URBACT
Driving change for better cities

hriving STREETS

thematic REPORT

CONCEPTS AND METHODS TO RETHINK OUR STREETS

European Union
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thematic REPORT

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This Thematic Report is to a large part based on inputs, inspirations and cases shared at the Webinars and Masterclasses organized by the Thriving Streets URBACT Action Planning Network. Special thanks to all the speakers of these events.

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1.
Introduction

What is this document?

This document is the **Thematic Report of Thriving Streets URBACT Action Planning Network**. Its main purpose is to share the main lessons from the learning journey of our network partners. However, it is also intended to provide interested urban practitioners (as well as decision-makers, for that matter) with a concise, practical guide that can help them to **reclaim city streets from cars and (re)turn them into thriving, livable public spaces**.

There is no right (or wrong) way to use this document: if you are a city practitioner who is interested in all the details - go ahead and read the entire report - we do hope you find a wealth of useful bits and pieces of information, as well as inspirations. On the other hand, if you are a local politician who urgently needs a concise, practical overview of one of the specific concepts or methods covered in this report - we encourage you to waste no more time, rush to the relevant chapter and get the information you need. What's more, feel free to just pick the section on certain topics and share only that single chapter with your colleagues, staff, or fellow council members.

Thriving Streets URBACT Action Planning Network

Thriving Streets is an URBACT Action Planning network of 9 European cities, focusing on making city streets and public spaces better, more liveable places – for people.

During the 2,5-year cooperation project all partners prepared their Integrated Action Plan to address their specific local challenges and transform their streets. An intense thematic learning process was an important part of their journey - during which they have learnt from city practitioners, academics, researchers and consultants about concepts and methods they can adapt and apply to solve their local challenges. We organized 6 online learning events / webinars and 4 online masterclasses to learn about the concepts and methods, as well as 2 in-person study visits (to Pontevedra, Spain and to Ljubljana, Slovenia) to see many of the methods "in action".

The main learnings from this intense journey have been distilled into this Thematic Report.

The Challenges our cities face

One of the biggest challenges Thriving Streets cities (and many other cities across Europe) face is the physical separation of the different components of everyday life. This separation leads to significant mobility demand, a major part of which is still met by car use: the current mobility systems in most cities can still be characterized by the dominance of the individual car. While many people use cars to improve their quality of life by significantly shortening the time needed for moving between different parts of the city - to work or to use various services - in reality, car-oriented local mobility has a wide range of adverse consequences, many of which negatively affect the quality of life already in the short run.

Cars are major contributors to urban GHG emissions and thus to climate change, but car use also leads to congestions, air and noise pollutions, the occupation of already scarce public spaces - not to mention the negative social and health implications of excessive car use. Many cities (including our Thriving Streets partners) are aware of this complex problem and ready to take actions - but the transformation is very difficult. Changing the infrastructure is one thing (not easy, as there are so many interlinking aspects and interests to take care of); what is probably even more difficult, though, is to change the travel behaviour of people.

The ambition of Thriving Streets

The ambition of Thriving Streets is to address the challenge presented and to improve sustainable mobility in urban areas from an economic and social perspective. The premise of the Thriving Streets network is that break-troughs in sustainable urban mobility can be established when mobility is no longer framed as just going from A to B but rather as a means for social-economic development of the city. The key question the Thriving Streets network intends to answer is the following:

"How can mobility become a motor for urban health, economy, inclusivity and social cohesion?"

The sub-themes of Thriving Streets are reflected in the figure below:

The concepts and methods

The concepts and methods to be presented address all the subthemes of Thriving Streets, and are organized around the questions of WHY, WHAT and HOW. More specifically:

- WHY do cities need to move away from car dependency and create better conditions for active mobility?
- WHAT are the main "ingredients" of a thriving street / public space?
- HOW can we implement the transformation process, what tools can we use?

In the next section you will find specific chapters dedicated to the following topics:

From car dependency to active mobility

WHY?

WHAT?

Places for People

Thriving local economy

Thriving streets for All

Creating Thriving Communities to revive public spaces

Concept and methods to RETHINK our streets

HOW?

Co-create Thriving Steets

Manage parking

Managing urban freight for thriving and vibrant streets

Placemaking - thriving and vibrant public spaces in the making

Storytelling for urban changes

2. Why – from car dependency to active mobility

KEY POINTS

- *Mobility is just a means - cities need to provide access to its citizens.*

- *In many cities, car ownership is a necessity; however, car dependency has a range of negative effects like wasteful use of energy and scarce urban spaces, excessive GHG emissions and air pollution, high (and increasing social costs) and harmful health consequences.*

- *Car dependency is a complex phenomenon, involving a range of interrelated factors like transformed land use patterns, extensive car infrastructure, deviating resources from other mobility modes, the interest and power of the automotive industry and even intangible aspects like car culture.*

- *Technology innovations in mobility - like EVs, autonomous cars, ride-hailing services - are NOT the solution to urban mobility problems.*

- *Cities need to plan for better access and when designing mobility, they need to prioritize space efficiency, energy efficiency, cost efficiency and inclusivity.*

- *A wide range of concepts and tools have been used in various cities to move from car dependency to active mobility; cities embarking on this journey should study these and adapt according to their unique needs and circumstances.*

- *When implementing the transformation, key success factors include political will and commitment, knowledgeable technical team, participative approach, the use of temporary solutions, placemaking approaches, communicating a positive narrative.*

Why do we move?

Developing or improving mobility is increasingly becoming a standalone goal in our cities: we expand our road networks, install traffic lights, develop our public transport system. Sometimes it seems like we forget WHY people move. They move because they need to get to their workspace, to the school of the children or to a shop - in other words, people don't want mobility - they want access. Therefore, mobility is just a means to ensure access - to services, urban functions people need.

ACCESS vs. MOBILITY

What is the problem?

As we have already indicated in the Introduction to this Thematic Report, one of the biggest challenges many city dwellers face today is the physical separation of the different components of everyday life. Functions and services most people use daily are located far from each other, which leads to massive mobility demand. In many cities, a significant part of this demand is still met by individual car use: people drive around in cars to get to work, take the kids to school, do the shopping – just to name a few – making both people and cities car-dependent. In fact, in many cities **owning a car is not even a choice anymore, it is a necessity. Moving and stationary (parking) cars dominate the public spaces in our cities**, and this seems natural. In fact, cars embody basic values like speed and almost unlimited freedom to such an extent that people accept that our **cities exceedingly serve cars instead of serving its residents**.

While cars offer some undisputable benefits, the **car dependence of our cities has a range of grave adverse consequences:**

Energy usage: from energy usage perspective, driving a car in a city is a very inefficient way of moving people around: using a car requires more than twice as much energy per passenger kilometre travelled as using public transport, while more than 13 times (!) as much as walking.

Space usage: cars demand unproportionally large part of the limited space available in our cities both when they are standstill (which most cars are in more than 90% of their lifetime) and especially when move. (One only has to think about the congestions in rush hour traffic, or the circulation in search of empty parking places.) For instance, even in Vienna, Austria, where cycling represents 7% of the modal split, a mere 1% of total traffic area is dedicated to cyclists.

GHG emissions, air pollution, climate change: today the overwhelming majority of cars on our city streets still have traditional drivetrain, using fossil fuels and directly emitting harmful gases, thus making a significant contribution to air pollution in urban areas (not to mention their contribution to climate change).

Economic aspects: the popular belief (especially among car users) is that drivers more than compensate for the social costs associated with car use in the form of various (quite high) taxes they pay. However, building, expanding, and maintaining the road network is extremely expensive in itself - and if we consider the other - environmental, health, etc. - social costs of car use, a driver "costs" many times more for the society than a cyclist or especially a pedestrian.

Health impacts: extensive car use has a range of negative health consequences - the traffic accidents, the related injuries and fatalities are the most "visible" ones, but the sedentary lifestyle connected to car use also makes a significant contribution to various chronic illnesses in the long run.

Social interactions: car dependency negatively affects even the social interactions in a city. Being hermetically separated in a car from others while moving between A and B prevents chance encounters, people interact less, which has many negative social consequences, especially for the independence and responsibility of children.

Why is it so difficult to break away from car dependency?

Car dependency of cities is a **complex phenomenon**, has a number of interrelated aspects that mutually reinforce one another and make it extremely difficult to change to a focus on active mobility. To understand this complexity is important if a city wants to move away from car-dominance.

Car use fundamentally **transformed land-use patterns** in our cities: it made physical separation of different functions and services possible, contributed for instance to urban sprawl and suburbanization. This quickly became a vicious circle - cars make physical separation possible, increasing physical separation makes it necessary to use car in the city to move around. The growing number of cars not just further increases physical separation, but also affects land use patterns in other ways - **cars need more space in the form of roadways and parking places (car infrastructure)**. Building and maintaining a continuously expanding car infrastructure is costly, though - so it **takes away public resources from** other mobility options - especially from the development of **public transport**. As a result, the quality and even availability of public transport services decline, which in turn drives people away from public transport and encourages car use.

On top of all that, **automotive industry** is extremely important in many countries in Europe and globally - it is a **major contributor to employment and tax revenues** of governments - consequently, car manufacturers have immense lobbying power - and their interest is to maintain and even increase car use.

Finally, we cannot forget about car culture: cars have become so ingrained in our everyday life that they have long been more than just simple objects - they are symbols of status, lifestyle goods, objects of desire. All this is continually reinforced by the marketing activity of car manufacturers.

This complexity and the related (multibillion dollar) web of interests mean that if we don't intervene, car dependency will not just sustain, but even further increase. Breaking car dependency requires understanding of and acting on all aspects.

Technology to the rescue?

Before we move on to the possible solutions, it is important to mention a recent phenomenon. Tech companies have recently discovered urban mobility as a field to disrupt (and earn a lot of money while doing it), and they claim to offer the **solution to our urban mobility challenges in the form of technology innovations**. Electric cars, autonomous driving, ride-hailing services, underground tunnels are just some of the best-known ideas that are communicated to **solve all our urban mobility problems. Sadly, they don't**. Electric cars claim as much place in our cities as cars with traditional drivetrain, and while they do not emit harmful gases in our cities, they pose a range of other environmental concerns. We are probably still many years away from the mass proliferation of self-driving technology, but if cities (and national governments) do not prepare and limit their use with strict regulations, they will have more (probably much more) disadvantages than benefits.

The main takeaway is that **technology companies will not solve our urban mobility problems** - and if cities don't act in time, we can easily find ourselves in a situation like the original proliferation of cars when our cities were shaped by the interests of car manufacturers and other private corporations (with the support of the public sector) and not by the real needs of residents. We are certainly not saying that technology innovations cannot contribute to improving urban mobility - they can. But they are definitely not THE solutions - rather, they are pieces in the complex puzzle of urban mobility.

What can (and should) cities do?

Breaking away from car dependency and transforming our cities into places for people where pedestrians are queens and kings, and cars are just occasional visitors, requires integrated actions. Before moving to the specific solutions, though, it is important to understand the need to change the underlying approach and the main principles behind mobility planning.

As it was already mentioned, mobility is not the end - it is a means to provide access to city services and functions people need and use. Consequently, instead of thinking about mobility per se, cities need to design for accessibility and **plan mobility as one of the means contributing to better access**. We need to develop compact **cities and neighbourhoods where most of the services and functions are easily accessible by walking, cycling and public transport**.

When it comes to planning mobility, then, the planning principles should reflect commitment to developing your city for people, and not for cars:

- **Space efficiency**: priority need to be given to transport modes that use the scarce urban space more efficiently and are well interconnected
- **Energy efficiency**: prioritize modes that are more energy efficient.

- **Cost efficiency**: prioritize transport modes (not just in words but also financially) that give the most "value for money" and are cheaper to use - both from the individuals' and from the community's perspective.
- **Inclusivity**: give priority to transport modes that are accessible (and affordable) to all.

© Bicycle Innovation Lab, Copenhagen, DK
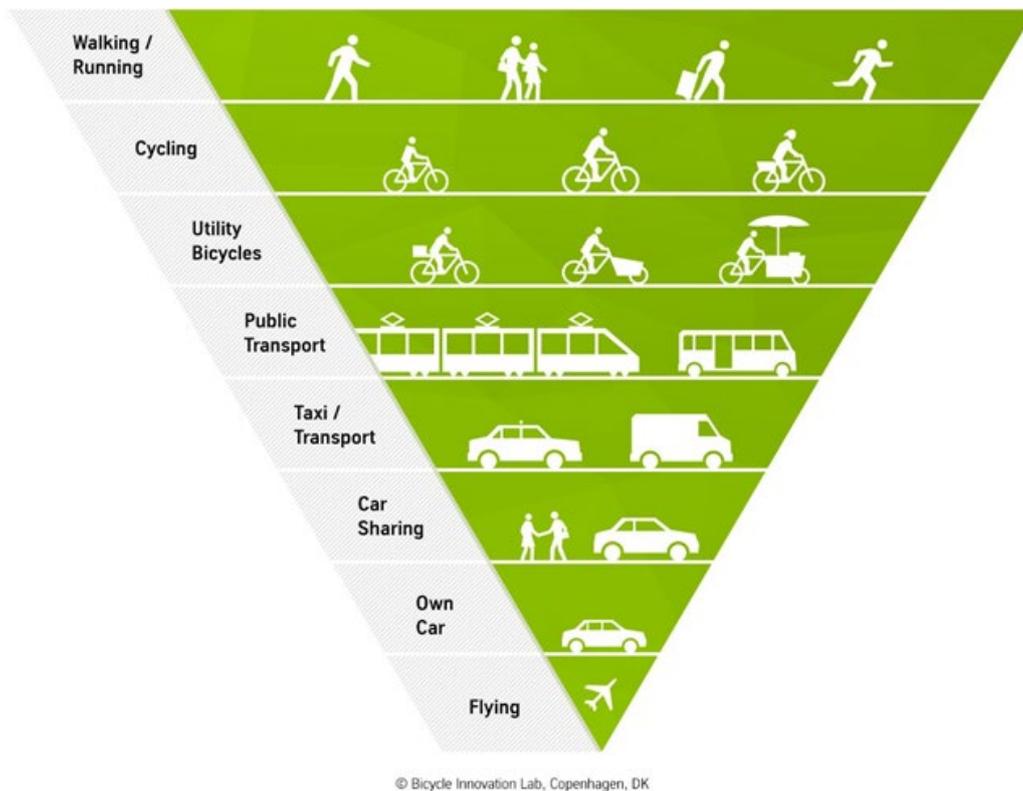
These principles require **"reversing" the mobility pyramid** - giving priority to walking, cycling and public transport at the expense of cars both in terms of resources and space.

How exactly the transformation takes place in a city depends on the specific local challenges and circumstances - there is no one-size-fits-all solution. Cities can certainly **study the examples of other cities, good practices and specific tools** that have successfully been used elsewhere.

On a more general level, the concept of the **"15-minute-city"** (Paris), the **circular mobility model** (Ghent), the **superblock model** (Barcelona) or the **pedestrian priority city model** (Pontevedra, Ljubljana) are all worth examining. Regarding the specific tools, **turning urban highways into boulevards**, the **Tempo 30** initiative, managing parking, managing urban freight, **school area development, shopping street development, developing public transport, cycling network development, integrating micromobility** are all useful tools with a potential to learn from and adapt in your city. Eventually, though, each city needs to design (and implement!) its own mobility mix that can best address the specific challenges, fit the local circumstances and culture.

PLATZ FÜR WIEN - SPACE FOR VIENNA

Vienna is a forerunner in transforming urban mobility and moving from car dependency towards active mobility. A civic initiative named Space for Vienna (Platz für Wien) was instrumental in orientating the public debate on a series of topics strictly connected to the improvement of active mobility, such as climate justice, traffic safety and high quality of living. The organization of public events and the collection of more than 50.000 signatures by residents and commuters was crucial for engaging local politicians in a structured debate which led to the definition of 18 specific demands for giving more space to pedestrians, cyclists, and trees. Among these requests, the creation of 60 kilometers of pedestrian zones and shared space and 300 kilometers of safe cycle path, the creation of 110 kilometers of cycle highways and 72.000 new bicycle parking spaces are just some of the elements emerging from a participatory process that became fundamental for orientating Vienna's policy on urban mobility on medium and long term.

How can they do it?

Moving from car dependency to active mobility in our cities requires systemic change, a major transformation that affects various stakeholders, also hurting interests. Mobility development is a hot topic in any city, so when the urban mobility system of a city is changing significantly, there are many potential conflicts. People complain, oppose changes, retailers insist on retaining parking places in front of their shops and even organize protests to stop changes.

Seems like in general everyone agrees with the objective of reducing car-dependency - as long as they can keep using their cars without interruption and the changes don't affect their own street. That - of course - is not possible. Significant transformations of urban mobility systems are often disruptive and affect the everyday life of people, forces them to change (mobility) habits and behaviour. So, any city embarking on such a transformative journey needs to prepare well and learn from the examples of cities that have already achieved results in transforming urban mobility. So, what can we learn from them?

Have a strong political will and commitment

Fundamentally changing urban mobility systems is possible only if the top local politicians - especially the mayor - have a clear vision, are committed to the change and determined to complete the transformation - no matter what. There are inevitable roadblocks, difficulties, even protests, and the necessary decisions are often unpopular with the residents - at least on the short run. The example of both Pontevedra and Ljubljana show, though, that once people start to see the results and benefits, they change their mind, and the approval rate of the changes (and of the mayor) goes up.

Rely on a supportive and knowledgeable technical team

Committed and determined leadership is an important pre-condition, but for real changes to happen there's a need for a supportive and knowledgeable technical team. A professional staff that understands the specificities of local challenges, designs and implements the necessary interventions. While planning the changes, the professional team can benefit immensely from studying good practices from other cities.

Ensure participation, active involvement of stakeholders

In a city, practically everyone is moving around, so any changes affecting mobility affect all residents. Participation and involvement of stakeholders while planning and implementing interventions, therefore, are fundamental. Dialogue needs to be integral part of the change process; it is important to understand the needs and fears of all stakeholders. Such an approach can also help in eliminating or diffusing at least some of the conflicts and protests. (For more information, go to the chapter "Co-create Thriving Streets".)

Use temporary actions, tests

Temporary actions and tests prior to introducing permanent changes - for instance closing a street for a limited time or eliminating just a small number of parking places and showing alternative uses - are useful for various reasons. They can help people experience first-hand the wide range of possible uses of streets not occupied by cars - like it was the case with Tartu's "Car-free Avenue" initiative. Temporary actions are also useful in generating a real dialogue - people are more likely to express their opinion regarding real changes they can experience - as they did in Thriving Streets partner Antwerp Deurne, when they set up a small pop-up square in a busy street.

Embrace placemaking

Making streets and squares car-free is an important first step, significantly reducing or eliminating car traffic definitely makes a public space better. However, it is important that when one function (moving vehicles) is removed, other functions need to be added to make it a place where people like to spend time. The concept of placemaking can help cities to provide its residents with a superior user experience in public spaces reclaimed from cars. (Read more in the chapter on Placemaking.)

Invest in a positive narrative

Communication is key when it comes to major transformative changes that affect the everyday life of most residents in a city. Cities often commit the mistake of focusing their communication efforts on telling people WHAT actions will be implemented, instead of revealing WHY it is done. Eliminating parking places in the city centre is not a positive message - but making a city centre greener and providing a more liveable place is something many people can identify with. Similarly, reducing speed limit may upset drivers, but it is only an intervention that contributes to making city streets safer for kids - few can disagree. Investing in a positive narrative and communicating it on various channels consistently can greatly improve the effectiveness of communication efforts. (Read more about the topic on the chapter on Storytelling.)

CAR FREE CITY CENTRES - PONTEVEDRA AND LJUBLJANA

Both Pontevedra (Spain) and Ljubljana (Slovenia) are champions of transformative changes in sustainable urban mobility.

Pontevedra started its journey in 1999 with the objectives of improving urban quality, providing more public space for social living, ensuring universal accessibility, and drastically improving urban road safety - mainly through drastically reducing motorized traffic in the extended city centre.

Instead of totally prohibiting car use they apply the principle of necessity - anyone can use a car (even in the city centre), but only when it is really needed, and only for a limited time. Through-traffic was totally eliminated by introducing circularity, and parking was also transformed: surface parking in the city centre is only allowed (in dedicated parking places) for 15 minutes or long-term in (paid) underground garages; otherwise, anyone has the option to use the free municipality parking facilities around 10–15-minute walking distance from the centre.

Motorized traffic in the heart of the city decreased by over 90%, in the extended centre by nearly 80%. Urban noise level drastically reduced, there has been no fatal road accident in the city centre. As a bonus, Miguel Anxo Fernández Lores - the Mayor who started the transformation is still in position...

Ljubljana started some years later - in 2005 - and the start of the transformation was one of the first decisions of a then new Mayor - Zoran Jankovic. Similarly to Pontevedra, they also took a pedestrian-first approach and designated a 17ha pedestrian-only area in the city centre. In subsequent years, they also transformed one of the main thoroughfares of the city from an urban highway into a shared space. The guiding principle was to "make leaving the car behind an easy decision". Car-use decreased significantly, nearly 2/3 of all trips take place by sustainable mode of transport. The city centre is a lively, vibrant place with no cars but lots of outdoor cafés, restaurants, kids playing everywhere. And just like in Pontevedra, the Mayor has been repeatedly re-elected ever since he started these drastic changes.

3. Places for People

KEY POINTS

- *Public spaces in cities are crucial ingredients of improving the quality of life of residents, helping community cohesion, active inclusion, local economy, and environmental sustainability.*

- *Providing more and better public spaces for people is only possible at the expense of places for cars: cities need to reduce the role of cars in the mobility mix to give back people some of the space occupied by cars.*

- *In most cities, totally eliminating cars is impossible - but their role in urban mobility can be significantly reduced. This requires integrated actions.*

- *Removing cars from a public space does not automatically revitalize the place - other interventions are often needed to change the perception of place and stimulate use.*

- *During the COVID-19 pandemic most cities implemented rapid changes in public spaces to give more space to people, especially in densely populated urban areas. It is important that cities learn from the lessons, consolidate changes that proved successful and prevent the automatic return to the pre-pandemic status-quo.*

- *Temporary solutions, tactical urbanism initiatives can be useful when transforming public space - they can help to test the changes, trigger real dialogue with people. It is important, though, that temporary initiatives are still part of a wider vision, and are implemented with an open mind, in a participative way.*

The challenge

Car dependency in our cities also means that our urban public spaces are dominated by cars: cars occupy the majority of public spaces in our cities when they move - but even when they are stationary (which most cars are in 90-95% of their lifetime). However, space is a limited "commodity" in our cities - so cars can only satisfy their "space-hunger" at the expense of other functions - basically they take away space from people.

In the first chapter ([From car orientation to active mobility](#)) we have already covered the range of adverse impacts of car orientation in our cities. Here we will take a look at the spatial aspect of the challenge: **how can we (re)turn our cities - urban public spaces - into places for people.**

The Covid-19 crisis has clearly demonstrated the importance of quality public spaces for community cohesion and active inclusion. At the same time, public space is also the best dimension for addressing some of the structural challenges of the century, such as environmental sustainability, eliminating social inequalities, creating better economic opportunities for all.

The **development of a holistic approach to the management of public spaces is the pre-requisite for any initiative aimed at placing people in the core of urban policies** and connecting the solutions to the different challenges mentioned above to a spatial dimension.

How can we create (better) places for people in our cities?

Turning our cities into places for people requires changing the status quo: first and foremost, **we need to provide more space for people** - and that's only possible **at the expense of spaces for cars**. This is important also because cars use space very inefficiently - when a car moves at a speed of 50 km/h (on average, transporting 1,2 passenger), it requires 140 sqm valuable public space. Even when parking, a car occupies 20 sqm. In contrast, a cyclist only needs 5 sqm to move around at a speed of 15 km/h, and as many as up to 10 bikes can be parked in the space needed for just 1 car. Even public transport vehicles are unproportionally more space-efficient than cars: a tram carrying 50 passengers only occupies 7 sqm / passenger.

As we have seen, though, cars are so ingrained in the mobility systems of our cities that eliminating them from cities is practically impossible. Fortunately, **in most cases cars don't need to totally disappear from our cities - simply reducing their role in the mobility mix (modal shift) significantly would already make most of our cities better places for people**. As we have seen, this requires integrated actions - involving the improvement of conditions of active mobility (cycling and walking), the development of public transport, managing parking, efficiently managing urban freight, the introduction of vehicle sharing systems (car, bike, e-scooter), eventually offering the optimal mobility solution to people in the form of Mobility as a Service (MaaS) that eliminates the need of individual vehicle ownership. Simultaneously, we also need to work on **changing the travel attitude and behaviour of people.**

There are several examples of city streets returned to a more balanced coexistence among different road users or totally transformed into public spaces. Traffic calming measures and other innovative interventions create safer and more fluent mobility conditions for cars, public transport and delivery vehicles, bicycles, and pedestrians. Other interventions remove permanently road space from car use and create public spaces for people (mixing soft mobility and social life).

Even by simply reducing the number of cars, we can potentially improve public spaces. However, **removing (or reducing the number of) cars does not automatically** (at least not always) **turn an urban space into a space for people.** It is easier in neighbourhoods not originally developed for cars, where other functions are still present, people like to hang around, places that are endowed with tangible and intangible values - like for instance old towns. Here, once cars are removed, people gradually repopulate the "new" public spaces and start to use them for various social and economic functions: meeting place, de-facto playground for children, outdoor place for restaurants and cafés - just to name a few. These are typical "quick-win" projects - the spaces come to life even with limited or no further public interventions.

There are other places, however, where this transformation is not automatic, and by simply removing all or a significant part of cars does not turn them into places for people. Such places can easily become derelict, abandoned areas where people do not like to be, don't feel safe. In places like that, it is necessary to change the perception and stimulate use. In such cases **the structural changes need to be complemented with other elements** - visual transformation of the place, installation of urban furniture, greening, using incentives to encourage certain functions, organizing events, implementing other soft interventions.

VIENNA VALLEY TERRACE AND COOLE STRASSEN

Wien is home to a wide range of public space innovations - we present here two. The Vienna Valley Terrace addresses the scarcity of usable public spaces in densely built (and populated) neighbourhoods in the inner city. The local authority found a new way to create additional open spaces by installing terraces over the metro line 4 and partly also overhanging the river. When building the terraces, they used natural design - timber, planting elements - and added quality outdoor furniture. The terraces quickly became popular, and people use them for various functions.

The Coole Straßen initiative is addressing the urban effects of climate change - specifically the urban heat island phenomenon. "Coole Straßen" are temporary solutions to cool down certain streets in during hot summer days. The city has tested this approach in different districts; in the selected streets, cars are not allowed to drive in or park, water misters, plants and seating facilities are installed - creating climate-adapted places for playing, chilling, working, and hanging around. In 2021, building on the experience of the temporary cool streets, 4 permanent cool streets were created, with lighter asphalt, tree planting, shading and water solutions.

The COVID-19 pandemic as a trigger for changes

We have already indicated **the role of the COVID-19 pandemic in "rediscovering" our urban public spaces**. What started as the creation of various solutions for ensuring social (or, rather, physical) distancing during the pandemic, gradually led to **testing a range of innovative measures** which have the potential of radically changing how we perceive the role of the public spaces in our life. The reduction of the space available for cars, the creation of new (temporary) cycling and walking paths, the use of public spaces for leisure activities are just some of the trends which were already visible before the pandemic, but which rapidly became part of a series of public policies combining social, environmental, and economic dimensions of urban sustainability.

Many of the decisions that led to restructuring the use of public spaces were taken by local authorities without an active involvement of the residents, due to emergency reasons. However, in most cases these decisions were built on the results of previous civic engagement processes: **when local authorities managed to include in emergency plans for the reuse of public spaces measures that were co-designed with people (even though in different contexts), the chances of consolidating these changes are definitely higher.**

From temporary to permanent changes

Reallocating city spaces for different functions, redesigning and transforming public spaces are often major interventions, both financially and in their potential impacts. No surprise, that already even before the pandemic cities increasingly used experiments and temporary interventions, tactical urbanism solutions "to test the waters" prior to committing to a major transformation project.

The spectrum of change:

QUICK BUILD

Demonstration	Pilot Project	Interim Design	Permanent Installation
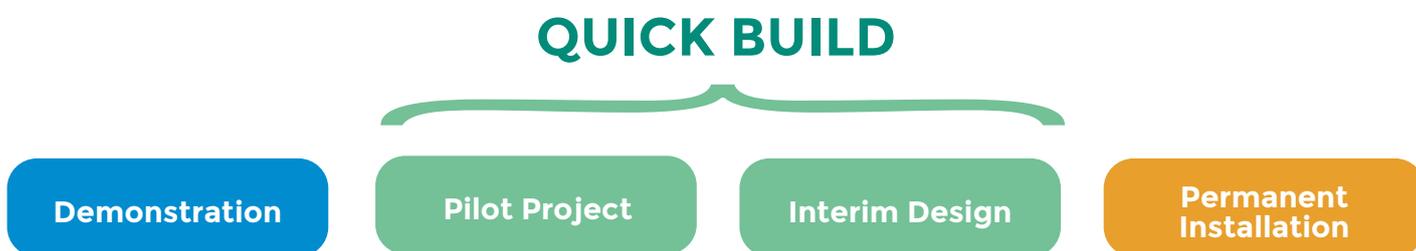
Using **tactical urbanism** enables cities to **quickly implement changes without investing massive amounts**. Temporary changes are also **optimal for launching a real dialogue with the residents** - the users of the public space: there's an important difference between theoretically discussing a planned transformation of a public space and actually experiencing the changes. Using feedback from people and information from observing how they use the (temporarily) transformed public space can (and

should) be fed into **fine-tuning the final design**. This approach is also helpful when "selling" transformations that initially are perceived as negative - **when people know that the changes are not irreversible, they are more likely to be supportive and ready to "try" the new setup**.

It is also important to note, that **sometimes people completely refuse the change** demonstrated by the temporary solution; **that**, however, **does not mean that it is a failure**. In fact, in such cases we can still gain important insights that can be used to design a better solution, while the local authority also avoids wasting money and other resources on a transformation that does not meet the needs of residents. Therefore, an open-minded, flexible approach and a genuine intention to learn are crucial when launching temporary solutions.

While implementing tactical urbanism initiatives, using a **participative approach, engaging residents, co-creating with the people instead of creating for the people is the way to go**. This way we not only mobilize the creativity and ideas of public place users, but also increase their attachment to place already in the development phase. Placemaking principles and methods can provide us with useful guidance during the process.

Last, but not least, while tactical urbanism projects usually (and by definition) are mostly small-scale, quick initiatives, it is still important that they are integrated with other initiatives and fit a wider vision of the city regarding public space use and mobility.

INTEGRATING PLAY IN PUBLIC SPACE - PLAYFUL PARADIGM, UDINE

Udine is a medium-sized Italian city - and was the lead partner in the Playful Paradigm URBACT transfer network. Udine started 20 years ago to incorporate play as flexible and innovative tool to address urban challenges, to engage citizens from all walks of life and to promote healthy lifestyle. The first "Play events" - various gaming events organized mainly in the city centre - became regular and were extended to other neighbourhoods by using the "Ludobus". The Ludobus is a mobile toy library that can be moved to and set up anywhere in the city (especially in the suburbs and the periphery) to promote playing. The local authority also set up an "office of play", planning, coordinating, and facilitating play initiatives and events across the city.

Thriving Streets Lessons

Thriving Streets - as the name suggests - is about creating better - thriving - public spaces. As part of the project, most partner cities implemented small-scale actions that involved the testing of temporary changes in public spaces with the objective of showing residents how the public space in question (be it a square, a street or a section of a street) could function as a place for people instead of a place for cars. The evaluation of these experiments served with a wide range of important learnings.

Almost all partners found that while planning and implementing a temporary intervention may seem relatively easy at first, **doing them properly involves lots of planning, coordination** with a range of organizations, obtaining licenses (and overcoming obstacles) - and all that **absorbs lots of energy and efforts** both prior to, during (and even after) the intervention.

Some of the partners designed their installation with the assumption that it is enough to create the temporary installation, change the place and people would fill it with life - but that did not happen; you really need to be pro-active and creative and work hard to stimulate uses. Our partners have also learned that **summer** (or at least when the weather is good) **is a better time to do temporary intervention** in public spaces - people spend more time outdoor anyway. And, if you want people to turn up, offer **food and drinks**!

All cities learned a lot about the neighbourhood, the needs, and expectations of people - things that may not have come to surface without the temporary installations. **Experiencing the changes forced people to think about the neighbourhood and public spaces in very specific terms and not just throw in general ideas**. However, you must be prepared that many of the **"learnings" come in the form of criticism and complaints** - and it requires the right approach, time and capacity to deal with them.

Overall, using temporary interventions is a valuable tool to "test-drive" public space changes. **There's no right or wrong way to do them** - the right approach really depends on the specific circumstances a city has. One needs to be aware, however, that it may not be the overnight success case studies sometimes suggest.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Car drivers represent only one group of residents – your responsibility as a mayor is to develop a city – public places and streets – that serve first and foremost people*

- *Create a regular forum of discussion with residents and commuters to identify the critical points of urban and regional mobility systems and transfer the indications to the transport service providers.*

- *Plan temporary closures of streets and roads, combined with cultural events, concerts, street parties and other activities for the local community; use these occasions to better understand how different groups of people use public spaces.*

- *Experiment: learn from other cities, test innovative actions on public spaces and transport infrastructure, in collaboration with the local community.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *[Playful Paradigm](#)*
- *[Civitas Sunrise for sustainable neighbourhoods](#)*
- *[Transformation of Mariahilfer Strasse](#)*

4. Thriving Local Economy

KEY POINTS

- *Working and shopping are important functions for the vitality of urban areas. Quality public spaces need shops and businesses - shops and businesses benefit from quality public spaces.*

- *Shop-owners are often the most vocal opponents of public space improvements aimed at reducing car traffic, in the fear that it would lead to losing their customers. However, there's increasing evidence that this fear is based on false assumptions - there's increasing evidence that less car-oriented, more walkable neighbourhoods usually attract more customers.*

- *Local authorities can - and should - proactively help retail development in urban areas and work closely with retailers when a street or neighbourhood is transformed.*

- *Reducing car dominance and improving public spaces not only helps retail but also offer other economic benefits: it could contribute to attracting and retaining talent, and - by making mobility more affordable - it can help to increase the disposable income residents can spend at local businesses.*

The importance of economic vitality

Cities were created to bring things together - and have traditionally been **places of commerce and economic activities** - enabling concentrated presence of buyers and sellers, employers, and workers. The vitality of a city or a neighbourhood requires that the functions and services people use on a regular basis are present and accessible. Working and shopping are clearly such functions.

The healthy presence of retail shops, restaurants, bars, and cafés is crucial not only for creating new opportunities of social and economic growth, but also for improving the quality of life of entire neighbourhoods, by contributing to the connection between people and public space. Conversely, if a public space is otherwise dysfunctional, degraded, unattractive, shops and other businesses will not thrive. So, **quality public spaces need businesses - and businesses need quality public spaces**. The proliferation of cars, however, has negatively affected this healthy symbiosis in more than one way in the second half of the 20th century. On the one hand, our **city streets and public spaces were transformed from places for people to places for cars, displacing a range of important functions and spoiling quality, attractiveness, and overall liveability**. On the other hand, the spreading of **suburban shopping malls** - first in the USA then also increasingly in European cities - **lured customers away from inner city shops**, forcing more and more of them to close down.

Retail and mobility - perceptions and facts

When it comes to shifting from car dominance to sustainable mobility - for instance pedestrianizing a street, eliminating on-street parking, or replacing a car lane with bicycle lane - the most vocal opponents of changes are often the shop-owners. They argue that the changes will kill their business by causing traffic congestion, hampering delivery vehicles - and, most importantly - by making it impossible for customers to park right at the shop entrance. Most retailers in urban areas still assume that the majority of their customers arrive by car and if access by car becomes more difficult, they lose customers - which they obviously want to avoid at any cost. This assumption, however, is built on anecdotal evidence at best.

In reality, according to a survey in London, businesses estimated that 63% of their customers travelled to the area by car - when in fact this proportion was only 20%. (Transport for London). A survey delivered in Graz, Austria showed similar results: businesses estimated that 58% of their customers arrived by car, while in fact, only 32% used private car. A survey in two shopping streets of Dublin, Ireland arrived at very similar results. So, shop-owners usually significantly overestimate the proportion of customers arriving by car and underestimate the proportion of those arriving by other modes. Apparently, "cars don't shop - people do".

> *"Have you ever seen a car stop into a café for a sandwich, or window-shop at the boutiques in Soho? Me neither. Cars don't shop. People do." (Janette Sadik-Khan in her book "Streetfight")*

What's more, there's mounting scientific evidence from European and US cities that limiting car-traffic and implementing pedestrianization generally have a direct positive or neutral effect economically, while the reduction of the number of cars circulating (or being stationary) on commercial streets contribute to improving the quality of the retail experience and push the customers to spend more time pleasantly in the area.

In New York, streets with dedicated cycle lanes saw a larger rise in retail sales compared to the surrounding area *(source: New York DOT, 2014)*. In Los Angeles, sales tax revenue rose by two thirds after cycle lanes were built – 14% higher than unimproved areas *(source: McCormick, 2012)*. For every square meter of parking space in Bern, Switzerland, customers who cycled generated 7,500 EUR compared to 6,625 EUR from car drivers *(source: Fahrradportal)*. According to the analysis delivered by Transport for London in 2013, over a month, people who walk to the high street spend up to 40% more than people who drive to the high street. And when it comes to parking, cycle parking delivers 5-times the retail spend per square meter than the same area of car parking *(source: Raje and Saffrey, 2016)*.

Experience of shops in Copenhagen demonstrate that clients coming by bike spend more than those coming by car, be it during a certain period or related to the parking space that has to be provided for them. Car drivers might spend more per visit, but

they visit shops less often. Most cyclists do their shopping locally (in the proximity of their residence) and are usually more loyal customers. **If a street is transformed in a way that gives more space to cyclists and pedestrians at the expense of cars, the absence of clients that came by car before is more than compensated for by the clients that come by foot or by bike afterward.**

How can cities promote retail development in public spaces?

More and more cities recognize that retail vitality is crucial for a well-functioning public space, and that the local authority needs to work actively with retailers to create better streets. Instead of simply wanting to buy commodities, **customers increasingly search complex (retail) experience, which can only be co-created by the public and private sector**.

The URBACT RetaiLink partnership developed innovative strategies to revitalize the retail sector in cities, which can provide useful guidance for cities intending to develop the retail sector. When it comes to redesigning mobility while retaining (or increasing) footfall and retail vitality, there is a need to **provide near and affordable transport to access the city centre/retail area** through incorporating a variety and combination of public and private transport. Even with a focus on active mobility, ensuring the **availability of affordable car parking in the proximity** of shopping areas is important. Instead of building expensive new infrastructure, however, many cities use innovative solutions such as the temporary reuse of brownfield and abandoned areas. The introduction of **alternative and sustainable freight modes** (such as cargo bikes) and the definition of **freight delivery schedules** to prevent congestions during peak hours are also interesting solutions being tested by many cities in Europe. Embracing new trends in private and shared mobility (e-bike, scooters, electric plugs in parking areas, etc.) is also crucial.

Within retail areas, pedestrianization or shared streets allow people walk and find their ways in the shopping area and **have a pleasant, uninterrupted shopping experience**, especially if there is a clear and **attractive wayfinding and signage** in place, consistent with place image. As we have seen, transforming streets (like pedestrianization, installation of new bike lanes, turning the street into a co-existence area) often meets strong resistance from people, and especially from retailers. So, such **changes always need to be accompanied by extensive consultation, and the use of temporary reversible mobility solutions** with a fixed timeframe can facilitate testing, learning as well as progressive acceptance and alleviating fears of shop-owners.

Local authorities can also help creating a consistent and unique proposition together with the businesses in an area. This **retail proposition needs to be based on both place identity and convenience, emphasizing its distinct elements**. Also, retail should be considered and marketed as an integral part of the city feel-good experience and leisure offer. Working together towards ensuring a standard quality (of shops) and a

good mix of retail offer is in the interest of both the businesses and the city.

Finally, **embracing and actively using digital solutions is also inevitable for futureproofing: digitalization can contribute to creating a seamless physical and virtual experience for retail and the whole area** - which is more and more expected by customers. The city needs to ensure that a high-quality digital infrastructure and connection are in place. While it may sound surprising at first, connecting shops, businesses, hospitality, and services sharing and analysing data (with the involvement of the local authority) can help shopping areas to establish and maintain competitive advantage. Similarly, **using common branding and a coordinated omni-channel place-based marketing strategy** for consistent online and offline visibility can also help businesses - and public spaces - thrive.

Strong cooperation and active involvement can also help in times of economic difficulties, when some (or even many) of the shops and businesses are forced to close down. Vacant retail units are bad for the area, and it is the common interest of other shops and the local authority to fill most of them with some activities. **Many cities experiment with coordinated actions to reduce vacancies**, most of these initiatives build on **creating a legal framework that facilitates temporary use**, actively monitoring vacancies, working together with owners of vacant units to find temporary uses.

Parma implemented temporary installations, exhibitions and theatre in vacant shops of the city centre to revitalise the area, attract people and improve the experience of the area.

It is clear from the examples above that **retail and public space vitality go hand-in-hand** and require a (pro-) active approach from the local authority, together with the mobilization of (human and financial) resources.

THE EXPERIENCE OF CITY CENTRE DOCTOR IN SAN DONÀ DI PIAVE

San Donà di Piave extended the pedestrian areas in the city centre, triggering new retail activities with the creation of pop-up shops run by young entrepreneurs. The action was the result of the Integrated Action Plan developed in the framework of City Centre Doctor, that the city - located in the metropolitan area of Venice - led in URBACT III.

This action contributed to diversifying the offer and attracting new customers to the centre, while creating new opportunities for local business owners.

The role of marketplaces

When discussing thriving local economy, the role of marketplaces cannot be ignored. **For centuries, urban marketplaces were central parts of not just commerce, but also city life**: they served as focal points of local trade, shopping, socializing and even leisure and cultural activities. Although the role of local markets has changed (diminished) considerably due to globalization and the resulting transformation of commerce and retail, they still (potentially) play an important role in city life, in the revitalization of city centres and / or neighbourhoods. **Cities increasingly rediscover the potential and relevance of marketplaces in urban development**.

Market development - creating a new marketplace or rehabilitating an existing one - **can be a starting point and the central element of revitalizing a neighbourhood.** Markets offer opportunities local producers, contribute to sustainability by enabling short supply chain, help employment and business development, just like community and social development by bringing together diverse people, links urban and rural economies - and can even serve as tourist attractions.

It is not just about retail, though …

Thriving local economy is not just about retail - and **shifting from car dominance to sustainable urban mobility has a range of other economic benefits** for cities.

If a city wants to attract businesses - it needs to attract and retain talent. People, however, want to live and work in areas offering a high quality of life. For an increasing number of people this means walkable places. By 2025, 3 out of 4 workers will be millennials, who value the environment and sustainability and use cars less (many of them don't even own or want a car). 73% of London business improvement districts (BID) say that walking and cycling are important for attracting and retaining staff, customers and for creating a vibrant environment. Increasingly, businesses in high value-added sector prioritize offices with high-quality cycling facilities.

Shifting from car dominance to more sustainable means of transport makes moving around in the city more affordable for residents. Walking, cycling or even using public transport is much cheaper than using a car - so by not owning and driving a car people save significant amounts - and at least a **part of these savings is spent using local services or buying local products** - directly benefiting the local economy.

As the examples show, thriving public spaces, sustainable urban mobility benefit local economies in more than one way, so - besides the obvious health, social and environmental advantages - **there are clear economic and financial incentives for cities to continue and even accelerate their transformation from car dominance to active mobility**.

Thriving Streets Lessons

During the implementation of Thriving Streets most partners have worked closely with representatives of the retail sectors, shop owners involving them in consultations as well as in the delivery of small-scale actions.

During the COVID lockdown, when it was impossible to organize meetings, the project team from Debrecen accidentally discovered **how well informal, and unstructured discussions with shop-owners, and their customers in their own environment can work** and result in honest dialogue, lots of new perspectives and insights.

Santo Tirso has also learned valuable lessons during the implementation of their small-scale action, which involved the temporary closure of an important commercial street on 2 occasions. During the first event they found, that - despite evidence from other cities suggesting otherwise - 60% of businesses in the commercial street experienced a drop in sales during the temporary closure of the street. For the second event, they have organized a sales campaign together with the shops and encouraged retailers to showcase their products also in the street - and sales numbers of participating shops were markedly better. The experience of Santo Tirso shows that:

- while evidence suggests that **reducing car traffic, increasing pedestrian, and cycling traffic is good for commerce, the positive effects are not automatic and usually not immediate**.
- it is important to **listen to and involve the business owners, which should be done as a standard practice**, and not only for sporadic events; when a street is transformed - for instance pedestrianized - the local authority needs to work actively together with shop-owners to ensure that the changes benefit the shops and contribute to increasing sales.

Antwerp has come to similar conclusions - their experience with the temporary intervention has shown that regular and structured consultation with retailers is necessary. **"When the dialogue only starts in response to decisions, you get an energy-consuming conflict instead of an enriching cooperation."**

Their dialogue with local retailers during the temporary intervention also showed that many shop-owners have a negative perception of their own neighbourhood and how it is evolving. "Therefore, - they concluded - **it's important to properly support positive actions in the neighbourhood, so that not only customers are convinced of the potential of the neighbourhood, but also the retailers themselves."**

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS 💡

- *Even as a mayor, it is useful to talk with shop owners and customers to better understand different points of view and learn what kind of commercial activities or services are still missing in your city. Visit some shops informally instead of organizing a formal event, enter into conversation with the shop-owners. On the one hand, that gives much better insights, on the other, it also demonstrates that you honestly care.*

- *Don't let vacant shops spoil the customer experience in commercial streets - launch a call for opening pop-up shops facilities, ease local regulations for a limited period and ask the aspiring entrepreneurs to use the public space in a creative way.*

- *Partner with businesses to launch a common social media sales campaign promoting the local commercial offer using multimedia and user-generated content.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *[The effects of pedestrianization and bicycles on local business](#)*
- *[Economic Value of Walkability](#)*
- *[Economic benefits of walking and cycling](#)*
- *[Placemaking in the Nordics Handbook](#)*
- *[Healthy Streets, London](#)*

5. Thriving Streets for ALL

KEY POINTS

- *Observe and analyse how public space is used by people to define solutions catering for all.*
- *Plan public spaces while prioritizing the needs of different types of pedestrians.*
- *Eliminate architectural / physical barriers as much as possible.*
- *Make public spaces accessible to different types of users.*
- *Analyse mobility patterns of men and women when observing public spaces.*
- *Create mixed-use, family-friendly, green spaces for all.*
- *An inclusive city is a city safe for all.*
- *Gender equality actually benefits everyone and makes for a more inclusive city.*

Why it matters?

'Streets for all' means that **public spaces welcome all types of users** – they are places where **all citizens feel safe, not discriminated, and happy to stay**. It is not only about ensuring the accessibility of people with mobility impairments, but also about contributing to social justice and equity.

The UN-Habitat Global Toolkit for Public Space highlights that **public spaces represent a public asset** that produces various benefits and opportunities: they contribute to social relationships, community building, mental and physical health, participation in city life, sense of belonging to the city, access to city services and opportunities, but also to local economy and to the respect of the spaces as public goods.

Citizens' experiences of mobility and public spaces can therefore be limited by inequalities. The physical structures and the quality of public spaces in a city have a strong impact on the quality of everyday life of the citizens and that's often perceived differently by different groups. **Mobility and urban planning today are not gender neutral and do not benefit all citizens equally**: men, women, children, elderly, migrants have different expectations, needs and constraints for mobility and for using public spaces. What's more, those needs and the use of public spaces change during the different life phases. And still, many public spaces - including streets - are designed and managed in ways that tend to exclude certain groups or certain functions.

Therefore, **when redesigning streetscape and urban mobility systems, it is fundamental to understand the mobility pattern differences, as well as the distinct needs and expectations** of different user groups regarding public spaces. How do they experience cities and specifically public spaces differently? What are those differences? How they move in the cities? Below there are just some examples.

- **Women** and men use transport modes in different ways and have different trip patterns. Women are more likely to travel for caring and social purposes, shorter distances with many stages and tend to use different public transport modes during the day. They are also more likely to face security issues and other barriers to walking and cycling.
- **Men** tend to drive more and to use new mobility services like car-sharing, ridesharing, bike-sharing and e-scooters more than women.
- **Older people** face connectivity of transport issues. They are more likely to be away from stations. They lack direct bus routes, and they also find navigating, walking in roads stressful and dangerous.
- **Younger people and students** are mostly hit by affordability issues of transport.
- **People from ethnic minority backgrounds** are more likely to identify cost as a barrier. They're more concerned about crime and antisocial behaviour, and they're also more likely to be exposed to air pollution.
- **People who are disabled** face accessibility issues of public transport: physical barriers but also insufficient provision of audio and visual announcements and supports. Taxis and driving can be feasible but also costly. The way the cycling services and infrastructure is designed is not with them in mind. Lack of accessible options severely limits their independence.

STREETS FOR ALL IN VIENNA

Vienna is one of the cities that established a department for gender mainstreaming for supporting the departments and offices of the Vienna City Administration in their gender mainstreaming process. This cross-cutting action led to redesigning public spaces in different neighbourhoods of the city, but also to improving the access to public transport for all.

Key aspects of designing and implementing Streets for All

Good governance and decision-making

Planning and implementing streets for all requires a good governance structure in place. This should involve a political commitment, dedicated human and financial resources, understanding the challenge and the possible solutions and - most importantly - an integrated and participative approach.

Universal design

By adopting a 'design for all approach', using the principles of universal design in public spaces and in the furniture of public spaces we can satisfy the needs of a wide

variety of potential users, including the most vulnerable.

"**Universal Design** is the design and composition of an environment so that it can be accessed, understood and used to the greatest extent possible by all people regardless of their age, size, ability or disability. If an environment is accessible, usable, convenient and a pleasure to use, everyone benefits." ([read more on universal design](#))

The British Standards Institute defines inclusive design as: "The design of mainstream products and/or services that are accessible to, and usable by, as many people as reasonably possible ... without the need for special adaptation or specialised design."

Transport availability

THE NORTH CAROLINE STATE UNIVERSITY DEVELOPED THE 7 PRINCIPLES OF UNIVERSAL DESIGN:

- *Principle 1: Equitable Use. The design is useful and marketable to people with diverse abilities.*
- *Principle 2: Flexibility in Use. The design accommodates a wide range of individual preferences and abilities.*
- *Principle 3: Simple and Intuitive Use. Use of the design is easy to understand, regardless of the user's experience, knowledge, language skills, or current concentration level.*
- *Principle 4: Perceptible Information. The design communicates necessary information effectively to the user, regardless of ambient conditions or the user's sensory abilities.*
- *Principle 5: Tolerance for Error. The design minimizes hazards and the adverse consequences of accidental or unintended actions.*
- *Principle 6: Low Physical Effort. The design can be used efficiently and comfortably and with a minimum of fatigue.*
- *Principle 7: Size and Space for Approach and Use. Appropriate size and space is provided for approach, reach, manipulation, and use regardless of user's body size, posture, or mobility.*

The transport connectivity, affordability and accessibility all affect the travel options of people and should be carefully planned and implemented for an inclusive city.

The distance to the nearest transport points, the density of connections, the directness of links, and the quality of infrastructure can help people find better employment, have access to education, culture, healthcare, and travel. The scarcity of options, on the other hand, can increase the use of cars, with the related financial burden; it can

also increase poverty, inactivity, contribute to poor physical health, as well as to air and noise pollution.

Limited affordability of travel options can exacerbate poverty, reduce social interactions - especially for elderly, youth, single parents, migrants.

The **accessibility of transport is key to enable all people with different mobility, sensory and mental impairments to move in the city** and reach their destinations in safe and secure ways.

Gender disaggregated data

Data are essential to understand the lives and the needs of citizens and to design policies and actions that meet these needs in an equitable way. Men, women, teenagers, elderly, families, workers, students, citizens with disabilities, single parents, low-income people etc. all live, move and experience public spaces in different ways. Data-driven policies and services allow decision-makers to take decisions that target real problems, prioritise interventions, address inequalities and make the action of local government more effective and inclusive.

City of short distances

The **15-minute city concept** has a great potential to support the deployment of inclusive mobility and public spaces. The availability of services at short distance allows residents to use sustainable mobility (public transport, cycling, walking) without the need for owning a car, thus removing the heavy financial burden of car ownership. This concept can also reduce the time needed to move around in the city, thus allowing citizens to have more time for their lives.

However, the **15-minute city concept is not per se inclusive**: it has to be complemented by basic mobility services for all, a good provision of different transport solutions, and it has to be included in a system of urban planning and the provision of services that take into account the needs of all.

Urban symbols and signs

"You can't be what you can't see" (Marion Wright Edelman)

The current **design of the signs and symbols in our cities is mainly men dominated:** the statues and the streets names, icons used in mobility and urban planning (on buses, traffic lights etc.), as well as the signs and symbols usually refer to men or to traditional and stereotyped roles. Images and language influence the way we think of, live in and plan public spaces and the cities, and the way we live in a society. Women – young, old, middle-age, single or mother –, black people, minority groups have little visibility. The visual and symbolic representations in public spaces demonstrate what is valued and often perpetuate gendered stereotypes. They also often do not represent all the different citizens of the city.

Naming streets after women, using inclusive signs are ways to recognise that the public spaces are for all.

The signposting of barrier-free alternatives to obstacles such as flights of stairs is an example of target group-specific data capturing and practical application.

Lighting, seating, water, toilets

The fear of not being able to walk longer distances, to access buildings with long stairs, or of being outside during the hot summer, the lack of clear information on the location of services and facilities, can all be barriers to participation in the normal life of a city.

The possibility to sit and rest while being outside, to drink free water from public fountains, to use toilets (toilets that are free, clean, and accessible to all) allow elderly, people with disabilities, families with young children to move more freely and at ease in the city and have access to public spaces.

Street security

A major concern regarding public spaces is the improvement of the sense of **security** for both men and women, as well as reducing harassment and nuisance. Good lighting of streets and public spaces used by all, - both during the day and at night – can significantly increase the security (real and the perception of security), especially for women. If people feel afraid, it could undermine their possibility to go to school, work, enjoy fully what their city can offer, which negatively affects their empowerment and rights.

Quality public spaces are also clearly defined and visible, with no blind spots that would increase the insecurity.

Mixed use, family friendly, greener neighbourhoods

Public spaces are places to meet, socialize, and interact. They should be designed in a way that allows the use of those functions by all groups of citizens and should not be dominated by just one group (young, children and families, senior citizens etc). It is important to understand the challenges and needs of all different groups of people, how and when they tend to use a square or a street. Quality public spaces should offer a combination of both functional zones (areas for bars and cafés, for playgrounds etc.) and open, flexible sub-zones for mixed and multiple uses.

In areas that do not have a clear and established function, focal points such as seats, drinking fountains, trees etc. are important because they can facilitate the use by groups that normally don't or cannot use other public areas.

Public spaces should be well connected to cycling and walking routes and to public transport so that they are accessible; they should also not be dominated by car traffic and parking. They should also provide areas protected / sheltered from high temperature - such as trees and green spots.

Some public spaces are particularly important for the success of a local strategy aimed at improving the usability and inclusiveness of the streets for all. **Parks and playgrounds** are decisive for the creation of intergenerational connection, but also for improving the relationship with natural resources.

Walkability

Making cities safer and more accessible for pedestrians is a challenging aspect when developing streets for all. Walking needs to be considered as the main component of a multimodal mobility within city centres intended to reduce car-use. Walking has many benefits, including the improvement of public health, air quality, but also the reduction of noise pollution and the improvement of road safety.

The debate on how to create pedestrian-oriented and inclusive cities has been going on for a long time and it has been further strengthened by the recent pandemic.

Ensuring good-quality pedestrian access for all becomes a crucial aspect for cities that are inclusive and want to rethink themselves 'beyond the car'.

There are plenty of conditions that strongly limit pedestrian movement in cities: the presence of cars is only one element. Other aspects include the scarcity of pedestrian paths, limited integrity, continuity and inadequate maintenance of existing paths, high volume of traffic, limited protection of pedestrian areas from traffic, insufficient or unsafe crossing opportunities, limited width of footpaths are all conditions that constrain the walking and mobility of people.

Widening the sidewalks, improving the maintenance of pedestrian paths, enhancing the quality and safety of pedestrian crossings can all contribute to making the "weakest" street users – pedestrians - less vulnerable.

When designing for walkability, ensuring equal conditions of accessibility for all the users, including the most vulnerable ones - such as kids or elderly persons - also needs to be a priority.

Improving walkability should also involve the identification and gradual elimination of physical / architectural barriers in public areas and buildings. Various solid methodological approaches have been developed and used - especially in the old towns of many European cities - to systematically assess and improve walkability conditions for residents and visitors.

Several methodologies are used for improving the walkability of cities, but the combination of in-field inspections, data analysis and interventions on public infrastructure (not only on the roads, but also on lighting and other elements) appear to be the best recipe for redesigning cities while prioritizing the needs of pedestrians.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Gender and inclusive policies should be defined at European and national level, but local authorities do have a role and can make a big difference in implementing a real inclusive city.*

- *Different areas of the city need to be involved to make it mainstream: budgeting, procurement, public space, communication, participation, mobility... Actions need to be rooted in different departments across a local government. When this is done consistently over time, cities can make progress faster.*

- *Streets for all means that all people can feel well, safe and represented in the city. The process of planning and design of public spaces should not allow one group to dominate the use of the space.*

- *A challenge of the gender mainstreaming process is raising the awareness of the technical administrative staff on the effects planning measures can make on the different groups.*

- *Organise walkshops to assess to what extent a street or public space is gender-equal and inclusive and raise awareness and motivation. Involve technicians and stakeholders and representatives of the different groups of citizens.*

- *Engage with local media to create a positive narrative and support to new projects and planning.*

- *Test and experiment. Start with small projects that can become flagship / lighthouse projects. Monitor and assess them regularly.*

- *Develop department-specific planning instruments such as guidelines and a gender mainstreaming matrix jointly developed for all projects affecting public spaces.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *URBACT Gender Equal Cities*
- *UN-HABITAT Her City*
- *UMEA - Gendered Landscape Link 1 | Link 2*
- *CIVITAS, Gender equality and mobility: mind the gap*
- *European Charter for Equality of Women and Men in local life*

- *European Commission (2020), "Gender Equality Strategy 2020-2025"*
- *CIVITAS SUNRISE*
- *Centre for London*
- *Pedestrian space*

6. Creating *Thriving Communities* to revive public spaces

KEY POINTS

- *For Communities to thrive they need both leadership and co-creation.*

- *Reopening and managing abandoned spaces together with the residents can help creating spaces for collaborative work between organisations and individuals committed to your mission and ways of working.*

- *It is essential to map out a variety of actors which may be involved in a bottom-up urban regeneration process.*

- *Sustainable civic engagement requires the creation of structured governance mechanisms.*

- *Engaging with businesses and freight operators can increase understanding for the issues and could even provide partners for planning and action.*

- *A simple framework approach can help prioritise potential solutions.*

- *Developing a clear procurement policy for the city could provide a demonstration for others to follow.*

Thriving communities

By 'thriving communities' we mean that **communities attain high levels of wellbeing for everyone**, while getting back to living **within the ecological and physical limits of their neighbourhood**. By quoting Martin L. King, we can say that a thriving community is a community made by common people doing uncommon work for the common good.

Making neighbourhoods more vibrant with the active participation of residents and local stakeholders is a challenge for many cities around the world.

Public spaces are the places where innovative tools and strategies for civic engagement can be tested. Strategies such as gamification and the creation of digital replica of urban spaces were particularly useful during the Covid-19 emergency to continue bottom-up processes of civic engagement and can be included in wider strategies also after the end of the pandemic.

However, the power of public spaces as transformative places is not in discussion. **Public spaces have the power to keep communities together** and to engage all the actors in a different way. Places such as markets, squares or malls can become epicentres of new forms of civic engagement, which contribute to revive the spaces according to the needs and aspirations of the people. **There are no thriving streets without thriving communities**: acting on public space means bringing people in, finding altogether interesting solutions for improving the urban quality and for leaving nobody behind.

Connecting people and networks for thriving communities

There are three core enabling factors to drive thriving communities.

First, **a strong culture of co-creation** is crucial for a thriving community. Yet co-creation has its limit, especially in volunteer-lead groups. Most awesome things in our groups are still organized by a handful of organizers who put in a disproportional amount of work. It's often a few motivated volunteers who organize amazing events, who drive new initiatives forward, who breathe life and love into the group. And the reality is that once these people move on, get tired, or in many cases burn out, it won't be easy to replace them. The group will become less active. We can ease the peaks and valleys by pro-actively recruiting new organizers, by creating good handover processes, by creating and documenting roles. That certainly helps. But commitments and motivations come in many different shapes and forms. Only once the next highly motivated organizer feels ready to step in, that group will start to thrive again in similar ways. To have Thriving Communities we need a culture of co-creation to unlock the infinite potential of our groups. And we need to accept and appreciate the value of the people who choose to step into a bigger role. You need to take care of community leaders even in highly co-created environments.

Second, **public spaces** are fundamental for ensuring better quality of life for all, but also for promoting a **balanced sustainable social and economic development of the local community.**

Actions such as the reopening of abandoned spaces, or the reactivation of food markets or the support to social entrepreneurship are crucial not only for the tangible benefits which they bring to the local community but also for the impact on community spirit and sense of place. Engaging local communities in reviving public space is quite always the minimal key activity that need to be sustained in a dormant phase so that thriving communities can come back to life.

Finally, the **creation of structured mechanisms for governing civic engagement** is a crucial element for making communities thriving and vibrant. The adoption of standards of community-led local development was decisive in many cities across Europe in promoting alliances among NGOs, groups of residents and small businesses for reviving public spaces and unused facilities. Programs such as the BIP/ ZIP initiative of Lisbon targeted central and peripheral areas of the city with a series of public calls, which served as the basis and starting point of bottom-up urban regeneration processes. At the same time, the programme created a more structured governance of civic engagement, with public authorities being on the same level as civic stakeholders. This element led to a stronger ownership of innovative projects and initiatives by the local community, while keeping the process strictly connected to the city priorities in terms of sustainable urban development.

How to go beyond the 1–9–90 rule

We're all familiar with the 1-9-90 rule, which states that in any group of 100 people there is/are:

- 1 member that is a super active communicator, actively engaging everyone else in the group – he/she becomes the thought leader
- 9 who are somewhat active, engaging the rest of the group occasionally
- 90 who are content to simply listen or follow the 10

What is the secret of those societal initiatives that could scale up and extend their local know-how and develop from a city initiative into a stable thriving community? When we analyse the key success factors and key rules that made it possible for thriving communities to scale up and set up, some golden rules emerge:

1. All initiatives had a **clear mission** and easy to understand rules that made it easy for the audience to join.
2. **Strong branding and strong storytelling** not only helped the audience understand the value-driven messages of the initiative, but it also made it easy to transform their need for impact into a simple action and made it attractive for everyone to take active part.
3. The use of **social media and digital tools** helped to engage people and enabled them to act together. Social media was a good tool to mobilise the public: initiatives generally used the social media to initiate crowdfunding campaigns, calls for video challenges, and engage local citizens in storytelling.
4. All successful initiatives derived from personal motivation and the person or NGO initiating the movement is also a key driver in sustaining it. A **charismatic person or dedicated NGO** is crucial for establishing a sustainable system, but also observed as a key societal need.
5. The format **functioned as a "human software" in the community**. We found that this format (either an event or an online platform) has been set in rules and frameworks which could then be adopted to local needs.
6. **Research and crowdsourcing** played an important role in engaging citizens and volunteers.
7. Often, these initiatives had **important societal impact beyond their framework**; in many cases social cooperation opened the door for new policy and research agenda effecting a specific area or social group.

LARGO RESIDENCIAS IN LISBON

The regeneration of a former noble mansion (turned into a hostel and premises for artistic residencies) by a group of creative people and artists is a great example of urban regeneration carried out in Lisbon, in the framework of the scheme for temporary uses.

The active collaboration between local authorities and grassroots groups led to the creation of an alternative to unsustainable tourism, providing at the same time the first step for a wider regeneration of the Mouraria neighbourhood in which the building is located.

The creation of better public spaces close to the hostel, co-curated by the groups managing the structure, is a positive example of urban regeneration co-implemented with the local community.

Thriving Streets Lessons

Creating connections among different bottom-up initiatives and groups is crucial for reviving community spirit and pushing for a common action on public spaces. The creation of relational and identity networks among people is fundamental for giving new inputs to local authorities and for creating interventions addressing the needs emerged from bottom-up participatory processes.

Co-creating more cohesive neighbourhoods that are able to integrate the diversity of visions, beliefs and uses of public spaces is particularly important, especially in multicultural or traditional social housing neighbourhoods. Many cities in Europe are driving innovative processes of civic engagement in areas where social cohesion needs to be restored for reducing social exclusion and improving active engagement of a diversity of local communities.

Acting on iconic spaces, such as markets, which are often serve as the heart of these neighbourhoods and spaces for interactions beyond retail, is an interesting strategy that many cities implemented to intervene in areas that needed rehabilitation. Fostering interaction in public spaces with soft interventions, such as promoting the collaboration between artists and street vendors, contributed to the regeneration of areas such as South Rotterdam with the active engagement of the local community. This action was particularly important to revive the hidden energy and skills of the residents, promoting the creation of new cooperatives and small enterprises.

The actions carried out in collaboration with the local community are often the first step before starting new projects and investments in partnership with public and private actors. The facilitation of the process is often up to the local authorities, fostering collaboration among different actors with the objective of reviving the community spirit and making public spaces testing ground for innovative uses and civic and economic activities.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Push for a common action involving different civic groups and entities.*
- *Connect the action on the ground to broader civic policies.*
- *Act on iconic public spaces for making the action of regeneration recognizable and tangible.*
- *Use civic crowdfunding to support initiatives and coagulate thriving communities around them*
- *Launch a survey on social media asking the residents which public spaces or abandoned places they want to see revived: this action can offer useful (and often unexpected) tips for the action.*
- *Test the water: revive one of the proposed unused spaces with the active collaboration of the local community. An empty shop, a market stall, a floor in the City Hall: these spaces can have the power of fuelling the active engagement of the local community, creating a gathering point and promoting the reuse of other structures.*
- *Involve creative people and artists in a process that exalts creativity of the people and help residents in thinking out of the box: this element can be crucial for defining collaboratively new ideas for reviving the city while fostering community spirit.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *Thriving Cities*
- *Share Network*
- *Toolkit for community development in North Belfast*

7. Co-creating Thriving Streets

KEY POINTS

- *A strong culture of co-creation is crucial for a thriving street if you want sustainable solutions and long-lasting results.*

- *Guide people to recognize the characteristic elements of their neighbourhood.*

- *Use communication and design tools to better visualize the challenges of the targeted area is essential.*

- *Connect visioning to the implementation of tangible measures at neighbourhood level.*

- *Places, people, objectives, and practices are four fields involved in a work combining a holistic vision with tangible impacts on the ground.*

- *Co-creation achieves different results according to four variables, which are language, procedures, expectation, and time: all these variables are undoubtedly connected to the nature of the community involved and of the areas of intervention.*

- *Work with people to identify challenges and solutions in a collaborative way that leaves nobody behind.*

- *Launch an open and transparent process where everybody is considered as expert, and all the different opinions are fundamental.*

- *Use collaborative tools, as mapping, to share a common set of information useful for the different steps of the co-creation process.*

How to create Thriving streets with people

Bringing together people with different backgrounds to define collaborative policies is a challenge for many cities around the world. Co-creation is much more than ensuring citizen engagement through a set of methodologies involving different elements. **Co-creation is the collaborative development of new value** (concepts, solutions, products, and services) **together with experts and/or stakeholders** (such as citizens, policy makers and so on). Co-creation is a form of **collaborative innovation**: ideas are shared and improved together, rather than kept to oneself.

The objective of co-creation, when the goal is to have thriving streets, is to involve people in the place where they live and – thus incorporating different perspectives in the design process.

The logical framework guiding the intervention includes a series of moments that go from **reconnaissance of the main characteristics of the place in which the co-creation practice take place** to the maintenance of interventions carried out with the collaboration among different actors.

Guided tours to observe the reality of a neighbourhood and the action of pairing the field of intervention with different definitions of city makes reconnaissance a useful exercise to focus on specific aspects on which the co-creation process needs to rely. They also help to understand how much **a street can be further improved through the co-design of innovative solutions** prioritising inclusiveness, curiosity, and astonishment.

Between these initial steps of reconnaissance and the final step of the maintenance, a series of other moments must be present in a co-creation process.

Communicating with citizens and stakeholders is obviously crucial for ensuring a wide involvement of the local audience in the process. Communication can be carried out in different ways and through a wide range of channels, but a strong focus on storytelling is important for making people part of the narrative, as well as co-creators of personal and collective stories on the process that they are contributing to create.

The **phase of cooperation**, carried out with a strong support in terms of mediation and facilitation, brings to the creation of a shared vision, achieved through visioning activities. Such activities are **often paired with foresight sessions**, which have the objective of supporting civic imagination and the creation of future scenarios that may be implemented by the people. This step is particularly important to bring to a stronger acknowledgement of the challenges and the collaborative creation of solutions.

The phase of implementation is the moment of truth for creating a tangible impact in the areas targeted by the co-creation process, with the objective of consolidating different types of innovation and setting up the long-term sustainability of thriving streets.

PARTICIPATORY PROCESS IN THE DISTRICT OF DEURNE, ANTWERP

Antwerp, one of the partner cities in the URBACT Thriving Street Network, used co-design techniques to find effective solutions to improve mobility at urban level after complaints from the shop owners to the new urban mobility plan. The participatory process started with a joint discussion of the existing state of the art in the pilot area. With a series of sense-and-feel events and temporary solutions organized to make participants feel how it is to navigate the urban centre with alternative mobility solutions, the co-creation process led to the collaborative design of a series of solutions, such as the improvement of the bicycle parking infrastructure or the introduction of cargo bike and car sharing stations which are aimed at reducing the number vehicles circulating in the neighbourhood.

WALKSHOPS AND GAMIFICATION IN PARMA TO ENGAGE RESIDENTS

Co-creation is a value-based, inclusive approach that focuses on bringing together different societal actors around matters of shared concern. Citizen co-creation is a collaborative process that often needs "navigators". The navigator is a volunteer or an expert who is familiar with facilitation and animation techniques and guides citizens through the different stages of co-creation: from preparation to execution. In Parma, we used walkshops and gamification with the support of selected navigators to support the active engagement of different types of citizens (from school students to elder residents) with dedicated solutions.

How to foster co-creation for thriving and vibrant streets

Neighbourhoods provide specific opportunities for the success of a co-creation process. Working in areas well defined at territorial level, where a solid social capital is paired with a strong sense of belonging is crucial for creating the change in a collaborative way in places where everyday life unfolds, and where the opportunities for meeting face-to-face are stronger. Furthermore, the neighbourhoods are places where a strong sense of mutual responsibility is shown by different types of residents, and where vulnerable groups are easier to reach.

Co-creation is seen as an umbrella for several phases of the innovation chain: from the co-identification of the challenges to the co-development of solutions, from the co-implementation of the actions to co-monitoring of the impact produced on the ground.

The identification of problems can be encouraged through transparency and openness, but also by effectively managing actions and well defining the commitment of the different subjects involved and understanding how each of them can contribute to the different phases. The creation of a **memorandum of understanding** can be useful for consolidating the individual and collective commitment of the local community from the initial phase of the process.

INSPIRATIONS FROM OTHER PROJECTS

The URBACT project "Thriving Streets" shared insights from the H2020 SUNRISE project on good practices of co-creation addressing mobility challenges at the neighbourhood level in six cities. It entailed activities along the entire innovation chain: Identification of mobility problems, development of innovative ideas, concrete implementation, systematic evaluation, extraction of lessons learned and their dissemination in the form of a "Neighbourhood Mobility Pathfinder." Residents, businesses, and other stakeholders were involved in all phases to live up to SUNRISE's "co-creation" spirit. Particular focus is given to involve typically under-represented groups such as migrants, women, older and younger people. SUNRISE laid the foundation for a Sustainable Neighbourhood Mobility Planning concept to complement the existing Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (SUMP). The H2020 project SUNRISE, provides ideas and suggestions about specific co-creation techniques along the entire innovation chain that can generate thriving streets:

Co-identification of problems; Co-development of solutions; Co-implementation of measures; Co-evaluation of impacts.

Sustainable Urban Neighbourhoods - Civitas Sunrise (civitas-sunrise.eu)

Thriving Streets Lessons

Co-creation processes have **clear advantages** for the communities that test this approach for tackling some of the most urgent challenges in terms of management of public space and mobility infrastructures. Residents involved in the process are considered as experts having the knowledge to find appropriate solutions for their local community.

The process is also characterized by an **unusual attention to details**, also to the ones that are often overlooked. This type of attention to details is pivotal for ensuring that streets are perceived as thriving spaces and that the implemented solutions have the necessary consensus and support to be implemented and sustained in the long term.

Collecting **feedbacks** from residents on potholes, broken lamps and similar disruptions is crucial for finding solutions going from the systemic level (such as integrated policies) to the everyday life's most pressing issues.

Furthermore, co-creation mobilizes **local motivation and creativity**, pushing residents to elaborate measures that are quickly tangible, but also explores the use of local resources such as public spaces, communication channels, and permissions.

Co-creation contributes to **democratic legitimacy** at neighborhood level: if people are involved, they will better understand the measure implemented to improve public spaces and mobility infrastructures, which, in turn, will reduce conflicts and social exclusion.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Launch a process of collaborative mapping, by asking people to map a neighbourhood and the most pressing issues affecting their everyday life.*
- *Use institutional communication tools to foster co-creation and active engagement of the residents.*
- *Define a clear visual identity for the process of co-creation to enhance its visibility and importance in the public debate.*
- *Promote a pact of collaboration with residents and stakeholders to clearly highlight the commitment of each actor involved in the co-creation process and in the implementation of the measures emerged from the participatory scheme.*
- *Identify a dedicated unit in the city organogram that has the responsibility of active citizenship and co-creation*

DISCOVER MORE

Specific
- *Co-creation of solution for sustainable mobility*
- *Co-creating sustainable mobility at the neighbourhood level*
- *Thematic platform on co-creation and sustainable mobility*

General
- *URBACT Engaging Stakeholderss*
- *Horizon Co-creation navigator WAAG*
- *Oxfam Co-creation toolkit*
- *EU RRI Co-creation toolkit*
- *Horizon UNaLAB. Tools for co-creation*

8. Managing Parking

KEY POINTS

- *Use parking as a key factor of an integrated mobility strategy.*
- *Apply a push and pull strategy to maximize impacts.*
- *Manage available parking spaces to minimize use of public space.*
- *Apply the 85% occupancy rule to on-street parking spaces and use the approach to smartly reduce public space used for parking.*
- *Promote the shift of parking from on-street to off-street and steer where traffic heads to by placing off-street facilities.*
- *Pay attention to details to avoid pitfalls like instead of reducing, only replacing parking demand to other areas once installing paid parking zones.*
- *Involve stakeholders and citizens in creating objectives and measures of a parking strategy as well as in deciding how to use revenues.*

How to change the way we design cities for all

Parking is present in all cities across Europe. Many urban roads are characterized by on-street parking spaces at each side of the roadway thanks to a decade-long transport policy that worked by predicting future traffic flows and providing respective infrastructure. The results today are - aside from large parts of public space dedicated to parking – favorable conditions for car access in most parts of our cities.

Parking policy, however, is a strong tool to steer where car traffic is heading to and directly impacts the volumes of car traffic. While **parking** traditionally was a standalone task of public administrations, it **needs to be integrated in sustainable urban mobility planning and in urban planning in general**, to effectively influence how people move in the city and how public space is used.

In the end, **all car trips end in a parking space** – and this gives managing parking supply and the conditions for parking a powerful role. Managing parking has an unexpected advantage: despite a high unpopularity of eliminating parking places in any city, managing parking still meets higher acceptance than other restrictive measure like fuel prices or Urban Vehicle Access Regulations. **Parking** also **has a strong impact on travel choices** compared to standalone promotion of sustainable mobility means.

A **main principle** of parking management is to manage available parking spaces and *not to supply more space.* A city can use a wide range of measures, starting with the classical ones like deciding where parking is allowed and where not, putting time limits on the duration of parking and applying paid parking schemes and zones. These 'standard' parking management tools are supplemented by options like multiple use of parking spaces, a differentiated tariff system, a workplace parking levy, or well-

elaborated Park & Ride schemes. One parking-related challenge is that local authorities are often only in complete control of on-street parking, and off-street facilities like garages and underground parking are often managed by private operators.

Parking management works best if it combines Push & Pull measures: pushing people to other travel choices AND **pulling them by offering good alternatives** to car use. It is also important to offer better, more valuable use for public space than parking. A positive "side-effect" of parking is that **paid parking creates revenues** to finance sustainable mobility alternatives (for instance improvement of public transport or active travel infrastructure) and upgrading of public space. It is essential, though, that revenues are earmarked for this purpose and do not disappear in the general city budget.

With all these benefits, **parking management measures can still be highly controversial** in a city's society. The idea to take out a few parking spaces in dense or central urban areas might result in fierce opposition from stakeholder groups like retail, commuters, and residents. Communication of objectives of parking policy, of mobility strategies and even the larger urban development ideas are crucial to help stakeholders understand WHY the measures are taken. Urban storytelling can prove to be a powerful tool to support understanding within the city population by creating and developing narratives on people's gains and losses connected to how we use public space.

THE MOBILITY COMPANY OF GHENT

The City of Ghent had in the past a parking company responsible for all parking matters and a mobility department to design and deliver mobility strategies. Besides the lack of a common approach, interests of both parties were not always in line, and assets could not be combined to create better impact.

In 2011, Ghent merged the two entities into a new Mobility Company. Today the company operates rather independently based on a mission statement defined by the city. It is in full control of all aspects of mobility and can even invest revenues from paid parking in sustainable mobility projects, thus optimizing the delivery of the city's mobility objectives.

How to best employ parking management

Parking management works best as an integrated part of a mobility strategy, a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan. The development of a parking policy is best done as a strategic approach by key stakeholders like political decision makers, public administration units and private stakeholders. They co-create objectives and related measures for parking. A standardized approach for this is ParkPAD, developed by the Horizon 2020 project Park4SUMP.

Stop to supply to all demand

To start with, parking management needs to stop the policy of providing supply for all demand, (that is, if not done already). A good approach is to apply the 85% occupancy rule for on-street parking spaces. The rule works with adjusting the price for parking to the level where 85% of available on-street parking spaces are in use while the remaining 15% are unoccupied. This results in only little parking space search traffic as well as lower traffic volumes heading to the specific areas. This rule is also useful for reducing on-street parking space by setting price levels higher than it would be necessary to meet 85% occupancy – and thus driving down demand.

From on-street to off-street parking

Parking management can (and should) contribute to dedicating public space to other use forms than parking if a city works to push on-street parking to off-street facilities. Possible measures include setting time limits for on-street parking or concluding an agreement that for every off-street parking space added to an area, an on-street parking space must be eliminated. Pricing mechanisms provide a possible option as well, but as a standalone measure they only work well if price levels of off-street parking facilities are not increased in parallel with on-street parking price hikes.

SHIFTING ON-STREET TO OFF-STREET PARKING IN ZURICH

In 1996 Zurich concluded a contract with the inner-city businesses to shift on-street parking spaces to off-street facilities. The city wanted to use public space for active mobility and places to stay, while businesses were afraid to lose customers with reduced parking options. The compromise was that for every off-street parking space added in the centre, an on-street parking space is removed. About 800 parking spaces were removed from public space this way. In 2019, Zurich decided to go one step further and aims to remove another 700 parking spaces from its streets.

Use parking revenues in a transparent way

Paid parking is a critical element that is extremely sensitive to stakeholders and people in general. Cities need to make sure to invest the revenues from paid parking in visible improvements in the metered area or in improving access by sustainable mobility means. Parking Benefit Districts, an idea from the U.S., add credibility to paid parking by allowing stakeholders of the metered area to either decide alone or co-decide with public authorities on how to use the revenue for improving public space or any other measure supportive to the area.

IMPROVING PUBLIC SPACE WITH PAID PARKING REVENUES IN SOFIA

Sofia is using a 2-zone model for its paid parking approach. A blue zone combines fees with time limits in the central area and a green zone enclosing the central blue zone applies paid parking without time limits. Whenever paid parking zones are installed, the city invests revenues in upgrading pedestrian spaces and sidewalks as the first visible effect to people. Sofia sees areas neighboring the green zones asking for an extension of the green zone to their area due to the visible benefits on traffic load and public space improvement.

Communicate the benefits

Communication on parking management is crucial for its acceptance. Political decision makers need to focus on the objectives that parking management supports to achieve, showcase that the objectives are realized, highlight what revenues are used for and finally communicate themselves instead of administration or external experts.

Take care of enforcement

Many parking management measures need a well working enforcement to be effective. Enforcement for paid parking and illegal parking is best placed in the responsibility of the city that decides if to do it itself or use a company for it. The police, in charge of enforcement in many cities, often lacks the necessary time resources to deliver the task effectively. Legal settings, however, need to accommodate for the ability of a city to run enforcement. If in place, cities often decide to place enforcement with a city-owned company.

Thriving Streets Lessons

Parking management measures form part of all Integrated Action Plans of the Thriving Streets cities, following a Push & Pull strategy to bring public life to their streets. The main idea is to remove car traffic and transform the use of public space by applying pricing mechanism, shifting parking out of the areas and out of streets. Other recommendation involves the complete revision of the local mobility strategy to effectively apply parking management for decreasing car use - as in the case of Santo Tirso.

A main principle visible is to shift on-street parking spaces to off-street facilities, preferably located outside the intervention area. Debrecen and Klaipeda work with off-street parking facilities at the edge of the city centre to remove both traffic and parking options from the centre. Antwerp applies a multiple-use approach by exploiting the possibility of residents using the parking places of nearby supermarkets as part of a neighbourhood parking scheme. In addition, residents taking a subscription for a parking space in a garage receive a subsidy to the costs if they hand in their residential on-street parking permit at the same time. Debrecen intends to move out parking further to the edge of the city centre by following a Park &Ride strategy that intercepts car users at the edges of the city centre while limiting car parking options in the city centre.

Southwark and Nova Gorica plan to extend paid parking zones. Nova Gorica reduces the number of unregulated parking spaces from 90% of all parking spaces to 10% and adds a permit scheme meeting the needs of specific user groups.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Make parking management a core part of your mobility strategy to make the most out of an integrated mobility strategy.*

- *Communicate to stakeholders and citizens on your objectives for the city and only then on the necessary measures. Nobody wants a paid parking zone, but almost everyone wants livable and attractive streets.*

- *Dedicate revenues from paid parking to the benefit of metered areas or to improve sustainable mobility options. Make sure to communicate the use of revenues in a fully transparent way, visible to everybody.*

- *People react less negatively to frequent but smaller changes than to large scale steps and price increases. Use a gradual approach for extending zones, fees, time limits. And employ tests where possible!*

- *Be aware that car drivers are not the majority of residents in many cities, and only speak up loudly if measures are not to their liking.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *The Mobility Company of Ghent*
- *Parking Enforcement in Trondheim*
- *Parking Management in Vitoria-Gasteiz*
- *Park4SUMP case study videos*
- *Park4SUMP resources*
- *ELTIS Practitioner Briefing Parking and Sustainable Urban Mobility Planning*

9. Managing urban freight for thriving and vibrant streets

KEY POINTS

- *Thriving streets need people, and people need cafes, shops and services supplied on a daily basis by delivery vehicles.*
- *Urban freight is complex and there is no single, one-size-fits-all solution.*
- *Change is only possible through planning and scheme design by considering the movement of both people and goods.*
- *Engaging with businesses and freight operators can increase understanding for the issues and could even provide partners for planning and action.*
- *A simple framework approach can help prioritise potential solutions.*
- *Developing a clear procurement policy for the city could provide a demonstration for others to follow.*

Why managing freight can help create thriving streets

Many people only think about freight when it goes wrong; there being no toilet paper at the start of the pandemic or as the result of our online shopping or ordering food online, making us think about when the delivery will arrive.

But our towns and **cities have always been centres for deliveries**, as marketplaces and ports, and urban populations need food deliveries and their waste removed. As towns and cities have grown, we've built new roads and new housing, and the movement of goods and services has changed in response to the changing customer demands and business requirements. As a result, alongside the growth in car traffic, **the majority of the freight in our towns and cities is now moved on the road network by trucks and vans**.

City authorities have started to tackle the negative impacts from this growth of road traffic such as poor air quality and road safety, and to address decarbonisation due to the climate crisis. **Freight activity**, deliveries, and collections of everything from construction materials to bread and waste, **may only be 10 to 15% of urban traffic**, but it often **contributes disproportionally to greenhouse gas emissions and poor air quality**. And simple physics means that larger or faster vehicles are more dangerous than smaller, slower ones.

The freight industry responds to customer demand and very few customers are willing to pay more for their goods, meaning profit margins are small and there are always competitors who say they can do it cheaper, faster, or greener. There are also a huge variety of goods and services we consume as individuals and businesses, requiring different freight operators and vehicle types. In fact, most freight operators have fewer

than 6 vehicles, whether those vehicles are cargo bikes or cement mixers.

Whether we buy goods from the other side of the globe or from a few kilometres away, which freight vehicle we see on our streets may be determined by the commodity, who we buy it from, how quickly we want it and how much we are willing to pay. There are also a whole range of national and local regulations that impact the vehicle size, weight, and roadworthiness; the driving time and training requirements, if any, for the driver or rider; land use planning for the allocation and design of warehousing sites: and traffic planning for where and when deliveries can take place.

Managing urban freight for thriving and vibrant streets

The complexity of urban freight makes it difficult to know where to start. Freight results from a private commercial activity between a customer and a supplier and little public data exists. There may also be lobbying from stakeholders for specific solutions; for example, cargo bikes or consolidation centres, or the ban of larger vehicles from certain streets.

A **local authority is unlikely to have much experience in freight transport planning** to know what is right, and solutions may appear to be common sense even when they are not. For example, if facilities are available nearby, moving large amounts of freight by rail or water appears to be more efficient, while moving small home deliveries by cargo bike seems better for local residential streets, but both could add unacceptable costs for residents.

When managing urban freight, **the critical element is to understand the specific local circumstances and problems** first, and then to identify what solutions might work and what actions need to occur. This will ensure that any solutions implemented are fit for purpose, and time, effort and money is well spent.

Stakeholder engagement is critical to defining the underlying problems that exist. A city may want to reduce congestion or introduce a new cycle lane, but it is the businesses that are ordering goods and the freight operators who are delivering them who really understand the daily situation. They see what freight is moving locally and why, and the costs and benefits different operators and customers obtain from the way deliveries happen today.

With this understanding cities are better equipped to determine likely solutions, but which ones are right?

Many trials and pilots of consolidation centres, cargo bikes, retiming deliveries and other solutions have taken place. There is always a lot of publicity about the launch of a trial and individual changes that have taken occurred, but usually a lot less information about clear transformative results. Technology is also seen as an answer, but while it may help the industry to be more efficient, it cannot solve every problem and could even create new ones.

These elements and many more may be part of the solution set to reduce the impacts of urban freight. What planners and politicians really need to know if the solution would work here, in this street with these conditions, and what they need to do to make it happen.

In part, this is about learning from other cities and reaching out to stakeholders to gain a better understanding of the complexities of supply chains and the impacts of customer requirements. It is also about thinking through the basic framework of '**Avoid, Shift, Improve**,' as applied to urban freight.

Using this framework approach to reducing the impacts of freight, it is possible to think about:

- **Avoiding road freight trips** by changing mode, consolidating loads, and ensuring joined-up transport and land use planning facilitates fewer movements by managing the supply of logistics land and space for loading and unloading across the urban area;

- **Shifting road freight trips to when space is available on the road network**, by changing the time and place the delivery occurs and managing the route between the origin and destination, and

- **Improving the trip with safer and low or zero-emission vehicles**, well trained drivers and riders, and quiet delivery equipment.

MANAGING FREIGHT IN STOCKHOLM

In 2007, Stockholm's Vision 2030 identified what it will be like to visit, inhabit and work in the city, while a land use development plan (Stockholm City Plan) and the Urban Mobility Strategy contain specific policies to address walking, cycling and public transportation, and the need to accommodate commercial freight traffic.

Starting from a blank page the city produced the first Stockholm Freight Plan in 2014, identifying many challenges but setting just four goals and a four-year delivery period:

- *To enable more reliable delivery times*

- *To facilitate commercial freight vehicles by improving access to efficient loading zones*

- *To promote the use of clean vehicles*

- *To advance the freight delivery partnership between the City and other stakeholders*

Two city officers were dedicated to freight and clear progress was made on all four goals, increasing the confidence of stakeholders that collaboration was beneficial for all concerned. With more knowledge and greater collaboration, the second Stockholm Freight Plan was published in 2018.

Thriving Streets Lessons

Very few people see the whole supply chain and even fewer understand it. The critical step is to recognise that freight is one important piece in the jigsaw puzzle to creating thriving streets. As an important step, freight needs to be considered as part of transport / mobility and land use planning, with clear targets.

No city starts with a lot of freight data. Stakeholder engagement will help identify the major issues, but **openness** is needed as some of these may seem counterintuitive or even be problematic for some residents. For example, stakeholders may suggest the need to review the existing regulations on delivery times or that better enforcement of the kerbside space is needed to help create the desired street space.

Both of these changes may raise concerns, as deliveries out of hours need to be quiet and funding may be required for enforcement. Compromise may be required from all sides and recognising that city planning is an iterative process that should enable greater experimentation and **flexibility**.

The city will already employ people who know something about freight: those responsible for the collection of municipal waste, parking enforcement, and economic development all spring to mind. There will also be specific local employers and businesses who are critical to the solutions - e.g. port, hospital, or manufcturing sites. Engaging with these colleagues first may help in developing the **engagement plan** and knowing what questions to ask.

There is more guidance and research on urban freight being published every week and a 'new' solution seems to appear every day, either in a newspaper or on Twitter or even on TikTok. By having a role in the municipality which takes **responsibility** for reducing the impacts of urban freight there will be a growing understanding of the potential solutions, and the successes and failures. It will also provide a route to coordinating the approach across a wider urban area or region.

Finally, the municipality can be a catalyst for change by providing **leadership** through stakeholder engagement and developing a clear procurement policy for the city. By procuring deliveries using zero-emission vehicles and drivers/riders trained in urban delivery, the city can provide a demonstration of the effectiveness and costs for others to follow.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Freight is an important part of the urban mobility landscape, consequently, it needs to be an integral part of urban land-use and mobility planning – this will also enable interventions in active travel and shared mobility to be more effective.*

- *Managing urban freight is complex and affects a wide range of actors; therefore, stakeholder engagement is critical. The city is ideally placed to play a key role in coordinating this engagement.*

- *Even with a complex challenge like urban freight, starting small is possible: dedicating one person at the mobility department to work with freight is an important first step.*

- *The city can also lead by example, demonstrating the commitment through its own supply chain.*

- *The municipality can learn a lot by sharing and engaging with peers and connect with other European cities taking a lead in freight.*

DISCOVER MORE

Specific

- *Sustainable Urban Mobility Plans (Sustainable Urban Logistics Plans)*
- *Delivery and Servicing Plans*
- *Cargo bikes*
- *Business websites*
- *Walking freight*
- *Retiming deliveries ('off-hours' deliveries)*

General

- *Summary*
- *URBACT Freight TAILS*
- *Eurocities*
- *ICLEI EcoLogistics*
- *POLIS*
- *Transport for London – Streets Toolkit*

10. Placemaking – thriving and vibrant public spaces in the making

- *Placemaking is a participatory and multifaceted approach to the planning, design, and management of public spaces - with the objective of creating places for people. In addition to the physical aspects of places, it gives attention to non-tangible elements like culture, social identify and community values.*

- *Using the placemaking approach contributes to enhancing the physical capital, the green capital, the social capital, as well as the economic and cultural capital - all fundamental elements of strong communities.*

- *Great places are sociable, offer a wide range of uses and activities, have a positive image, are comfortable, easily accessible for all and connected to their immediate (adjacent buildings) and wider environment.*

- *Once the public space you want to transform is selected, identify your stakeholders, and build a collaborative structure; dedicate considerable time to evaluating and understanding the place, and prepare a place plan. Then start "making" - implement short-term experiments to test the solutions, monitor and evolve, then deliver long-term improvements while maintaining on-going re-evaluation.*

What is placemaking?

In recent years, many medium-sized cities followed a series of different strategies of urban planning focused more on the realization of large-scale design infrastructures with the objective of turning them into crucial assets for restructuring the city's fabric. However, these grandiose development projects often failed to achieve their objectives and did not manage to solve even the most fundamental local challenges.

The **failure of more traditional, infrastructure-focused urban development** approaches has increasingly **driven cities to experiment with new ways of addressing complex local challenges**. Emerging as an antidote to the use of rigid, institutionalized, and decontextualized urban development practices during the transformation of public spaces, **placemaking constitutes a participatory and multifaceted approach to urban planning** - more specifically to the to the **planning, design, and management of public spaces**.

In the core of every placemaking process are people, with their needs, desires, and visions: people have the power of reshaping public spaces, making them more accessible and connected, but also supporting the development of new services and activities. Besides the physical attributes of a public space, placemaking dedicates particular attention to the less tangible aspects - including culture, social identity, community values.

Inspired from the vision of Jane Jacobs and William H. White on the creation of welcoming public spaces and active neighbourhoods, the concept of placemaking was developed in America in the 1990s and then implemented and spread by the NYC-based organization Project for Public Spaces, with the launch of pilot actions and guidelines for improving the role and the quality of public spaces at urban level. Many other cities around the world followed this model to reinvent public spaces, always with community-based active participation at its centre.

Placemaking is always **about improving public spaces**, with the objective of making them vital, lively destinations for people. It **involves planning, design, and management** - and as its name suggests, it has a strong **focus on "making"**, not just planning.

WHY Placemaking?

Overall, using the philosophy and core concepts behind placemaking results in better places. Placemaking - and the resulting better places - **helps bridging intercultural, interethnic, and intergenerational differences** typically present in urban environments. It also contributes to forging a **stronger community identity** by giving people a sense of place, common vision, and values - and even **helps the development of local economy** through encouraging markets of local products and small-scale entrepreneurial activities.

So, by creating great places, placemaking helps to enhance the physical capital, the green capital, the social capital, the cultural capital, and the economic capital - all fundamental ingredients of a well-functioning community.

WHAT makes a great place?

When you look at various public places - even within the same city - at first sight it could be surprising that some of those places are really vibrant, full of vitality, people - things are happening there all the time - while others are empty, abandoned, and overall, painfully lack vitality. Design and infrastructural attributes do count when it comes to attractiveness of an urban space - but good design and quality architecture are far from being the only ingredients defining great places. In fact, probably everyone has seen beautifully designed places that somehow don't work - and places that are far from perfect, even maybe a bit rundown - and are still full of life, people love to hang around there. According to the model developed by the Project for Public Places (PPS), the main attributes of a great place can be structured under four main categories.

1. **Sociability** Sociability of a place is all about people: a sociable public place is where people hang around, one where you would choose to meet your friends. Such places are easy to spot: people are convened in groups, they (animatedly) talk to each other and often smile. Diversity is also present: you can detect a mix of ages, ethnic groups, women, and men.

2. **Uses and activities** In a great public space there is a choice of activities one can do: people can just hang around, sit, and watch urban life unfolding, read, eat, play, do some sports; kids are running around chasing pigeons, older people soak up the sun, mums are pushing prams.
3. **Comfort and Image** Great places are comfortable - even cozy, like a favorite old armchair. There is are a range of dedicated and informal seating opportunities conveniently positioned - most of them used by people all the time. The space is clean, free from litter - and feels safe, both in broad daylight and during dark hours. Most such places are walkable, pedestrian-friendly - dominated by people, not by cars. Often, they are not fancy - but do make an immediate pleasant impression.
4. **Access and Linkages** Great places are easy to find and to access - people can use a variety of mobility options to get there - including uninterrupted sidewalks from surrounding areas. Accessibility is good for all - including people with special needs. Great public spaces have good connection with adjacent butildings - the space is surrounded by active ground floors, not blank walls.

HOW to develop great public spaces?

Placemaking creates a balance among three main elements of urban development: hardware, software and the often ignored or neglected orgware. Placemaking counterbalances the role played by large-scale built infrastructure in urban areas, introducing new elements that can foster active inclusion, civic engagement, and reduction of inequalities in the access to public spaces and services.

Considering the real needs and emotions of people when a public space needs to be regenerated is crucial for connecting software to hardware: it is fundamental for matching the tangible to the intangible.

Placemaking also goes beyond the mere actions of tactical urbanism because it supports cities in creating a framework for using collaboration with residents and creative uses of space as part of wider urban development strategies.

When adopting a placemaking approach, the process is relatively straightforward. Once the space is chosen, the first step is the **creation of a collaborative system**, with a series of actors and stakeholders within the local community identified and actively involved from an early stage. The second step is the **evaluation of the space**, with a strong focus on the perception that people have of that place; this involves analysing data but also understanding the demands and desires of the community (by observing the place and having an active dialogue). The third step is the **participatory design of a place plan** - this process involves developing a vision, identifying specific actions, and preparing a visual concept. The fourth step is **the iterative implementation of short-term experiments** to test the solutions (both physical improvements and programming) on the ground, which needs to be monitored for being readjusted. Finally, introduce **long-term improvements while maintaining ongoing reevaluation** (and make changes if and when necessary).

REGENERATING A FORMER PRISON IN AMSTERDAM THROUGH PLACEMAKING

Amsterdam transformed an empty prison into a cultural centre using placemaking tools, which fostered the connection between locals and asylum seekers from Syria, Eritrea and Afghanistan.

The space hosted local startups and art studios and was regenerated through a series of collaborative actions co-designed by the residents and put in practice the so-called "Amsterdam approach", a cooperative policy framework fostering the creation of activities on the ground.

Certainly, the devil is in the details - and providing detailed guidance for placemaking processes is well beyond the scope of this report. Fortunately, both Project for Public Spaces and Placemaking Europe offer a wide variety of specific methodologies and tools freely available at their website.

A great place needs
at least 10 reasons to be there

11 PLACEMAKING PRINCIPLES BY PPS

The 11 principles developed by PPS can help any city to turn public spaces into spaces for the community.

1. ***The community (the user) is the expert*** *- in every placemaking process you need to listen to the community - the regular users of the public space. They understand best the place and can provide the most valuable insights.*

2. ***You are creating a place - not a design*** *- design is an important aspect of placemaking - but only one. Developing active uses, economic activities, attractive events are often more important than "mere" design.*

3. ***Look for partners*** *- placemaking is a participatory process, and you should involve partners - schools, libraries, museums, businesses, and the community as early in the process as possible. This also enhances sense of ownership and community of the space.*

4. ***You can see a lot just by observing*** *- while having an active dialogue and working together with the community is essential, simply observing how the place works, how people use it can really be helpful in identifying what works well, what's missing and what should be improved.*

5. ***Have a vision*** *- while developing a place together with the community is a longer journey, which sometimes involves trial and error, testing new solutions - it is important to have a shared overall vision of what the place should be like in the future.*

6. ***Start with the petunias*** *- lighter, quicker, cheaper. Speaking about trial error - simple, inexpensive, rapid (but reversible) changes - like planting flowers or painting parts of the space can be a great way of testing ideas, experimenting with solutions. In fact, most great places are not the results of one major transformation or rehabilitation initiative - they evolve over time, with incremental changes and improvements.*

7. ***Triangulate*** *- locate various elements next to each other to foster activity - for instance placing an ice-cream stand and benches in the shade of a large tree in a park.*

8. ***They always say "It can't be done"*** *- in a placemaking process, there will always be people, officials, bureaucrats saying that something can't be done. If it is an important element, don't accept it. Bring on board powerful allies, keep pushing, find alternative solutions - there's almost always a way.*

9. ***Form supports function*** *- and not the other way around. Architects, landscape architects love to create beautiful, unique, one-of-a-kind designs - and there is no problem with that. However, it is important that those beautiful forms support important functions.*

10. ***Money is not the issue*** *- the excuse probably most often used by decision-makers, politicians when it comes to transforming a place is the lack of funding. However, if money is not available, how come that all those grandiose infrastructure projects can be implemented? Also, most placemaking projects should not cost a fortune - especially if it is a gradual process and the community is involved. So, if there's an intent, money can be made available.*

11. ***You are never finished*** *- a great place caters for the needs of its users - and those needs change over time. This means that the place should also evolve and adapt to the changed needs, customs, and preferences of the community.*

Thriving Streets Lessons

Placemaking strategies work when they manage to connect the right to the city, tactical urbanism, and urban strategy. The combination between fast experimental actions and the development of a long-term vision on how to make public spaces more attractive and prosperous is a crucial element also of the approach carried out by the partners of Thriving Streets.

The adoption of placemaking strategies can constitute a relevant element for the implementation of the Integrated Action Plans on medium and long-term, making the urban strategy co-designed with residents and stakeholders more flexible and able to cope with the emerging needs of the cities, such as the post-Covid recovery.

The improvement of the quality of public spaces in the neighbourhood of Deurne in Antwerp can be carried out through a series of actions. The Antwerp team has already experimented with small temporary interventions on public spaces, which has provided valuable insights - most importantly, led to the conclusion that even more dialogue with the residents and the retail community is needed to better understand the real needs and desires of users - as well as to improve the perception of the place within the community.

The collaborative regeneration of the Lower Road in Southwark (London) can be carried out by fostering the active engagement of business owners, who may be the driving force of a bottom-up placemaking process aimed at improving the attractiveness and sense of identity of the area and attracting residents and visitors.

Light can form the backbone of some interesting placemaking initiatives, engaging residents through enhancing the visibility of monuments, buildings, and public spaces: this approach combining lighting and placemaking was experimented with by Klaipeda, which included lighting of architectural heritage among the actions aimed at reviving the old city centre.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Invest a small amount of the city budget for urban regeneration using placemaking approach and principles.*

- *Test a placemaking action in a symbolic place of the city, thus creating a multiplier effect in terms of innovation. If the experiment is successful, expand it to other public spaces in the city.*

- *Placemaking is not a project - once a place is successfully transformed, switch to places and streets management to consolidate the innovation tested with placemaking.*

- *Connect with other cities in Europe that test similar placemaking activities, learn from them and create your own placemaking strategy - place-based and connected to your policy objectives.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *Project for Public Spaces*
- *Placemaking Europe*
- *Placemaking Guides:*
  Link 1 | Link 2 | Link 3 | Link 4
- *Placemaking in Turin, Italy*
- *Seven examples of placemaking in Francisco and the Bay area*
- *From "streets for traffic" to "streets for people": can street experiments transform urban mobility?*

11.
Storytelling for urban change

KEY POINTS

- *Storytelling is a cross-cutting approach, focused on the analysis of the urban phenomena on medium and long-term. It can contribute to positive changes.*
- *An integrated narrative to showcase the impact of urban trends on the everyday life of people, using human stories, solutions, and practices.*
- *Urban storytelling is a collaborative narrative style, involving new sources, styles, and tools. It can also be a useful participatory support to integrated urban planning.*
- *The proper narrative can help positioning innovative actions focusing on public space and mobility as crucial elements for public debate.*
- *Urban storytelling creates emotional connection with the receivers of the communication, enhances sense of place and identity.*

How storytelling can contribute to positive change in cities

Cities are places of challenges and solutions, but at the same time cities are also places where storytelling is more effective in creating new, collaborative narratives of change.

After the Covid emergency, many **European cities tested innovative solutions** in terms of use of public spaces and green areas, social and economic recovery, or creation of new services within a short walking or cycling distance.

The right to the city, the 15-Minute city, city diplomacy and design for all are just some of the global trends that are concretely adopted by the cities with actions having a tangible impact on the quality of life of the residents. However, all these trends need to be well narrated to be fully understood by the people, in order to make the residents part of the change that local authorities are fostering with integrated strategies and planning.

Urban storytelling is a cross-cutting approach, which is contributing to positive change in cities, with a focus on stories, solutions, and practices more than just focusing on local news and the political debate. The creation of integrated narrative strategies is fundamental to showcase the impact that new urban trends are having on the everyday life of people, connecting international, national, and local dimensions in a coherent and effective way.

Compared to traditional forms of journalism and communication, urban storytelling is **fostering innovative models of contents production, involving non-traditional actors as new sources of information** such as civic officials, NGOs representatives,

city activists and active residents.

Urban storytelling is also **using new narrative styles and multimedia tools** for promoting the diversity of urban topics, such as long-forms, podcasts, infographics, and elaboration from visual data platforms.

These new productive models, which are often based on the connection with social media channels, are also contaminating traditional media fostering the integration with existing media and communication ecosystems, thus giving more visibility to urban topics on the public debate.

Urban storytelling can be also one of the possible solutions to the crisis of the media landscapes. The offer of high-quality and in-depth contents, the **stronger need by the citizens of being informed about what is happening around them**, the capacity of fostering a positive interaction with the users: these are the distinctive elements making this particular form of storytelling a promising field for many local contexts on medium and long term.

A CHIEF STORYTELLING OFFICER FOR DETROIT

The City of Detroit hired in 2018 a Chief Storyteller Officer to reshape the narrative of the city, focusing on the spirit of the people living and working in Detroit's neighbourhoods.

The city launched a digital magazine called The Neighbourhoods which is showcasing the stories of artists, small business owners, doctors, nonprofit groups, but also of members of LGBT and African-American community. The objective is to offer a different angle of view on the vibrancy of the city, shining a light on who is making the city stronger but is traditionally ignored by the mainstream narrative

Using urban storytelling to co-create thriving streets

Urban storytelling is a powerful support to integrated planning because it offers the ground for sharing ideas and proposals with the residents, helping them to understand the urban changes that are going to happen in public spaces and city streets on medium and long term.

At the same time, **the collaborative creation of an urban narrative can revive the sense of place and the community spirit**, fostering a better knowledge of the urban context among urban experts, professionals, and city dwellers.

The creation of clear narrative strategies is key to support the implementation of integrated plans, with a focus on the actions co-designed with residents and stakeholders and showcasing their impact on different areas of the city.

The connection between urban planning and mobility, the strategies for reviving streets and public spaces, the role of residents as change-makers are powerful topics that can be explored with a storytelling strategy aimed at creating an emotional connection with the receivers of the communication.

The design of better and more inclusive mobility systems for people at urban level can be showcased highlighting the steps of the process and the role played by the residents in collaboratively defining a set of solutions. The active involvement of all the stakeholders who co-created the solutions in the storytelling action can make them multiplier among their respective audiences, enhancing the impact of the narrative of change to be delivered at different scales.

The focus on the role of mobility as activator of integrated policies and solution with an impact at local level and beyond is a crucial element for an action of urban storytelling presenting an original angle of view on the action of a city on the topics recalled by Thriving Streets.

The impact of innovative actions on urban spaces and mobility on the everyday life of the residents is the core of a narrative which makes a large use of stories based on the experience of people on the ground, and possibly connected with the topics which are at the core of the local debate on sustainable urban development.

Thriving Streets Lessons

The partners of Thriving Streets tested the connection between urban storytelling, Small Scale Actions and Integrated Action Plans highlighting the role played by a collaborative narrative for making their action on livable spaces more understandable by different categories of users.

Residents, associations, local business owners are among the main actors of urban storytelling actions proposed as part of their action for promoting the mixed use of streets, for reusing vacant spaces, for preventing car parking in city centres or for fostering active mobility among different types of users.

The use of multimedia tools, such as podcast, video, or social media campaigns, or the revival of traditional tools such as the graphic novels show how a diversity of techniques can be used for narrating the change in urban area. The relation between the residents and the evolution of public spaces is the core element of narratives which complemented the action of integrated planning and can be also combined to action of city branding and urban promotion.

USEFUL TIPS FOR MAYORS

- *Focus your narrative on the solutions, explaining the process you went through.*

- *Create a series of podcast to tell what is going to change in the public spaces of your cities.*

- *Include different visions and points of view in the narrative of the city, so to make it representative of the vibrancy of the city.*

- *Launch a campaign for involving residents in a collaborative action of urban storytelling, which can revive the community spirit.*

- *Adopt an inclusive narrative style, showcasing the impact of urban changes (such as the actions on public space) on different categories of users.*

DISCOVER MORE

- *The Neighborhoods of Detroit*

- *Urban solutions from all the world narrated by Bloomberg CityLab*

- *Examples of urban narratives on City at Eye Level*