URBAN STREETS:
CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES IN PUBLIC SPACE AND MOBILITY

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CHALLENGES & OPPORTUNITIES...

- Contested Urban Space
- Environmental Sustainability
- Social Sustainability
- The Right to Mobility / Access
EPITOMIZED IN URBAN STREETS

Minhocão, São Paulo  
Leefstraat, Ghent  
Parklets, San Francisco  
Occupy Central, Hong Kong

Photos: Sam Welson (CityLab), leefstraat.be, curatingcities.org, Luca Bertolini
LEEFSTRAAT, GHENT

- Emphasis on street as public space, public domain, meeting space, non-commercial
- Incorporates mobility functions
- Collaborative action for change
- Street closed to motorized traffic, discourages car traffic (active)
- Encouraged walking, cycling sometimes possible
- NGO, residents and government collaboration
- Several streets, each individually designed
- Directly accessible, except by car
- Car-users included in discussion and parking solutions incl.

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LEEFSRAAT, GHENT

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4 Debates

1. Uniting functions of public space and mobility
2. Multi-Purpose Planning
3. Sustainability Transitions & Experiments
4. Governance
1. PUBLIC SPACE AND MOBILITY FUNCTIONS

Public Space: civic space, inclusion/exclusion, city ownership, exchange, mobility, ...

Mobility: accessibility (!), proximity, segregation, (in)complete streets, shared spaces, ...

Mobility and public space share: access, movement, meeting (‘others’), exchange, ...

Streets: ‘quintessential social public space’, space of both ‘places and flows’
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**Streets:** ‘quintessential social public space’, space of both ‘places and flows’

→ Move AND linger AND interact (potential!)

→ What speeds, which functions, which sizes, which objects?
2. MULTI-PURPOSE PLANNING

- Dealing with uncertainty and complexity
- Need for flexibility in planning
- Room for change and alternating uses

Pedestrianized (shopping) streets are as ‘single-purpose’ as highways…
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Dealing with uncertainty and complexity

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Room for change and alternating uses

Pedestrianized (shopping) streets are as ‘single-purpose’ as highways...

→ No single purpose

→ But what multi-purposes?
3. SUSTAIN. TRANSITIONS & EXPERIMENTS

Potential for transformative change toward sustainability

Experiments, flexibility, embracing complexity and uncertainty

Emphasis on learning
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Potential for transformative change toward sustainability
Experiments, flexibility, embracing complexity and uncertainty
Emphasis on learning

→ what kind of experimentation could generate more sustainable streets?
→ how can we learn from both failure and success?
→ how do we move from successful experiments to regime change?
4. GOVERNANCE

Stakeholders & decision-makers

Participation & innovation

Fruitful cooperation between sectors; overlapping roles

Power relations

Source: Avelino & Wittmayer 2015
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Stakeholders & decision-makers

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Power relations

→ Who should be involved, when, where, how, with what purpose..?

Source: Avelino & Wittmayer 2015
THIS LEADS TO QUESTIONS

- **what characteristics** need to be present for urban public spaces and streets in particular to allow people to move through the city but also to linger and interact and provide liveable environments?

- **how can multi-purpose planning be implemented** and allow for flexibility?

- **what kind of experimentation** could generate more sustainable streets? How to learn from both failure and success? And how to move from successful experiments to regime change?

- **who** should be included in the debates, when, how, where and for whom?
... WHICH LEAD TO EXPERIMENTS AND MORE... QUESTIONS!

- **What characteristics to move through the city but also to linger and interact and provide liveable environments?**
  - Do we need slow mode focus? More street furniture? More green colour? Or plants? ...

- **How can multi-purpose planning be implemented and allow for flexibility?**
  - Through collaboration? Through experimentation? Radical or less so? ...

- **What kind of experimentation could generate more sustainable streets?** How to learn from both failure and success? And how to move from successful experiments to regime change?
  - Blocking cars/motorized vehicles? Knowledge exchange? Replication? ...

- **Who should be included in the debates, when, how, where and for whom?**
  - Government? Residents? Market actors/businesses? NGOs? ...

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DISCUSSION

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