Interreg Euro-MED

Co-funded by the European Union

Streets for Citizens

D1.2.1 People-centered approach practical guide

https://streetsforcitizens.interreg-euro-med.eu/

Project full title: TACTICAL URBANISM - new innovative solutions for sustainable mobility in the cities to mitigate negative environmental impacts in urban life and make cities more liveable places.

Mission: Promoting green living areas

Programme priority: Greener MED

Specific objective: RSO2.4: Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches

Work package: WP1 The Concept

Activity: A1.2 Develop knowledge basis

Deliverable: D1.2.1 People-centred approach practical guide

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Version: 2

Date of production: 13 June 2025

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1 Introduction

What is Streets for Citizens project?

Sustainable mobility management is crucial for cities to reduce the negative environmental impacts of urban life. However, small and medium-sized cities often lag behind in addressing the climate emergency, promoting energy transition, and encouraging sustainable mobility and greener public spaces.

The "Streets for Citizens" project, co-financed by the EU's INTERREG Euro-MED program, tackles several key challenges, such as high car ownership rates, traffic congestion, and road safety concerns. Additionally, it addresses the declining quality and scarcity of green spaces and community areas in urban environments.

To promote sustainable urban mobility and greener streets, it is essential for citizens to understand the impact of their transportation choices and be willing to adopt alternatives to car use. The *primary objective* of Streets for Citizens is to empower local authorities and relevant stakeholders to actively engage citizens, change their travel behaviour and foster their involvement in addressing mobility and public space challenges in urban areas.

The project has been supported under the "Greener MED" programme priority and contributes to the Programme specific objective RSO2.4 "Promoting climate change adaptation and disaster risk prevention, resilience, taking into account ecosystem-based approaches", being part of the mission "Promoting green living areas".

More information at: https://streetsforcitizens.interreg-euro-med.eu/

What is this Document?

As part of the project, "Activity 1.2 Develop knowledge basis" under Work Package 1 THE "CONCEPT" focuses on equipping urban actors and local authorities with the tools they need to use tactical urbanism and placemaking methods. These approaches are designed to influence travel behaviour and encourage more sustainable urban mobility. To use these methods effectively, local stakeholders need to build their knowledge and skills in adapting them to their city's unique challenges, especially in the context of sustainable mobility.

This document, the "**People-Centred Practical Guide**" (Deliverable 1.2.1), aims to help cities involve citizens in addressing mobility and public space issues through participatory methods. It offers a practical framework, presenting approaches, tools, and success factors for effective citizen engagement in urban development, with a particular focus on tactical urbanism interventions.

The guide was developed collaboratively by knowledge provider partners, with input from territorial partners, including a co-creation workshop where project members designed the core elements together. In preparing the Guidebook we have been inspired by and used as resources various existing documents and guides. The full list of sources are included at the end of this document.

Structure of the Guide

The guide is organized around three key questions: **WHY, WHAT and HOW**

WHY? The Challenge

The first thematic chapter explains why this guide is necessary, focusing on the main challenges that cities face in terms of public spaces, the local economy, social cohesion, public health, and the environment. Increasingly, city streets and public spaces are dominated by cars and motorized vehicles, which leads to a variety of negative consequences, including:

WHY?

- Reduced quality of public space
- Decline in urban life quality
- Contribution to climate change

This car dependency also negatively impacts local economies, limits social interaction, harms public health through air and noise pollution, and reduces physical activity. Moreover, it poses a threat to biodiversity and destabilizes ecosystems.

WHAT? The Solutions

The second thematic chapter outlines potential solutions for cities to address these challenges. The aim is to reclaim urban streets from cars and promote active, sustainable forms of transport, while creating better public spaces for people. The solutions explored in this guide include:

WHAT?

- Pedestrian Priority Cities
- Tempo30 Zones
- Transforming Highways into Boulevards
- The 15-Minute City Concept
- Parking Management
- Superblocks
- Reducing Car Access to City Centers
- Comprehensive strategies to encourage cycling
- School Streets – enhancing safety in school areas

Each solution is presented with a consistent structure, highlighting:

- The challenge it addresses
- The core concept of the solutions

- Key steps for implementation
- The expected benefits
- Potential challenges and how to overcome them
- Case studies

HOW? The Methodologies and Approaches

The final chapter covers HOW cities can implement these solutions by focusing on three key methodologies: placemaking, tactical urbanism, and citizen involvement / engagement.

1. Placemaking

This section introduces the concept of placemaking, including its origins, principles, benefits, and the process of creating great public spaces. It also discusses potential obstacles and provides short examples of successful placemaking projects.

2. Tactical Urbanism

Here, tactical urbanism is explained, with information on why it is a recommended approach, how it can yield results, and the main steps of its implementation. Different types of interventions, their benefits, and examples are also covered.

3. Citizen Involvement/Engagement

The guide emphasizes the importance of involving citizens in urban development. This section outlines the benefits of citizen engagement and offers tips and strategies to improve participation in urban interventions.

By providing a comprehensive overview of challenges, solutions, and methodologies, this guide aims to empower cities and their stakeholders to create more sustainable, citizen-friendly urban environments.

WHY?

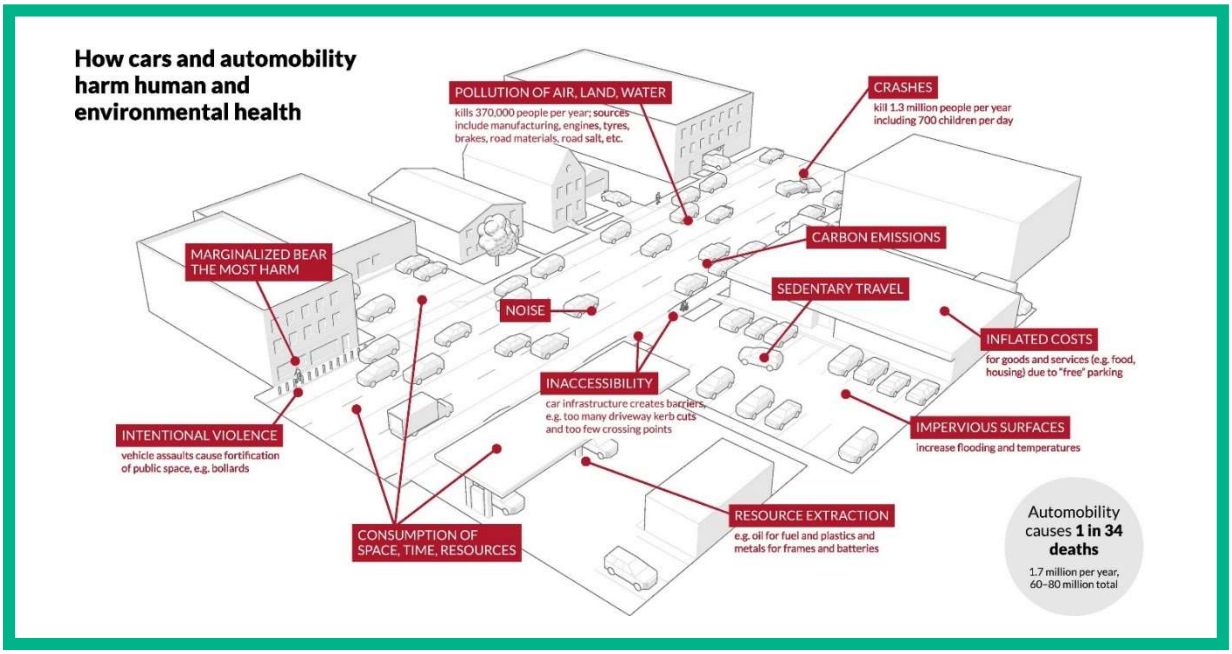
The Challenge

2 The Challenge

How are cars affecting our city?

Cars have become the primary mode of transportation in our cities, towns and the countryside. Meanwhile trains, buses, bicycles, wheelchairs, and even our own bodies are viewed as "alternative" means of transport.

Although some individuals may benefit from this car-centric approach, its negative impacts are felt by nearly everyone, regardless of whether they drive. In essence, our urban environments are shaped by a system of automobility – an interconnected web of cars, highways, fuelling infrastructure, automotive industries, government policies, and car-centric cultures.



Miner 2024. Car harm: A global review of automobility's harm to people and the environment.

2.1 Use of space

Automobility facilitates the spatial separation of homes, workplaces, schools, hospitals, shops, parks, and other destinations, making motor vehicles the most convenient means of travel between them. In this sense, automobility addresses a problem that it itself contributes to.

STREET SPACE

While streets are intended to be shared among all users and modes of transport, **cars occupy significantly more space than other modes**. When in motion, cars require approximately 1.39 m^2 per hour per person, compared to just 0.52 m^2 for bicycles, 0.27 m^2 for pedestrians, and 0.07 m^2 for buses. These figures can vary based on vehicle size, speed, and occupancy. Essentially, **one person in a car takes up the space equivalent to about 20 bus passengers**, and the trend is worsening as vehicle sizes grow. In fact, SUVs now make up 46% of global car sales.

PARKING

Unlike streets, parking is rarely used by people outside of cars. As such, parking space is distributed more inequitably than street travel lane space. On-street parallel parking consumes approximately 10-19 m^2 per car and off-street parking consumes about 25-33 m^2 per car. By contrast, a person standing, sitting in a wheelchair, or stationary on a bicycle consumes approximately 1-2 m^2. **An empty car in a car park consumes the space of about 20 people.** Outside of city centres, parking often appears to be free. Yet **there is no such thing as free parking.** Rather than "everyone parks free" it is true that everyone pays for parking – regardless if they arrived by car or not – through increased costs for goods and services. Some governments have minimum parking "requirements" or mandates that legally obligate property owners to supply a certain number of parking spaces for each building. These mandates frequently result in car parks (parking lots) that consume more land than the buildings to which they are attached. At a supermarket with parking, customers all pay the same inflated price for food since the cost of building and maintaining the car park has been externalised onto the cost of each item. As a result, people who walk to the store are covering part of each driver's bill.

HOUSING

Automobility also raises the prices of housing. A significant factor in this problem is that a single parking space can be larger than an individual's living area. In Europe, where there are regulations on dwelling sizes, minimum space requirements range from 14 to 20 m^2 per person – less than the size of a typical off-street parking space. In car-dependent areas, homes are often designed with off-street parking options like garages or parking lots. This **pairing of parking with housing drives up housing costs** and hides the real expenses associated with car dependence. As a result, we end up with "free" parking for cars, while the cost of homes for people becomes much higher.

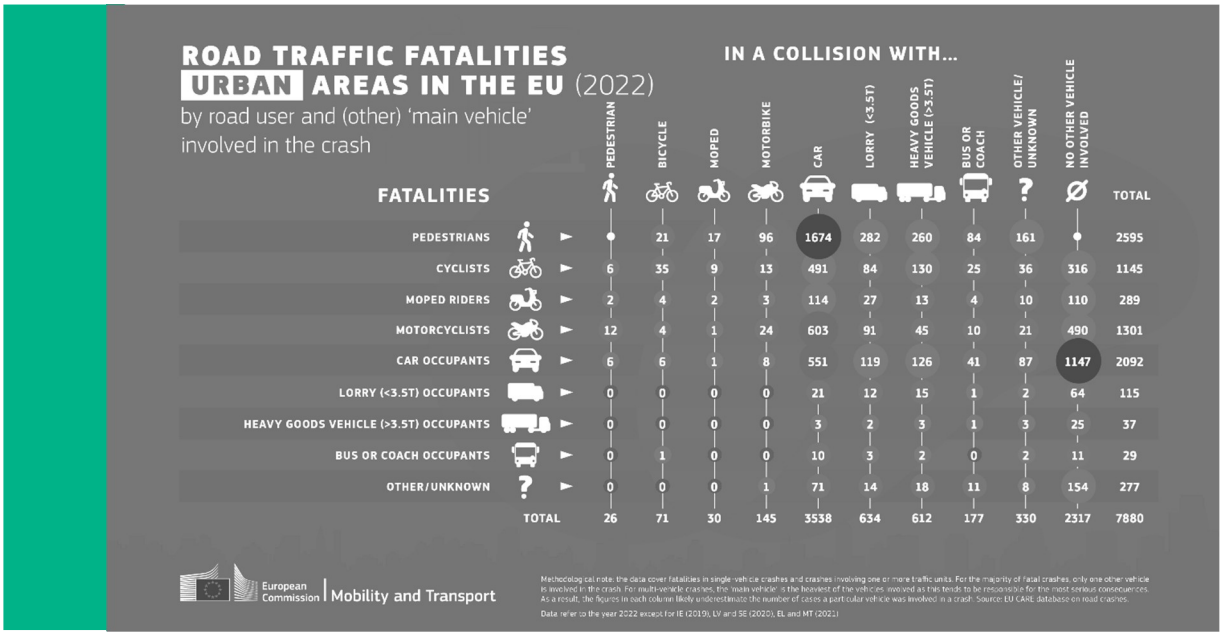
2.2 Public health and well-being

Motorised car traffic is linked to sedentary lifestyle, air pollution, noise and overheating, which individually and in combination cause many chronic non-communicable diseases, including some cancers, and mental illnesses and problems that reduce the quality and length of life, particularly affect the young and the elderly, and also impose a significant economic burden on the health sector.

Death toll

According to European Commission, Directorate-General for Mobility and Transport, around **20,400 people were killed in road crashes in the EU in 2023**. The EU average was 46 road deaths per million inhabitants. This marks approximately 2,360 fewer fatalities (-10%) compared to 2019; however, the decline has plateaued in several Member States. Therefore, not all Member States are on track to meet the 50% reduction target in road deaths and serious injuries by 2030, the EU established goal set in 2018.

Car occupants (drivers and passengers) represented 45% of all fatalities, while pedestrians accounted for 18%, users of powered two-wheelers (motorbikes and mopeds) 19%, and cyclists 10%. Within urban areas, vulnerable road users (pedestrians, cyclists and users of powered two-wheelers) represent almost 70% of total fatalities, mainly in collision with cars and lorries.



Data show that not all groups are affected to the same extent. Older people, aged 65+, are at greater risk as they represented 29% of all road deaths while they account for 21% of the population. Similarly, young people aged 18-24 accounted for 12% of road deaths but 7% of the population.

Sedentary lifestyles

Sedentary lifestyles increase the risk of all types of mortality, **cause 70% of deaths worldwide** and are an independent risk factor regardless of body mass index. Sedentary lifestyles or lack of exercise contribute to the development and progression of cardiovascular disease, stroke, high cholesterol and blood pressure, type 2 diabetes and other metabolic diseases, obesity, bowel, breast and uterine cancers, musculoskeletal disorders, depression, dementia and cognitive decline. With as many as one third of adults over 15 years of age worldwide suffering from a sedentary lifestyle and 81% of adolescents not moving enough, lack of exercise-related diseases is also becoming more prevalent in children.

Air pollution

Outdoor air pollution is a major environmental health problem affecting both cities and rural areas and was estimated to cause 4.2 million premature deaths worldwide per year in 2019. Air pollution is the second highest risk factor for noncommunicable diseases and causes respiratory problems, including lung cancer, and also affects the brain, heart and blood vessels, causing type 1 and type 2 diabetes and asthma in children. In Europe, 98 % of the population

lives in areas with excessive air pollution and the WHO estimates that as many as 400 000 people die prematurely each year as a result.

Noise pollution

Noise is pervasive in urban areas and poses a **severe risk to public health and well-being**. Noise can cause both auditory and non-auditory negative health outcomes. The auditory effects of noise on human health have been studied extensively, and there exists widespread awareness of the harms it causes, such as tinnitus, hearing loss, and nerve damage.

The **most common source of noise is environmental noise**, and the non-auditory affects associated with it. Environmental noise is defined by the World Health Organisation as noise emitted from all sources, except noise at the industrial workplace, and includes, road, rail, air traffic, industries, construction and public work, and the neighbourhood, and is commonly regarded as an unpleasant sound. Typically, the negative outcomes of environmental noise are non-auditory.

The European Environment Agency reported in 2014 that a minimum of 125 million people were exposed to road traffic noise above 55 dB. They estimate that approximately 20% of the population of the EU inhabit regions where environmental noise is harmful to their health and that traffic noise causes more than 10 000 premature deaths a year.

Heat stress

In Vienna, car traffic alone generates up to three times as much waste heat every day as the body heat of the entire population.

Car traffic, together with **roadways and parking areas** generate up to 30% of heat emissions in cities, making it the **second largest contributor to overheating and heat islands**, after buildings. Roads store heat and release it into the atmosphere during the night. Heated cars parked on the street reduce night-time cooling. Pollutant emissions increase heat build-up and impede air circulation.

Heat stresses the human body and can lead to cardiovascular problems, heat exhaustion or heat stroke and may trigger heart attacks and strokes. The elderly, children and people with chronic underlying medical conditions are particularly vulnerable to the effects of heat.

Prolonged heat waves are particularly harmful to health, as the body is not able to recover sufficiently due to the lack of cooling during the night. Night-time cooling is particularly important, as for many people night-time ventilation is the only way to reduce indoor temperatures. Night-time temperatures that are too high may disrupt sleep. Fatigue leads to poor concentration and an increased risk of accidents.

In summer 2023, the Barcelona Institute for Global Health reported that 4% of all summer deaths in EU cities are related to heat islands.

Dependence and isolation

In car-dependent areas, individuals often find themselves isolated from essential services and social connections due to long distances and barriers like highways. Without a vehicle, accessing food, healthcare, employment, education, and social relationships becomes challenging. Most people on the planet do not drive, including millions in car-dependent cities, and those are exposed to social isolation. Research shows that isolated individuals face higher risks of developing cardiovascular disease, infectious illnesses, cognitive decline, and even higher mortality rates.

2.3 Social tissue and community

In car-dependent communities, the design often prioritizes roadways and parking over pedestrian-friendly spaces. This can lead to several negative consequences for social interaction.

Highways and busy roads can physically separate neighbourhoods, making it difficult for residents to visit one another. This separation can also discourage walking or biking and reinforce a sense of distance and disconnection. The lack of walkable spaces—like parks, sidewalks, and communal areas—means fewer opportunities for spontaneous encounters and socializing. Neighbourhoods become less about shared experiences and more about individual lifestyles, which can diminish civic pride and collective responsibility. Social interactions often require planning and organization (like scheduling playdates or community meetings) rather than occurring naturally.

Furthermore, dependence on cars has **transformed perceptions of childhood**, particularly regarding independence and safety. Children who travel by car tend are less familiar with their neighbourhoods, have fewer chances for outdoor play and exploration, and limited opportunities to learn risk assessment and independence compared to those who walk or cycle. They also have less knowledge about their neighbours or the services in their vicinity.

Automobility produces a long list of **social injustices**. These include unevenly distributed harm, inaccessibility, and the consumption of space, time, and resources. In car-centric cities, citizens without cars often face limited access to services, jobs, education and healthcare. This is especially true for the social groups with less resources or some kind of limitations, such as low-income groups, elderly, people with disabilities etc.

2.4 Local economy

Car dependency can affect the viability of local businesses in several ways. In car-centric cities there is less footfall, and businesses often miss out on potential customers who might walk or

bike by if the environment were more pedestrian-friendly. When communities prioritize vehicle access, the layout tends to favour drive-in customers rather than those who might browse or stop spontaneously. This can lead to **lower sales for local shops, cafés, and service providers**.

As people become accustomed to driving everywhere, they may favour larger retail chains and shopping malls that are designed for easy car access, leaving small local businesses at a disadvantage. These larger retailers often have more resources for advertising and promotions, making it even harder for local businesses to compete.

The prevalence of car-centric development can also lead to a homogenization of business types, with **fewer unique, locally owned establishments**. This reduces the diversity of offer in the community and can detract from the local culture, making it harder for businesses that contribute to a vibrant community identity to thrive.

The design of car-dependent areas can create **barriers to community events and activities** that would typically bring people together. For instance, local markets, festivals, or fairs might be less successful in areas where people are less likely to walk or cycle. This limits opportunities for businesses to engage with the community and foster loyalty among customers.

2.5 Environmental damage

In the planetary boundaries' framework, six of the nine planetary boundaries have been transgressed. Automobility has contributed to the transgression of at least four of these boundaries: climate change, biosphere integrity, land system change, and novel entities. Automobility is a leading source of anthropogenic carbon emissions, and it damages ecosystems and habitats, consumes natural resources, and worsens natural disasters.

Automobility is one of the leading causes of climate change.

> *According to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change:*
>
> - *transport accounted for **23%** of global energy-related CO2 emissions in 2019.*
> - ***70%** of direct transport emissions came from road vehicles, and transport-related carbon emissions are rising.*

Tailpipe emissions are just one part of traffic-related emissions. Motor vehicles produce emissions, pollution and account for resource extraction in all stages of the life cycle. In addition to the car itself, building and maintaining the infrastructure for it - streets, parking, and other spaces - generates substantial carbon emissions, pollution and use of land.

WHAT?

The Solutions

3 The Solutions

3.1 Pedestrian-priority city

Example of success: Pontevedra, Spain

This city has become a global model for pedestrian-first urban design, with car traffic in the city centre almost entirely eliminated. Key measures included banning cars from the city center, expanding pedestrian-only zones, and redesigning streets to favor walking and cycling. Speed limits were lowered to 30 km/h in residential areas, while public spaces were revamped to include more greenery, wider sidewalks, and plazas. These changes significantly reduced traffic accidents and pollution. The initiative also revitalized the local economy by attracting more visitors and businesses to the car-free areas.

The Challenge

In many urban areas today, the physical separation of key functions such as housing, work, education, and shopping increases the need for transportation. This results in a **reliance on motorized vehicles**.

As a result, cities have often focused on mobility as an end in itself—constructing roads, parking lots, and traffic systems, while sometimes losing sight of the underlying goal: accessibility. People don't move simply for the sake of moving; they move to access services, jobs, and community activities. Prioritizing mobility without considering the accessibility it should provide has contributed to the **increasing dominance of cars in urban planning**.

This growing dependence on cars has led to a major shift in urban design, where streets are primarily designed to accommodate vehicles, often at the expense of pedestrians. This car-oriented design has several negative consequences:

- Significant energy consumption: Cars require 13 times more energy per passenger-kilometer than walking.
- Greenhouse gas emissions and air pollution: Car usage contributes to climate change and deteriorates air quality.
- Negative health impacts: Increased car use correlates with higher rates of pollution-related illnesses and reduced physical activity.
- High infrastructure costs: Developing and maintaining car infrastructure, especially in dense urban areas, is extremely expensive.
- Social consequences: Car-dominated cities are less conducive to social interaction, community cohesion, and vibrant public spaces.

This over-reliance on cars has made many cities less liveable, more polluted, and socially fragmented.

The Solution

To break free from car dependency and make urban spaces more sustainable and people-friendly, cities need to implement integrated interventions. While there is no single solution, the guiding principle should be to design cities for people, not for cars. The focus should be on providing access, not just mobility.

Key principles for designing people-centric cities include:

- → Space efficiency: Prioritize modes of transport that make more efficient use of limited urban space, such as walking, cycling, and public transport.
- → Energy efficiency: Promote transport modes that consume less energy, like active travel (walking and cycling).
- → Cost efficiency: Reduce the financial burden of car infrastructure by investing in alternatives that are less expensive to develop and maintain.
- → Inclusivity: Ensure that transport options are accessible and affordable for everyone, making streets more equitable.

Many cities don't have the luxury of designing entire districts from scratch. However, by applying these principles in all new mobility plans, urban spaces can gradually evolve to prioritize people over cars. This transformation involves not just making walking, cycling, and public transport more convenient, but also **making car use less attractive**—whether by reducing parking availability, increasing parking fees, or introducing road restrictions.

Example of success: Bolzano, Italy

Bolzano's urban mobility plan prioritizes pedestrians by offering well-maintained and illuminated pathways, along with incentives for public transport use. The city has developed a "last mile" policy that enhances pedestrian connectivity between transport hubs and final destinations.

The city has established extensive pedestrian zones in the historic center, restricting car access to create safer and more pleasant public spaces. Bolzano also integrated pedestrian paths with its efficient public transport system, including a popular cable car network linking surrounding areas. Measures like traffic calming zones and limited parking in the city center have further encouraged walking and cycling. These efforts have not only enhanced air quality but also supported Bolzano's commitment to sustainability and high living standards.

How to Implement the Solution – Key Steps

There is no one-size-fits-all solution; every city must tailor its transformation strategy to its specific context. However, several key actions can guide cities toward making pedestrians the priority:

Strategic Parking Management: limiting parking availability and introducing pricing strategies can discourage car use in key areas, while reclaiming space for pedestrians and cyclists.

Improving pedestrian and cycling infrastructure: it is crucial to make walking and cycling safer and more convenient – that requires high quality infrastructure.

Strict Speed Limits: reducing speed limits, especially in residential or pedestrian-heavy areas, improves safety and encourages non-motorized travel.

Traffic Restrictions: banning through-traffic or limiting car access to certain areas, such as city centres, can create more pedestrian-friendly zones.

Pedestrian Priority Streets and Shared Spaces: designate certain streets as pedestrian-priority areas or create shared spaces where pedestrians, cyclists, and cars coexist, but cars must give way.

Improving public transport: sometimes people cannot easily reach certain destinations walking or cycling. Even then, however, good quality public transport service can replace car use.

Acknowledging Car Use – With Limits: while cars will still be necessary for some trips, their use should be carefully regulated and restricted to reduce their impact on public spaces and urban life.

There is no specific "recommended size" for a city to prioritize pedestrians. However, **city size does influence the approach, scope, and feasibility of pedestrian-priority actions**. Small cities are often ideal for pedestrian-priority transformations because of their manageable scale, simpler transportation networks, and close-knit communities. They can more easily involve residents directly in the design process. Small cities often focus on developing pedestrian-only zones in the city center, creating car-free plazas, adding bike lanes, and ensuring essential services are within walking distance. Medium-sized cities are well-positioned to scale up pedestrian-friendly areas while balancing the needs of residents who may commute to work or travel across longer distances. Medium-sized cities may combine large pedestrian-only areas with strategic car restrictions, traffic-calming zones, and interconnected public transit routes to support longer commutes.

BENEFITS for the city

Transitioning to pedestrian-priority streets offers a wide range of benefits for cities and their residents:

- **More Space for People:** reclaimed street space can be transformed into parks, plazas, and recreational areas, leading to more liveable and vibrant public spaces.
- **Improved Quality of Life and Community Interactions**: streets designed for people foster stronger community ties, encouraging more social interaction and creating a sense of belonging.
- **Better Air Quality**: reduced car traffic leads to lower air pollution, improving public health and contributing to cleaner urban environments.
- **Healthier Residents**: more active forms of travel like walking and cycling promote physical health, while green spaces and quieter streets contribute to mental well-being.
- **Reduced Budget Pressure**: investing in sustainable transport infrastructure costs less in the long term than maintaining expansive car-centric infrastructure.

Communicating these benefits to the target group can help making walking attractive.

CHALLENGES cities may face

The transition from car dependency is not without its challenges. Cities often face resistance from various sectors, including citizens and powerful stakeholders. Some common difficulties include:

- **Land-Use Patterns**: car use has enabled suburban sprawl, leading to a vicious cycle where car dependency grows, further expanding the need for car infrastructure.
- **Funding**: developing alternatives to car travel requires funding, which can often only be sourced by reallocating resources away from car infrastructure projects.
- **Influence of the Automotive Industry**: the automotive sector wields significant political and economic influence, often lobbying to maintain or increase car usage.
- **Car Culture**: in many societies, cars are more than just a mode of transport; they are status symbols and deeply integrated into daily life. Any policies aimed at reducing car use—such as increasing parking fees, reducing parking spots, or restricting car access—can provoke strong backlash, making politicians wary of losing voter support.

To address these challenges, cities can adopt several strategies:

- Political Will and Commitment: major transformations are only possible with strong political backing. Decision-makers must be prepared to withstand opposition and remain committed to long-term goals.
- Knowledgeable and Supportive Technical Teams: having experts who understand the complexities of urban mobility (preferably in-house) is crucial for planning and managing the transition effectively.
- Stakeholder Involvement: engage stakeholders — citizens, commuters, tourists, businesses, and local organizations — from the beginning to build support and minimize opposition.
- Positive Communication: frame the narrative positively. For instance, instead of saying, "We will introduce speed limits," say, "We are making our streets safer for children."
- Prototyping and Temporary Actions: use temporary measures like pop-up pedestrian zones or pilot projects to demonstrate the benefits of changes before making them permanent.
- Placemaking Approaches: public space development should focus on placemaking, ensuring that spaces are designed with people in mind, fostering social interaction and community engagement. You can read more about this approach in Chapter 4.1.

By prioritizing pedestrians, cities can create more liveable, sustainable, and healthy environments. While the journey to change may be difficult, the long-term benefits far outweigh the challenges, leading to more vibrant, resilient urban areas.

3.2 15-minute city

The challenge

In recent decades, there has been a growing change in mobility patterns, as a result of the intensification of motorization rates, leading to a progressive deterioration in people's quality of life in the areas with the largest urban agglomerations. Furthermore, the layout of cities often favors long distances and functional segregation, making mobility difficult and affecting quality of life.

> *How can we create urban environments that promote a healthier, more integrated and balanced life, while reducing the environmental impact of our daily activities? What kind of transformative impact would it have on communities if every resident could easily access daily amenities—such as libraries, schools, parks, recreation centers or grocery stores—in less than 15 minutes?*

The Solution

Developed by Carlos Moreno, the concept of the '15-minute city' has been increasingly emerging. It is based on designing cities where citizens can access all their daily needs - such as work, schools, markets, essential health services and leisure facilities - within a 15-minute radius, either on foot, by bicycle or by public transport. This approach aims to reduce car dependency and greenhouse gas emissions, while promoting the creation of healthier and more enjoyable urban environments, where people can reinforce their sense of community and live in a simpler and more well-balanced way. The aim is to rethink the existing mobility system and urban morphology in order to encourage more sustainable choices, redistribute urban space and reorganize citizens' daily activities, thereby fostering cities to be more climate-neutral, livable and inclusive. It also highlights the **equal distribution of facilities throughout cities**, meaning that every neighborhood should have the availability of infrastructures and services.

How to implement the solution – Key Steps

1 **Understand the city's context:** firstly, it is essential that the city sets realistic expectations for how the 15-minute city concept can be applied and how it could most benefit the city.

2 **Mapping assets & urban reconfiguration:** evaluate the starting place by mapping the assets and needs. It is important to create urban areas that guarantee access to essential services within 15 minutes, and also to promote the development of mixed areas (residential, commercial, recreational).

3 **People-focused design**: cities can start by determining initial projects that visibly prioritize people-friendly streets, e.g., turning a street into pedestrian-only, hosting or reclaiming parking spaces for outdoor dining which can galvanize public support and raise awareness.

4 **Promote active mobility**: developing safe cycle paths and integrating public transport, making it more efficient and accessible.

5 **Prioritize green and recreational spaces**: creating more parks, gardens and spaces for outdoor activities, namely by making sports facilities and leisure areas more accessible.

6 **Make sure that there is equitable distribution of services**: ensuring that all areas have access to health, education and commercial services. Another important point is to guarantee affordable housing in well-connected areas.

7 **Community participation:** Include the community in the urban planning process.

8 **Start small, if necessary:** think about which areas of the city are most in need of these changes and consider starting with a pilot neighbourhood.

9 **Monitoring and continuous improvement:** continuously adjusting policies to improve the city.

Example of success: Reggio Emilia, Italy

The Municipality of Reggio Emilia has defined guidelines and content for a strategy to reorganize mobility and promote the hybrid use of public space, outlining the principles of proximity urbanism. The Municipality mapped the territory, focusing on the neighborhood scale, studying the connection between the polarities and their relations of proximity .

What are the benefits for cities?

The "15-minute city" concept essentially aims to transform cities into more accessible and pleasant places to live, with the objective of reducing dependence on motor vehicles, reducing traffic, improving air quality and increasing people's quality of life. The following benefits for cities can be identified derived from the implementation of this concept:

1. **Environmental (Reduced environmental impact)**

«*Urbanization is one of the leading global trends of the 21st century that has a significant impact on health. Over 55% of the world's population live in urban areas – a proportion that is expected to increase to 68% by 2050.* » Also, «*Cities are major contributors to climate change. According to UN Habitat, cities consume 78 per cent of the world's energy and produce more than 60 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions*». With this concept of «15-minute city», it is possible to reduce carbon emissions, allowing to reduce the distances as we travel and, when we have to, allowing to switch cars to bicycles and walking on foot. It also meets SDG 13 - Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts

2. **Social (Improved accessibility)**

The «15-minute city» adds a sense of neighbourhood unit, where the proximity between services and households contributes to the creation of "the sense of belonging" of a community to a place. By reducing the distances between home, work, school, stores and services, people spend less time commuting, which results in more free time, less stress and a stronger sense of community. So, accessibility constitutes a crucial component of urban planning. It is also in line with SDG 10 - Reduce social inequalities.

3. Local economy (Economic benefits)

This concept can boost tourism by creating pedestrian and cycling streets, which can directly lead to economic growth. By improving the foot traffic, 15 minutes cities can also support local and small businesses, rather than big multinational chains, since people can feel more connected to the business owners, and they end up passing by near the street shops.

4. Quality of life (Better mental and physical health)

With the availability of green spaces, pedestrians and cyclists are encouraged to make better use of public space, which can lead to more active and healthier lifestyles. It is also in line with SDG 3 - Ensure access to quality health and promote well-being for all at all ages.

Example of success: Metrominuto

Metrominuto is a synoptic map that measures distances and walking times between a few points in each city. It originates from Pontevedra, but many Spanish and Portugese cities have been adopting this concept. There is also a platform that allows to explore how much worldwide cities are close to this ideal at: https://whatif.sonycsl.it/15mincity/index.php

What difficulties may cities face?

One of the major challenges when implementing the 15 Minute City concept is the need to adapt existing urban infrastructures. Carlos Moreno points out that in order to make cities more accessible and functional within a 15-minute time radius, it is essential to reconfigure the urban space. However, this adaptation is not simple, as it requires the reconfiguration of streets, squares, residential and commercial areas, which can be particularly challenging in areas that are already densely urbanized or have old infrastructure, as well as the need for "rearranging roads to promote greater mobility, creating extensive cycle and pedestrian paths", recognizes Carlos Moreno.

Another fundamental aspect is the need to adapt to the different population densities and geographical characteristics of each city. The 15 Minute City model cannot be implemented uniformly in all urban contexts. Cities with a high population density, for example, will have different needs and challenges compared to smaller or more peripheral cities. In areas with a high concentration of inhabitants, the issue of space to create new infrastructure, such as parks or cycle paths, can be more difficult to resolve. On the other hand, less populated or suburban cities may need different solutions, such as greater integration of public transport and greater proximity between residential areas and shopping centres.

It is also worth mentioning that people's opposition can be a major challenge when it comes to the 15-minute cities, for example in Britain, where people are afraid of losing their freedom and end up being restricted to their 15-minute zone.

Thus, the 15 Minute City model should not be seen as a single, universal strategy, but rather as a guiding principle that should be adapted to each local reality. Solutions must be flexible, considering factors such as population distribution, availability of space, existing infrastructure and even the cultural and social preferences of the inhabitants.

3.3 Reducing car access to city centres

The Challenge

Picture being in a European city, walking down a colorful, vibrant street surrounded by shops, cafés, restaurants and other inviting activities and surrounded by green spaces. All around are conversations, music, laughter, bicycles, prams and people out walking. On the other hand, imagine another one, where the contrast is streets that are impossible to pass on the pavement, where cars are parked on top of them, where horns and engines are heard, and the air is hard to breathe. This could be the difference between restricting - or not - cars in urban centers, the essence of living in environments that respect people and where communities are brought to life in public space.

Example of success: Groningen, Netherlands

Groningen has drawn up a strategy to reduce freight and deliver traffic in the inner-city center with the plan – "Ruimte voor Zero Emissie Stadslogistiek" (Space for Zero Emissions City Logistics).

With the expansion of cities, human traffic has increased, and, over time, car traffic has also intensified. The excessive and often unjustified use of the car for all and any kind of journey has turned the car into the mode of transport of choice for the vast majority of people, making mobility dependent on it. Today, **the increase in car traffic in cities is becoming unsustainable**, particularly in terms of air conditions, which is a major cause of environmental damage. With substantial population growth in urban centers, there is an urgent priority to implement initiatives that **encourage people to switch their transport habits**. Instead of using cars on a daily basis, it is essential that people opt for other means of transport, preferably collective, that are more environmentally friendly and just as efficient.

The Solution

In order to reduce the number of vehicles in urban centers, restrictive measures and sanctions can be adopted, here are some of these examples:

MEASURES	DESCRIPTION
Congestion charge	A congestion charge is a fee that is charged to drivers who enter a designated area during peak hours, and its main purpose is to reduce traffic congestion and improve air quality. Normally, this is implemented in large cities, with high traffic volumes.
Low Emission Zones and restricted traffic zones	Low-emission zones (LEZs) are areas where the most polluting vehicles are regulated. A LEZ is a contiguous zone that restricts the use of polluting vehicles through priced and non-priced strategies. Priced LEZs restrict vehicles by charging drivers a fee to enter. Typically, higher-polluting vehicles pay a higher fee, while hybrid or electric vehicles pay a lower fee or enter free of charge. Non-priced LEZs restrict vehicles by banning the highest-polluting vehicles from entering the zone.
Reducing public car parking	Reducing the availability of parking spaces in urban areas can lead to a decrease in car usage. While addressing parking issues is often politically challenging, public acceptance can increase when people understand that the revenues from such policies are to be invested in improving public spaces. Transforming parking areas, roads, and other traffic infrastructure into car-free streets, bike lanes, and walkways enhances the experience and utility for cyclists and pedestrians. For example, Oslo implemented this approach and successfully reduced car usage in its city center by 19%.
Dynamic parking charges	Dynamic pricing is a pricing strategy that adjusts parking rates based on customer demand. Dynamic pricing in parking typically works in one of two ways; rates are fixed during a specific time period and/or day, with the rates raised during peak occupancy and lowered during downtimes. It can also be fully dynamic, fluctuating in real-time based on supply and demand. Also termed demand-based parking, this introduces a whole new level of flexibility in the pricing structure for parking vehicles.
Taxes and circulation ban on combustion/ more polluting engines	Taxation according to gas emissions, fuel type, cylinder capacity, etc. Establishment of deadlines for the prohibition of fossil-fueled vehicles.
Heavy fines in urban centers	Increased sanctions for traffic infractions committed in urban centers.

Example of success: Mechelen, Belgium

In the inner city of Mechelen, a few strategic streets are car-free between 11 am and 6 pm. The city highly invests in and values participatory processes.

How to implement the solution – Key steps

1 **Understanding the city's context**: not all cities have the same problems, and not all solutions can be applied universally. That's why it's important to understand which the best solutions are to apply to urban reality.

2 **Include citizens in the process:** it is crucial to include citizens in the decision-making process, always taking their views and opinions into account, particularly through citizen engagement events.

3 **Start small, if necessary**: sometimes big projects start with small changes. Cities could start by testing small pilots in specific streets or areas, checking the results and expanding afterwards.

Changing people's mindsets: it is important to change people's mindset about their mobility, but this requires a strategic and gradual approach. For this, it's crucial to raise awareness of the negative impacts of excessive car use in urban centers with a focus on the benefits that restricting it can have, particularly in terms of quality of life, health and traffic congestion. This shift in mentality is the key to the effectiveness of successful, sustainable mobility systems, accepting a limitation on their freedom in terms of foregoing the use of their private car to the detriment of the alternatives available to them.

4 **Prioritize pedestrian-oriented environments:** revitalizing urban spaces through pedestrian-oriented environments is essential for the future of cities, bringing not only economic prosperity, but also improvements in health, well-being, social interaction and cultural identity.

5 **Monitoring and continuous improvement**: it is essential to monitor the measures taken and to coordinate them with other public policies, assessing their impact and possible improvements.

6

Example of success: Bergen, Norway

The City of Bergen has committed to making the whole city center area a zero-emission zone by 2030 and started by piloting in smaller areas in the

What are the benefits for cities?

Environmental

The gases emitted by the use of car into the atmosphere contribute to a substantial increase in the greenhouse effect, which at this rate will grow by more than 37 per cent by 2030 and 57 per cent by 2050, resulting in a potential increase in the average global temperature of between 1.7 and 2.4 degrees, alongside its other adverse consequences. By restricting the use of cars in urban centers, not only are gas emissions limited, but dependence on fossil fuels is also reduced.

Improved quality of life

As a consequence of the environmental improvement that limiting the number of cars can bring, urban environments that are less polluted and less noisy are more likely to be favorable to healthy living, providing more pleasant spaces for socialization, cultural and leisure activities. In the same sense, making urban space more accessible and inviting also stimulates the local economy.

Public health

The excessive use of cars in urban centers not only affects the environment but also people's health, contributing negatively to air quality. Furthermore, this use of cars also causes permanent noise pollution.

Urban mobility and infrastructure

City centers, in general, are dominated by large volumes of car traffic and, consequently, constant traffic congestion. By restricting the access of cars to urban centers, it is possible to reduce travel times within cities, also increasing the efficiency of public transport, while at the same time stimulating the use of alternatives. This encourages the use of soft mobility, such as public transport, bicycles and walking. Moreover, the space dedicated to car traffic can be used for other purposes, such as green areas, squares, pedestrianized streets or leisure spaces, making cities more enjoyable for visitors and residents. By doing this, cities also allow accessibility by car or other motorized transport to be better for those that really need it.

What are the difficulties cities may face and how to overcome them?

Peoples resistance

Whether due to cultural factors, habits or simply a lack of will, one of the main challenges that cities can face is the resistance of communities to adopting new mobility habits. To overcome the resistance, it is important for cities to prioritize transparent communication, providing clear information about the public policies and also to engage communities in co-creating solutions.

Uncompetitive alternatives due to lack of infrastructure and public policies

For many years there has been heavy investment in urban and road infrastructure that prioritizes the car, making it difficult for alternatives to be competitive. While investment in soft mobility infrastructure and public transport has increased in recent years, infrastructure is still scarce in many European cities. It is also worth mentioning that by restricting cars it can lead

to the exclusion of some social groups that traditionally rely on cars, so it is crucial to promote other modes of transport for them. To overcome this challenge, cities should implement inclusive policies that balance investments in accessible public transport and soft mobility infrastructure while ensuring equitable support for car-dependent groups during the transition.

Introduction of other modes of transport in the urban system without adequate policies

Some research suggests that for example e-scooters have created conflicts in terms of space, speed and safety, as a result of their introduction into urban transport systems without adequate policies. The main concerns include clutter and vandalism, irresponsible driving, speeding and accidents caused by e-scooters. Some of the strategies for tackling these problems that have been adopted by both companies and public bodies include reinforcing road safety measures, speed limits for scooters and motorized vehicles, educating users on how to drive them, imposing charges for driving under the influence of drugs/alcohol and complementing these measures with better infrastructures that allow e-scooters and other forms of soft mobility to circulate safely.

Security issues in public transports

One factor that can sometimes constrain people from using public transport is the security aspect, since there are cities - particularly those with a higher population density - where the crime rate is higher, which can make public transport stations and stops susceptible to minor thefts and robberies. More surveillance and policing are essential in these more sensitive areas.

3.4 Tempo 30

The challenge

In many urban areas, road infrastructure is built with speed and car traffic flow as priorities, leading to a car-dominant environment. This creates unsafe streets, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, and contributes to noise pollution, road accidents, and poor air quality. Fast-moving traffic discourages active travel, such as walking and cycling, and degrades the overall quality of public spaces, making cities less livable and more congested.

Research highlights that in car-dominant environments, high-speed traffic is a significant factor contributing to the increased risk of accidents, particularly for vulnerable populations. In urban areas where speed limits are higher, the frequency and severity of road traffic injuries tend to increase dramatically, especially among pedestrians and cyclists (Yannis & Michelaraki, 2024).

The solution

Introducing Tempo 30 (30 km/h speed limits zones) in cities prioritizes safety, reduces traffic-related emissions, and creates a more people-oriented urban environment. By lowering speed limits in residential, school areas and high-traffic urban centres, cities can encourage walking,

cycling, and public transport use. It is an effective tool to reduce road accidents, noise, and air pollution, while creating safer, more attractive streets for all users, including the most vulnerable, like children and the elderly.

> Statistics show that at a speed of 50 km/h, the chance of a pedestrian dying in a collision is over 50%, however this chance drops to less than 10% at 30 km/h. In areas with a 30 km/h speed limit, there are fewer accidents and injuries, ultimately resulting in cost savings for the healthcare system.

Tempo 30 is not a new concept. The Austrian city of Graz was the first in Europe to introduce a 30 km/h speed limit throughout the city, except on main roads, as far back as 1992. In Munich, the speed limit is set at 30 km/h or less on 80 % of all streets, and in Madrid, this applies to around 85 % of the streets. (Road Safety NGOs, n.d.).

Example of success: Trbovlje, Slovenia

In September 2024, the "Furam 30" (I drive 30) initiative was launched in Trbovlje, Slovenia, a city with approximately 16,000 residents, implementing a 30 km/h speed limit throughout most of the city, especially in school zones. The project also included public awareness campaigns to promote the newly implemented measure.

Since the zone's implementation, the total number of cars in the area has decreased by more than 9,000. This reduction is especially important for improving the safety of schoolchildren. A 6 km/h drop in average speed and a 7 km/h reduction for 85% of vehicles were observed across three measurement points, translating to a 17% decrease in overall speeds. This reduction in speed greatly enhances pedestrian safety, as the braking distance was shortened by 7 meters, potentially preventing collisions and saving lives.

How to implement the solution – key steps

Engage with communities

In the initial phase, work closely with different community members to understand local needs and priorities. Gathering diverse perspectives — such as those from residents, local business owners, and schools — ensures that Tempo 30 zones effectively address real problems and safety concerns from the local community.

Identify high-risk zones

Identify high-risk zones and conduct feasibility studies to determine where a 30 km/h speed limit would have the most positive impact. Prioritize establishing Tempo 30 zones in areas with high pedestrian activity, such as residential neighbourhoods, school zones, marketplaces, and near healthcare facilities.

Designate 30 km/h zones

Clearly mark designated 30 km/h areas with appropriate signage and road markings to inform drivers of the speed limit and ensure compliance.

Introduce traffic calming measures and layouts (optional)

Implement measures such as speed bumps, raised crossings, and narrowing lanes to naturally slow down traffic and enhance safety for all road users.

Public awareness campaigns

Launch initiatives to educate the community about the benefits of Tempo 30 zones, promoting safer streets and encouraging compliance among drivers.

Monitoring and enforcement

Regularly monitor speed limits and traffic patterns, using technology to collect data and track traffic speeds. Employ enforcement strategies to address violations and ensure the speed limit's effectiveness.

Collaborative planning (interdisciplinary)

Engage various stakeholders, including urban planners, local government, and community members, to collaboratively design and implement Tempo 30 zones for greater community support and effectiveness.

Example of success: Paris, France

In 2021, Paris reduced the speed limit to 30 km/h on almost all its streets. With the speed limit already set for 60% of Parisian roads, the announcement aimed to standardize it across the city. Reports show that traffic accidents in the city dropped by around 20%, and noise pollution decreased by up to 3 decibels. Paris is now more pedestrian- and cyclist-friendly, peaceful and liveable. While some drivers initially resisted the change, the long-term benefits for public health, safety, and urban vibrancy have outweighed the challenges.

What are the benefits for the city?

BENEFITS for the city

When discussing the benefits of implementing 30 km/h zones, we often come across several more or less obvious advantages for cities.

- **Safer streets**: 30 km/h zones enhance street safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, creating secure environments in residential and school areas.
- **Cleaner Air:** Lower speed limits encourage walking and cycling, leading to reduced emissions and improved air quality.
- **Increased active travel:** With safer streets and cleaner air, more residents are likely to walk or cycle, promoting healthier lifestyles.
- **Quieter, more peaceful neighbourhoods:** Reduced traffic speeds contribute to less noise pollution, creating a more serene living environment.
- **More vibrant and functional public spaces**: With less traffic, public spaces become more inviting for social interactions, events, and recreation. Streets can be redesigned for multiple uses — walking, cycling, and community gathering — creating a more balanced and livable urban environment.

While these benefits are significant, it is essential to particularly highlight the economic impacts, which are often overlooked in discussions about 30 km/h zones:

- **Economic benefits**

The introduction of 30 km/h zones significantly lower the costs associated with traffic-related injuries and fatalities. By reducing speed limits, cities see a decrease in the frequency and severity of accidents, leading to substantial savings for governments in emergency services and medical treatments.

Individuals and businesses also benefit from reduced vehicle repair costs, insurance claims, and lost productivity, allowing local governments to allocate resources more effectively.

Safer roads can even stimulate economic growth.
A World Bank study found that reducing road crash deaths could lead to significant increases in GDP. For example, per capita GDP could rise by as much as 22.2% in Thailand over 24 years as a result of fewer traffic fatalities, illustrating the strong link between road safety and economic productivity.

CHALLENGES cities may face

Resistance from car users: Drivers often resist 30 km/h zones, viewing them as inconvenient. To address this, cities can run awareness campaigns emphasizing the safety benefits for pedestrians, especially children and the elderly, while highlighting the minimal impact on travel time.

Enforcement challenges: Ensuring compliance can be difficult without proper monitoring. Cities should implement speed cameras, increase patrols, and publicize penalties for non-compliance to promote adherence.

Infrastructure costs (if traffic calming measures are introduced simultaneously): Traffic calming measures like speed bumps and narrower lanes can be costly. Cities can manage this by prioritizing high-risk areas first and seeking external funding or community-driven, low-cost solutions.

3.5 Parking management

The challenge

Free parking for everyone everywhere means less space for other uses. After decades of largely unrestricted car park expansion in the most frequented areas of the city, many city authorities have begun to realise that parking infrastructure disrupts public life and have been implementing different approaches to parking management.

A survey on the use of public space for parking in Graz, Austria, showed that 92% of public space is used for car parking (this does not include private parking spaces and garages). Only 2% is used for bicycle parking, 3% for pedestrian areas (including pedestrian zones). Only 3% of the areas are dedicated to public passenger transport (including stations). The results of the survey clearly show the overwhelming preference for cars in the use of public space compared to other travel modes.

Example of success: Idrija, Slovenia

Idrija is a small town in western Slovenia (6.000 inh.) attempting to revitalise the city centre and change mobility in the city. Based on the Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan (SUMP), Idrija decided to introduce a restrictive parking policy – in a participative manner – aimed at creating more safe, accessible public spaces and reducing the dominance of on-street parking. Using the parking beat survey, the external expert group analysed parking patterns, studying occupancy rates, user types, and the duration of parking at individual spaces to better understand car usage in the area.

The survey revealed that Idrija has more parking spaces than needed, with only a few areas in the historical centre reaching full occupancy for limited periods. Many parking spots in the city centre were occupied by commuters who could park just a short walk away. The bottom line result of the analysis was that the total amount of parking places in Idrija is sufficient, while locally it requires some adjustments that can be achieved through soft measures, such as removal of some parking places.

Community engagement was integral to the policy's development. Residents participated in identifying problems, designing scenarios and selecting measures. Through several iterations, the expert group prepared a number of harmonised measures, such as a new parking regime and removal of some parking places. The policy plan was well accepted by the local community and the new parking policy has been unanimously confirmed by the municipal council. The measures have been put in place and are still relevant. For example, the removed parking places still serve as public space.

The solution

For the efficient management, maintenance and control of public parking lots and on street parking spaces, the municipality may adopt rules within the framework of a parking policy. Such a policy can include different measures related to parking, ranging from:

- → **management**, such as parking standards, register of parking lots and education of stakeholders,
- → **implementation**, such as parking regimes, issuing parking permits and maintenance of car parks,
- → **infrastructure**, such as removal, redevelopment or building of parking, and
- → **digitalisation**, such as introduction of technologies for parking occupancy detection and for a more user-friendly experience.

How to implement the solution – key steps

Starting the Process

1 The city sets up a working group, organizes a kick-off meeting, identifies key stakeholders, and prepares a stakeholder and public engagement plan. Clear communication of roles, timelines, and fostering predictability are essential. The working group should include decision-makers, city department representatives (mobility, spatial planning, etc.), stakeholders like traffic police, parking operators, major employers, and advocacy groups.

State of Play Analysis

2 Effective parking policies must be tailored to local needs. This phase gathers data to achieve consensus on the current situation. A self-assessment questionnaire and situation inventory are helpful tools. Parking problems should be documented, with findings summarized to guide policy planning.

Outlining the Desired State

3 The city selects parking policy scenarios, defines strategic objectives, and develops a vision for the future. Scenarios should balance ambition with public and decision-maker expectations. Visual clarity is key when presenting these scenarios, which should range from moderate to ambitious approaches.

Developing a Set of Actions

4 An action plan is drafted with measures to achieve the vision. Proposed actions are refined with stakeholder input. Challenges include aligning on specific actions despite agreement on general goals. Clear responsibilities, timelines, and funding sources must be established.

Validating the Parking Policy Document

5 The policy document must be clear, transparent, and suitable for public consultation. It should include data analyses, graphical presentations, and justify proposed measures. Approval from municipal authorities is required, with readiness to address their feedback or requests for amendments.

Implementation

6 After adoption, stakeholders must continue collaborating on communication, implementation, and monitoring of the measures. Proper communication and reporting of impacts are crucial to ensure success.

Example of success: Vitoria-Gasteiz, Spain

In Vitoria-Gasteiz parking spaces were eliminated to have more space for other uses. 2,000 on-street parking spaces have been removed to make way for the tram infrastructure, while activities and measures to promote active mobility such as walking and cycling have been implemented (for example, the installation of 12,000 bike racks and safe bike rooms). The monthly subscription fee for using a safe bike room is €3-6, and there are already more than 2,800 registered users. These measures have helped to increase the share of bicycle use from 3% to 10%.

What are the benefits for the city?

Better conditions for active mobility

Effective parking management enhances conditions for active mobility by offering more space for bike lanes and pedestrian pathways. Less space for parking also means less cars in the city, which consequently means the traffic is calmer and safer. This encourages walking and cycling, promoting healthier lifestyles and reducing car reliance.

Better accessibility, even for cars

Thoughtful parking management optimizes space allocation, enhancing accessibility for all users. Those who really need parking near their home or service will be able to find and access it easily.

Better quality of public space and positive impact on local communities

Improved parking management enhances public spaces by freeing up areas for parks and community gathering spots. These vibrant spaces foster social interaction and enrich the neighbourhood, promoting a sense of belonging. This also enhances the overall attractiveness of neighbourhoods for residents and visitors.

Lower mobility and housing costs

Well-structured parking systems lower mobility costs by maximizing the use of available spaces and encouraging alternatives like public transport. Shared parking and car-sharing options also reduce individual expenses related to car ownership. Maximal parking requirements can lead to lower housing costs by freeing up land and lowering the overall costs of housing.

Flourishing local economy

Effective parking management supports local businesses by increasing foot traffic and accessibility. This not only boosts sales for retailers but also fosters a thriving economic ecosystem where local enterprises can flourish.

Better public health and lower impact on the environment

Efficient parking management lessens car-dependency and promotes active modes of transport. This results in better public health due to a more active lifestyle as well as due to lower impacts of mobility on the environment.

What difficulties cities may face – and how to overcome them?

Public opposition

Implementing parking management strategies can often face resistance from the public. Residents may feel that changes, such as increased fees or reduced parking availability, will negatively impact their convenience and mobility. Misunderstandings about the goals and benefits of parking management can exacerbate this opposition. This can be addressed through sufficient and timely engagement of the public when developing the parking policy. It is also beneficial to educate the community about the benefits of effective parking management, including improved traffic flow, enhanced safety, and better public spaces. Hosting workshops, public forums, and informational campaigns can help address concerns and build support. It is advised to implement pilot projects that allow residents to experience changes on a smaller scale before full implementation. Gathering feedback from these initiatives can help fine-tune approaches and demonstrate positive outcomes.

Aligning different departments and municipal services

Parking management often requires coordination among various city departments, such as transportation, public works, planning, and law enforcement. Differing priorities and communication barriers can hinder effective collaboration. Establishing cross-departmental committees or task forces dedicated to parking management can help with that. Regular meetings and collaborative planning sessions can foster communication and alignment of goals.

Finding the right technological and infrastructural solutions

Selecting appropriate technologies and infrastructure for parking management can be complex, given the variety of available options. Cities may struggle to identify solutions that fit their specific needs, budgets, and existing systems. Conducting a thorough assessment of current parking challenges and future needs to guide the selection of technologies can help with that. Involving stakeholders, including residents and local businesses, in this process can ensure the chosen solutions are practical and effective.

Funding and resources

Securing adequate funding and resources for parking management initiatives can be a significant hurdle. Budget constraints and competing priorities often limit the financial support available for these projects. It is advised to look for various funding opportunities, including state and federal grants, public-private partnerships, and sponsorships from local businesses. Engaging with community stakeholders to share costs can also reduce the financial burden on the city.

3.6 Cycling Strategy

The Challenge

Contemporary cities are increasingly focused on reducing car dependency and promoting sustainable transport like cycling, which offers benefits such as lower pollution and reduced congestion. However, **many cities lack the necessary infrastructure**, such as proper pavements and safe crossings, making it difficult to implement cycle paths. This, coupled with **insufficient political commitment**, highlights the need for more integrated urban planning.

The solution

A cycling strategy provides a vision for transforming the city by making cycling the key mode of transport. It is important to keep in mind that a cycling strategy is more than just adding a few bike lanes to cities, it's a way of thinking the urban space. So, if we imagine cities where bikes are protagonists of urban mobility, there needs to be safer streets, a network and infrastructures that allow them to circulate freely and safely and well-designed cycle paths.

In smaller cities, where everything is just around the corner, it's easier to implement complete and safe cycling networks.

In medium-sized cities, cycling can reduce growing congestion and better integrate with public transport, connecting i.e. neighborhoods and shopping centers.

In large cities, on the other hand, although the challenges are greater due to the complexity of traffic and of the existing infrastructure, a cycling strategy can be important in tackling urban chaos through well-planned cycle paths, reducing pollution and large-scale congestion.

So, regardless of size, every city can pedal into the future with a good cycling strategy.

Example of success:
Malmö, Sweden
Utrecht, the Netherlands
Seville, Spain

These cities have successfully promoted cycling strategies through comprehensive urban planning and investment in cycling infrastructure. In **Seville**, the cycle paths are typically bi-directional, physically separated from motor traffic as well as pedestrians and with a green surface. **Utrecht** is a bike paradise, 100% bike-friendly city, ranked first in the "Global Bicycle Cities Index 2019". Bicycling in **Malmö** is on the rise, increasing steadily over the last decade, with some 26 percent of total transport occurring on a bicycle. Together, these cities exemplify how targeted policies, and infrastructure can enhance urban cycling.

How to implement the solution – Key Steps

There are two main key steps that are crucial to implement a cycling strategy in cities:

1. **Infrastructure**
2. **Raising awareness**

Firstly, to promote cycling in cities, a comprehensive approach is needed, starting with infrastructure. This includes creating safe, well-planned cycle paths, ideally separated from car traffic to protect cyclists. Providing secure bicycle parking and integrating cycle paths with other modes of transport, like buses and trains, are also key factors. Cities such as Amsterdam and Copenhagen serve as examples, where interconnected cycle paths and accessible infrastructure have contributed to cycling becoming a primary mode of transport. These measures are essential for fostering widespread and safe urban cycling. Also, integrating cycle paths into urban planning is essential for creating a cohesive network that enables safe and easy travel. Cycle routes must connect key areas like residential neighborhoods, bus stations, workplaces, and schools. Amsterdam's "Supercycle lanes" exemplify this approach, allowing fast and safe cycling while seamlessly integrating bicycles into the city's infrastructure, making daily cycling more practical and efficient.

In addition to developing proper infrastructure, it is crucial to raise awareness and educate people about the benefits of using bicycles as a mode of transport. Many citizens don't view cycling as a viable alternative to cars due to cultural factors or lack of information. Awareness campaigns and educational programs in schools are vital in shifting this perception. By informing people about the health and environmental advantages of cycling, it becomes possible to encourage more citizens to adopt bicycles as a practical and sustainable transport option. Promoting bicycle use is a key part of a successful cycling strategy. This can be achieved through practical measures like offering tax incentives for bike purchases and establishing shared bicycle systems, making cycling more accessible and convenient for citizens. Such initiatives increase the appeal of cycling as a practical transport option. Programs like "car-free days," implemented in various cities, show how reducing car traffic can improve urban spaces, making cities more pleasant and encouraging broader cycling adoption.

There is also another fundamental aspect that must be mentioned, which is to **encourage young people to use their bicycles**. In this regard, schools have a fundamental role to play in promoting cycling from an early age. It is also important to have infrastructure that allows young people to use bicycles safely as a means of transportation, especially on the way to school and to leisure facilities.

BENEFITS for the city

Bicycles as urban transport bring vital benefits for sustainability and well-being:

- **Environmentally**, hey are zero-emission, reducing air pollution and greenhouse gases, which improves air quality and helps combat climate change. Cycling fosters healthier, more sustainable urban environments.
- **Socially**, cycling promotes inclusion and equity by providing an affordable, accessible transport option for all ages and socio-economic groups. It democratizes mobility and supports physical health, social cohesion, and community bonds.
- **Economically**, cycling reduces costs for individuals and cities. Families save on fuel, maintenance, and parking, while cities benefit from less car dependency, lower infrastructure costs, and boosted tourism and investment. Additionally, cycling eases traffic, reduces public transport strain, and lessens the need for road expansion, enhancing urban livability and sustainability.

CHALLENGES cities may face

Promoting cycling in cities faces significant barriers. A major challenge is **inadequate infrastructure**, with many urban areas lacking safe, well-maintained cycling networks. Poorly connected or neglected facilities make cycling unsafe and impractical.

Additionally, **cycling is often seen as recreational** rather than a primary transport mode, requiring education and awareness campaigns to shift this mindset.

Safety concerns are another key obstacle. Poor road conditions, lack of separation from vehicles, and insufficient safety features, like cyclist-specific traffic lights, create risks. This sense of insecurity deters many from using bicycles for daily trips.

A lack of consistent public policies also hinders cycling growth. Many cities **lack clear strategies or sufficient political support** for promoting active mobility. Limited investment, weak tax incentives, and poor integration into urban planning highlight policy shortcomings. Strong political commitment and coordination are crucial for sustainable and impactful development of urban cycling.

3.7 From highways to boulevards

The challenge

In the mid-20th century, traffic engineers viewed cities as problems to be solved, and neighbourhoods were destroyed to build extensive motorway networks to efficiently move traffic. These large road infrastructure systems therefore play a role in the movement of people and goods within metropolitan areas.

By providing easy access for cars and heavy goods vehicles, extensive motorway networks generally tend to encourage car-centered lifestyles, urban sprawl and mono-functional land use, leading to more traffic and congestion.

Motorways with segregated interchanges create physical barriers within and around cities; they restrict pedestrian and cyclist movement and cut off access to water and nature thus reinforcing social deprivation. They reinforce the social deprivation of roadside neighbourhoods and hamper regeneration efforts. The high volume of traffic that these motorways promote generates noise, dust and air pollution, raising health and social justice issues.

Example of success: Madrid, Spain

The Madrid Rio project, a six-kilometre linear park spanning a sunken motorway is the result of a plan hatched a decade ago to reconnect the city centre and adjacent neighbourhoods to the river. The design also links to existing historic parks, sports and cultural sites, and includes kilometres of bicycle paths, playgrounds, 32 foot bridges, 33,000 new planted trees, and an urban beach.

The solution

Highway removal is a step in urban planning policy to remove highways and create mixed-use urban areas, parks, residential, commercial or other land uses. Freeway removal is often part of a policy to promote smart growth, transit-oriented development, and walkable and bikeable cities.

These highways reduced the quality of life for city residents and some cities have chosen an alternative to urban design by replacing elevated highways with boulevards to restore neighborhoods. Highway removal also counteract urban sprawl, by making redevelopment plans around urban intensification. **The purpose is to transform deteriorating, low-density commercial corridors into mixed-use corridors, focused around transit-oriented development.**

Cities have implemented plans to use intensification corridors functioning as boulevards aimed at being transit-supportive and pedestrian-friendly, and providing a focus for higher density mixed-use development and thus a better quality of life.

How to implement the solution – key steps

The Highways to Boulevards movement offers a way for people who live near highways to repair and rebuild their communities. There is a wide range of options and solutions to be implemented based on the specific territorial challenges. All projects should seek to reuse the space taken up by the motorway in a way that improves the quality of life for people living along the corridor.

Removing highways needs a specific evaluation of the city networks, needs, and alternative solution. When a City starts to consider the elimination of freeways, should

- → create an internal group to elaborate the strategy
- → design and organize the action together with all the relevant stakeholders
- → consider to relocate traffic
- → rebuild the city grids
- → encourage active transport
- → develop a more efficient public transportation system

Since the process for a highway removal is very complex, it could be useful to join the "From Road to streets" initiative from METREX (Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas). This is a platform for the exchange of knowledge and experience on the transformation of urban highways into city streets

Example of success: Paris, France

The Seine has long been a source of cultural and artistic inspiration for Parisians and even the world. Despite its societal value and cultural depth, access to its banks was cut off when the two-lane Voie Georges Pompidou was constructed in 1967. This expressway ran along the right bank of the Seine for 13 kilometres through Paris, connecting the Boulevard Périphérique that encircles the city.

Permanently close the Pompidou Expressway and replace it with a pedestrian zone, converting the expressway on the opposite bank from an automobile-prioritized road to a boulevard serving both cars and pedestrians. The Right Bank now boasts a 1.5 km pedestrian promenade, while the Left Bank offers 4.5 hectacres of public space. Included in this public space are picnic tables, street fountains, and restaurant areas. The promenade also offers spaces for sporting activities and designated spaces for children to play safely. The Left Bank promenade features event barges and a large cultural space to host concerts and events that focus on each individual season.

What are the benefits for the city?

- → Less pollution
- → Cohesion between neighboorhood
- → Community development
- → Public health
- → Economic development of the area and the city

Highways to Boulevards conversions increase access to human needs and allow for the creation of community-driven neighbourhoods.

What difficulties cities may face – and how to overcome them?

Conflicts with citizen, participatory approach with direct involvement of the citizen, clear explanation of economic and environmental benefit supported by scientific studies (like the evaluation of the carbon dioxide emissions analysis).

3.8 Superblocks

The challenge

Superblocks is a concept of urban traffic planning to calm traffic in residential neighbourhoods.

Within each superblock, **traffic and non-residential parking are diverted to the surrounding perimeter streets,** significantly reducing vehicle movement within the interior. Streets within the Superblocks are transformed into pedestrianised spaces, with strict speed limits and an emphasis on accessibility. The reclaimed areas are enhanced with green spaces, cycle lanes, play areas and public seating, promoting a more vibrant and communal urban environment.

This initiative was born in Barcelona where many large blocks exist. The city, as many big cities, faced serious problems like large numbers of cars, pollution, noise and an urgent need for space for citizens. City leaders have realized they needed to make big changes to improve life for residents and the first experiment has been established in Gràcia neighbourhood since 1993.

Example of success: Wien, Austria

The Supergrätzl is a superblocks project originated with the aims to improve the quality of life and stay in the city. Through systematic reorganization, optimization and calming of traffic, new open spaces are created in public streets. It is anchored in the Smart Climate City Strategy Vienna, the Vienna Climate Roadmap and the government agreement of the Progress Coalition. It combines various target areas: mobility, transport, adaptation to climate change, health and social inclusion, participation, engagement and culture.

The solution

The concept of superblocks has a human-centred approach with the human being at the heart of the urban ecosystem, that stresses the importance of the relationships of the citizens with each other and the city itself.

Each superblock consists of 3×3 blocks (approx. 400m x 400m) that divide outer streets from each other. **Within the blocks, no traffic is allowed on the streets**, creating a space that could be redesigned for alternative use for pedestrians and cyclists.

In European cities, they occupy between 15 and 25 percent of the land. In some cities, more than 40 per cent of the street network is eligible for transformation into superblocks or mini blocks. By converting them into superblocks, it is possible to use the streets for other purposes and thus make cities more liveable.

This urban model is **scalable** and can be applied to new developments and the urban regeneration of compact inner-city suburbs and low-density settlements. The 16-20 hectares Superblock has proven to be the smallest possible urban ecosystem to achieve useful results on mobility and social infrastructure. The size of superblocks makes it **ideal for testing** and adapting strategies, allowing for tangible and immediate results.

Inside the superblocks, different types of intervention could be implemented, offering several innovations and advantages

- Creation of new community areas by removing parking spaces;
- Creation of new bike lanes often separated from car traffic, making it much safer and more comfortable for people of all ages to ride bicycles;
- Creation of new green spaces: small parks, flower beds or vegetable gardens sometimes tended by residents;
- Increase of plants and trees inside the superblocks and decrease the urban heat islands;
- Increase the relax zone inside the cities by putting benches and tables inside the superblocks, where people can meet friends, relax, read a book or enjoy being outdoors;
- Increase the number of safety zones for children, by adding playgrounds or sports equipment;
- Incorporate public art and cultural spaces in these initiatives (like murals, sculptures, or small performance areas), making the streets more interesting and celebrating local culture;
- Promoting a healthier lifestyle;
- Reduce noise and pollution.

How to implement the solution – key steps

The process to introduce a "traffic calmed zone" starts in two different ways:

- **The bottom-up process** is initiated by people living in the area etition to support their request (residents' questionnaires, public petitions), public demonstrations and discussions with local politicians and policymakers for their local neighbourhood;
- **The 'top-down' process** is initiated from above by local politicians or local government.

The scale of this initiative (neighbourhood level), encourages a bottom-up approach and local citizen engagement. A flexible approach with involvement of the community and the maintenance of a social balance are key factors to be taken into consideration for a successful implementation of the project and the urban regeneration.

Example of success: Barcelona, Spain

The Barcelona superblock forms an urban unit made up of nine (3 × 3) urban blocks with interior and exterior streets and is characterized by enabling a transformation of the interior streets for new shared urban uses. Barcelona Superblocks are a new and exciting way of organizing city streets. They're designed to make urban areas better for people to live in, rather than just being spaces for cars to drive through.

- A Superblock is typically made up of nine regular city blocks arranged in a 3×3 grid. This creates a larger area that can be transformed into a more people-friendly space.
- Inside the Superblock, cars are limited. They're only allowed to drive very slowly, usually no faster than walking speed. This makes the streets much safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- The streets inside the Superblock become places for people to walk, play, and relax. Without the danger of fast-moving cars, children can play safely, and adults can enjoy outdoor activities.

To make the space nicer and more inviting, the city adds trees, benches, and play areas. This turns boring streets into green, pleasant spaces where people want to spend time.

In Barcelona, a speed limit of 10 or 20 km/h was applied to interior streets, and they were altered so that superblocks cannot be crossed by cars preventing traffic. Superblocks not only redefine urban mobility by shifting the modal split towards public transport, cycling or promoting walkability, but also aim to improve urban green infrastructure and biodiversity by creating urban corridors that cross the city.

Benefits for the city

Environmental improvements

Transforming streets into pedestrian-friendly areas provides more space for public use and social activities. Less car traffic means reduced emissions, resulting in cleaner air to breathe. Limiting motor vehicle use promotes sustainable mobility and lowers the city's carbon footprint. Green areas and reduced vehicle use help mitigate the urban heat island effect.

Enhanced mobility and safety

Streets are redesigned for safer and more comfortable walking and cycling. Prioritizing walking, cycling, and public transport fosters an eco-friendly urban environment.

Health benefits

Cleaner air and more opportunities for physical activity improve overall health. Reduced noise, stress, and enhanced green spaces contribute to better mental health. The combination of reduced pollution and increased physical activity leads to longer, healthier lives.

Social and economic advantages

Increased foot traffic benefits cafes, restaurants, and small shops. Outdoor-friendly businesses, like open-air cafes, thrive in pedestrianized areas. Accessible green areas foster social connections among residents.

Difficulties cities may face and how to overcome them

The implementation of a superblocks initiatives always requires a co-creation process with the community and should be based on existing urban planning and traffic analysis. Many challenges should be considered:

- → The need to redesign the collective transport network (in and around the superblocks);
- → Potential negative impacts on traffic flow outside the superblocks. I.e. Emergency vehicles need to be able to access all areas. This requires careful planning of street layouts;
- → Public opposition and from certain business (i.e shops around or inside the superblocks);
- → The implementation of Superblocks can have significant effects on local businesses. While some businesses thrive in the new environment, others may face challenges and need to adapt their operations.

In general, it is necessary to **coordinate between different city departments** since Superblocks involves changes both in traffic patterns and in green spaces and more. Successful implementation often involves extensive community consultation, phased approaches, and flexible designs that can be adjusted based on feedback.

3.9 School streets

Example of success: Medvode, Slovenia

This case shows that it is not necessary to close down a street entirely; measures promoting active ways of traveling to school can also be effective. Before the intervention almost half of the children of Medvode Primary School were driven daily, despite the fact that two thirds of them live within a 15-minute walk.

In September 2024, the area around the school has been changed to ensure greater safety for children and to encourage more independent and active arrivals to school. Vehicular access to the school was restricted, with "Kiss+Ride" drop-off points and for younger children who have to be accompanied by an adult several time-limited (15 min) parking spaces were available. Pedestrian routes were improved, a 30 km/h zone was introduced, and bollards were installed to prevent unsafe parking. The street in front of the school was converted to one-way, allowing two-way cycling.

The initiative has been highly successful.

The challenge

A common problem in schools is that the area outside the school is full of traffic during the morning and afternoon rush hours - cars bringing children to school.

The biggest victims of this are the children, those who walk and cycle to school independently and those who would like to do so but are not allowed to by their parents because they are concerned for their safety.

The heavy traffic in the immediate vicinity of the school puts children in physical danger on the road and pollutes the air they breathe. It therefore makes a lot of sense to limit the number of cars driving in the immediate vicinity of the school and to make it as safe as possible for children to get to school.

The solution

School street is a measure to improve safety and comfort for pupils on school routes. It typically involves closing streets near schools to motor vehicle traffic during certain hours, particularly during drop-off and pick-up times. The measure can be temporary or the basis for permanent changes in the traffic regime.

The implementation should include strong communication and other activities for the parents, schoolteachers, and residents to understand the importance of such changes and for them to have a say in them.

How to implement the solution – key steps

1. Start of the process

Identifying a suitable street near the school that could benefit from a school street. Factors to consider: traffic volume, safety concerns, and the potential for creating a safer environment for children. A dedicated working group should be established composed of school representatives, parents, residents, and community leaders. The working group should develop a comprehensive plan outlining objectives, timelines, resources, and responsibilities.

2. School street traffic planning

The working group will select an external transportation expert or consultant that will provide guidance on best practices for traffic management and safety measures. The external consultant will also support the working group with navigating the necessary administrative processes to secure permits for the street closure and create clear markings and signage to designate the school street area. A trial period to test the street closure will be conducted, allowing for adjustments based on real-time observations and feedback from the community.

3. Communication and information

A strategic communication plan including key messages, target audiences, and methods for disseminating information to inform all stakeholders about the school street will be developed. Eye-catching materials to promote the initiative, including posters, flyers, and digital graphics will help convey the messages. A system for collecting data before, during, and after the implementation of the school streets should be established.

4. Engaging with stakeholders

Engaging children, school staff, and parents is essential. Involving children in the design process through workshops and art projects fosters their engagement and investment. Close collaboration with school staff ensures the initiative aligns with educational goals, helping to integrate it into the school community. Actively seeking feedback from parents through meetings and surveys addresses their concerns and cultivates a sense of ownership and support for the initiative.

5. Accompanying programme

Additional activities that can enhance the school street experience can be considered, such as organizing events like street theatre, safety workshops, or fun activities for children. These activities can help build enthusiasm and support for the project.

6. Implementation

Iit is time to confirm the installation of street markings, signage, and any other necessary infrastructure and then implement the school street! It is essential to document the school street to gather feedback from all users and stakeholders, especially children.

7. Evaluation

After it has been implemented, it is time to conduct a thorough evaluation to assess its impact. Gather data on traffic patterns, community feedback, and any challenges faced. Compiling insights and recommendations based on the evaluation process can serve as a valuable resource for a future decision whether the school street can become a long-term solution.

Example of success: Tolmin, Slovenia

The Municipality of Tolminin cooperation with the Most na Soči Primary School and the local community, decided to introduce a school street to ensure safe arrivals of children to school, as the area in front of the school was often congested with cars during the morning rush hour, although most of the children arrived to school actively or by school bus. Other temporary measures had already been put in place to improve safety.

As of 1 September 2022, the area in front of the school was closed to motor vehicles for one month, which included a restriction of traffic in the morning hours. Removable bollards were erected in front of the school, completely restricting access for car traffic. Between 6 am and 8 am, except for pass holders, a complete closure to motor traffic was also in force in the wider area. During the rest of the time, one-way traffic was introduced around the church in the old part of the settlement. In accordance with national guidelines, coloured markings on the ground gave drivers a friendly warning of the presence of schoolchildren in the area.

Within a month, suggestions for improvements to the traffic arrangements were collected and long-term measures, including a change of speed and the construction of an additional footbridge, were prepared. The temporary arrangement has now become permanent.

What are the benefits for the city?

A school street is much **safer and more pleasant** for walking, cycling, skateboarding and other forms of active mobility. As a result, more children will walk, cycle, skate or scoot to school. This will reduce the number of cars around the school, reduce the number of traffic accidents and make the school journey safer.

Fewer car journeys will produce **less emissions** and dust particles, which will make the air around the school cleaner and **reduce health risks** for children connected to air pollution.

Today, most children are driven to school by their parents. Morning driving deprives children of **physical activity and socialising** with their peers. In addition, pupil surveys show that very few children like their parents driving them to school. Most would prefer to cycle, walk or scoot to school. Teachers also want more children to get to school in an active way. Children who walk, cycle or scoot to school are **more focused** and follow the curriculum more easily. Children who walk to school are also more familiar with their neighbourhood and have a stronger sense of community.

What difficulties cities may face – and how to overcome them?

Public opposition

Parents, residents and local businesses may resist changes due to concerns about accessibility or perceived inconveniences. Engaging the community early through informational meetings and surveys to address concerns and demonstrating potential benefits can help with that.

Traffic diversion

Implementing a school street may lead to increased traffic on nearby streets as vehicles are diverted. It is advised to conduct a traffic impact analysis to identify potential diversion routes and implement traffic calming measures in those areas.

Enforcement, asuring complience

Assuring that drivers adhere to the new traffic regulations can be difficult, leading to safety risks. It is crucial to collaborate with local law enforcement to establish a clear enforcement strategy. Visible signage, temporary barriers, and community volunteers can help remind drivers of the changes.

Regulatory complience

Navigating local regulations and securing necessary permits can be time-consuming and complex. Beginning the regulatory process early and maintaining open communication with city officials is essential. Cooperation with an external consultant to handle permits can also help with this.

Logistical challenges

Coordinating temporary street closures can be logistically challenging, especially regarding signage and public notification. A detailed implementation plan outlining all logistical aspects, including signage placement and communication strategies can be the solution. Testing the closure during a trial period can help identify potential issues.

Funding and resources

Securing adequate funding for implementation and ongoing maintenance can be a significant barrier. Diverse funding sources, such as grants, community fundraising, or partnerships with local businesses can be explored. Highlighting the long-term benefits of school streets can also attract interest from potential sponsors.

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HOW?

The methodologies and approaches

4 The methodologies and approaches

4.1 Placemaking

What is Placemaking? How did it emerge?

In recent years, many medium-sized cities have adopted various urban planning strategies, often centered on the development of large-scale infrastructure projects aimed at becoming key assets for revitalizing the city's fabric. However, these ambitious projects frequently fell short of their goals and failed to address even the most basic local issues. **The shortcomings of traditional, infrastructure-driven urban development approaches have led cities to explore new methods for tackling complex local challenges.** Placemaking has emerged as a remedy to the rigid, institutionalized, and disconnected practices of urban development, particularly in transforming public spaces. This approach emphasizes a participatory and multifaceted process in the planning, design, and management of public spaces, **placing people and their needs, desires, and visions at its core**. Communities play a pivotal role in reshaping public spaces, making them more accessible, connected, and supportive of new services and activities. Beyond the physical characteristics of a space, placemaking also focuses on intangible elements like culture, social identity, and community values.

Rooted in the ideas of Jane Jacobs and William H. White about creating welcoming public spaces and vibrant neighborhoods, the concept of placemaking originated in the U.S. in the 1990s. It was then popularized by the NYC-based organization Project for Public Spaces, which introduced pilot initiatives and guidelines for enhancing the role and quality of public spaces at the urban level. Cities worldwide have since adopted this model, always prioritizing active community participation. Placemaking is about enhancing public spaces, turning them into dynamic, lively destinations for people. It involves not only **planning and design** but also the active process of **"making"** these spaces vibrant and functional.

To sum it up, placemaking is about **improving public spaces**, to make them vital, lively destinations for the people. An essential characteristic of this approach is that it is **mainly about doing**, not just planning; and that it builds on the **participation of the community**.

Placemaking actions can include creating community gardens, building pocket parks, establishing pedestrian plazas, installing public art, adding street furniture, organizing events, redesigning intersections, improving lighting, building playgrounds and recreational areas, activating waterfronts.

Benefits of Placemaking

Incorporating the philosophy and key principles of placemaking leads to the creation of better spaces from several aspects:

These improved spaces **foster connections** across intercultural, interethnic, and intergenerational divides, which are often present in urban settings.

Placemaking also **strengthens community identity** by providing people with a sense of place, shared vision, and common values.

Additionally, it supports the **growth of the local economy** by encouraging markets for local products and promoting small-scale entrepreneurial ventures.

Not to mention, that placemaking contributes to **local democracy building** and engages residents.

By creating vibrant and well-designed spaces, placemaking **enhances** physical, green, social, cultural, and economic **capital**—essential components of a thriving community.

The last point of the list above can be better understood with the following examples:

- **physical capital**: flexibility, adaptiveness; public spaces as a backbone; active groundfloors; great streets and places; fine grain and human scale; waterfronts; informality, warmth; parks, plazas, long lasting quality.
- **green capital:** natural environment; walking and cycling; sustainable mobility; prevent urban heat island; comfortable climate; green environment; sustainable energy; city as a sponge.
- **social capital**: safety; social networks; co-creation; health, wellbeing, happiness; social life; informal play, creative learning; pride, trust; social innovation.
- **cultural capital**: buskers; public art; heritage, sense of place; diversity; street art, city as a canvas; inclusion; artists' involvement; temporary art spaces.
- **economic capital**: property value; better image; local economy; economic innovation, creativity; room for startups; ground floor use; markets; street vendors.

Example of success: Maribor, Slovenia

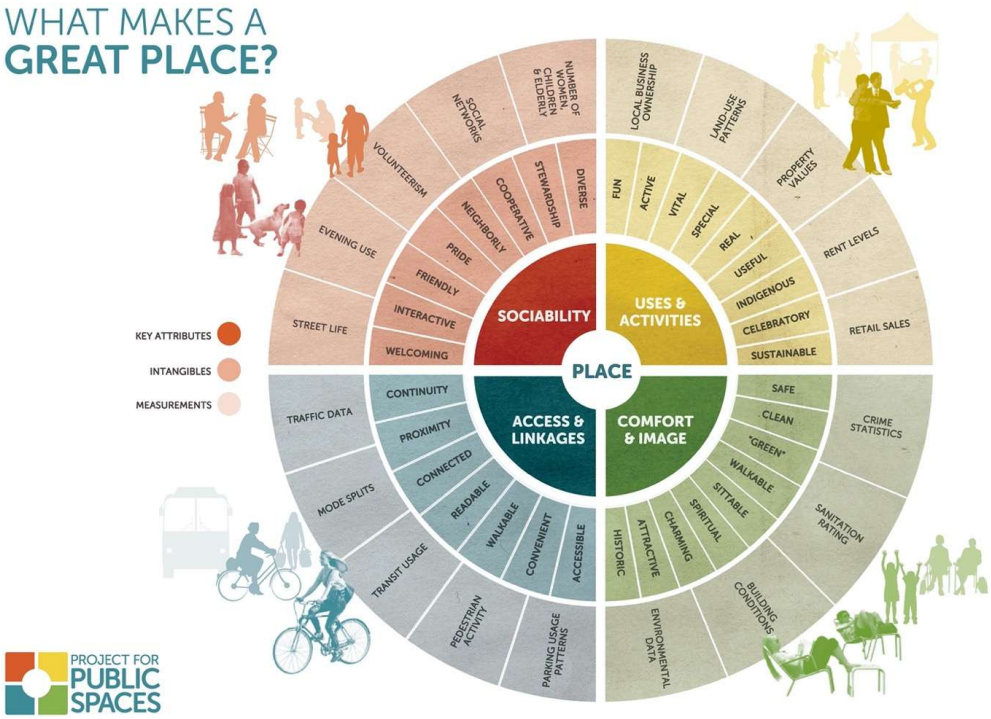
Živa Dvorišča / Living Courtyards - a civic program of events (workshops, lectures, concerts, plays, storytelling, picnics and socialising) co-created with varied local actors and aimed at revitalising private courtyards in central Maribor. The Placemaking for Citizen-led Missions in SE Europe (PLACE) project has supported local placemaking processes and capacity building events; there is a pilot Placemaking Clinic in Maribor to help citizens to learn more about placemaking and develop ideas for local placemaking action.

There isn't a one-size-fits-all "recommended size" for cities to implement placemaking actions, as placemaking is about creating vibrant, people-centered spaces, regardless of the city's population size. However, there are several factors to consider that influence how effectively placemaking can be implemented in both small and larger cities.

Small and medium-sized cities are often ideal for placemaking due to their flexibility, lower complexity, and more manageable scale. These cities can implement placemaking actions with fewer bureaucratic hurdles and more direct engagement with the community.

Key qualities of great places

When observing various public spaces, even within the same city, it can be striking to see that while some places are vibrant and bustling with activity, others are empty, neglected, and lacking in energy. While design and infrastructure certainly contribute to the appeal of an urban space, good design and quality architecture alone don't define great places. Many of us have seen beautifully designed spaces that somehow fail to attract people, as well as imperfect, even slightly rundown areas that are full of life and popular with the community. According to the model developed by the **Project for Public Spaces (PPS),** the key characteristics of a successful public space can be categorized into four main areas.



Source: https://www.pps.org/article/grplacefeat

1. Sociability

The sociability of a place revolves around people: a sociable public space is where people naturally gather and where you'd want to meet your friends. Such places are easy to recognize – groups of people are interacting, chatting animatedly, and often smiling. You'll also notice diversity, with a mix of ages, ethnic backgrounds, and both men and women.

Here are some sample questions to check this aspect of your city:

- → *Do people use the place regularly and by choice?*
- → *Are people in groups? Are they talking with one another?*
- → *Does a mix of ages and ethnic groups generally reflect the community at large?*
- → *Do people seem to know each other by face or by name?*

2. Uses and activities

In a great public space, there's a variety of activities to engage in. People can simply relax, sit and observe the flow of urban life, read, eat, play, or participate in sports. Children might be running around, chasing pigeons, while older adults bask in the sunlight and parents stroll with prams.

Here are some sample questions to check this aspect of your city:

- → *How many different types of activities are occurring - people walking, eating, playing baseball, chess, relaxing, reading?*
- → *Is there a management presence, or can you identify anyone is in charge of the space?*
- → *Are people using the space or is it empty?*
- → *Which parts of the space are used, and which are not?*

3. Comfort and image

Comfort is key in these spaces – they feel cozy, like a beloved old armchair. There are a variety of seating options, both formal and informal, strategically placed and consistently used. The space is clean, free of litter, and feels safe both during the day and at night. Walkability is a priority, with pedestrian-friendly environments dominated by people rather than cars. These spaces may not be extravagant, but they instantly leave a positive impression.

Here are some sample questions to check this aspect of your city:

- → *Does the area feel safe? Is there a security presence? If so, what do these people do? When are they on duty?*
- → *Are spaces clean and free of litter? Who is responsible for maintenance? What do they do? When?*

- → *Does the place make a good first impression?*
- → *Are people taking pictures? Are there many photo opportunities available?*

4. Access and linkages

Great public spaces are easy to locate and access, offering various modes of mobility, including seamless sidewalks from surrounding areas. They are accessible to everyone, including those with special needs. Additionally, they integrate well with their surroundings, with active ground floors of nearby buildings creating a lively connection, rather than being bordered by blank walls.

Here are some sample questions to check this aspect of your city:

- → *Can people use a variety of transportation options - bus train, car, bicycle, etc. - to reach the place?*
- → *Is there a good connection between the space and the adjacent buildings, or is it surrounded by blank walls? Do occupants of adjacent buildings use the space?*
- → *Can people easily walk to the place? For example, do they have to dart between moving cars to get to the place?*
- → *Does the space function for people with special needs?*

The Power of 10+ is a Placemaking concept developed by **Project for Public Spaces** to enhance cities by focusing on the human-scale experience of destinations and districts. It emphasizes that places thrive when they offer a variety of engaging activities (10 or more) such as seating, playgrounds, art, music, food, and cultural elements unique to the community, informed by local input. When cities cultivate at least 10 such vibrant destinations, they can transform public perceptions, foster resilience, and inspire innovation among residents and visitors alike.

The placemaking process

Placemaking goes beyond tactical urbanism by helping cities establish frameworks that incorporate resident collaboration and creative space use into broader urban development strategies. The process includes five main steps:

1 The challenges of the public place should be assessed. That is followed by selecting a site. Once a space is selected, it is essential to create a collaborative system by identifying and engaging key local stakeholders (residents, nearby stores, businesses, NGOs, community groups, local authority) from the outset.

2 The space is then evaluated, placing strong emphasis on understanding people's perceptions of it. This step includes data analysis but also considers the community's needs and aspirations, gained through observation and active dialogue. Possible methods include counting, behaviour mapping, interviews, surveys, obserations).

3 Participatory design includes developing a plan for the space through a shared vision, specific action steps, and a visual concept. A summary report and presentation can help all participants in understanding the main objectives.

4 Next, the iterative implementation of short-term experiments takes place, testing both physical improvements and programming. Physical improvements can be plants, green surfaces, book kiosks, flexible seating, exhibitions, signage. Installations, such as temporary structures, vending carts, inexpensive building improvements can also be set up. Events and programmes could include showcasing local talent, performances, classes or flashmobs. These trials should be carefully monitored and adjusted as needed.

5 Finally, long-term improvements are introduced, with continued re-evaluation to allow for adjustments when necessary.

Example of success: Eugene, Oregon, USA

PPS and the City of Eugene launched the "Places for People" campaign to revitalize downtown public spaces. A study engaged over 2,300 residents to address the area's issues, including homelessness and poor design that discouraged sociability. The campaign provided design and management recommendations for making the downtown more vibrant and welcoming. The city implemented quick, cost-effective improvements and began reconstructions.

What can go wrong?

There are a few difficulties cities may face during placemaking actions. To be honest, these interventions are hard to sell to politicians, as they are not that fancy, complicated and time-consuming, and usually favours people over pedestrians. Other than politicians, engaging people can also be difficult, so it is better to prepare for some failures. Agility and flexibility can be of key importance.

The 11 Placemaking Principles of PPS

The 11 principles of PPS help cities in turning public spaces into spaces for the community:

The community Is the expert.

A key starting point is identifying the talents and assets within the community. Local people offer valuable historical insights and an understanding of how the area functions. Engaging them early fosters community ownership, benefiting both the project and its backers.

Create a place, not just a design.

To turn an underperforming space into a vibrant place, a design alone won't suffice. It's essential to incorporate physical elements, and make management changes to improve how the space connects with surrounding activities. The goal is a place that fosters community spirit and feels welcoming.

You can't do it alone.

Partners are crucial to the success. Whether involved in planning or as future participants, local institutions like museums and schools offer valuable support and help get projects off the ground.

You can learn a lot by observing.

Observing how people use (or don't use) public spaces provides key insights. By understanding their preferences, you can assess what works and what's missing. Ongoing observation helps refine spaces over time.

Have a vision.

A public space vision should emerge from the community itself. This vision should focus on creating a comfortable, inviting place where people want to gather and take pride in.

Start small.

You won't get everything right initially. The best public spaces start with short-term, low-cost improvements, like seating or public art, which can be tested and refined. Think "Lighter, Quicker, Cheaper."

Triangulate.

Triangulation refers to arranging elements in public spaces to encourage interaction between people.

Overcoming "it can't be done."

Obstacles are inevitable in creating public spaces, as no one sector is solely responsible for this task. Starting with small, community-centered improvements can demonstrate the importance of public spaces and overcome resistance.

Form follows function.

Input from the community, lessons from other spaces, and small experiments help shape the design. While design is important, these elements ensure the form meets the vision.

Money isn't the main issue.

Once basic infrastructure is in place, the elements that make a space work don't need to be costly. Community involvement in activities and programming can also help reduce costs.

You are never finished.

Great public spaces require ongoing attention. As needs and environments change, so too should the space. Flexibility in management allows these spaces to thrive long term.

4.2 Tactical urbanism

What is Tactical Urbanism?

Tactical Urbanism is an innovative concept in urban planning that has been gaining popularity worldwide thanks to the straightforward concept of "do it yourself". The term is used to refer to small, low-cost temporary interventions to improve neighbourhoods – and to inspire long-term positive change. In particular, the flexibility and adaptability of this approach, allow experimentation and engagement of local community.

This innovative approach transforms the urban landscape by empowering communities to take charge of their surroundings and makes immediate, low-cost changes that have a significant impact. The movement is also known as DIY Urbanism, Planning-by-Doing, Urban Acupuncture, or Urban Prototyping and all these terms refer to a people-centred approach that uses short-term, low cost and scalable interventions that could promote long-term changes.

The idea behind this movement is to utilise simple and affordable methods to bring about positive changes in the community. By taking matters into their own hands, these pioneers have been able to create spaces that are not only visually appealing but also foster a **sense of community and connection among people**.

The promotion of walking, cycling and public transport to enable mobility in growing cities is internationally recognised as a concept to which there is no alternative. At the same time, urban planning and development require more informal, flexible and adaptive democratic processes for negotiating, deciding, adapting and managing the shared custody of urban spaces. Tactical urbanism can be a solution to these problems and challenges.

Tactical urbanism interventions offer:

- → local solutions to local planning challenges
- → short-term commitment and realistic expectations
- → are based on a deliberate, phased approach to driving change
- → minimise the risks of implementation with potentially high rewards
- → develop social capital and cooperation between public and private institutions, non-profit organizations and citizens.

Why use this approach?

Temporary intervention

Tactical urbanism interventions could be used by a range of actors like citizens, organisations, and governments. One of the key aspects of this approach is the use of **temporary interventions** that can be easily implemented, changed and reversed if needed. These pilot activities are often small and replicable and give opportunities for the promoters to evaluate feedback and lessons learnt.

Moreover, unlike traditional top-down planning methods, tactical urbanism encourages grassroots initiatives to enhance public spaces.

These temporary interventions should be used as a tool to accomplish these outcomes:

- inspire and speed up the implementation of projects
- analyse specific shortcomings
- allow people to "physically" experience alternative
- widen public engagement
- deepen understanding of citizen needs on a neighbourhood level
- obtain data from the real world
- encourage people to work together
- test innovative solutions

Local engagement

The involvement of local residents, businesses and organizations is a key aspect of the process that has to be carefully considered and planned before the execution. This **participatory approach** led people to contribute directly to the process, giving a valuable contribution. Moreover, their active engagement ensures that activities are lined up with the community's needs.

Incremental changes

Urban development is often about large-scale and long projects with a top-down approach. Tactical urbanism concerns **small projects with incremental changes** that are quick to implement and evaluate real-time feedback.

Low-cost and small scale

Tactical urbanism promotes the design and implementation of **low-cost, small-scale, time-limited projects**. With inexpensive materials and creative solutions, tactical urbanism offers a cost-effective alternative to traditional urban development projects. These interventions offer a practical and efficient approach to addressing various challenges and issues.

Test new ideas

The innovative concept of tactical urbanism led to **testing innovative ideas and creative solutions in the urban context**. Small-scale temporary projects allow stakeholders to define, test and evaluate the feasibility of a longer and bigger initiative in the city. Temporary interventions, such as pop-up parks, picnic areas, or temporary bike lanes, allow communities to test innovative ideas and new ways of living in their city.

How to get good results?

To get good results for a tactical urbanism intervention, it is necessary to **follow some principles** for the implementation processes. Firstly, it is necessary to involve the community and have strong political support. A successful project starts with the engagement of stakeholders proactively (from the community groups involved as stewardship partners to the crews installing new materials in the street). To ensure good results, the key is starting small and expecting the first try to be a "test drive" that can be improved with feedback. Even after a process or material has been 'test-driven' on a small scale, further adjustments may be needed.

Tactical Urbanism Intervention phases

Planning
- Project goal and context
- Project team
- Stewardship plan

Design
- Side context
- Permitting / approval
- Develop concept

Implementation
- Implementation plan
- Promotion and awareness
- Coordination and preparation

Monitoring and report
- Monitor and report
- Evaluate and adjust
- Maintenance
- Make permanent

Communication

Communication plan; Promotion and awareness; Feedback (survey, data analysis etc.); Report

Tips for improving the success of a project

Understand needs and context

Tactical urbanism projects should be based on a localized understanding of context and need. Design and evaluation metrics have to be calibrated to the context and directly respond to local needs and challenges.

Constraints

For an effective pilot action, it is necessary to evaluate the constraints and use them to define the perimeters of the intervention. The outline of these parameters should be defined at the beginning of the process and clearly communicated to all stakeholders.

Goals

The project has to be designed around a clear goal(s) that arises from a deep evaluation of the needs and the context. These goals should be developed with the team and the stakeholders. The definition of goals and aims of the project led to establishing the perimeters, the methods for success measure and the threshold for project adjustment.

Team definition

The roles and tasks of team members should be clearly defined. A high level of collaboration from partners with different skills and education is required. Necessary key stakeholders: local politicians, residents, advocacy groups, and the city staff

Collaborative design process

Developing design and programming elements typically involve a high degree of collaboration and communication. Projects may require collaboration between city staff and stakeholder agencies, neighbourhood groups, business organisations, advocacy organisations and local artists.

Material procurement

Sourcing materials for the pilots requires collaboration and creativity. It is possible to use partnerships and collaborations to access existing materials or consider borrowing and hiring materials instead of buying. Demonstration projects typically rely on volunteers for project outreach and installation. Engaging volunteers in creating the project builds long-term community ownership of the project.

A flexible implementation and communication plan

A flexible implementation plan should help the community to obtain better results, by considering and trying different options and getting feedback. Communication plan should include: need/challenge behind the project; project timeframe; project evaluation; adaptability (or removability) in response to community feedback.

Ongoing evaluation and maintenance plan

Ongoing evaluation helps to track the project's performance. This evaluation should include qualitative and quantitative metrics, often involving surveys or observational data collection at the project site. To maintain the intervention, it is necessary to define the stakeholders involved in this phase with a maintenance agreement outlining responsibilities for all parties involved.

Typology of interventions

Connecting places and people

1. Extended sidewalks

Providing sidewalk extensions reduces pedestrian crossing distances and increases pedestrian space. Sidewalk extensions physically and visually narrow the roadway while increasing the available waiting space and providing street furniture, benches, transit stops, trees, and landscaping areas. They may be implemented throughout the city and be of different sizes, combining stormwater management and other public space enhancement. (Photo from Turin.)

2. Pop-up bike lanes

Temporary bike lanes are used to test, pilot or trial new infrastructure to improve conditions for people riding bicycles. If it is successful, interventions can be implemented permanently. (Photo from Berlin.)

Reducing conflict between mobility and livability

1. Intersection fix and pedestrian crossing

Transforming intersections with paint, planters, and other creative elements can improve pedestrian safety and create visually appealing landmarks. This tactic demonstrates the potential for safer and more attractive urban design. (Photo from Milan.)

2. Traffic calming

Traffic calming is a type of initiative that wants to promote slower travel speeds at intersections and urban nodes experiencing higher pedestrian traffic. Project examples: traffic circles, bulb-outs/curb extensions, road diets, street murals and mid-block crosswalks. (Photo from India.)

Parklet installations

Parklets, small public seating areas created from repurposed parking spaces, are a classic example of tactical urbanism. These installations provide pedestrians with places to rest, socialise, and enjoy their surroundings.

Shade structures

Seating

Lighting Art in the street

Stationary activity zones

Disadvantages of tactical urbanism

Lack of long-term sustainability

The transient nature of tactical urbanism is one of its main difficulties since it could not be improved and transformed to be a permanent initiative or address more long-lasting changes. Tactical urbanism projects run the risk of feeling isolated from the wider urban fabric if they are not carefully integrated into larger urban planning initiatives. Their overall impact could be reduced by this lack of integration.

Limited impact on policy change

Tactical urbanism projects can influence local conversations and policy debates, but they do not necessarily lead to substantive policy adjustments or long-term improvements in urban planning. Policymakers couldn't easily integrate these temporary initiatives into their urban plan.

4.3 Citizen involvement / Engagement

Effective public participation is a cornerstone of successful spatial planning and governance. This chapter aims to empower decision-makers, public representatives, administrators, and professionals to improve and increase public engagement in the planning process.

> We provide practical advice to improve the participation process, ensuring that residents feel valued and heard. Understanding that participation is not merely a checkbox to be ticked, but a vital component of democratic governance, we emphasize the importance of inclusive dialogue and shared decision-making.

Example: Participatory budgeting

It is a mechanism for involving residents in decisions about the use of community funds. At its core, participatory budgeting is a way for community members to influence how public funds are spent in their living environment. The purpose of participatory budgeting is to establish processes that connect residents with decision-makers, transferring part of the decision-making power over the use of shared resources to the community itself.

It is a common practice in many European municipalities, where residents propose projects, vote on their favorites, and see the municipality fund and implement the winning ideas.

This approach began in Porto Alegre, Brazil, in 1989 as an anti-poverty measure and has since spread to over 7,000 cities worldwide, including over 3,000 in Europe. Once seen as bold and experimental, it's now common in cities of all sizes - from Buenos Aires and Boston to over 3,000 cities in Europe, including Paris, Milan, and Lisbon. Many Slovenian (Maribor, Koper, Ptuj, Nova Gorica and others) and Portuguese municipalities are also adopting this approach.

Why participation?

Participation, in our context, refers to the public participation in spatial planning, which includes **decision-making on spatial planning in the different stages**, from strategic to detailed planning, and the implementation of various activities related to construction, maintenance, and other phases of spatial planning.

Engaging with the public is a necessary part of a democratic political system and governance. If public participation is avoided, it often leads to public opposition. Public participation allows residents to share their wishes, concerns, and ideas with decision-makers, such as municipal representatives, planners, or contractors preparing development plans. While formal channels often dominate, public participation can also happen independently of institutional frameworks, such as the municipality, district, or local community. For example, residents may organize themselves and make proposals to improve their living environment or carry out improvements on their own initiative, such as beautifying a park in the neighborhood by planting trees, improving play conditions, or building a new bench. These grassroots initiatives, though informal, significantly enhance the quality of public spaces and living conditions.

The task of decision-makers is to recognise public participation in spatial planning as a **development opportunity within the sustainable development model.** By fostering collaboration with the community, decision-makers can create an inclusive environment that empowers citizens to contribute to the planning process.

Example: Neighbourhood Matching Fund

In Seattle (USA), local initiatives are supported through a special fund called the Neighbourhood Matching Fund (NMF). Each hour of volunteer work is matched with a specific amount of financial support. This is a great example of how bottom-up and top-down approaches meet. The NMF has been part of the city's management for thirty years. Through the fund, the city can support initiatives that come from local or other communities.

Tip: If a group of creative individuals has independently started establishing and managing a co-working space, and the municipality also has ambitions to create such a space, it makes sense for the group and the municipality to collaborate. The municipality should build on the community that initiated this activity, rather than investing in its own project without their involvement. By doing so, it strengthens the social relationships the creative group has already established, which are crucial for the long-term success of such a space.

Benefits of Participation

Solutions are synchronised with people

- If you want the public to like the solutions, it's better to design them together with people, not just for them.
- Engaging the public reduces the risk of politicians making decisions that may face opposition.
- When the public adopts and advocates for solutions, their implementation is usually more effective. Expert opinions become more persuasive when combined with public input.

Better solutions – people know what they need

- Residents know their environment best and can make imporant contribution to improving solutions.
- The public participation process makes the process of coordinating interests and initiatives more transparent and convincing.
- Public participation takes time and might lengthen the processes of developing solutions, but it can also significantly increase the overall time or even stop the implementation of projects if solutions are not aligned with the public.
- If the public understands the goals of solutions, they can suggest alternative ways to achieve those goals.

Measures/changes are met with less resistance

- If the public is involved in the process of designing and adopting solutions, it better understands the reasons for these solutions and the consequences that follow.
- If people are not invited to participate and solutions are not aligned with them, they will usually find ways to express their disagreement and ensure their voices are heard.
- Solutions made without public input often raise doubts and concerns.

Stronger institutional and community trust

- Public participation improves mutual trust, trust in institutions, and trust in decision-makers.
- Cooperation between residents and the municipality is rarely limited to spatial planning. Good participation practices eventually extend to other areas of governance.
- Participation should be learned – by individuals, communities, experts, and institutions. Each successive case becomes easier, so it's better to start as soon as possible.
- Cities where decision-makers extensively engage the public tend to be places where residents cooperate more with each other, making them more pleasant to live in.

Tips and tricks for better participation

Does participation make sense in your case?

- → When you start planning your public participation process, the first question you will need ask yourself is whether it makes sense to engage with the public at all. The minimum standard should be to at least inform the public. To make it easier to decide whether to simply inform or to organize a broader participation process, you can use the following questions for guidance.
- → Are there any legal obligations for consultation or participation?
- → Does the planning concern or interest a large number of residents or interest groups?
- → Are there still opportunities to influence and (co-)shape final solutions?
- → Do decision-makers agree to consultation or participation (political commitments)?
- → Do you have the time, resources, and human capacity (internal or external) to prepare and carry out the consultation or participation?

Did you answer "yes" to at least one of the above questions? Then consulting or engaging with the public is certainly worthwhile.

First attitude, then methods

It is important to consider why the process of engaging with the public begins in the first place. Is it because it is trendy, or because someone in a higher position decided so, or out of a genuine desire among decision-makers to understand and consider the interests of the people and organizations affected by the planned intervention? The right attitude towards participation is crucial for all involved, including residents, politicians, and officials.

- → **Strive for an equitable dialogue:** listen to others, build trust and accept other people's opinions and roles.
- → **Try to see things from another perspective:** make an effort to view and understand issues through the eyes and experiences of others.
- → **Show respect and take things seriously**: communicate without judgment, criticism, or diminishing others' viewpoints. Take your time and give others time as well. Take contributions seriously, even when they are critical.

Is this the right time to start a participation process?

It is never too early to start involving residents in decision-making through public participation. At this stage, you can still have a relatively open discussion about needs, objectives, and purpose, as well as capacities and locations. Starting the process after proposals are prepared is less effective, as it can create tension and conflict. When decisions are already made, planners

find it harder to modify proposals, and feedback tends to come mostly from opponents, complicating the balance of interests and making discussions about common goals nearly impossible.

> **Tip:** If you start the participation process early enough, it becomes calmer and more productive, with discussions being more constructive and less tense. When you lead the process early on, you are proactive rather than defensive, which often occurs when a group of opponents emerges during the process.

What is the scope of the participation process?

In the participation process, you may encounter results that cannot be implemented, even if they seem beneficial. In such cases, explain why these results cannot be considered within the project's framework and seek alternative ways to address them.

Ideally, collaboration is not just about gathering proposals and responding to them – positively or negatively – but is an ongoing process of communication and coordination among all stakeholders: various communities, interest groups, decision-makers, and experts.

Public must have impact

The outcome must be shaped during the participation process itself

The first rule of public participation is that the outcome should not be predetermined. If the final result is already clear, participation is unnecessary and can lead to dissatisfaction among institutions, the public, and planners.

Residents and the administration have limited resources

If people invest their time and ideas, they need a real chance to influence the final decision. Involving them without that power is unfair. Clearly define the scope of participation from the start, explaining what they can influence and what is already decided. (see section "Does participation make sense in your case?").

Plan the process

Outline the process step by step and explain how the results of each stage, such as workshops or surveys, will be used. It's essential to respect people's time and plan activities so that participants can contribute effectively in the shortest time possible.

Flip the narrative

People are often tired of hearing about what is not possible. Flip the narrative and emphasize what *is* possible and what they *can* influence through their participation. It's important to listen to them, discuss their suggestions, explore the feasibility of their ideas, and keep them informed about the outcomes.

Residents want to be heard

Residents often just want their voices heard and considered. While they don't expect all suggestions to be implemented, they do expect their ideas to be discussed, evaluated, and informed why certain ones weren't adopted.

Bridge the knowledge gap

Residents often lack knowledge of the various administrative departments and the roles of officials. It's helpful to clarify the point of contact for the process, ensuring this person is committed and available to answer questions. Additionally, avoid jargon and explain procedures in simple terms, as residents may not understand technical language used by municipal officials.

Important to note:

The process becomes frustrating and counterproductive for participants if they notice tha

- the process is manipulated and options are no longer open;
- the process is only meant to calm the public;
- the process is designed to legitimize a pre-made decision.

Tip: When inviting residents to participate, it's essential to communicate clearly about who is leading the process and seeking input (political leadership or administration), what information is being sought, the timeline for the process, and the methods of participation involved. Additionally, inform them about what will happen to their suggestions, which plans or decisions will consider these proposals, and when and how they will be updated on whether their input has been taken into account.

Find the right method

Before you start planning the individual steps of the process and deciding on methods, you should have a clear idea of what you want to achieve, who you will involve, and how you will use the results. Now is the time to develop a process plan composed of individual elements – participation methods, intermediate steps for preparation, analysis, processing results, and consultations within the administration as well with political leadership.

Outline the sequence of events and stakeholder interactions, along with the methods you will use. To help you choose methods, refer to the table below, which outlines different participation methods and key parameters for informed decision-making in your engagement process.

Characteristics / Method	Reach (how many people it reaches)	Type of communication	Participants' influence on decisions	Creative potential – does the method generate new ideas
Public debate	●●●	⇄	●◐○	●◐○
Workshop	●◐○	↻	●◐○	●●●
Printed materials	●●●	→	◐○○	◐○○
Interview	◐○○	⇄	◐○○	●●●
Focus group	◐○○	↻	●◐○	●●●
Survey	●●●	⇄	●◐○	◐○○
Digital methods	●●●	⇄	●◐○	●●●
Exhibition	●●●	→	◐○○	◐○○
Street festival	●●●	↻	●◐○	●●●
City Walk / Jane's Walk	●◐○	↻	◐○○	●●●
Round table	●◐○	↻	●◐○	●●●
Online survey	◐○○	⇄	◐○○	●◐○
Informal communication with the residents	●◐○	⇄	◐○○	●◐○

◐○○ Low / small / undemanding ●◐○ Medium-high / moderately demanding ●●● High / large / demanding

	Promotional effect in terms of popularizing the measure	Complexity of implementation	Work input required for method execution	Difficulty of summarizing and formulating conclusions	Cost of execution
Public debate	●◐○	●●●	●◐○	●◐○	◐○○
Workshop	●●●	●●●	●●●	●◐○	◐○○
Printed materials	●●●	●◐○	●◐○	/	●◐○
Interview	●◐○	◐○○	●●●	●●●	◐○○
Focus group	●◐○	●◐○	●◐○	●◐○	◐○○
Survey	●●●	●●●	●◐○	◐○○	●◐○
Digital methods	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●◐○
Exhibition	●●●	●●●	●●●	◐○○	●●●
Street festival	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●	●●●
City Walk / Jane's Walk	●◐○	●◐○	●◐○	●◐○	◐○○
Round table	●◐○	●●●	●◐○	●◐○	◐○○
Online survey	●◐○	●◐○	●●●	●◐○	◐○○
Informal communication with the residents	●◐○	●◐○	●◐○	●●●	◐○○

Two-way communication
One-way communication
Facilitates coordination among participants

Source: Očkerl, P., & Cerar, A. (2017). *Priročnik za boljše in lažje sodelovanje z javnostjo pri urejanju prostora*. IPoP – Institut for Spatial Policies.

Recent trends and additional participation method:

In addition to the aforementioned methods, several new approaches have emerged in recent years to further enhance participation processes. One such approach is the **ideaton / hackathon**, a variation of a workshop designed as an intensive, time-limited event where diverse participants collaborate to solve specific challenges. It brings together citizens, experts, students, and stakeholders to brainstorm, design, and prototype innovative ideas. Hackathons promote creativity, teamwork, and rapid problem-solving, making them a powerful tool for community engagement. Municipalities can use hackathons to co-create solutions for local issues, encouraging active participation and delivering tangible results.

Important to note:

Different citizen groups require tailored participation methods to effectively engage them. The approach for involving school pupils, for example, differs significantly from that for engaging elderly individuals. City partners planning pilot interventions must carefully consider the specific needs and characteristics of their target groups, developing customized participation strategies that resonate with each demographic. This ensures that the participation process is inclusive, effective, and relevant for all participants.

What is a good result of public participation?

When setting goals and deciding for methods in the process plan, also keep the results in mind. What will emerge from the process? What will be the final outcome, and how will you use it? What will you have in hand at the end of the process?

> **Keep in mind:** In some processes, the main outcomes are intangible, reflecting soft changes in mindsets. These can include increased trust, improved cooperation among residents, decision-makers, and officials, and better relationships within the community. Additionally, residents may become more engaged and committed to their environment, leading to a stronger sense of identity and belonging to the neighborhood.

Here are some examples of possible results and how you can use them:

The result you want to achieve through the process	How to use the result
• A vision or goals shaped together with participants • A collection of coordinated solutions, perspectives, and needs • Specific comments on the prepared proposal • A proposal developed with participants	• Include it in a strategic document • Include it as a basis for project planning • To adjust and modify the proposal • Present it to decision-makers

Communication, communication, communication!

Last but not least, maintaining an open communication throughout the participation process is essential. Utilizing a variety of communication channels – such as newsletters, social media, public meetings, and dedicated websites – ensures that information reaches a diverse audience and accommodates different preferences for information consumption. Especially the website should continuously inform the public and provide access to all relevant materials and information.

Public participation is voluntary and typically takes place during people's free time. Therefore, **participants reasonably expect that their knowledge, data, views, initiatives, and comments will contribute meaningfully to the common good.** Thus, it is crucial to ensure that as much knowledge gathered from the public remains accessible even after the participation process concludes. The information gathered can also be valuable for future processes.

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