Walk'n'Roll Cities Guidebook

Where streets belong to people

1. Why?

Intro and challenges

European Union
European Regional Development Fund

URBACT
Driving change for better cities

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

Find out more about it!

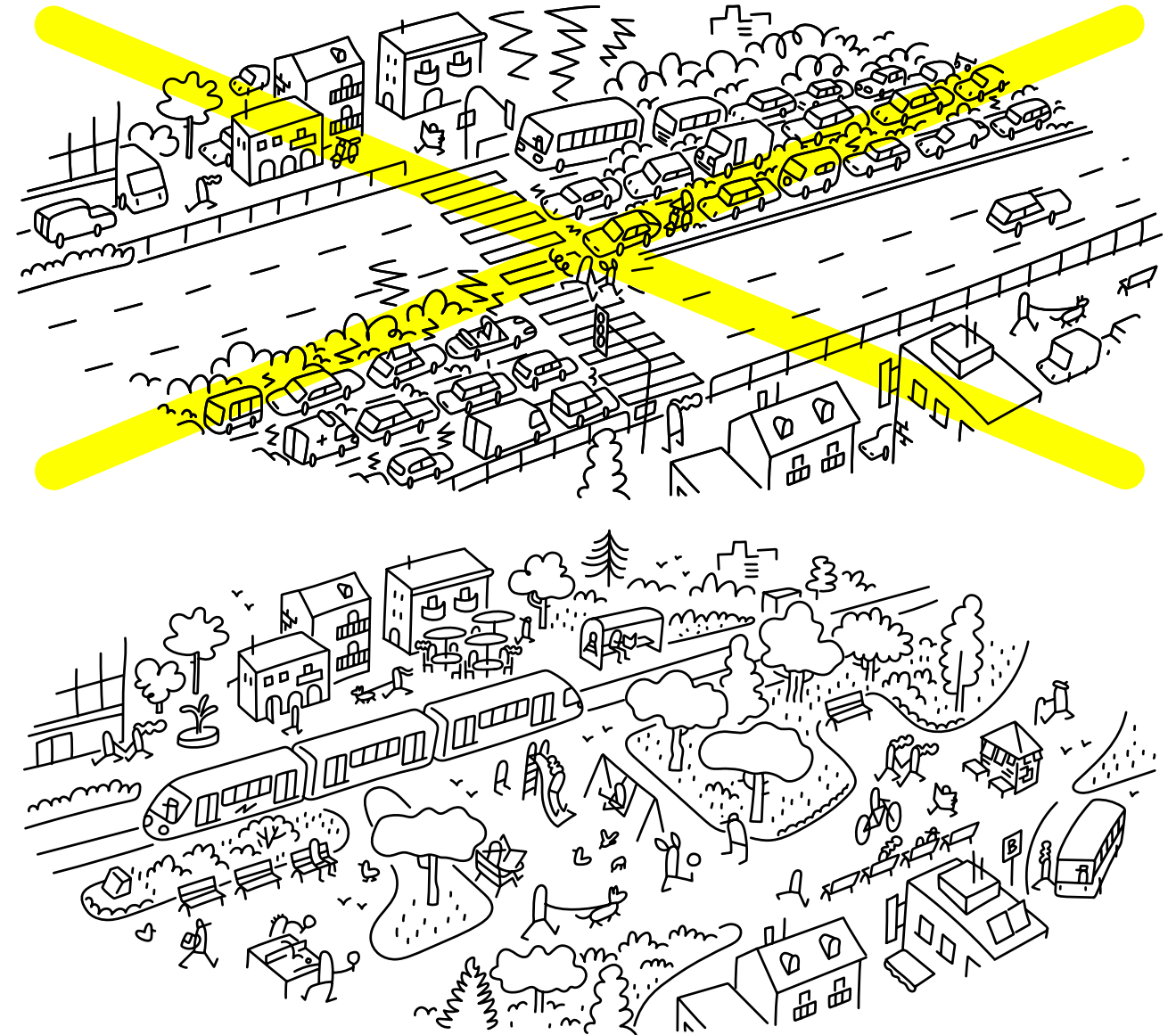**www.urbact.eu/knowledge-hub**

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What is Walk&Roll cities?

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

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

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Introduction

Booklet 1: WHY

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

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

The guidebook has three separate, but strongly connected parts.

- Booklet 1 primarily focuses on the **WHY**

- Booklet 2 focuses on **WHAT** cities can do

- Booklet 3 presents **HOW** cities can make the transformation happen

Booklet 2: WHAT

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

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

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

- the identification of the problem;

- the specific steps cities can (and need to) do to address;

- the less obvious aspects and issues cities need to keep in mind while implementing the intervention;

- the impacts cities can expect;

- and the relevance of the intervention for the different categories of cities.

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

Booklet 3: HOW

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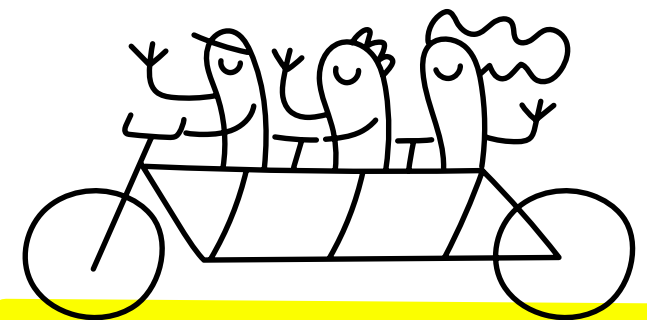
Who's this guidebook for?

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

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

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

Last, but not least, while the guidebook is not written specifically for the wider civil society, its content can still be used when **designing messages and arguments for awareness-raising campaigns** promoting sustainable urban mobility.
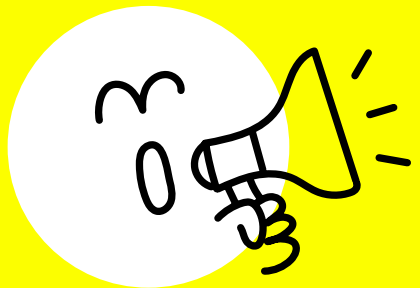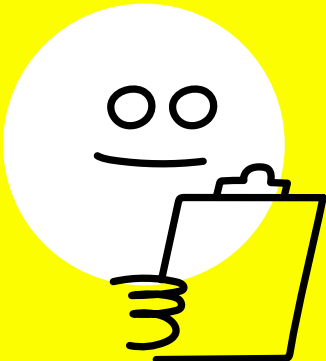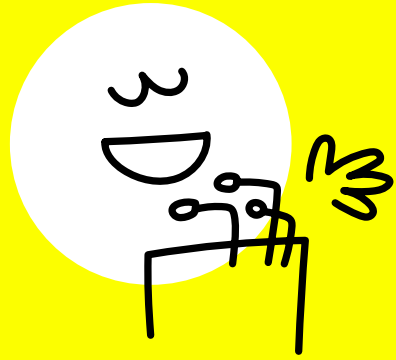
There is no right or wrong way to use this guidebook.

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

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

So, what are you waiting for?
Go ahead, **take a ride** with us and make the most of your journey!

The Challenge

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A new approach

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

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

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

The new approach should be based on **connectivity**, like being connected to online tools and networks, which enables some activities to be done remotely; **proximity**, as in bringing city services closer to each other as well as to citizens in space; and **innovative mobility**, taking an integrated approach to promote active mobility and public transport as a backbone for the remaining mobility needs.
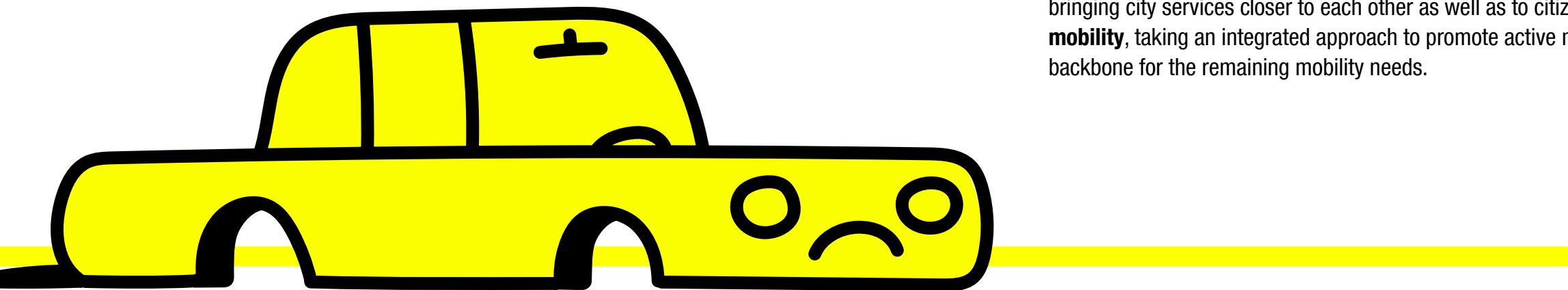
1. Jonathan Levine, Joe Grengs, Louis A. Merlin, 2019: From mobility to accessibility: transforming urban transportation and land-use planning. Ithaca [New York] : Cornell University Press, 2019.

Different cities, different stakes

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

There are many possible methods to categorise cities according to their size. One of the most widely accepted definition comes from OECD[2], which makes the distinction between urban areas acording to **population number**, as it follows:

- **large metropolitan areas** if they have a population of 1.5 million or more;

- **metropolitan areas** if their population is between 500 000 and 1.5 million;

- **medium-sized urban areas** if their population is between 200 000 and 500 000;

- **small urban areas** if their population is between 50 000 and 200 000.

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

- the dimension of a **mobility-related element**, so it is easier to visualise your own city and to translate the recommendations from Walk'n Roll;

- the use of the **population size** as an overall guidance, rather than fixed limitation;

- and by **embracing smaller towns and villages** that, according to the original OECD classification, are below the urban area threshold.

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

Small: cities without a real network of public transport, the population is roughly below 50 000 inhabitants.
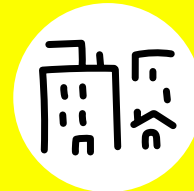
Medium-sized: cities with a network of public transport, but typically without an extensive network of fixed track transport modes like trams, subways or suburban trains. Their population is roughly between 50 000 and 200 000 inhabitants.
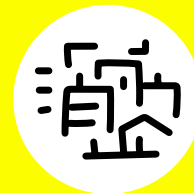
Large: cities with a real network of public transport that, most usually, include fixed track modes of transport, but not necessarily a subway system. Their population is roughly between 200 000 and 500 000.

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

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

The relevance of visions and interventions to different city size categories

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

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

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

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

Action Planning Network's partners

RiConnect

Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (ES)
Stowarzyszenie Metropolia Krakowska (PL)
Anaptyxiaki Meizonos Astikis Thessalonikis (EL)
Métropole du Grand Paris (FR)
Obszar Metropolitalny Gdańsk-Gdynia-Sopot (PL)
Área Metropolitana do Porto (PT)
Transport for Greater Manchester (UK)
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Thriving Streets

Parma (IT)
Antwerp (BE)
Igoumenitsa (EL)
Nova Gorica (SI)
Klaipèda (LT)
Radom (PL)
Oradea (RO)
Santo Tirso (PT)
Debrecen (HU)
London Borough of Southwark (UK)

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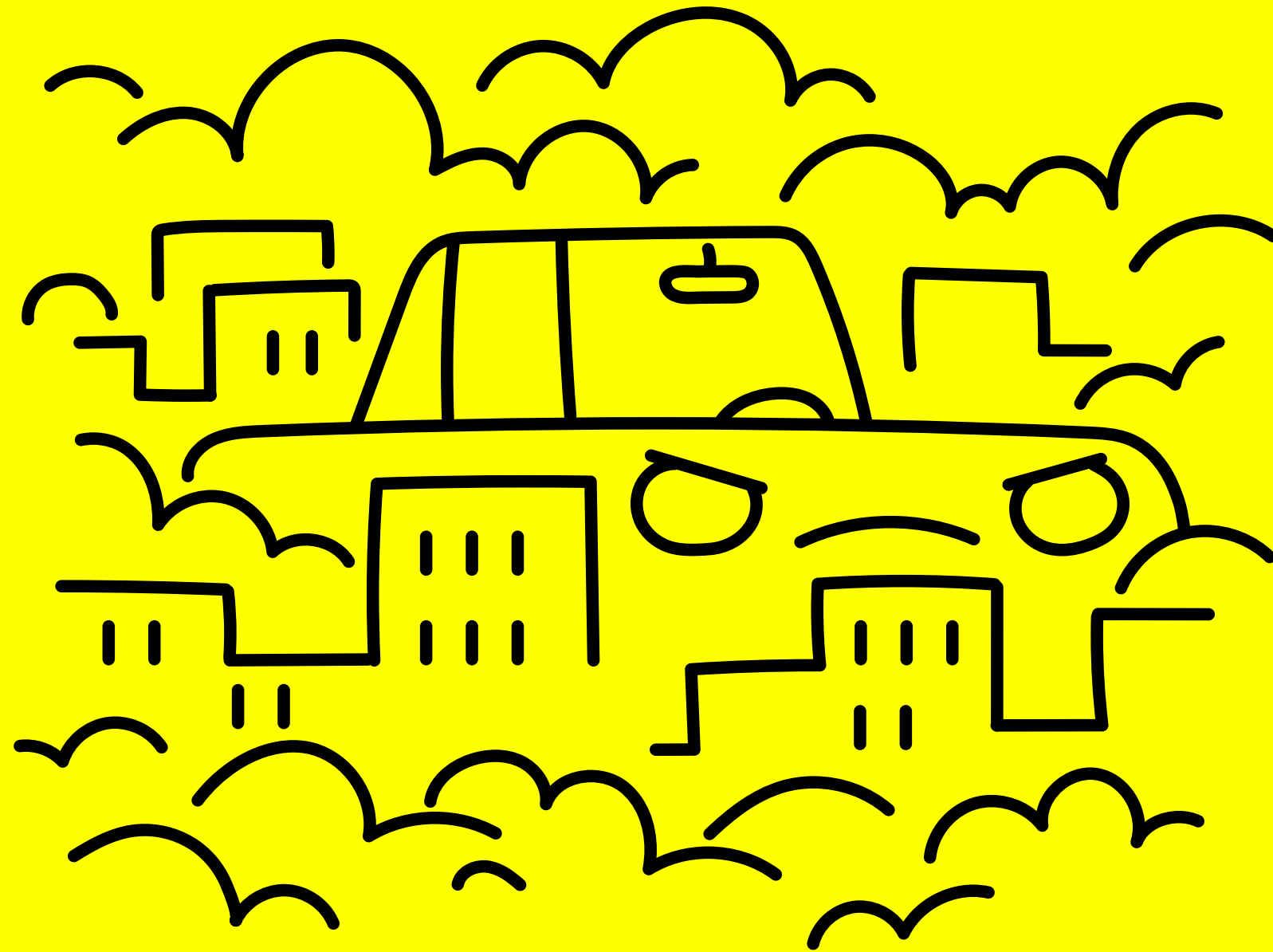p.marani@comune.parma.it

Space4People

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Walk'n'Roll community

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