we built. Even the relationship improved between the residents, the administration and decision-makers. And we don't give up, we will continue.

Great example and learnings. Finally, let's speak a bit about the importance of knowledge and expertise. Do you think you have the necessary knowledge within the municipality? What do you do to keep up-to-date and follow the latest innovative ideas and solutions?

Aleksandra: I believe that we have the necessary knowledge in place. It all started more than **20 years ago, when we had a colleague who was really committed to sustainable urban mobility** - definitely not a mainstream topic back then, at least in this part of Europe. She was a **real champion, pushing the agenda and promoting the topic in the various departments** - so we have a history of dealing with the issue. Fortunately, we also have a **very good national knowledge sharing structure**: the Institute for Spatial Policies (IPOP), which works hard to facilitate the exchange of experience between cities and to disseminate good practices and innovative solutions. **Transnational knowledge sharing initiatives**, projects, just like the URBACT Network Thriving Streets, also play a fundamental role, as they gently **force cities to take the next steps**.

Overall, I can say that we have a good level of knowledge for a municipality of this size. **Where we still have a lot to do is the dissemination of at least part of this knowledge among the other relevant departments.** For instance, there is the department responsible for the maintenance of streets, but they don't intend to implement more innovative measures. They keep doing the same old things in the same old way.

Another area where we need improvement is the knowledge of residents. To have a meaningful dialogue with people, they need to have at least a basic level of understanding. Otherwise, the conversation will be controlled by emotions and particular interests. So, **awareness raising and even education of the people is also crucial** – our local Sustainable Mobility Centre (CTM)¹ supports that process. ●

1. <https://turizem-novagorica-vipavskadolina.si/en/sustainable-mobility-centre/>



Temporary intervention in the Solkan neighbourhood - “sacrificing” parking places to create a space for the local community

Action Planning Network's partners

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Walk'n'Roll community

People who took active part at any of our W'n'R webinars and seminars.

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