

# LIVING STREETS

From citizen engagement to citizen ownership  
a guidebook for municipalities



# THE PEOPLE BEHIND LIVING STREETS



# INTRODUCTION

This guidebook will inspire you if you are in the process of rethinking public space in your city.

For many years the space in the city has been taken away from the people and given to the automobile. As we look out of the window onto a congested street, another lane for cars was simply added or new roads were built. But we cannot perpetuate this model by expanding road infrastructure to unlimited levels.

Urban planning and mobility is all about people. They congregate in cities to work but also to meet, seeking casual or informal interaction and support that makes people thrive. Public space is also essential from a social and economic point of view.

Today, European cities face challenges in urban planning and other societal issues, such as job creation, climate change, land use, immigration and so on, but are also the best placed to find solutions. At the same time local authorities are no longer perceived to be the only actor to solve complex issues faced in cities. Local authorities, businesses and residents more than ever need each other to find creative solutions to challenge their way of thinking, acting and learning. We believe that

in every city there are many people from different backgrounds, from companies, local associations and municipalities ready to join forces and search for these solutions. Through the Living Streets we bring the energy and creativity of people together and are making the city of tomorrow visible today.

In this guidebook, you will read about the experience of eight European cities where collaborating citizens, businesses, local authorities, associations enable inhabitants to temporarily transform their streets in the place they have always dreamed of. They learn from all the practical experiences and reflect on a more sustainable society. One of the main strategic questions of this experiment is how we can organise our daily lives without using our cars as much as we do today. By removing cars and finding other places for parking, new space becomes available for other functions. Other diverse aspects are taken into account such as: socialising, risk of exclusion, avoiding isolation, safety, street prostitution, noise pollution, urban agriculture, pedestrianisation and the environment at large.

Inspired by the Ghent Living Streets, seven other cities created their

own Living Streets with the help of pioneers from the Trojan Lab network (Ghent), transition thinkers from Meneer de Leeuw (the Netherlands) and Energy Cities as an association of local authorities in energy transition. Now, five years after the first Living Street was created in Ghent in spring 2013, we are happy to see the Ghent pioneers organising themselves in a Living Street Foundation ([livingstreet.org](http://livingstreet.org)) to help other cities.

We are inviting you to read this guidebook to get inspired by the diverse strategies, initiatives, stories of cities and people. We do hope you will find all the information you need in here so that you can get a grasp of what a Living Street is. We will not provide you with a unique model to carry out Living Streets, a single recipe or list of ingredients to make your cities thrive. We prepared this guidebook with the purpose of allowing you to become more streetwise by sharing the necessary understanding of what Living Streets are and showing you how the pioneering initiative of Ghent was used and adapted by seven other European cities to their own contexts with their residents, local stakeholders and initiative takers.

Enjoy your reading.







# TABLE OF CONTENTS

- p.02* The people behind Living Streets
- p.03* Introduction
- p.06* Streetwise
- p.08* What is a Living Street?
- p.14* The inspiration: Ghent
- p.18* How can you create Living Streets in your city?
- p.45* Living Streets stories

# STREETWISE

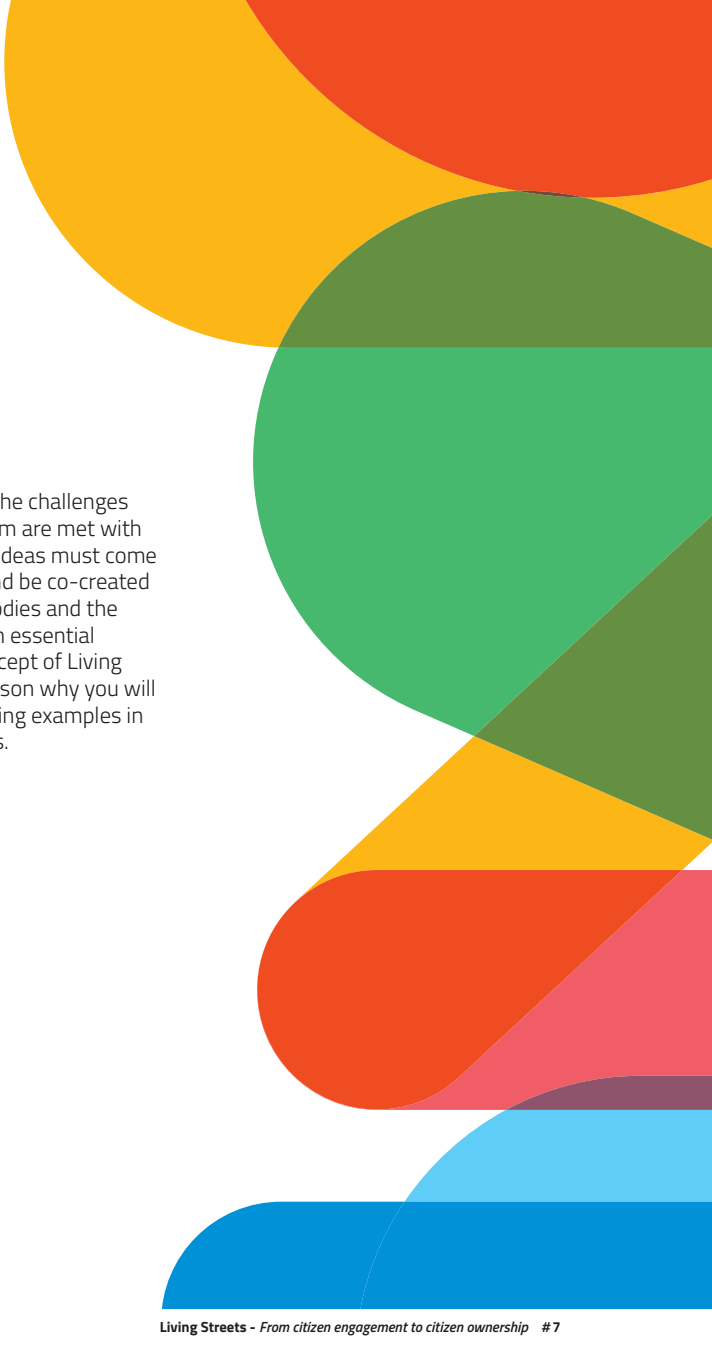
By 2050, two-thirds of the world population will live in urban areas. People are migrating to cities at an exponential rate and the trend does not seem to be decreasing. This unprecedented growth needs to be managed sustainably if we want to move forward.

Streets are an intrinsic part of cities. If we think of a city as a body, streets are the veins through which resources and people are swiftly pumped into buildings, shops, offices, health facilities, schools, etc. They are the channels that allowed the city to be vibrant, fast-paced and offer services that improve living standards. This phenomenon, as

beneficial as it is, has developed out of control in the past few decades and has put the car on a pedestal while relegating the resident to a peripheral role in street life.

Initially, streets were not thought of as just channels for vehicles but they were places where people congregate, talk to one another, where children play. The idea of cars dominating the space is relatively new and we now find ourselves having to rethink our relationship with the streets. We need residents to take their rightful place to become more streetwise, but how? The growth of cities has traditionally been designed by public servants

and political leaders at the municipal level, which resulted in the car-centred streets we see today. Their objectives were driven by economic growth and efficient infrastructure, which clearly improved residents' quality of life. This has resulted in plans to add more lanes, maintain worn-out bitumen, improve traffic lights and install signage around the city. We now need to deploy efforts to shift streets dynamics, away from cars and closer to residents. In order to do so in the most effective way possible, solutions for residents need to come from residents. A collaborative approach will ensure we do not lose sight of who the streets are meant for and will frame



residents as owners and developers, rather than as mere consumers. Although very important, this is not only about giving the streets back to residents as an ideal. In the case studies presented in the following pages, you will find examples of projects that not only put people first but also influenced them in a very practical way. We have heard stories of growing local economies, sprouting of businesses, increased security and better infrastructure.

Cities are vast and powerful. They are highly resource intensive but they are also melting pots of ideas and experiences. In order to create more sustainable cities, we need

to make sure that the challenges they bring with them are met with creative solutions. Ideas must come from the streets and be co-created by the municipal bodies and the residents. This is an essential element of the concept of Living Streets and the reason why you will find so many inspiring examples in the following pages.



# WHAT IS A LIVING STREET?

Living Streets is a real-life experiment whereby residents can temporarily transform their street into the sustainable place they have always dreamed of.

A Living Street allows you to set your imagination free to find alternatives that transform the public space and strengthen the collective dynamic. It is an urban laboratory tackling diverse issues such as mobility, urban agriculture, local economy, solidarity, social cohesion, culture, leisure, sports and health.



In a Living Street, the inhabitants get to know each other, they meet and discuss the needs of the street where they live. They imagine together what their ideal street would look like and they think of solutions to reach this vision together.

*This project is extremely meaningful to us as it is a true chance to encourage inhabitants of all ages to dream together, to be inspired and to share their fears, their desires.*

*A young resident of Sint Jan Nepomucenus street, Brussels*

Most importantly, residents are seen as the experts of their streets! This does not only make it a story of individuals trying to make

their own street car-free. Living Streets is the story of hundreds of citizens, temporarily experiencing a different lifestyle in car-free areas being closed to traffic for several weeks and sometimes even up to six months. Together with the municipality and local stakeholders, citizens are exploring how local policy-making and urban planning can build on the experience of Living Streets for all existing areas and especially ensure that all newly-paved streets and neighbourhoods are always designed as 'Living Streets', with the consent of all levels of society.

The experiment has already been successfully developed in Ghent. Now other European cities have been inspired, built on this experience and adapted it to their own local context.

*Living Streets introduced positive changes to the Žeravinec neighbourhood. Vlatka from the municipality gave us an initial boost to set up urban gardens by providing us with a gift set of gardening tools. By gardening, we as neighbours started communicating, spending more time together and helping each other. New ideas come one after the other.*

*We managed to get water tanks and fruit seeding which allowed us to set up two community orchards along with gardens, which provide us with fruits as well as a place to hang out.*

*Ankica Lukač, citizen and urban gardener in Ivanič-Grad*



# GET INSPIRED!



**In Zadar, Croatia,** the Living Streets were organised in a derelict area in 2017, nearby the historical city centre. The purpose was to revive this abandoned area by bringing it back to the citizens and turning this part of the city into a central point for gathering people and being an alternative to arts and cultural events. Currently, this area is only used for parking cars on three big parking slots which are crowded the whole year.

**In Ghent, Belgium,** Living Streets triggered the imagination of hundreds of citizens and since 2013 led to more than 50 Living Streets. Some streets were located so close to each other that we can even speak of Living Neighbourhoods! Organized by a temporary network, Living Streets were used as a strategic experiment to help the City of Ghent with future sustainable mobility policy, creating a new approach to urban space and reinforcing social links by multiplying interactions among citizens.







**In Ivanić-Grad, Croatia**, the main square was closed to cars in 2017. The objectives were to prepare the ground for the creation of a pedestrian city centre, promote the bike as a means of transport, support local production and consumption and encourage a circular economy. Workshops were organised with the citizens focusing on the redevelopment of the urban spaces, seeing the square as a 'living room' closed to the traffic.

**In Turin, Italy**, the residential neighbourhood of Campidoglio (5,000 inhabitants), also home to many local artists and craftsmen, is the laboratory where Living Streets is experimented. Close to the city centre, it is characterised by narrow streets, full of cars, with only one pedestrian street. Residents wanted to take back the streets and reorganise the public space. The municipality supported this process by proposing Laboratorio Campidoglio in 2017.





**In Milton Keynes, United Kingdom,** the citizens are not yet ready for Living Streets as the city is a new town built for the individual car user. Milton Keynes currently has few traffic problems but will grow from 230,000 inhabitants to over 300,000 in the next 7 years and 500,000 by 2050. Existing communities need more time to accept this initiative, gain trust and ownership of the public realm in a car-centric city where green space is near everyone's house. The legacy of the Living Streets initiative here is that people will be more involved in designing new neighbourhoods.

**In La Rochelle, France,** the Saint Nicolas district is a small shopping area close to the city centre. The aim was to make this street and neighbourhood visible from far away and attract more people to this neighbourhood. Living Streets were used to help local shopkeepers who are struggling to attract more clients, taking into account the competition of the huge commercial areas located in the outskirts. Living Streets were also implemented in the old marketplace to reduce car traffic. Within the Living Streets, La Rochelle used the bike as a voluntary behaviour change factor as is it related to many aspects such as environment, health, education, sociability and economy.





**In Brussels, Belgium,** based on a call for applications 8 Living Streets were organised in different neighbourhoods between 2016 and 2018. They tackled various problems such as safety and street prostitution, the need for positive facilitation of public spaces and ownership by the inhabitants, green spaces, public works and need for silence, a 'residential zone' for meeting, sharing between inhabitants and a public space shared between pedestrians and cars.

**In Rotterdam, the Netherlands,** 13 dream streets were organised between 2015 and 2017 in residential streets, focusing on making the street a more attractive place to meet and play. The most represented social category is highly educated people. Some Living Streets are taking place in socially and economically mixed neighbourhoods, where a professional organisation is needed to develop the plan and coordinate the project together with the citizens.





# THE INSPIRATION: GHENT

## **Ghent's radical transformation**

Anyone will tell you that cars play a prominent role in Belgian street life. But things have changed a lot since Ghent's former Mayor Frank Beke's plans to pedestrianise an area of the city forced him to wear a bulletproof jacket in 1997. The plans covered 35 hectares of the city having angered many local business owners and led to heated protests. The current Mayor, Daniël Termont, says that he would be the one wearing the bulletproof jacket if he decided to reintroduce cars into the city today.

Ghent's radical transformation is an inspiring example. Today, the city centre is healthier than ever and 72% of Ghentians support the city's plan to expand its pedestrian zones,

but this was not accomplished overnight. Something that affects a whole neighbourhood requires people to embrace the concept and be prepared for change and this is not easy. This is especially true when plans come dictated from the municipality, without the involvement of residents from the beginning. The City of Ghent finally made progress, but it took many and long public consultations. The need for a different approach became evident.

## **Bottom-up planning**

Residents and local associations took the lead and engaged in discussions about the streets they imagined. Through a much needed bottom-up approach,

residents took full control of the process and Living Streets started developing, almost organically. They decided what to do, how to do it and the City of Ghent offered the space for experimentation while the Trojan Lab, a former local think tank supported the process as initiator and facilitator. Within this framework, co-creation and agreement between residents was a prerequisite for any idea to move forward and it was only then that the ideas could become real projects. It is not surprising that this approach to street planning is more effective than direct implementation by the municipality. This is because, contrary to municipal planning, a Living Streets project is more likely to meet the needs of the neighbourhood.

There is immense value behind Living Streets, which has sprouted from a two-street initiative in 2012 to a total of 50 Living Streets in Ghent. Through projects like these where active engagement is central, residents, government officials, organisations and business owners built a new kind of relationship by working and planning together. They co-created, co-designed, discussed, compromised and, most importantly, got to know each other while creating livable streets for their neighbourhood.

Living Streets are at their core, experimental. The result (a liveable street for residents) is important, but the process of getting there was the key. It was during planning, consultations, meetings and

implementation that residents could see the biggest earnings in the long-term. Not only did they strengthen relationships between each other but they also experienced the inner workings of street-planning, which will provide invaluable lessons for the future. They were exposed to problems and challenges, which they countered with solutions and opportunities. Through Living Streets, residents are no longer passive actors approving or disapproving their municipality's plans. Residents are building a/the Ghent that they want.

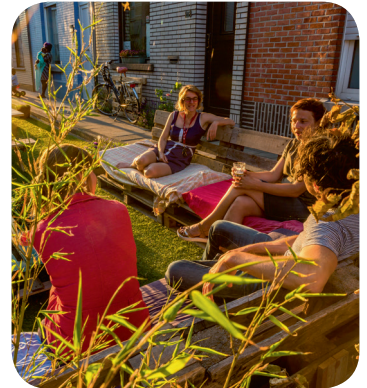
## What if?

In 2012 the City of Ghent asked residents what kind of sustainable city they envisioned for the future and created the necessary space for experimentation. This space was key for new ideas to be developed and implemented. The Trojan Lab came up with the concept of Living Streets based on a series of concrete experiments to materialise the residents' vision. The Trojan Lab is an independent network of collaborating citizens, businesses, civil servants and organisations and developed with the support of the municipality of Ghent.

Living Streets started with the question "What if?" What if our street would be covered with grass? What if I could have breakfast with my neighbours in the street? What if the noise of cars passing by would be replaced by the laughter of children? To answer these questions, the residents of Ghent came up with concrete ideas and plans to move forward and they took care of implementation, maintenance and organisation. Furthermore, Living Streets are labs for new ideas, innovative products, services and even academic research and the municipality gained invaluable perspectives from it. They got to learn what residents wanted from their environment, learned new ways of approaching challenges and collected data on what worked, what did not and why.

*We realized that a vision alone would not change the world.*

*Dries Gysels and Pieter Deschamps,  
Trojan Lab, Ghent*







# HOW CAN YOU CREATE LIVING STREETS IN YOUR CITY?



A city adventure:  
**CROSS-FERTILISE**  
municipal  
departments



**IDENTIFY**  
the right place:  
Living Streets,  
Living Squares,  
Living Areas



**DARE TO DREAM:**  
co-design  
a common vision  
for the street



**MAKE  
THE INVISIBLE  
VISIBLE** and  
engage citizens



**IMPLEMENT**  
by creating  
the space for  
experimentation  
and creativity



**FINANCE**  
your  
Living Streets



From temporary  
to permanent:  
**IMPACT ON CITY  
PLANNING**

**DEVELOP A  
QUALITATIVE  
EVALUATION  
PROCESS:**  
when 'soft'  
projects  
have a  
solid impact



# A city adventure: cross-fertilise municipal departments

The preparation and implementation of Living Streets requires action from different municipal departments and services as it touches upon transversal issues. To ensure synergies and an integrated approach from the very beginning, during this step, you can co-create the Living Streets initiative from an internal municipal perspective.



*Urban planning no longer takes place inside, among political representatives, the administration and experts, but outside, in the streets, with residents. In the next phase, we will have to look into how places can be restructured depending on the use and the functions residents gave them. The street will be an extension of their living room and anyone can try new things.*

*Ans Persoons, Deputy Mayor of  
Brussels, 2014-2017*

## **Key departments you might engage with:**

- Urban planning
- Mobility and transport
- Education and culture
- Health
- Finance
- Participation or public relations
- Communication
- Parks and recreation

## **Key questions you might address:**

- What is the strategic local issue you would like to tackle with Living Streets?
- Is there a specific neighbourhood you would like to address?

- What is the internal framework, the practicalities for setting up a Living Street? Do you need to prepare an implementation manual? Should you have a call for proposals for the Living Streets open to all residents of the city?
- What are the steps you will carry out?
- What key stakeholders can you engage with (different associations, local businesses, shopkeepers, local labs)?
- Do you want to implement Living Streets as a local authority or are you considering subcontracting to a local neighbourhood association, a think tank or fab lab for instance?

You will also need to connect to other important municipal bodies that are needed for setting up a Living Street, such as the local police department concerning safety issues, setting up signposts or street panels to close the street to traffic, or local schools related to educational issues.

### **How are you getting organised?**

You might set up a core team working on the Living Streets composed of:

- A coordinator
- Civil servants
- Councillors



### **How can Living Streets influence the municipal administration?**

Living Streets can be perceived as a real game changer by the city administration. Although it might start as a mobility project, many other themes are tackled such as: social behaviour; ecological environment and sustainable futures; local economy; and urban agriculture.



**TIP: You might also think of specific functions, such as a change manager or a dream coach in order to support citizens in the co-creation phase.**



In Ghent, Living Streets is not seen as a project but as a transition experiment to explore new ways of doing, thinking and organizing the city. It is a complex initiative that also puts pressure on the system.

#### **BRUSSELS – a Vade Mecum for the citizens**

In Brussels a vade mecum or guide was prepared and addressed to residents to explain what Living Streets are and the specific steps to be followed to initiate one. The vade mecum is jointly introduced by three councillors in charge for “Participation”, “Public works and mobility” and “Green spaces and environment”.

*Living Streets created synergies between different offices of the Municipality of Turin, that usually do not work together, but that welcomed the project. The collaboration of different departments increased as a result of a more direct link with the citizens and their needs.*

*Civil servants from the Municipality of Turin*

Via Living Streets, citizens become increasingly aware of certain issues and change their mindsets. They are also able to understand and appreciate more the work of civil servants, technicians and experts. This creates a fertile ground for co-creation.



### **ROTTERDAM – inter-departmental team**

A dedicated inter-departmental team of 5 to 7 civil servants meets regularly before and during implementation of Living Streets. They advise the inhabitants on their plans and budget and they check that the planned activities comply with the regulation. They also give support during implementation when needed. The Living Streets are managed by the urban planning department and there is also large involvement of the traffic department and maintenance department.

*I usually work at my desk, I went to the street and I felt I was working with the citizens and not for the citizens!*

*Rossana Guglielmetti and Nadia Bonghi, Municipality of Turin*



# Identify the right place: Living Streets, Living Squares, Living Areas

Living Streets can be organised or naturally emerge in a street, a public square or an entire neighbourhood.

You can organise Living Streets by:

- Either organising an open call to all residents of the city or of a specific neighbourhood, evaluating the applications and granting the funding to specific streets with good projects,
- Or deciding on a specific area in advance (square, street or neighbourhood).

*The image of cities depends on the appearance of streets. Brussels is thus attractive because its streets are lively. Each one has a unique personality, mixing history, urban landscape and marks of its successive residents. Knowing how to live life well in a street is about imagining new urban forms for it. This is why we invite you to suggest planning solutions, usage or equipment that are the most adapted to your street. To reinvent the feeling of being together.*

*Khalid Zian, Deputy Mayor in charge of green space and environment, Brussels*





# Dare to dream: co-design a common vision for the street

Imagine your neighbour knocking on your door: "Hi, how are you? Do you have a few minutes? I have an idea I want to share with you... Imagine that we could temporarily transform our street into a beautiful green meeting place for the neighbourhood? We would remove the cars, just for a few months and see what happens. What do you think?"

In 2013, precisely these kind of simple questions inspired the inhabitants of the first two Living Streets in Ghent.

*Living Streets is not a 'project'. It's letting people dream, taking time to deal with all their fears and worries and learn from it as a City.*

*Dries Gysels, Trojan Lab, Ghent*

## **GHEENT – Backcasting**

In 2012, the City of Ghent asked a group of citizens, entrepreneurs and civil servants to imagine a sustainable future for their city. Their vision can be found in their agenda for the future: a network of car-free zones built around central squares, with rapid transit bike lanes, public transit and neighbours talking in the street. What if we could simply lie down on the grass in our street? This is what comes out of one of the emblematic drawings of the Ghent experience.

*I'm happy to be a catalyst for the local community. I feel like I'm achieving something!*

*Christine Ballard, civil servant in Milton Keynes*

## **ZADAR – Board of ideas**

A huge whiteboard was made available to participants in the Living Streets event to collect their ideas of how they would like to see the district. These ideas have been collected by architects who prepared scenarios that citizens could vote for.



Designing a vision for the street is a key step that will bring together residents, associations and businesses in the street. They can share their needs, express their expectations and highlight problems they are facing on a daily basis in the street. The power of 'what if', as experienced at first in Ghent, drives enthusiasm and shows the way to make it possible. The municipality or a local association has to play a facilitation role in this discussion and co-creation process. For example, the city of Turin organised a Word Café with citizens and associations around the following question: which activities can we start experimenting to make the district more liveable? This step enables an open discussion space to be created, where dreams of the perfect street can be voiced.



**TIP: All Living Streets will be faced with various conflictual points of view, where an organisation is needed to develop the plan and coordinate the project together with the citizens.**



#### **ROTTERDAM – Talk to the dream coach**

The dream coach is the first contact person from the municipality of Rotterdam for citizens willing to organise a Living Street. He assists them in defining their dreams and plans before they submit their proposal for funding.







# Implement by creating the space for experimentation and creativity

## For how long?

There are different ways to implement Living Streets. However, in any case, the streets or squares need to be closed to the car for a long enough period to allow people to experience a different lifestyle and reflect and potentially change their habits.

In some cities the area was closed for six months, in some others for one-two months or even for two weeks at a time during two different time periods. There were even specific Living Streets where the street was closed to the car during several months, but only on Fridays.

## When?

Usually Living Streets take place during May to June or September to October. This is to allow people to experience real change when the weather is good and when most of the residents are not on summer holidays. However, in some cities there were even winter editions of Living Streets.



## The power of the experiment

You need to give yourself the permission to fail and foresee the time and capacity to deal with potential failures. This is the path leading to innovation. With Living Streets, lives get changed, habits get disrupted and people embrace a new lifestyle. They dare to dream, they dare to try, they dare to change.

Experimenting in the street is really bottom-up, starting with a dream and not with a target or output defined in advance. Just make it happen and not make it impossible! However, it is important that someone takes the responsibility for what happens in the public domain. For instance, in the example of the city of Ghent it was the Mayor who took direct responsibility.

For the municipal administration, Living Streets is the perfect ground for innovation via experimentation and you need to see it as a laboratory where you can test things in real life situation. For instance, as a mobility and transport department, Living Streets could offer you the perfect opportunity to test distance parking, as an urban planning department you can check and increase acceptance of a certain planning process. As a participation and communication department, you can engage closely with the citizens and help them see and experiment in a direct way how life in a car-free area actually is; it will also allow you to experience how to deal with engaged citizens being proactive instead of how to engage citizens.

In Living Streets, civil servants and residents are both seen as experts of their streets, playing different roles and learning from each other in order to co-create. As an example, the municipality can learn from concrete solutions directly impacting on mobility issues, such as residents finding a common window cleaner for their street (prior there were four different window cleaners, generating more traffic). When Living Streets happen in 30-40 streets, you can see an important impact on mobility issues and you can experiment also with distance parking and car sharing when there are several Living Streets in the same area. For instance, neighbours found a brilliant solution by parking in a supermarket parking lots during the evening and the night when the supermarket was closed.

### **Give time to experiment, start small and move towards a larger dynamic**

Every Living Street needs time to experiment. It is more than a symbolic action as living in a Living Street is not just a matter of experiencing life without a car for one day, but for a longer period of time, so every resident is impacted. People who initiate Living Streets need to take time to talk to all residents, to listen to their dreams, but also to their challenges and fears. It is important that everyone is listened to and all this is taken into consideration in the process. Living Streets need to be organised for several years in order to create a certain dynamic and go beyond their usual boundaries towards real co-creation between the citizens, civil



servants and the decision makers. After the first edition of the Living Streets, residents sometimes reconsider the solutions implemented and come up with a different configuration of the street the year after. This is the power of temporary solutions, instead of permanent, but might be difficult for the municipal administration to consider as they usually create infrastructure that should be there for 20-30 years.



**TIP: Remember to start small, with one or two streets, before going bigger. Thereafter, the streets will inspire each other and the initiative will grow organically.**

### **ZADAR – Acceptance of transforming parking lots in liveable areas**

In Zadar, in the derelict area where Living Streets were implemented, the people's acceptance increased concerning the closure of the parking lots to the cars and transforming them into public space dedicated to the people. Living Streets helped residents to see the potential of this area by experiencing a different vision of the neighbourhood in their everyday lives, making them realise it could not only be a dream, but a reality in the near future.

### **TURIN – Change of attitudes and habits via role-playing**

In Turin, a laboratory was made with the primary school who were engaged in a role-playing game. Children were playing roles such as a disabled person or a mum with a pushchair and little children. This allowed them to see with the eyes of the role they were playing which were the problems of the area. After the tour of the neighbourhood, they could come back with difficulties they faced and they were aware of, permitting them to reimagine the Campidoglio district without all these difficulties.

Some kids were playing the policemen, instead of imposing real fines, they placed the following message on people's cars: "And me where can I go?". Drivers were very receptive to these messages in comparison with their negative attitude when receiving a classical fine.

### **BRUSSELS – An ingenious way to take citizens out of their homes**

In Brussels, in the Vanderhaegen Street, the steering group is composed of several organisations from the neighbourhood, together with citizens. The project is steered by Studio P, a local centre focused on citizens' participation. This street was noisy due to public works being carried out and the focus of the citizens was to regain silence in the city. They were doing a Living Street every Friday for two months and it was completely car free every second Friday. The focus was on the children as a public that is easily reached. A recording of sounds of birds was used as a tool to engage the public. People came out of their houses to listen and to find out where it came from.







# Make the invisible visible and engage citizens

Living Streets are about improving the quality of life of residents and making visible the city of tomorrow. In that sense, participants of Living Streets are pioneers as they are experimenting with new ways of life in their street. These local projects are fragile equilibriums where a common direction needs to be decided by the residents, sometimes with compromises to be found. Therefore, although they bring a lot of enthusiasm and curiosity, experience shows that too much public exposure and promotion at an early stage can be counterproductive and weaken the community organising a Living Street. So, you need to start small! Promotion of the initiative, once the dynamic is installed and with the consent of the participants, can then have a great and beneficial impact as it can show to the outside all the positive outcomes of taking back public space.

You can use appropriate communication channels, such as working with local associations which are recognised figures in the district, piggybacking on existing events or using social media. In Ivanič-Grad, the local radio station proved to be successful in attracting

children and seniors to the Living Streets initiative. In Ghent, door to door communication was used to ensure direct contact and create confidence. To engage with specific social categories, the dialogue was led by individuals belonging to the same target group.





### **LA ROCHELLE – A poster campaign promoting bike usage featuring shop-keepers**

Posters showcasing shop owners have been produced by the municipality, using the ENGAGE poster tool ([www.citiesengage.eu](http://www.citiesengage.eu)). In La Rochelle, Living Streets have been organised around the topic of bike use. Shop owners could promote cycling on ENGAGE posters that were displayed in their shops. This was a perfect win-win situation where the familiar public figures were promoting sustainable mobility in the district and also attracting clients to their shops thanks to an attractive and positive communication tool. An exhibition of ENGAGE posters was also organised by the municipality, including posters with students, teachers, civil servants putting forward their different arguments for cycling.

### **IVANIĆ-GRAD – Rely on an existing popular local initiative**

In the first edition of Living Streets, the municipality organised a pumpkin production contest to attract citizens to the Living Streets initiative by piggybacking on an existing popular event: the pumpkin fest! To all the citizens who filled in the application form, the Mayor of Ivanić-Grad distributed 100 sets for urban gardening, including pumpkin seeds, tools for gardening, seed labels and gardening instructions. In this framework, the municipal-owned land was offered to citizens who live in multi-apartment buildings and do not own gardens, to use it for urban gardening. Their results encouraged them to continue in the coming years, creating a demand for more land for the future Living Streets editions.

### **BRUSSELS - From a square to a forest**

In Brussels, residents from Vanderhaegen street came up with the idea of a living forest for their public square and even created their own logo. The change of the name makes the place more creative and more attractive: it is all of a sudden, not just a square with a few trees, but a forest!

# Finance your Living Streets

## How to finance Living Streets?

It is important to reflect about how you finance your Living Streets. The municipalities chose to do it via crowdfunding, open call for subsidies or reimbursement to the initiators.

You also need to find the right process to be able to fund these citizen-led activities. For instance, in Brussels, initially the municipality was not able to give advance payment to the citizen-led initiatives. Thus the municipality developed a specific Vade Mecum, a clear manual and launch form allowing project leaders to frame their project, working method and budget in advance. Via the 'Declaration of claim' form, project leaders agree to respect the Vade Mecum and the City of Brussels can advance 80% of

the amount requested to the project leader. The remaining 20% will be paid after the presentation of the final report and all financial evidence and after approval by the Council.

## How much does a Living Street cost?

In addition to civil servants' time investment, the budget dedicated to material aspects of a Living Street varies from one city to the other. Costs can often be reduced by joint purchasing of common material such as benches and artificial turf that was bought for all the 52 Living Streets in Ghent. So, costs can range from approximately 100 euros/street for additional equipment in Ghent, between 1,000 and 5,000 euros/street in Brussels, up to 40,000 euros/street in Rotterdam.

## Less money, more creativity?

In Rotterdam, such an important financial support can be questioned as the experience showed that streets with less money were more creative and the impact was more important. Giving a higher subsidy is also transforming the co-creation aspect of the Living Streets, as in this case architect and urban planning companies are also interested in the project.

In Ghent, the major part of the street furniture is produced via DIY (do-it-yourself) by the residents themselves, allowing them to save money and helping them to profit from more engagement and ownership of the public space.

### **In-kind contributions from local businesses and crowdfunding in Ghent**

In Ghent, a supermarket lent e-bikes, other shops gave thousands of flowers, potting soil or lent a truck. Some local businesses even lent the time of their employees to help implement Living Streets. The value of all this is difficult to calculate, but it represents a major contribution.

How about crowdfunding?  
In 2015, the city of Ghent developed a crowdfunding platform called [crowdfunding.gent](https://www.crowdfunding.gent) as an instrument to facilitate co-creation.

The amount collected per citizen initiative is seen as an indicator of community support and thus public interest in the project. Via this platform, residents can also apply for subsidies from the municipality for their project. They can choose to apply for 25, 50 or 75% of municipal funding and need to show that the rest of the amount was collected from the citizens.

In Living Streets, this platform financed the construction of a bridge across a river, facilitating the access of the neighbourhood to a nearby park.



# Develop a qualitative evaluation process: when 'soft' projects have a solid impact

How to measure the impact of a Living Street? The trend in public institutions is to evaluate policies and projects with numbers. However, results are not necessarily measurable in terms of quantity, but quality and the process is as important as the result in itself. The choice of indicators is then a decisive step. Do you want to measure or to understand? This is not always the same, it depends on the quality of indicators. Impacts might be on quality of life in the streets, mobility, social cohesion, circular economy, capacity building of citizens... and there is no accounting mechanism for this! As a conclusion, the definition of indicators is not neutral as it is framing the way we look at things.

Examples of indicators that can be measured before, during and after Living Streets:

- Air quality
- Noise
- Social cohesion, contacts with other residents in the street
- Interest of residents to participate in another Living Street
- Distance car parking
- Turnover of businesses
- Acceptance of closing the areas concerned to the car
- Indicators related to modal shift: individual car use, use of other transport means than the individual car, carpooling, car sharing.



### **GHENT – Living Streets strengthened social cohesion**

One clear conclusion in Ghent is that creating a Living Street, whether it is a small, medium or larger street, is a huge opportunity to strengthen social cohesion. Thanks to the preparatory process and the 2-months test period almost all inhabitants are able to get in touch with each other. The fact that they can use their streets as parks strengthens contacts. Once this period is over, these contacts stay.

### **IVANIČ-GRAD – Living Streets helped develop circular economy**

In this small Croatian town, the municipality is closely supporting the local economy by developing specific local products (new bakery products, Škrlet wine production), setting up local selling points of goods produced, organising crowdfunding workshops to set up local business schemes, implementing urban farming to produce local vegetables and fruits by the citizens and that are sold to local restaurants. Ivanič-Grad did all of this and so much more! With Living Streets, the municipality symbolically and also physically planted the first seeds leading to a more important local trend that is already starting to be visible via major bilateral contracts between the municipality and Macedonian vegetable and fruit production experts or via the creation of joint wine producers' associations allowing them to supply bigger wine production demands by major Chinese clients for instance.

### **LA ROCHELLE – A more attractive city centre thanks to Living Streets**

The municipality worked with shopkeepers of the Saint-Nicolas district, a small shopping area affected by the competition of the huge commercial areas located outside of the city centre. The most significant result of these experiments are:

- the change of mind set of shopkeepers who no longer claim: "no car, no business".
- more people are now shopping by bike as citizens realised that the cargo bike is faster than the car.
- bike stores and shop owners have increased their income during this test phase, some of them by up to 25%.

# From temporary to permanent: impact on city planning

Living Streets offer the opportunity to experiment with different urban planning options in a street. You might have already been confronted with the situation where sometimes the very nice sketch and photomontage prepared by architects do not meet in real life

the exact needs of the users. A common example is the so-called 'elephant path', an unofficial route for users. With Living Streets, residents can experience life without their car parked under their window, build playgrounds, benches, gardens with

their neighbours and identify the best solutions for their street. The challenge for the municipality is then to take a decision on the measures that become permanent, based on budget and regulation issues.







### **TURIN – Towards a pedestrianised area in the Campidoglio district**

In Turin, the Living Streets confirmed that the citizens wish to have the public area in Campidoglio without cars. Traffic and parking have been the most debated themes within the events. So, the political will is now much stronger than before to pedestrianise parts of the district. Via Living Streets, citizens, politicians and local administrators were able to talk and exchange ideas. It was now decided that part of the Campidoglio district will be pedestrianised by the end of 2018.





# **LIVING STREETS STORIES**

# BRUSSELS *Belgium*



1,175,000 inhabitants

**In Brussels, the Living Streets target the improvement of the quality of life in the public space by meeting and reflecting on the problems of the streets among the inhabitants and Brussels Participation. In this framework the inhabitants are seen as the experts of their streets. The focus is not only on closing the street to cars but also on coming together and reflecting on the needs of the streets and then co-creating the street and finding creative solutions to the daily problems. To date, Living Streets have been tested in Brussels in several neighbourhoods and streets with different typologies. The initiative is called “Rue à vivre” or “Leefstraat” (Streets to live).**

## **How are Living Streets organised in Brussels?**

Each Living Street requires a preparation period of about three months and thereafter is publicly implemented during one to two months. Living Streets can be organised at any time of the year. An application needs to be submitted by the initiators and the city of Brussels and the Police department need to give the green light for it. A project can be allocated a budget between 1,000 and 5,000 euros. Brussels Participation is the service of the City of Brussels that supports project leaders launch a Living Street. There is close collaboration with various municipal departments: Participation, Green Spaces and Environment.

The main requirements to organise a Living Street:

- Any inhabitant of the City of Brussels can launch a Living Street where s/he resides.
- The initiator can be an individual, an association, a neighbourhood committee or residents' collective.
- The initiator needs to mobilise at least three inhabitants of the street and create a leading group.

*You live in your street, you know it better than anyone else. To know how you want to live in your street, we need your help. The existing situation can always improve and we think that you can play a key role here.*

*Els Ampe, Deputy Mayor in charge of public works, mobility and vehicle fleet, City of Brussels*

### **The creation and implementation phases of a Living Street:**

1. Define the project: choose the location (one or several streets, a market, a public square). At this moment, the steering groups meet Brussels Participation and other municipal services to get feedback on their first ideas and actions they want to implement. To smoothen this step, the municipality prepared a Vade Mecum, a manual helping project leaders to frame their project, working method and budget.
2. Fieldwork done by inhabitants: they engage with the other inhabitants via surveys and meetings to choose the actions and to create the steering group, composed of a minimum of three residents.
3. Submit the application: there is a form that the steering group needs to fill in and submit to Brussels Participation that details the needs of the street, the vision for their street as well as precise actions and timeframe with a budget. They submit their request for authorisations to be able to close the streets to cars and to organise events in the public space. Via this 'Declaration claim' form, project leaders agree to respect the Vade Mecum.
4. The City of Brussels can advance 80% of the amount requested to the project leader. The remaining 20% will be paid after the presentation of the final report and all financial evidence and after approval by the Council.
5. Launch of public activities during the agreed period.
6. Submit a final report and all financial evidence.





The municipality of Brussels communicates and promotes the Living Streets via information sessions to citizens in order to raise awareness and encourage the organisation of Living Streets. The initiative has been implemented in 8 streets so far.

In Brussels, the Living Streets tackled many aspects such as prostitution, need for positive animation of public spaces and ownership by their inhabitants, need for green spaces, need for silence in an area impacted by public works during several years, reflecting on the need for a residential zone for meeting and sharing among inhabitants.

### **What are the lessons learned?**

- Everyone wants to join the party, but no one wants to organise it! It is difficult to move from interest in a project to concrete action as many people are enthusiastic but not necessarily ready to take action to implement and steer the project.
- Involving the press and media too early in the process puts pressure on people.
- There was no vandalism during the project, all equipment was respected by the neighbours and other users. However, after the project ended, some equipment was taken over by homeless people.
- A Living Street takes long to organise, it is multifaceted and not immediately visible, making it complex to handle.
- Strong social ties were developed among the neighbours and the resistance of some inhabitants has been overcome by allowing them to concretely visualise the city of the future.
- Residents' ownership of their street increased via DIY equipment that helped embellish the public space, make it more pleasant and adapted to citizens' needs and expectations.



For the future of the initiative in Brussels, it was concluded that a Living Streets needs to be extended over longer periods of time in order to meet the expectations of the residents and put them in practice. It is also important to organise several Living Streets in the same spot, to experiment and possibly implement certain solutions on a permanent basis.

#### Contact



**Ann van de Vyvere**  
Coordinator City of  
Brussels

[ann.vandevyvere@brucity.be](mailto:ann.vandevyvere@brucity.be)



# IVANIĆ-GRAD *Croatia*



14,000 inhabitants

The objectives of the Living Streets in Ivanić-Grad are to prepare the ground for the creation of a pedestrian city centre, promote bicycles as a means of transport, support local production and consumption and encourage circular economy. The municipality aims to attract young people to live in Ivanić-Grad after finishing their studies as well as change people's mind-sets regarding the individual use of cars and unsustainable consumption models. For this purpose, the municipality is linked to different local businesses and citizens and is moving from a top down approach to a bottom-up and co-creative one.


## Context

The city of Ivanić-Grad is well developed thanks to gas and oil resources, but this has a negative impact on the local environment. The city also faces two important demographic issues: aging population and emigration. Due to the prolonged economic crisis, there are currently empty commercial spaces in the city centre, as well as abandoned land suitable for agriculture. This land belongs to the municipality, to the ministry of agriculture and to private owners who moved out of Ivanić-Grad.

## Local food production and consumption, circular economy and changing of mind-sets

In order to address the issue of local food production, in the first edition of Living Streets the municipality organised a pumpkin production contest to attract citizens to the Living Streets initiative and link with an existing popular event: the pumpkin fest.

To all the citizens who filled in the application form, the Mayor of Ivanić-Grad distributed 100 urban gardening sets, including pumpkin seeds, tools for gardening, labels for seeds and instructions. In this framework, the municipal-owned land was temporarily offered to citizens who live in multi-apartment buildings and do not own gardens to use it for urban gardening. Their results encouraged them to continue in the coming years, creating a demand for more land for the future



Living Streets editions. Therefore, the municipality is relaying with the national ministry of agriculture to use the plots of currently abandoned land. The municipality is also discussing with citizens who do not use their land in order to make it available for urban gardening. Local family farms expressed interest to buy the locally produced vegetables and fruits. Citizens and local businesses were therefore connected by the municipality to collaborate in the future.



*As a Deputy Mayor, I have been following the Living Streets project since the very beginning because I felt it could be very beneficial to our citizens.*

*During the project I was actively involved in urban gardening. Citizens motivated by my own example of planting pumpkins, started planting them as well. At the end of a successful gardening season, we organized a seed exchange and prepared ourselves for the next season.*

*I think citizens will continue to partake in this interesting project even after its official ending and encourage each other in planting pumpkins which will contribute to strengthening the traditional city manifestation.*

*Željko Posilović, Deputy Mayor, City of Ivanić-Grad*

Furthermore, Living Streets offered the opportunity to exchange experience with Macedonian experts on agriculture production leading to an international trading contract signed between businesses from Ivanić-Grad and experts from Macedonia. In this

framework, Macedonian expertise will be transferred to Ivanić and in turn, Ivanić will export innovative products developed within the Living Streets such as urban gardening sets, pumpkin seeds, local eco-toys and eco-devices prepared by local designers and companies. From a

social perspective, the project is expected to link up many citizens in Ivanič who are from Macedonia and it is likely that they will reconnect with their families from Macedonia. In the framework of Living Streets, the municipality encouraged small businesses to cooperate and to communicate on common goals they are reaching for and not to see themselves as competitors. Thus, the NGO Brenta was created to regroup wine producers in order to help them cooperate better. Many produce Škrlet wine, leading to the organisation of a new local event: the festival of the Škrlet wine. They are also now responding together to large market demands for local wine, to which they cannot respond individually. The municipality acted here as a facilitator encouraging networking within its territory by connecting people and businesses. Ivanič-Grad also organised a local workshop on crowdfunding to link up students and existing and future local producers with two goals: future orientation of the students from the middle school and set up local businesses. As a result, a local cookie factory will be opened, the local bakery developed new products and urban furniture for Living Streets

on the main square. Also gardening toolkits and insect hotels were produced thanks to Living Streets connecting Design students who designed the elements, skilled pensioners who pre-crafted the elements according to the drawings and kindergarten children who assembled them. All this got together at the main city square during the green living-room events in Ivanič. So, after the crowdfunding crash-course, the students are considering a start-up in urban design now.

All that it took to make this a true social innovation is the local radio station sharing the right news, passionate handy pensioners, creative and proactive design students and open-minded municipal staff...gathered together via Living Streets in Ivanič.

### **Local consumption and awareness raising**

During the Christmas period, the municipality encouraged the citizens to buy local presents (food, drinks, toys). It turned out that many citizens did not know where to buy these products locally, nor did they know who the local producers were and

whether they had a shop. To solve this issue, in the main square an exhibition office was built temporarily and local producers could sell their products there prior to the Christmas period. This proved to be very successful. Thanks to Living Streets, the mind-sets of the citizens are changing regarding the importance of local production and on their consumption habits.

### **A local pedestrian city centre**

In the past, the municipality envisaged to close the city centre to cars, but this was perceived as an unpopular measure at the time. During the Living Streets, this car free city centre was experienced twice for two weeks during different periods in 2017. At first local businesses and shop owners were worried that their sales would decrease. However, during the urban workshop they understood that even if the square is closed to cars they would still be able to deliver goods. Besides, when they realised that citizens are asking for the square to be pedestrian, they understood that this might be an opportunity for them. The municipality promised to do some communication activities to promote



their businesses. Positive results from other European cities were shown to prove that car-free city centres do not come only with problems, but also with solutions.

After experimenting and evaluating, the following conclusions were drawn:

- Young citizens and the families with kids see the main square as a safe and thrilling place with green spaces, playgrounds, cafés.
- On the other hand, other citizens (especially middle-aged males) voted against closing the main square to cars (they usually can park their individual car in front of the shops).
- It is felt that activities organised within the Living Streets were still not sufficient to change the mind-sets completely and help citizens see that it is much healthier to bike and to walk.
- To make a pedestrian square, budget is required for infrastructure and this is not included in the municipal budget for the next two years. However, experts within the project suggested some soft activities and minor works that do not require a huge budget.

In the near future, the municipality of Ivanič will need to change its urban plans especially related to the historic city centre. It is planned to organise another urban workshop and citizens will be invited again to express their opinions, needs and suggestions. Only political commitment and a decision from the mayor to close the square for a longer period, for instance six month, can have a bigger effect and allow city officials and citizens to better assess the acceptance and impact of a pedestrian main square in Ivanič.

## More information

<https://hr-hr.facebook.com/livingstreetiv/>

## Contact



**Vlatka  
Berlan Vlahek**

[vlatka.berlan@ivanic-grad.hr](mailto:vlatka.berlan@ivanic-grad.hr)



# LA ROCHELLE *France*



75,000 inhabitants

**La Rochelle is a touristic city on the French Atlantic coast that aims to become a slow town, meaning that 80% of the streets will be limited to a speed of 30 km/h in the coming years. The Living Streets offer the opportunity to experiment, to test life without cars and imagine a different use of public space. With this initiative, La Rochelle is using bicycles as a central tool, as it is not only seen as a transport mean, but is also used as a voluntary behaviour change factor.**

## **Increase home-to-school and school-to-home travel by foot and by bike: The Children's Street**

The Pierre Loti School is situated in a social mixed area within a small district. An attractive park is situated in front of the school but the Pierre Loti Avenue, supporting 8,000 vehicles daily, disconnects this green area from the school. The parents are afraid to let the children go by bike or by foot to school and think that cars are the safest option to take the children to school. Many of the school children do not even know how to ride a bike. For these reasons, the Mobility Department of the municipality contacted the school to see if together they could transform this busy road into a car-free street for a day. This provided the opportunity for the children to play in the street and in the park and have fun while learning how to ride a bike.

The street in front of the school was closed for one day in June 2016 and May 2017.

The activities organised included: home to school escort by bicycle (organised by the Bicycle Police Brigade/Bicycle School) and by foot (organised by the parents), a bike and games lending library, a bicycle training area, some workshops and information on bicycle repairs, biking safety, using public transport, free trial of different cargo bikes with bike stores.

This initiative has enabled the creation of a playground in the park next to the school and bicycle parking places. It also favoured inter-generational exchange between the school and the nearby retirement home. Parents launched a petition to have shared urban gardens in the park. It was decided that

60,000 euros will be spent by the municipality to set the garden up which will be open to all residents in the neighbourhood, including the retirement home. Besides, bike stores have increased their income and are selling more bikes, including foldable bikes and cargo bikes. Elected representatives, teachers and parents are now reflecting on how to include bike learning in the school programme.

The Children's Street initiative is sustained by several activities. Following the two one-day events organised by the municipality, the school and the parents have organised on their own a third event in April 2018, including a bike market and a party in the street, with the participation of associations. The municipality initiated the process and now parents, children and school teachers are responsible to organise such events in the future, with the municipality offering support, but not acting as a driving force anymore. In addition, other schools are interested in this initiative and a new Children' Street with another school will be organised in a different neighbourhood.



### **Develop the attractiveness of commercial areas in the city centre**

The first experiment took place in the old marketplace from July to August 2016. This place is today used as a big round-about for cars, reducing the space available for pedestrians. The shopkeepers would like to reduce the car's presence but at the same time authorise freight access for the market in the morning. A modular access was therefore needed. A

solution was found together to regulate the access, using colourful signs to mark the limits of the pedestrian zone during the event. From July to August 2017, the second experiment was organised in the Saint-Nicolas district, a small shopping area, a little hidden away just behind the old harbour. The aim was to make this neighbourhood visible from far away and attract more people to this area. All the shops are small local shops and



shopkeepers are struggling to attract more clients to the city centre, taking into account the competition of the huge commercial areas located outside of the city centre. Posters showcasing shop owners have been produced by the municipality, using the ENGAGE poster tool ([www.citiesengage.eu](http://www.citiesengage.eu)). Shop owners could promote cycling on these posters that were displayed in their shops. An exhibition of ENGAGE posters was also organised by the municipality, including posters with students, teachers, civil servants putting forward their different arguments for cycling.

The most significant result of these experiments is the change of mind set of shopkeepers who no longer claim “no car, no business”. More people are now shopping by bike as citizens realised that the cargo bike is faster than the car. This shows that it is important for people to have a voluntary behaviour change, but for that it is crucial that they try and experiment beforehand, so that they realise the advantages

that a different lifestyle might bring. Shopkeepers are using bikes to buy their products and to dispose of their waste. Bike stores and shop owners have increased their income during this test phase, some of them by up to 25%. The shop owners’ association, gathering almost 100 members, are now reflecting on how to encourage shopping by biking and walking to make this lifestyle attractive to their potential customers and thus differentiate themselves from the big commercial centres on the outskirts of the city where customers need a car to shop there. The project has also brought more sociability, for example shop owners now put chairs outside of their shops, in order to invite passers-by to sit and appreciate the excellent quality of life in their city.

### **Living Streets: a modular experience for the city of La Rochelle**

Living in an urban environment conceived for car use, makes it difficult for people to imagine and have another vision for the future

of the public space in their city. The municipality of La Rochelle implemented Living Streets as a motivating and modular experience allowing citizens to experiment different aspects of what life without a car means and see all the benefits that this might bring to them. However, with this experience, the municipality of La Rochelle does not aim for example to replicate the same children’s street in all schools, but a new concept based on the needs of each district. Each street is different and the municipality aims to keep the co-construction process that took place in the first children’s street. The Living Streets enabled seeds to be planted for the future, provided time and space for first-hand experience and let things happen.

#### **Contact**



**Birgitta Morin**

Sustainable  
mobility officer,  
City of La Rochelle

[birgitta.morin@ville-larochelle.fr](mailto:birgitta.morin@ville-larochelle.fr)







# MILTON KEYNES *United Kingdom*



230,000 inhabitants

Milton Keynes (MK) is a new town designed to be a regional hub between Birmingham and London and Oxford and Cambridge. It is one of the few British cities that was built 50 years ago with future growth in mind. Today, it is one of the fastest growing cities in the UK with an estimated population growth reaching more than 300,000 inhabitants by 2025 and 500,000 by 2050.

## **The challenge of implementing Living Streets in a new town**

In MK the individual car is the main mode of transport, facilitated by a grid system similar to Los Angeles. Milton Keynes has few traffic lights and many roundabouts which makes driving around the city easy and the promotion of sustainable mobility more difficult.

However, there are 250 km of cycle and walking routes in MK, called 'redways' that are completely independent from car traffic. MK has also many green spaces and sidewalks for pedestrians. So, the challenge Living Streets faced here is to solve something that is not yet a problem as currently there is no traffic congestion, people are able to drive around the city easily and plenty of parking space is available. Nevertheless, by 2025 it is estimated that there will be a travel demand

increase of 60% while practical capacity improvements will only address a 25% increase.

## **Reaching out to local councillors, civil servants, stakeholders and citizens**

Living streets encouraged departments in the Council that do not habitually collaborate such as the energy and culture departments to work together.



**TIP:**  
**Ask for 'drop-in' sessions so that you can participate in other municipal departments' own meetings and explain the initiative, instead of simply inviting participants to a Living Street focused meeting.**

*We are acting as catalysts with local communities, encouraging people to have a say in how their street and quality of life could be improved. This is important because there is a general view that the council makes decisions from the top down.*

*Christine Ballard, Neil Sainsbury, Shane Downer, civil servants at MK Council*



For Living Streets, MK residents were approached in different neighbourhoods throughout the city. Enthusiasm for the project was shown on several occasions however each neighbourhood eventually declined this opportunity for several different reasons: lack of time, opposition of a few inhabitants who didn't feel comfortable with the idea of Living Streets or the budget offered for implementing Living Streets was not appealing enough, particularly compared to the budget residents usually receive for initiatives such as creating a community orchard. In this car-centric city there is a real anxiety for most citizens about walking and riding a bicycle and residents are reluctant to make something unpopular happen in



their neighbourhood. Having to think differently and give up parking their individual cars in front of their houses was difficult for most streets. Citizens seem to be happy with the quality of life they have in this 50-year-old city where they do not face traffic jams. Most citizens have no problems with finding parking spaces at home, leisure activities and at their place of work while still being able to enjoy green areas on their doorstep. The conclusion is that people need to be encouraged to be involved in their street projects by starting small and taking baby steps. Focusing on their fears and worries, such as time spent commuting in their cars, would be a good starting point for Living Streets in the future. Gaining trust and support is a very slow process and initially the support offered by the MK Council was perceived as top down but it did improve over time.

The MK coordinator met with several not for profit organisations to discuss working together to make Living Streets happen in their area. This brought together like-minded people

and was a good way to reach active citizens in the MK communities. Meetings were arranged with local clubs, associations, residents' associations and charities and mutual goals were realised. One collaboration resulted in meeting families at two events organised with the Milton Keynes Play Association and MK Council will continue to work with this organisation in the future.

*Community engagement establishes understanding between neighbours and promotes inclusivity. The Living Streets project is a great idea that fulfils this role and contributes to the positive vision we have for Milton Keynes in 2050 and beyond.*

*Councillor Peter Marland, Leader of Milton Keynes Council*

## **Living Streets is planting a seed for the future**

It is well known that personal transport is difficult to replace in the UK and particularly in Milton Keynes because it was designed for cars. However, some communities were willing to accept this restriction. Thames Valley police are interested in collaborating in Living Streets mainly because neighbours talking to each other means problems can be discussed. Furthermore, Town and Parish Councils are also familiar with Living Streets and are willing to proceed to some traffic restriction.

Living Streets have also had a positive influence on future planning strategies in a growing city where new neighbourhoods will be developed based on a more people-centric approach. This is the fruit of strategic municipal departments being involved in Living Streets and of the widespread understanding within MK Council of this initiative.

So, in Milton Keynes, the Living Streets initiative has planted seeds and supporters of the idea are waiting for conditions to become more fertile so results become real and visible.

*I wish it would create parking spaces though, rather than lose them!*

*A Milton Keynes citizen*

*It was amazing to witness first-hand how the Living Streets Programme proved that streets can play such a fundamental role as an extension to private gardens and provide a place for residents to socially interact.*

*Neil Sainsbury, Head of Urban Design and Landscape Architecture*

*What a lovely idea. I've often hoped that the top end of the High Street would be pedestrianised. This would make a huge difference to the Town.*

*A Milton Keynes citizen*

### **Contact**



**Christine Ballard**  
Project Manager,  
Sustainability Team,  
Milton Keynes Council

Christine.Ballard@Milton-  
Keynes.gov.uk

# ROTTERDAM *the Netherlands*



630,000 inhabitants

**Inspired by the example of Ghent, the Living Streets in Rotterdam, called “Dream Streets”, started in 2015. They are defined as initiatives of citizens and/or professional organisations to make their street, square or neighbourhood a nicer place to meet and play by implementing temporary or permanent measures.**

## **A cross-sector process to create Dream Streets**

The Dream Streets take place within the framework of the “CityLab010 fund for local innovation” (2015–2018), containing an annual amount of three and a half million euros in total. All municipal departments are involved in the programme. With CityLab010, the Municipality of Rotterdam aims to generate and support initiatives that contribute to the further development and improvement of the main municipal policy challenges, such as: sustainability, economics, sports and culture. Via CityLab010 a grant fund is available for proposals of local initiatives that can be submitted. For each of the Living Streets implemented up till now in Rotterdam, a dedicated inter-departmental team of 5–7 civil servants meet regularly before and during implementation of the specific Living Street. They

advise the inhabitants on their plans and assist during implementation when needed. The Living Streets are managed by the Urban Planning department with a large involvement of the Traffic department and Maintenance department.

The process of Dream Streets in Rotterdam is as follows:

- A new Dream Street initiative approaches the dream coach of the city of Rotterdam. He assists them in defining their plan and introduces them to the interdepartmental team (“Kendoe team”) which advises on the plan and budget. They also check that the planned activities comply with the regulations. This team meets once or twice and they help to further improve the project and give support and suggestions. Usually this process takes a couple of months. After this, the Living



Street submits their proposal for funding by the CityLab010 programme.

- The final proposal is assessed by the Living Street project manager. The interdepartmental team formulates the conditions for funding and the Living Street receives a subsidy contract. During implementation, civil servants assist and advise if needed. This means that in some Living Streets, there is a high level of involvement of the city administration, while in other Living Streets there is much less. In all cases, there are many formal and informal moments of

contact between the Living Streets and the civil servants as often, civil servants attend the local Living Street events.

- After implementation, each Living Street submits a financial and narrative report on the results. Thereafter, the civil servants and the inhabitants discuss together which of the temporary measures could be continued or become permanent. Evaluation is also done by the Living Street initiators, sometimes using monitoring equipment bought by the municipality, but also based on a qualitative analysis.

### **The Dream Streets activities and their impact in the streets and the municipality**

13 Dream Streets were organised between 2015 and 2017, covering topics such as improving traffic safety, enhancing social cohesion, building permanent places to play and meet, greening communal gardens. Most Living Streets have a time span of one year in which they organise several activities, mainly in spring and summer when the weather is nice. The most represented social category is highly educated people, however some Living Streets are also taking place in socially and economically mixed neighbourhoods, where a professional organisation is needed to develop the plan and coordinate the project together with the citizens. The Dream Streets have diverse impacts. First, they bring more social cohesion to the streets as well as an increased sense of ownership of the public space by residents. Besides, these experiments, before investing in permanent measures, enable the municipality to have more insights on what works well or not



in the streets to enhance meeting and playing. Some measures then become permanent, such as reduced space for car parking, benches, small playgrounds and meetings places. These initiatives also have an impact on rethinking the role of the municipality: How do we cooperate with citizens? What do they expect from us? Are we capable to explain the municipal regulations for public space well enough and how do we manage to bend the rules without breaking them?

## Challenges ahead

The successful experience in Rotterdam has raised a number of key questions:

- How to deal with temporary versus permanent measures? Most permanent measures concern the installation of bike parks, benches and playgrounds. As this is public space, the city administration should implement these measures and citizens are not allowed to do this themselves. However, permanent measures

need a budget, which is not always available. Some solutions were found by the residents, for instance via crowdfunding.

- How to deal with initiatives from professional organisations? Professionals also approach the municipality with their ideas (like architects, urban planners) and find citizens to join them. How to ensure that the citizens feel and take ownership of the project? The municipality then considers that at least 10 residents from the street should support the proposal so that it can be accepted.
- High diversity: not everything is a Dream Street! In Rotterdam, there is a high diversity of initiatives that qualify as Living Streets. This is also a risk, as not every local initiative is a Living Street. What to do with this diversity of proposals?
- Do we 'spoil' our Dream Streets? A Dream Street can receive a subsidy of up to 40,000 euros. The positive effect is that real changes can be





made, the negative effect is that this may hinder creativity.

- To what extent do we coach the initiators in engaging their neighbours and getting their support? Some initiators, especially in mixed neighbourhoods, find it difficult to approach all neighbours in their street and to involve them in the project. What kind

of support should the municipal administration give them?

- When is the support for the plan sufficient to continue and if not, how to deal with that? Most Living Streets are initiated by highly educated people. In socially and economically weaker neighbourhoods, professionals write and submit the proposals

and involve the citizens in the implementation.

#### Contact



**Esther Sprangers**

Project manager,  
City of Rotterdam

[e.sprangers@rotterdam.nl](mailto:e.sprangers@rotterdam.nl)

# TURIN *Italy*



985,000 inhabitants

**In Turin, thanks to a living lab gathering associations, citizens and municipal departments, Living Streets have provided the opportunity to rethink the use of public space towards pedestrianisation in the residential district of Campidoglio.**

## **A living lab in the Campidoglio district**

Campidoglio (5,000 inhabitants) is mainly a residential district and it is also home to many local artists and craftsmen, but is not a touristic neighbourhood. Campidoglio is characterised by narrow streets, full of cars. Currently there is only one pedestrian street, but this is not really respected as people still continue to park and drive there. In this district residents are willing to take back the streets and organise something else in the public space. The municipality supported this process by proposing Laboratorio Campidoglio to facilitate meetings with the citizens, allowing contact among themselves, but

letting them be the main contributors to the Living Streets activities.

To prepare the events, the municipality contacted all associations in the neighbourhood as well as the craftsmen. In June 2017 a world café workshop was organised involving about 30 participants to develop ideas for activities: "What can we organise to make the area more liveable?" All the ideas were discussed in terms of their feasibility and based on this a follow-up workshop was organised in July to define the agenda of the Living Streets event. Participants highlighted the need to make the borough more visible to its inhabitants but also from the outside so that it becomes more inclusive.



*Citizens showed great interest and participation in the life of the borough: they are more aware of the nature and future of the area, which is not merely the pedestrianization, but also taking back the public spaces and making the neighbourhood more valued and lively. With the Living Streets, the citizens have realized the potential of the district where they live!*

*We need to encourage people to go to this borough. But how? For instance, by opening shops on the street that arouse the curiosity of visitors.*

*Carlo Zanella, craftsman*

In September and October 2017, two two-day Living Street events were co-organised with the active participation of the citizens, shops, schools and other associations within the neighbourhood. These events attracted numerous people outside of the area who came there for the first time.

A wide range of activities took place:

- Painting workshop: One of the local artists in the neighbourhood proposed a painting workshop with children on the topic “what neighbourhood would you like in the future?”.
- Consultation of citizens who were asked to imagine the

neighbourhood with different modes of mobility, what kind of possibilities they see to change this area into a pedestrian zone and also what street furniture they would need to make this area more comfortable. Citizens suggested to have benches, plants, public furniture. Urban furniture was installed with the help of a group of citizens already involved in urban agriculture.





- **Role play with the primary school:** Role play involves imitating the character and behaviour of someone who is different from yourself. Children were playing roles such as a disabled person, a mum with a pushchair and little children, so that they could see with the eyes of the role they were playing which were the problems of the area. After the tour of the neighbourhood they could come back with difficulties they faced and they were aware of, allowing them to reimagine the Campidoglio district without all these issues. Some children were playing the policemen, putting papers with messages on cars that were not appropriately parked. These were not real fines, so were positively perceived. The message was simply saying: "And me, where can I go?".
- **Art exhibition:** Local artists from the neighbourhood organised an art exhibition, including paintings with sights from the Campidoglio district. This allowed some artists to be promoted and be more well-known while making people discover specific spots in the neighbourhood illustrated in the paintings.

- **Debate on future activities:** A debate was organised to think about what should be done after the Living Streets event. Citizens appreciated that Living Streets made connections between them and now they are growing as a group and want to be more autonomous. This ensures that at the end of the project citizens still want to act and continue this process.

### **The impact: a collaborative project that brings more social interaction to the district**

The Living Streets events confirm that the citizens wish to revitalise the public area in Campidoglio. Traffic and parking were the most debated themes during this experiment. Thereafter it was officially decided that by the end of 2018, part of the Campidoglio area will be



pedestrianised and this is causing a big turmoil in the district. The majority of the inhabitants are satisfied with it, but some are worried about the toll parking or the distance of the car parks from their home. Residents will need time to integrate the transformation in their daily lives, but the first impression is that there is a

general acceptance of this decision. The social cohesion in the neighbourhood has considerably increased and a discreet number of citizens now meet regularly to discuss issues regarding the daily life of the borough. Schools, commercial activities and citizens are aware of the importance to exchange ideas

and listen to each other in order to make proposals and implement them together.

New activities have been created following the Living Streets events: the creation of a monthly street market of arts and crafts made in Campidoglio, as well as urban gardening activities with citizens and schools.

*An important part of Campidoglio will be pedestrianised: this result certainly represents a positive outcome because it closes a long path of confrontation and positional conflict and inaugurates a phase of concrete definition of solutions for the future of the district.*

*Now a stable group of citizens is acting as intermediary with the District and meets regularly in order to discuss the improvement of the area.*

*Without a doubt, this happens thanks to the 'constructive' climate created by Living Streets.*

*Claudio Cerrato, President of the District, City of Torino*

### More information

<http://torinolivinglab.it/laboratorio-campidoglio/>

#### Contact



#### Michele Fatibene

Policy Officer -  
Responsible for  
Innovation,  
City of Turin

[michele.fatibene@comune.torino.it](mailto:michele.fatibene@comune.torino.it)



#### Rossana Guglielmetti

European Policies  
manager, City of Turin

[rossana.guglielmetti@comune.torino.it](mailto:rossana.guglielmetti@comune.torino.it)



# ZADAR Croatia



75,000 inhabitants

In Zadar, the Living Streets were organised in the Voštarnica neighbourhood, a derelict area nearby the historical city centre. The aim was to revive this abandoned space by bringing it back to the citizens and turn this part of the city into a central point for gathering people by organising arts and cultural events.

## **Bringing neglected areas back to life: making the Voštarnica of tomorrow visible to all!**

The area was neglected and most residents avoided it, being used only for parking cars on three big parking slots which are crowded the whole year. This is precisely the key aspect that the municipality wished to change by using Living Streets to show another perspective of this area to the citizens, allowing them to see the potential to host other activities rather than merely parking cars. In Zadar, the Living Streets were linked to a local festival called Kvart Art (neighbourhood art festival) and it was decided to use this opportunity to create more than 80 activities during the event taking place in this derelict area. Even during time slots with no activities, people could still come and socialise, recognising this area as a key meeting point. This allowed different social groups and

ages, from children to seniors, to gather and mingle.

The Living Streets initiative also received political support from the mayor who was directly involved and participated in the initiative.

## **Get inspired by Zadar's activities!**

The Living Streets was officially opened via a metaphoric performance when citizens could break a cardboard wall, symbolically showing the barriers to a liveable Voštarnica neighbourhood. Different tools were provided to citizens (chalk, spray cans, etc.) that they could use to mark their visions for the future of the area on a big white screen. An idea box was also provided, gathering suggestions that were used at a later stage by a team of architects presenting future low-budget solutions for the area, based on the needs and dreams of the residents.

To allow residents to picture their area car-free and see all the potential of it in terms of socialising and a better quality of life, during the Living Streets a set of activities was proposed every day.

Below is a list of activities for inspiration:

- Change of perspective: members of the local firefighters came with their vehicle every weekend and they used the crane to lift people up in the air so that they can have a different view on the area from high above and realise the impact of transforming it from a space dedicated to cars (parking lots) into a space dedicated to people.
- Book exchange picnic: local craftsmen made wooden houses to store the books and placed them outside of the public library, on one of the parking lots which was transformed for this period in an enjoyable place with flowers and trees. Residents could exchange their preferred books and read them outside. This construction is now there permanently and residents are still using it.
- Electric bike presentation: this involved different local bike shops promoting electric bikes and



residents were able to try them free of charge on the day.

- Family activities: music concerts for children, archery workshops, and children chess championships.
- Souvenir development creative workshop: this involved seniors, with the support of the Eco Zadar association.
- An open space cinema, followed by a movie quiz.
- Physical theatre workshop: focusing on the body and physical acting in theatre.
- Outdoor theatrical performances, puppet shows.
- Development of lighting installations: residents could create their own lighting installation.
- Sunrise breakfast: this included activities supporting healthy lifestyles (education, training, running, healthy food for breakfast).

- Music concerts were organised with the performance of the well-known guitar player, Miroslav Tadić (traditional and alternative playing), involving more than 500 people coming to this abandoned place (skate park). The guitarist invited everyone to hang out in the parking transformed in a living room and this turned into a big after-party that was very successful, allowing residents to socialise.
- Alternative music and journalism workshops with famous journalists.
- Graffiti and art performances: citizens could have an active role in the graffiti workshops and were invited to ask questions and express themselves.
- Sport activities: mountain climbing with local associations, children's sports Olympics.
- Public viewing of the football game (like the movie night) with a barbecue.
- Parkour workshop.

There was a positive atmosphere during the entire festival and Living Streets revealed that the Voštarnica neighbourhood has a great potential to become a place for social interaction of the residents in the area, but also of all citizens of Zadar. In 2018, the City of Zadar is continuing with the initiative, but this time in close collaboration with 4 local institutions and associations.

### **What was the impact?**

The experience shows that in the derelict area concerned, the people's

acceptance increased concerning the closing of the parking lots to the cars and transforming them into public space dedicated to the people. There was also a snowball effect as the participants in the Kvar Art festival are thinking about the future of their own neighbourhood now, in different parts of the city and on how to turn the parking lots in their own districts into other initiatives than just space for parking cars.

It seems the first Living Streets experiment in Zadar is an eye opener for politicians, the administration





and the citizens on the potential of this neighbourhood and the festival will be organised every year while permanently reorganising this area, transitioning from cars to citizens.

### More information

[facebook.com/kvartartzadar](https://facebook.com/kvartartzadar)

#### Contact



**Stefani Mikulec  
Perković**

Head of the Section  
for Integrated  
Territorial Investment,  
Department of EU  
funds, City of Zadar

[stefani.mikulec@grad-zadar.hr](mailto:stefani.mikulec@grad-zadar.hr)




**Josip Milić**

Head of the Section  
for Preparation and  
Implementation of EU  
Projects, City of Zadar

[josip.milic@grad-zadar.hr](mailto:josip.milic@grad-zadar.hr)



**Make it  
happen  
in your city!**



This project has been funded with support from the European Commission.  
This publication reflects the views only of the author, and the Commission cannot be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained therein.

**Authors:**

Ann van de Vyvere (*Municipality of Brussels*), Birgitta Morin (*Municipality of La Rochelle*), Christine Ballard (*Milton Keynes Council*), Dries Gysels (*Meneer de Leeuw*), Esther Sprangers (*Municipality of Rotterdam*), Ian Turner (*Energy Cities*), Jan van der Wolde (*Municipality of Rotterdam*), Josip Milić (*Municipality of Zadar*), Kinga Kovács (*Energy Cities*), Laura Guérin (*Energy Cities*), Martin Freire (*Energy Cities*), Michele Fatibene (*Municipality of Turin*), Nadia Bonghi (*Municipality of Turin*), Pieter Deschamps (*Trojan Lab*), Rossana Guglielmetti (*Municipality of Turin*), Stefani Mikulec Perković (*Municipality of Zadar*), Trudy Poot (*Municipality of Rotterdam*), Vlatka Berlan Vlahek (*Municipality of Ivanič–Grad*).

**Designer:** [www.TUTTIQUANTI.net](http://www.TUTTIQUANTI.net)

**Date:** July 2018

**Photo credits:**

P. 2 (from top left to bottom right): 3<sup>rd</sup>: ©Andreas Gebert; 4<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 14<sup>th</sup>, 18<sup>th</sup>: ©Gert Arijns  
P. 4, P. 13 (right), P. 34, P. 35, P. 42, P. 44, P. 64, P. 65: ©Municipality of Rotterdam  
P. 8, P. 13 (left), P. 20, P. 25, P. 47, P. 48, P. 49: ©Municipality of Brussels  
P. 9, P. 11 (left), P. 21, P. 27, P. 28, P. 29, P. 36, P. 51, P. 53: ©Municipality of Ivanič – Grad  
P. 10 (left), P. 40, P. 71, P. 72, P. 73: ©Municipality of Zadar  
P. 10 (right), P. 16, P. 39: [www.livingstreet.org](http://www.livingstreet.org)  
P. 11 (right), P. 22, P. 23, P. 67, P. 68: ©Municipality of Turin  
P. 12 (left), P. 60: ©Milton–Keynes Council  
P. 12 (right), P. 30, P. 55, P. 57: ©Municipality of La Rochelle  
P. 40: Cnyborg (CC BY-SA 3.0)

Licence Creative Commons Attribution – NonCommercial – ShareAlike 4.0 International



[www.energy-cities.eu/livingstreets](http://www.energy-cities.eu/livingstreets)

[www.livingstreets.eu](http://www.livingstreets.eu)

[www.meneerdeleeuw.nl](http://www.meneerdeleeuw.nl)

[www.labvantroje.be/en](http://www.labvantroje.be/en)