RiConnect

Rethinking infrastructure

Articles

European Union
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URBACT
Driving change for better cities

RiCONNECT
RETHINKING INFRASTRUCTURE

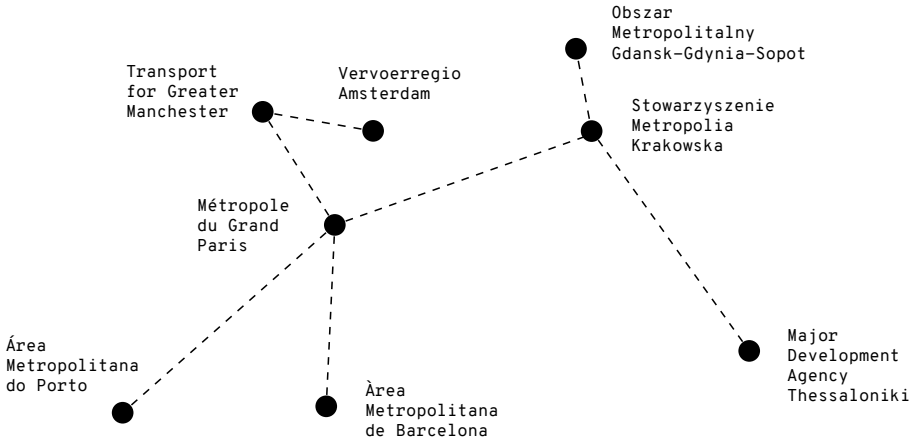
URBACT RiConnect
Articles

June 2022

Brief

This document gathers all articles issued as part of the RiConnect project in chronological order. The articles covered a wide variety of topics, from the setting of the RiConnect themes to the presentation of metropolises or their advancements in the journey to create their Integrated Action Plans.

These texts helped spark the conversation with network members and other interested parties. The Articles were originally posted online at the URBACT website, and shared through social media, starting in February 2020 and down to the end of the project in 2022.



On the network

RiConnect is a network of eight metropolises whose purpose is to rethink, transform and integrate mobility infrastructures in order to reconnect people, neighbourhoods, cities and natural spaces.

We will develop planning strategies, processes, instruments and partnerships to foster public transport and active mobility, reduce externalities and social segregation and unlock opportunities for urban regeneration.

Our long-term vision is a more sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis for everyone. It is an URBACT project and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund.

RiCONNECT
RETHINKING INFRASTRUCTURE

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Rethinking the mobility infrastructure of Europe's metropolises

Article by Rosa Rull,
Lead expert of the URBACT RiConnect APN

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RiConnect is exploring more efficient, equitable, and attractive metropolitan mobility systems

Read time: 4 minutes_Written on 13 January 2021, and edited on 22 July 2021

The fundamental aim of mobility infrastructure has always been to connect people, link settlements and structure the territory. Humanity's history is the history of mobility infrastructure. Without paths, bridges, tunnels and roads, there are no stories to tell. But looking at Europe now, where most population lives in urban areas, often surrounded by overused, congested, noisy, and air-polluting mobility infrastructure we must ask ourselves: How did we get here? How should we begin to address this issue?

Metropolis

Cities are growing. Today's global population is increasingly urban and this trend is expected to continue. Less than 30% of the total human population lived in cities in 1950 and over half of all people do so today. In 2050 the world's population is expected to increase by 2 billion and it is estimated that 70% of the total will live in urban areas. In the European context, despite the fact that Europe is not expected to grow, the urbanisation process is unstoppable, and almost 85% of the European population will live in cities by 2050, making the reality of the European community majorly urban. From an urban point of view, when we say cities, we mean urban areas organised around multiple cities; in other words, a complex structure of cities -few or many- that works as a whole; that is, a metropolis.

© Joan Caba

Flows

If we wonder why cities grow, we can answer that people mainly move to urban areas to access all the opportunities the metropolis has to offer.

Urban area's appeal resides in the extensive array of services available for their citizenry - everything we need and everything we want - from the most functional to the most spiritual. People will therefore try to access them in the quickest and most comfortable ways.

People move, as they already did in the past, they do today and will continue to do so in the future. From subsistence-driven migration in the past, to the contemporary new-nomadism of our digital and interconnected era, including

daily commutes today, people's movement within the urban area are increasing substantially.

People still move driven by subsistence – food or labour – but also do so to access to knowledge, education, culture, leisure activities and due to social relations.

"The right to mobility is, in fact, the right to the whole city"

Regardless of its driving force, movement is a vital element in people's lives. People don't move to cities to be isolated, hence the importance of providing and organising mobility and accessibility for everybody and everywhere.

The right to mobility is, in fact, the right to the whole city. And it is not only a functional element but also a fundamental and structural value in the way to an inclusive and non-discriminatory society.

Infrastructure

Paradoxically, not all metropolises today ensure the adequate connectivity of everybody to the places they may need to commute to. This is so because metropolitan mobility infrastructure design and use has mostly revolved around the use of private cars, with the exception of train tracks.

As population increases, the urban area grows, and infrastructures that once lay stretched apart, now are getting closer and closer, especially in the suburbs. Roads and other tracks are not integrated with the city around it. They are not accessible to everyone and their use doesn't adapt to the new mobility requirements arising from the current citizen's contemporary lifestyle.

These mobility infrastructures generate fragmentation, disconnections and other negative externalities. They usually consist in high-speed fenced roads with few traffic-light crossings, separating neighbourhoods and causing discontinuities in green spaces. They are often overused, therefore inefficient even for car mobility, and have no exclusive lanes for public transport or for active mobility, which makes them doubly ineffective.

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Also, they produce externalities that directly affect the nearby population, such as low-quality space around them, pollution and noise. Other externalities such as climate change, driven by excessive energy consumption and CO2 production, end up affecting the whole community. Nobody wants to live in such a place!

Better cities

If mobility operating patterns remain based on car use, as they are today, the existing infrastructure will continue to be insufficient, as it is already proving to be on many accounts today. To realise this, we must simply look around and see how congested cities' connecting roads are or count the hours lost by suburban commuters in daily displacements.

Instead of adapting mobility infrastructure to an increase in car use, what if we betted for optimising infrastructure we already have?

"While metropolises grow, we have two options: to further increase the space allocated to infrastructure, which, in most cases, is unfeasible in many aspects, or

to rethink, transform and integrate existing mobility infrastructure with the city around it, making it more efficient, equitable, sustainable and spatially attractive while reducing social segregation among other externalities". This, says Joan Caba (urban planner at AMB and the project's coordinator), is the main goal of RiConnect Action Plan Network.

"...to rethink, transform and integrate existing mobility infrastructure with the city around it"

RiConnect is an Urbact III' Action Planning Network (APN) composed of 8 metropolitan entities: Area Metropolitana do Porto (AMP), Obszar Metropolitalny Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (OMG-G-S), Stowarzyszenie Metropolia Krakowska (SMK), Major Development Agency Thessaloniki SA (MDAT), Vervoerregio Amsterdam (VA), Métropole du Grand Paris (MGP) and Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), led by Area Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB).

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RiConnect is a network of metropolitan authorities that want to address a particular issue - the right to mobility- that affects all citizens, mending possible disconnections between the centre and peripheral areas and uniting the city as a whole.

Cities that are rethinking the urban mobility infrastructure within them are blooming in Europe. They have already begun to restructure the use of the streets, recovering the space that had been allocated to cars and using it to foster public transport and active mobility.

However, few have done so on a metropolitan scale. The metropolitan authorities are essential for making future decisions that take into account the interests of all parties. Without their commitment, it would be impossible to achieve the main goal, which requires leadership and management capacity of the benefits for several municipalities.

So far, eight metropolises have already committed to doing so.

The Street–Path–Road–Highway–Street story

It is interesting to observe the dynamics of roads connecting metropolitan cities. This road here started as a path, maybe even a dirt track that stretched away from a street in the town centre. As the city surrounding it started to grow, it became a road at the edge of the city's centre, but also became the main street for the neighbouring cities. As the cities grew, cars, scooters, trucks and buses started circulating along fresh pavement that covered the dust and cobblestones that once defined it.

This paved road eventually became a fenced highway, but the unbearable traffic transiting along it made the villages decide to build a bypass to divert its traffic, with the intention of recovering the highway-road-path as the city's main street. However, it continued being a road in the cities' suburbs. That is why both municipalities agreed to transform the highway into a broad metropolitan avenue connecting both towns, to bring back the concept behind the first paths and roads that connected them.

While cycling, Oriol Ribera, urban planner from the Barcelona Metropolitan Area, showed us a similar metamorphosis: "The C-245 could transform after C-32 construction. It used to be a fenced four-lane road only for cars, and now it will change into a four-lane road, two of them for cars and the other two exclusively for buses and parallel lanes for bikes and pedestrians on both sides. The roundabouts will transform into urban squares. This transformation will increase the

Transport for Greater Manchester

Our partner Transport for Greater Manchester is preparing a set of specific strategies to rethink mobility and street space, and RiConnect will be a valuable forum to enrich the discussion

Read time: 4 minutes_Written on 13 January 2021, and edited on 22 July 2021

Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM) is the public body responsible for co-ordinating transport services across the metropolitan county of Greater Manchester. It was formed in 1969 and became the Greater Manchester Passenger Transport Executive (GMPTE) in 1974. In 2011, and following a reform of local government which granted more devolved powers, the organisation was re-named Transport for Greater Manchester.

In 2014, Greater Manchester was the first city-region in the UK to a significant devolution agreement with the UK's central Government. The agreement resulted in Greater Manchester gaining additional powers in some areas (including related to transport, planning and infrastructure) and a directly elected Mayor.

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Today, TfGM is responsible for delivering the transport policies set by the **Mayor**, the **Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA), the Greater Manchester Transport Committee (GMTC)** and the ten councils that make up the city-region: **Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale, Stockport, Tameside, Trafford, Wigan**, and the **cities of Manchester** and Salford. Decisions made by these elected representatives are implemented by TfGM to improve transport services and facilities across Greater Manchester.

TfGM works closely with **bus**, **train** and **tram** operators, to help improve these services for people who live and work in, and visit, **Greater Manchester**. It also owns **Metrolink** - the UK's largest light rail network - and plans for its future; promotes and invests in walking and cycling and owns Greater Manchester's bus stops and shelters. TfGM invests in new, modern transport interchanges; develops smarter ways to travel by using data and technology and subsidises fares to help older people, children and disabled people get around. The organisation also plays a leading role in co-ordinating Greater Manchester's plans to reduce transport related air pollution.

Some of Greater Manchester's transport governance arrangements are less straightforward. Broadly speaking, heavy rail infrastructure is managed by **Network Rail** and services are managed by privately-owned **Train Operating Companies (TOCs)**; bus services are managed by privately owned and operated companies; motorways come under the ownership and operation of a national government agency (Highways England) and the remainder of the highway network comes under the control of the ten councils (who have special powers, as **Local Highway Authorities**), although TfGM does keep traffic flowing on some of Greater Manchester's busiest roads, including by managing a **580km Key Route Network.**

Within TfGM, the Transport Strategy department prepares and oversees the implementation of Greater Manchester's statutory local transport plans, on behalf of the GMCA. Greater Manchester's current local transport plan is the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 which sets out a vision for Greater Manchester to have **'World class connections that support long-term, sustainable economic growth and access to opportunity for all'** and provides broad, guiding principles to help the city-region to develop and prioritise transport investment. To deliver our long-term **Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040**, we want 50% of all journeys in Greater Manchester to be made by **walking**, **cycling** and **public transport** by 2040. That's a million more sustainable journeys every day. The long-term approach to planning our transport network, set out in the Strategy, is

©TfGM

underpinned by a series of five-year Delivery Plans. The Delivery Plans set out the practical actions we will to take – over each five-year period – to achieve mayoral ambitions, and to provide a coordinated approach to transport investment. They also contain clear asks, for further devolution of transport funding and powers from central Government, to enable us to deliver a cleaner, more efficient and integrated transport network.

"TfGM works closely with bus, train and tram operators, to help improve these services for people who live and work in, and visit, Greater Manchester"

Detailed sub-strategies to the Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2040 – such as a **Streets for All Strategy**, a **Rapid Transit Strategy** and a **Local Bus Strategy** – are being prepared in collaboration with local councils and other key stakeholders, and these will set out, in more detail, how our mobility infrastructure could be designed to improve things for people travelling in Greater Manchester. We will provide more details about our Streets for All Strategy, and approach, in a future article as that work - to foster a progressive streets agenda – provides much of the rationale for our involvement in the RiConnect project.

RiConnect in 100 words

A brief overview on the RiConnect project: its vision, goals and partners - including a collection of content for broader information on each topic

© Adrià Goula

Read time: 1 minute_Written on 12 February 2021, and edited on 06 April 2021

RiConnect **is a network of eight metropolises whose aim is to rethink, transform and integrate mobility infrastructures in order to reconect people, neighbourhoods, cities and natural spaces. We will develop planning strategies, processes, instruments and partnerships to foster public transport and active mobility, reduce externalities and social segregation and unlock opportunities for urban regeneration.** Our longterm vision is a more **sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis for all.**

Riconnect: a network of metropolitan authorities

RiConnect is an URBACT III Action Planning Network (APN) consisting of six metropolitan entities and two transport authorities:

- Área Metropolitana do Porto (AMP)
- Obszar Metropolitalny Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot (OMG-G-S)
- Stowarzyszenie Metropolia Krakowska (KMA)
- Anaptyxiaki Meizonos Astikis Thessalonikis (MDAT)
- Vervoerregio Amsterdam (VA)
- Métropole du Grand Paris (MGP)
- Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM)
- Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (AMB), as Lead Partner

Why "**metropolis**" instead of "city"? European urban areas face significant challenges that can only be solved on a metropolitan scale. Facing some of those challenges leads to making decisions that affect the entire population of an urban area; both its centre and suburbs. Mobility patterns, air quality and social segregation, among other issues, should be reconsidered. Improvements to achieve a more egalitarian metropolis require solutions derived from a metropolitan scope.

Goal

- Rethinking the mobility infrastructure of Europe's metropolises

State of the art

- Why is rethinking infrastructure important?
- Seeing rethinking infrastructure as an opportunity

Themes

- Rethinking for reorganising how we move
- Rethinking for integrating the infrastructure
- Rethinking metropolis planning
- Rethinking for adding ecosystem functions

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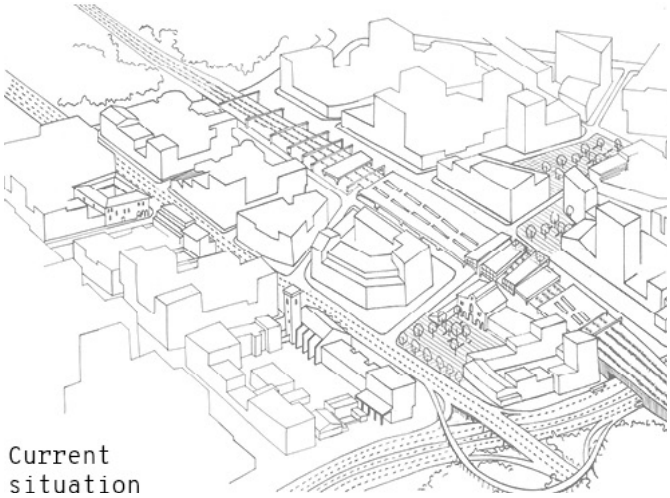
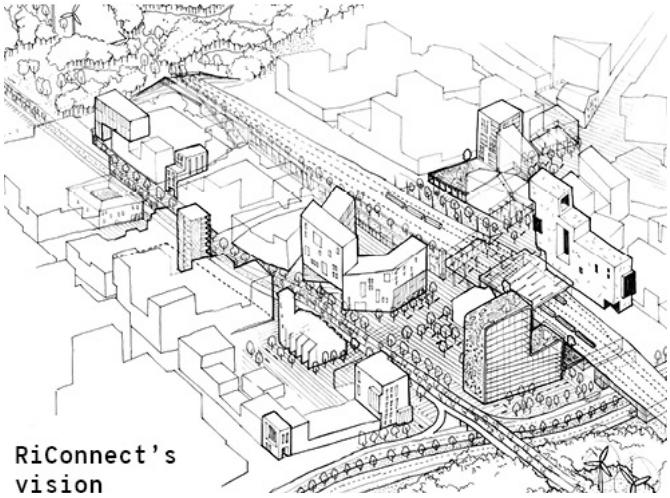


Current situation



RiConnect's vision

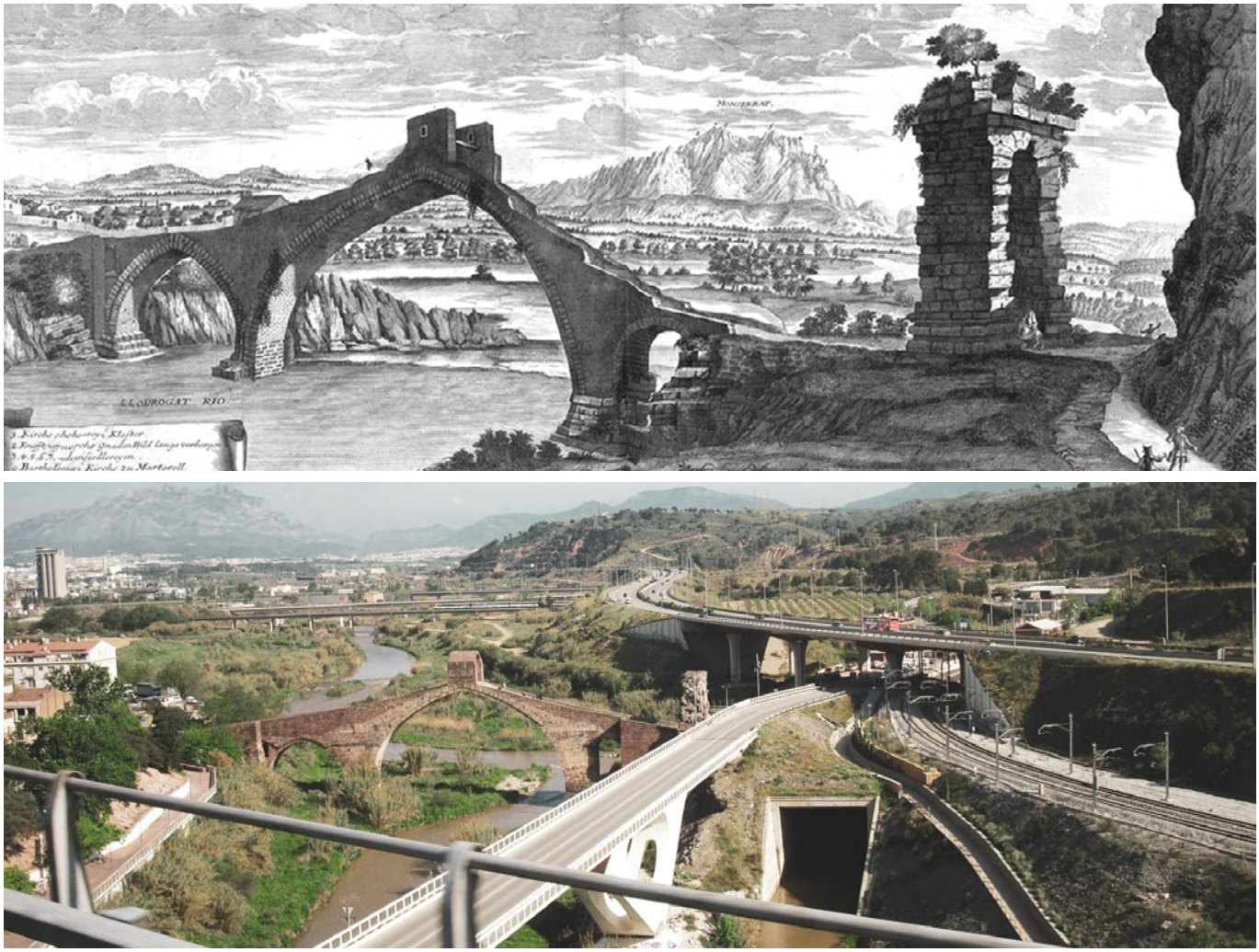
Why is rethinking infrastructure important?

RiConnect aims to rethink mobility infrastructure, and to do so, it is important to acknowledge the relevance of the challenges we are facing

Read time: 4 minutes_Written on 19 February 2021 and edited on 22 February 2021

Mobility causes a wide array of nuisances in our metropolises, such as pollution or car dominance, yet solutions to these issues need to tackle not only mobility, but also its infrastructure.
The fundamental aim of mobility infrastructure has always been to connect people, link settlements and structure territory. Human history has moved in parallel with mobility history. Humans have always hoped to be connected to civilisation through a network of paths, roads and bridges. As a society, we have perceived mobility infrastructure as 100% positive for centuries, "as a monument to something useful, necessary and collective".

© "Pont del Diable in Martorell", Bernhard Christoph Breitkopf, 1735



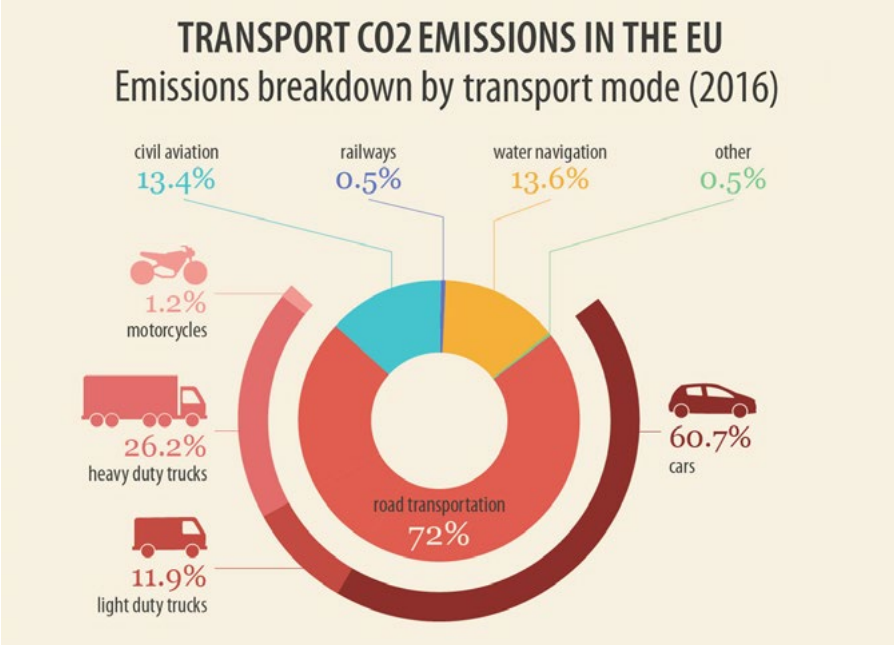
But looking at Europe now, where most of the population lives in urban areas, often fragmented and surrounded by overused, congested, noisy, and air-polluted mobility infrastructure, a question arises: is this the most adequate and efficient way to use this infrastructure? Is there another way? Can metropolitan areas develop more sustainable mobility, allowing citizens to move efficiently and fairly and simultaneously reduce impacts and externalities with significant social costs (urban segregation, stigmatisation, health disease, congestion, etc.)?

RiConnect proposes rethinking, transforming and integrating mobility infrastructure and the city around it to reconnect people, neighbourhoods, cities and natural spaces. Our vision is to develop more dynamic, sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolises where everyone can interact with each other and move about freely, regardless of age, social status and where they live.

In order to achieve this vision, the network develops planning strategies, processes, instruments and partnerships, promote public transport and active mobility, reduce externalities, and unlock urban regeneration opportunities.

Diagnosis

Due to a confluence of economic, technological and social factors, private use of automobiles became the main means of transport relevant to urban planning in the twentieth century. In a relatively short period of time, this transport means came to dominate the level of importance relative to others and take all the space of streets and roads that connect cities and towns. The expansion of this model that boosted suburbanisation required huge investment to build a segregated network that facilitated the transport between the city centre and the surrounding area, at the expense of human scale mobility. On average, every additional stretch of highway displaced 9% of the central city population in Europe between 1961-2011 (Pasidis, 2017). Moreover, in many cases, road design sought to exclusively handle specific challenges that created duplications and avoidable externalities, compromising the continuity of the local transport network.



© European Environment Agency

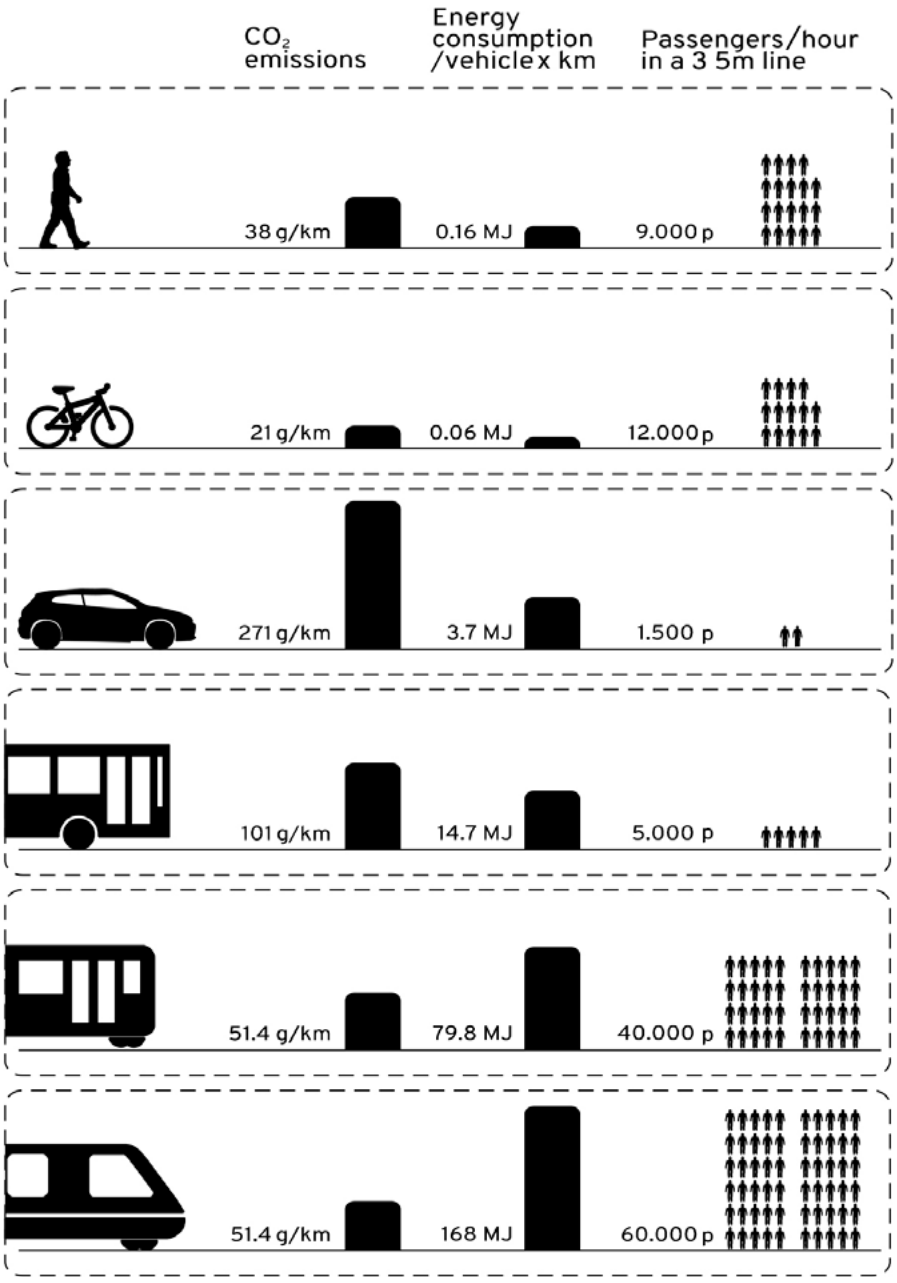
This had serious consequences on the connectivity of active mobility (pedestrians and bicycles) and segregation of the urban fabric and natural spaces with low urban quality surroundings. This was not a reliable solution, given constant traffic congestion affecting the economy and quality of life. In 2018 in the United Kingdom alone, this issue cost nearly eight billion pounds (INRIX Research, 2019).

"People nowadays are more mobile than before and this trend will continue into the future"

The urbanisation process in Europe is unstoppable. By 2050, almost 85% of Europe's population will live in cities (United Nations, 2019). Furthermore, people nowadays are more mobile than before and this trend will continue into the future. In London for example, there were 26.7 million daily trips in 2015 with 32 million expected in 2041 (Transport for London, 2018). Finally, it is important to mention that mobility demands will grow significantly in the following years, stressing the current transport system even further.

The EU has also agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels (European Commission and UN-Habitat, 2016) in addition to reducing air and noise pollution levels, especially in metropolitan areas. In 2016, almost 22% of total CO2 emissions in Europe were generated directly by road transport. Cars are responsible for nearly two-thirds (European Parliament, 2019). In 2012 almost half a million premature deaths were attributable to fine particulate matter (PM2.5), ozone (O3) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2) exposure in the EU-28 (European Environment Agency, 2015).

"The EU has also agreed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 40% by 2030"



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In this context, metropolitan areas primarily need to optimise their existing mobility infrastructure to allow increased and more efficient human mobility throughout the metropolis that is fairer, and simultaneously do so with less externalities and a tight budget. In other words, do much more with less.

However, we must pose the following question: is it feasible to believe that this challenge can be addressed and a better metropolis can be developed, simply by improving mobility issues?

The RiConnect Chronicles 01: Kick-Off Meeting

Issues such as why rethinking mobility is important were covered at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 1 celebrated in Barcelona in September 2019, where all partners discussed the goals of the network and got to know each other. The Kick-Off Meeting was aimed to address the relevance of metropolitan planning, the need to redistribute mobility fluxes and the convenience of establishing synergies among stakeholders.
A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 01, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

Seeing **rethinking infrastructure** as an **opportunity**

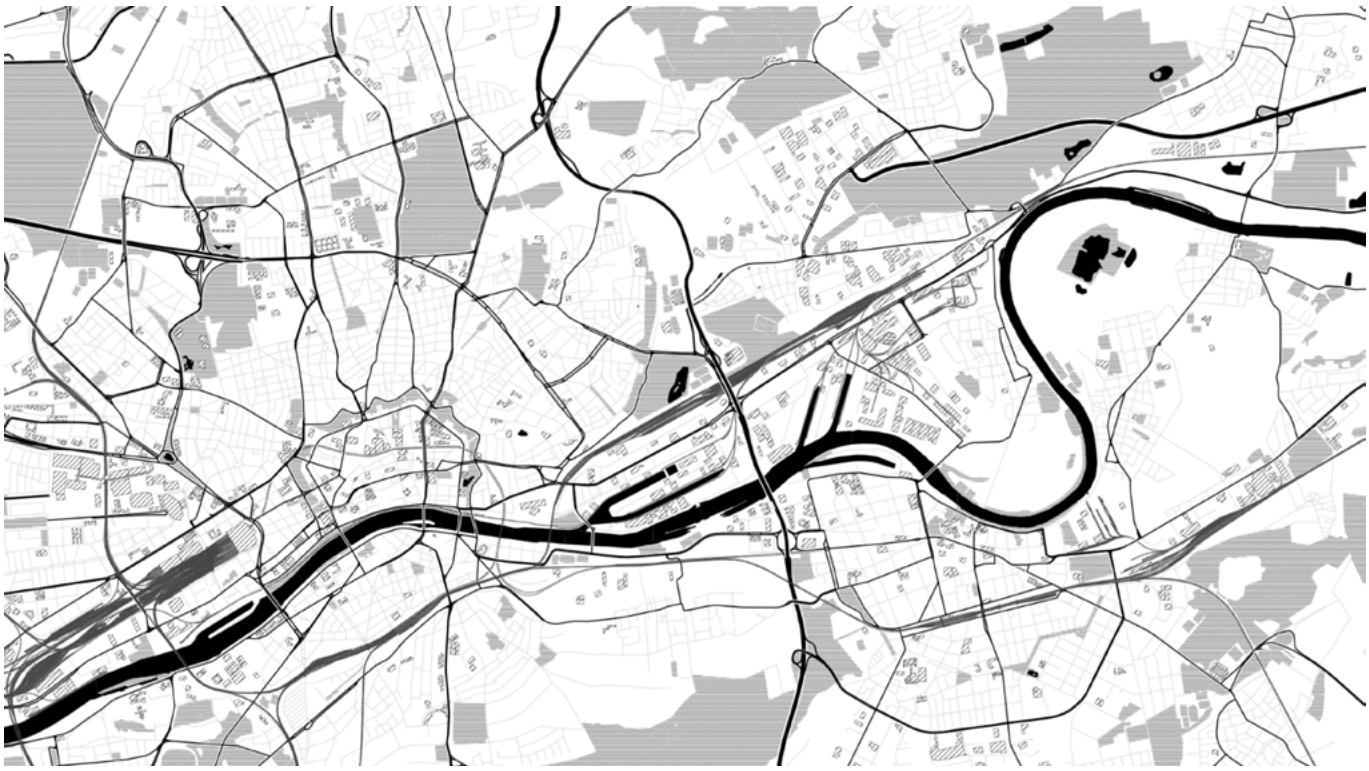
Infrastructure needs to take care not only about its efficiency, but also about its relationship and impact on surrounding communities and territories.

In doing so, great chances for sustainable urban development can arise, and RiConnect aims to seize such opportunities by gathering diverse stakeholders and assessing interventions

Read time: 4 minutes_Written on 22 February 2021

For many years, mobility infrastructure was built to solve mobility problems as efficiently as possible. With the invention of trains and more significantly, automobiles, these demands have become increasingly specific and infrastructure design has become more self-centred (focusing on increasing speed, comfort levels, capacity, safety, etc.) while at the same time, decreasingly taking into account the territory supporting it. This disparity between infrastructure and territory has created urban barriers, open space disconnections, low quality urban spaces, social segregation, and other issues.

Infrastructure set against the city of Frankfurt© Stamen+RiConnect



For many years, mobility infrastructure was built to solve mobility problems as efficiently as possible. With the invention of trains and more significantly, automobiles, these demands have become increasingly specific and infrastructure design has become more self-centred (focusing on increasing speed, comfort levels, capacity, safety, etc.) while at the same time, decreasingly taking into account the territory supporting it. This disparity between infrastructure and territory has created urban barriers, open space disconnections, low quality urban spaces, social segregation, and other issues.

However, the same infrastructure that has caused these problems can also be part of the solution. There is tremendous potential in rethinking mobility infrastructure. Mobility infrastructures are mostly built in public land, they are continuous elements that cross urban and open environments, their dimensions are enormous, can be ductile to integrate other requirements, their surroundings are normally not as consolidated as the central city, among others.

"There is tremendous potential in rethinking mobility infrastructure"

In European metropolitan areas, these infrastructures are concentrated in the 20th century fringe as well as the suburbs. This is primarily due to two reasons: in most European cities, the great expansion of mobility infrastructure took place during this period and the infrastructure located in main metropolitan city centres are already integrated. The twentieth century's urban fabric has a great deal of potential: due to the twentieth century configuration, a new type of urbanity may be allocated, with potential for new housing, workplace, amenity, and public space configurations. There is more space for green areas linked easily to natural networks. Indeed, these are the most suitable places for allocating growth. Rethinking infrastructure may lead to a fresh mix of high quality developments with new housing, industrial areas and economic centres, workplaces, open spaces, amenities and public facility typologies and configurations. This should help decentralise the metropolis, reducing the number of commuters to the inner city. In other words, "short distance metropolises" will be created.

The short distance metropolis

These new developments will not only enhance local quality of life, but also balance local necessities and, along with infrastructure integration, create a chain reaction for urban regeneration.

The infrastructure's physical features may facilitate the implementation of new metabolic requirements. Water treatment, ecosystem services, and energy production are just a few examples. These are demands that not only compensate infrastructure externalities but help to achieve a more sustainable, equitable, and attractive metropolis.

An integrated and participative approach. A process-oriented network

Due to large-scale mobility infrastructure (usually greater than municipal borders), metropolitan areas must take the lead with this task. RiConnect acknowledges this challenge and proposes a network of metropolitan areas and transport authorities with a supralocal perspective. These would share the same objectives while each partner enriches strategies and actions, contributing their own specific spatial, legal, economic and historical context and overall experience.

Due to the huge complexity of these areas with different territories, multiple tiers of administration, stakeholders, interests and dependencies, the most feasible option for rethinking mobility infrastructure and its territory is through an integrated and participated approach involving all stakeholders. The traditional approach, where cities tend to face these challenges in a segmented manner (separated departments of transport, planning, housing, environment, place making, etc.) approving segmented plans, has been proof of its limited success.

"The most feasible option for rethinking mobility infrastructure and its territory is through an integrated and participated approach involving all stakeholders"

The participative approach will be carried out by setting up URBACT local groups consisting in representatives of social, economic, and environmental sectors (city staff, NGOs, SMEs, universities, citizens, and other stakeholders). Their common objective is to find solutions for the needs and local challenges for which partner cities are involved in the network, issues associated to stakeholder's engagement, maintaining their involvement and organising joint decision-making throughout the entire delivery process of integrated action plans.

This integrated approach requires a new approach to funding. There is a 1 trillion dollar global infrastructure-funding gap with 3.3 annual global demand. This network will explore ways of directly increasing public budget to fund infrastructure transformation projects through EU and national funding as well as local/ metropolitan revenue (project-related revenue, pricing measures for automobile use, development charges and value capture) and external funding (municipal and green bonds). Taking into account the fact that this is a holistic approach, it is worthwhile to note that funding the mobility transformation will lead to future savings on healthcare, social services, security, services, and productivity.

The RiConnect network's process is therefore emphasised. Small Scale Actions (SSA) will also play a role in order to confirm some strategies and their financial impact. The successfully implementation of this process is more important than pushing forward mobility and urban planning that will never be realised or used in the intended way. This involves new efficient and equitable mobility paradigms, developing placemaking design principles to make the metropolis more attractive while adding value via its cultural heritage, developing spatial planning solutions to boost regeneration, balance the metropolis and allocate growth and housing and finally, introducing new ecosystem functions for an improved environment. In short, do more with less... with a sole vision: develop more dynamic, sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolises where everyone can interact with each other and move about freely, regardless of age, social status and where they live.

The RiConnect Chronicles 02: Final Meeting Phase 1

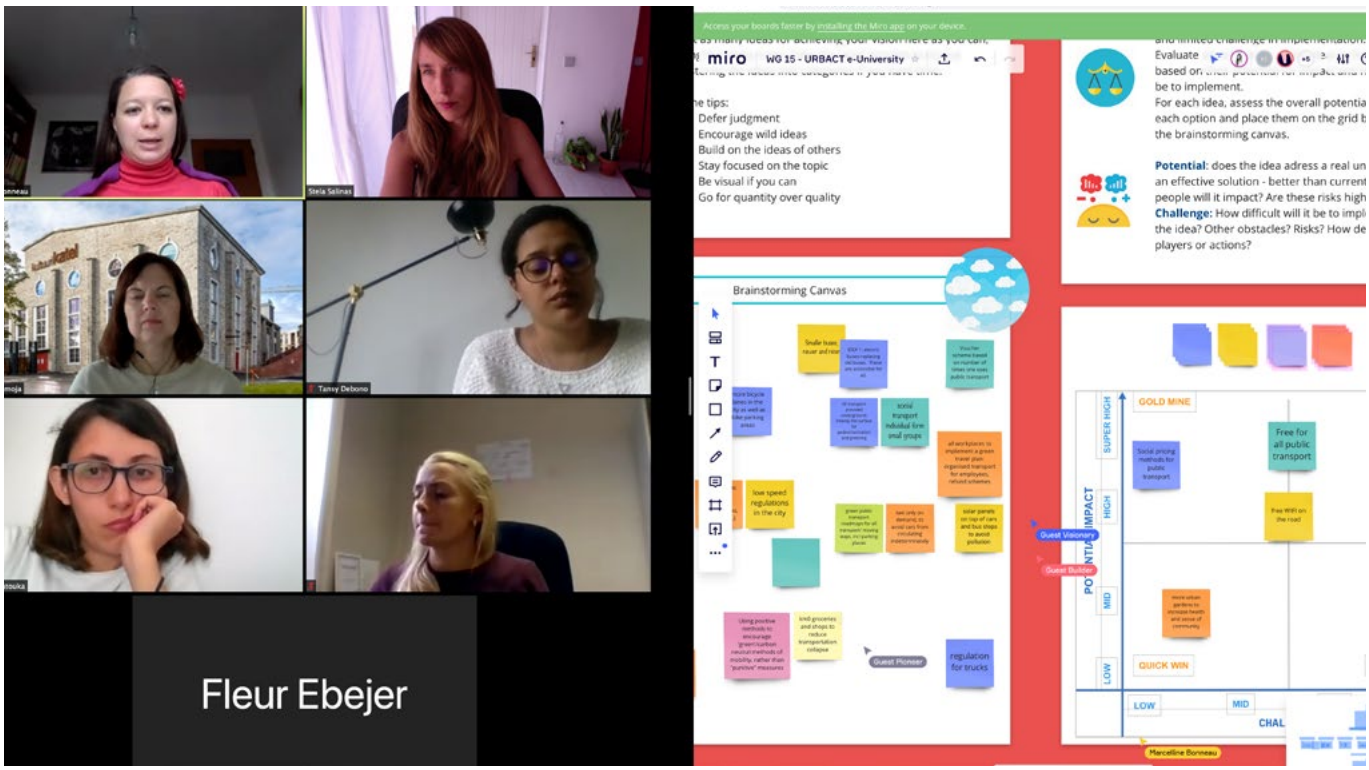
As stated in the article, the process to follow in the RiConnect project focuses on having an integrated approach to infrastructure integration projects and involving all stakeholders, and it makes the most of small-scale actions to do so. Discussions on how to approach the project process were covered at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 2, celebrated in Manchester in January 2020 as the Final Meeting of Phase 1.
A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 02, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

URBACT e-University: knowledge exchange, digital yet entertaining

The annual URBACT Summer University, an eight-day dynamic event, was carried out online in 2020. Despite the new setting and fast adaptation, the meeting proved successful with over 300 participants. It was a bold exchange of ideas and key takeaways for RiConnect

Read time: 5 minutes_Written on 02 March 2021

How can we build synergies and share knowledge from home? The 2020 URBACT e-University, held September 15-October 8, 2020, faced a big challenge in adapting the Summer University from an in-person meeting in Croatia to an online meeting. Nonetheless, they managed to create an event that was entertaining and inspiring. It went further than just a series of digital presentations and it was made to be interactive and appealing. We also had the chance to help manage the event ourselves, with two of our members acting as e-facilitators.



A successful adaptation to demanding times

The URBACT e-University is aimed at gathering members from all URBACT planning networks in order to offer support and training on how to handle their action plans. In doing so, the goal is to find solutions to specific urban challenges in a comprehensive, sustainable and participatory manner. Held yearly as an in-person meeting, the 2020 edition needed to be held online due to the pandemic. It was still an enriching event for RiConnect and all involved networks since it gave us tools to develop the upcoming project phases.

There were various relevant takeaways for our network, both as a whole and at the local level: new ways to engage with our local groups, tools to make meetings more dynamic, strategies for taking action. Therefore, showing a great spirit, it resulted in a more diverse and environmentally friendly event, with more than 300 participants from 200 cities throughout Europe, and with relevant contents that helped us improve our work.

© URBACT

A new setup, with brief sessions along four weeks

The talks were held on eight different days over the course of four weeks in order to keep the meeting light and on point, with a two-hour session on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Participants followed the usual planning process in this session series: detection of parties involved, problem analysis, planning actions, possible ideas and potential outcomes. Inputs were thereby showed to all participants during each session and discussions were held in smaller group workshops.

A wide range of themes was worked on. These ranged from regional planning to urban participation and hosted a varied pool of speakers. Some speakers were from partner networks such as Béla Kézy from Thriving Streets APN and Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse from GenderedLandscape.

"While demanding, the new e-University scheme was extremely interesting"

While demanding, the new e-University scheme was extremely interesting. In the days between sessions, partners were given time to comprehend the concepts and attend with renewed interest and even apply some of the tools in their networks in the meantime.

Enriching talks covering the entire planning process

The series of events started with the **grand opening** headed up by URBACT secretariat members **Clémentine Gravier** and **Julien Lambert.** It was an interactive session aimed to know the participants and hold an overview of the URBACT principles. This was followed two days later by an explanation on how to set up a participation group. **Mary Dellenbaugh-Losse** introduced us to techniques to engage with the right stakeholders for each project. This was an invaluable meeting for evaluating the steps we had taken in our Roadmaps and help us review and improve upon our local groups.

"Building a shared vision is usually a critical step in all projects"

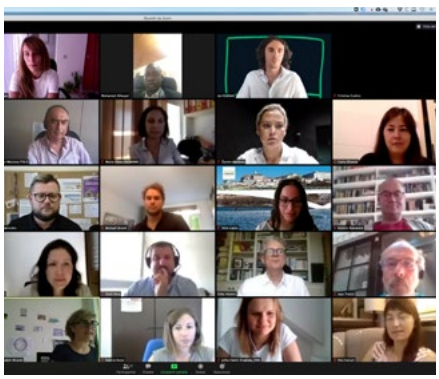
Christophe Gouache led a session the second week, guiding us through the process of **problem analysis.** The presentation helped us specify the definition of problems in our Action Plans and maintain a realistic scope, which is a vital step for successful urban planning action. In the week's second session, **Liat Rogel** showed us how to build a shared vision for a project jointly with all stakeholders. Building a shared vision is usually a critical step in all projects, where different interests collide, and all actors need to agree on a comprehensive solution. We therefore had the chance to learn about a variety of tools that will be very helpful to our Local Groups.

URBACT e-University schedule

The third week took us deeper into the **co-creation process.** Once the shared vision is set, it is time to generate specific ideas. **Eileen Crowley** guided us through the challenges of this stage. This was a very helpful talk on how to collaborate, especially in pandemic times, where faliltation is key for an enriching participation. These ideas should lead to specific planning actions, and **Ian Graham** introduced us to best ways to address the design of actions.

Finally, week four served as a wrap-up of the e-University. **Béla Kézy** presented on an essential topic: how to make results visible. The presentation led us through how indicators of success are defined, in order to better communicate the achievements and have a greater impact on public policy. The four-week synthesis culminated in the **Grand Finale.** Under **Anamaria Vrabie**'s guidance, all participants reflected on how our Integrated Action Plan wrapups will take place, imagining worst-case scenarios so that we can anticipate flaws before we get into trouble. The e-University concluded with these valuable contents, which helped us improve as a network.

A great result, making it possible to advance in our IAPs



© URBACT e-University

The e-University was a successful and compelling event: despite the difficulties, it was dynamic and easy to follow. It gave the networks plenty of new resources and abilities to develop their integrated action plans and better address local groups. The e-University was inspiring not only for its content, but for the meeting setup as well, with solutions that can be applied to our **Transnational Meetings.**

Since then, we at RiConnect have made great use of the tools that were described at the e-University, both at a local and network level. This has led to better coordination with our local stakeholders, and a more dynamic and fluid exchange of ideas between all partners.

The e-University was a complete success for us. In addition, although networking was not as easy as in-person, we still had the chance to share new and bold ideas with other networks and stakeholders. We are thrilled to meet with all participants again, hopefully in person soon, and keep developing our exchange of knowledge!

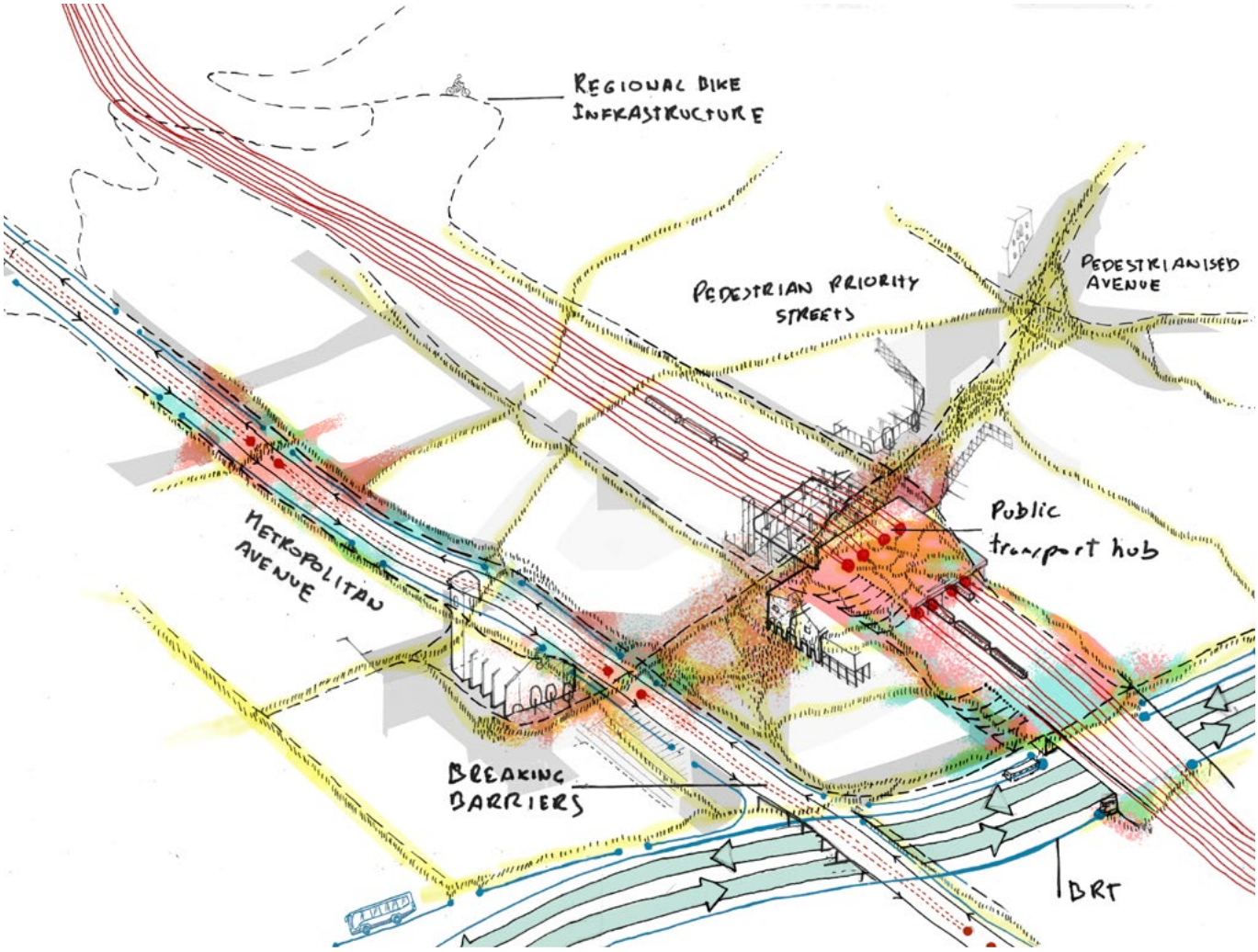
All contents from the URBACT 2020 e-University are available here.

RiConnect themes:
Rethinking for reorganising how we move

Rethinking for reorganising how we move" is one of the four themes RiConnect develops. In this theme, the network is aiming to integrate all mobility modes and favour a more sustainable and equitable mobility

Read time: 3 minutes_Written on 06 April 2021

The main objective of mobility infrastructure is to physically support mobility flow types to ensure adequate accessibility throughout the metropolis. Rethink our existing infrastructure and reorganise the way we move is the RiConnect network's first major step, rather than planning new infrastructure. How will this be done? We will optimise the use of combined means of transport in favour of more efficient mobility.



For many decades, urban development of cities was based on making the territory accessible using cars. This caused significant externalities including urban sprawl, territorial fragmentation, excessive public space occupancy, resource waste, pollution, accidents, and other issues.

Accessibility based only on private mobility also ended up isolating some inhabitants due to their age, health, social status, gender, religion, location, or other factors; namely, people who did not have access to cars.

RiConnect network is promoting mobility systems based on using means of transport that will assure accessibility for everyone, thereby reducing negative externalities. Achieving this will help us attain a more equitable metropolis.

Towards efficient mobility

"RiConnect network is promoting mobility systems based on using means of transport that will assure accessibility for everyone"

New mobility's demands on metropolitan areas, caused by the increase of inhabitants and number of daily journeys, should essentially be covered using active mobility and public transport. There are many advantages over private cars. Less space is occupied, thereby dramatically increasing the capacity of existing infrastructure. Externalities are reduced, making protective elements for spaces likely no longer necessary. Transport is more reliable, reducing traffic congestion costs if specific infrastructure is available, and it is more equitable, as there is no longer segregation due to economic, social, health, age or other factors. Relative to cars, however, this mobility should be competitive in terms of time, cost and comfort. Three main strategies have been seen in the first phase of the project:

- **Through the infrastructure**: Reprogramming infrastructure mobility flows in order to incorporate and prioritise active mobility and public transport throughout its length at the expense of car space. For example, in Porto, a four-lane motorway will be re-shifed to introduce pedestrian walkways on both sides, as well as a bus and bike lane. Manchester is working towards similar goals.
- **Across the infrastructure**: Rethinking infrastructure can make it possible to introduce new mobility flows across infrastructure and reconnect both sides. This is Thessaloniki's case, where various neighbourhoods can be integrated, 'only' rethinking road and military infrastructure, making it possible for the city's inhabitants to have more meeting spaces.
- **Inter-modality and city hubs**: In order to reach any final destinations (Last Mile) anywhere more efficiently, all sustainable means of transport must be integrated to facilitate transfer from one means of transport to another. They should be integrated physically, in the sense that they should be as close to each other as possible and have integrated management (including same fares, signage, coordinated schedules, etc.). Krakow and Amsterdam have experience in working on such inter-modality hubs.

Towards equitable mobility

Mobility infrastructure is related to citizen accessibility to all services and opportunities offered by the metropolis, including basic subsistence, accessibility to housing, workplace, education centres and services. This is not merely a functional matter. This is a fundamental right for all citizens.

The importance of the role of infrastructure is undeniable as a physical support for all means of transport in guaranteeing adequate accessibility to all places. This is not currently happening, despite infrastructure's overuse. Therefore, this network explores which factors lead to urban segregation in terms of age, health, disability, social status, gender, religion and location. It will then set up strategies and actions to tackle these.

"The importance of the role of infrastructure is undeniable as a physical support for all means of transport in guaranteeing adequate accessibility to all places"

The following are some points already identified by the European Institute for Gender Equality:

- Gaps in access to transport infrastructure and services
- Segregation within the transport labour market
- Weak representation of women in the transport sector decision-making process
- Gender-based violence in transport, which mostly affects women

Case studies

Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development, Berlin, 2005

Gender Mainstreaming in Urban Development contains a range of criteria and guidelines for decision-making in gender-sensitive planning at various levels.

Key elements for knowledge sharing are short travel distances in a “compact and safe city” ensuring equal opportunities for people. Equal mobility opportunities are attained by optimising foot and bicycle traffic and providing convenient access to surrounding areas and the public transportation network and designing a safe network of paths for pedestrians and cyclists.

© Berlin Senate Department for Urban Development

Good practices

- Cycle Hubs, Manchester
- Barcelona-Esplugues Bike Lane, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
- Radbahn Bike path, Berlin
- Wetering Circuit, Amsterdam
- Railway Walk Along the E411, Belgium
- RijnWaalpad Bicycle Highway, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Netherland
- The Bicycle Bridges of Copenhagen, Denmark
- The Claude Bernard Overpass, Paris
- Cycle Roundabout Hovenring, Veeldhoven Meerhoven, Netherlands
- Luchtsingel, Rotterdam
- Express Axes, Paris
- Integrated Public Transport, Nantes, France
- Norreport Station, Copenhage

Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan, Gdansk, 2018

The SUMP development process saw the implementation of a broad and detailed participation strategy, beginning with the working team itself. It was extended to city districts, stakeholders, inhabitants, interest groups, politicians and a wide range of experts from various professions. SUMP’s main objectives are: Improved conditions for active mobility, increased safety, improved accessibility, increased public transport, reduced transport externalities, increased quality and accessibility of public space and increased quality of life.

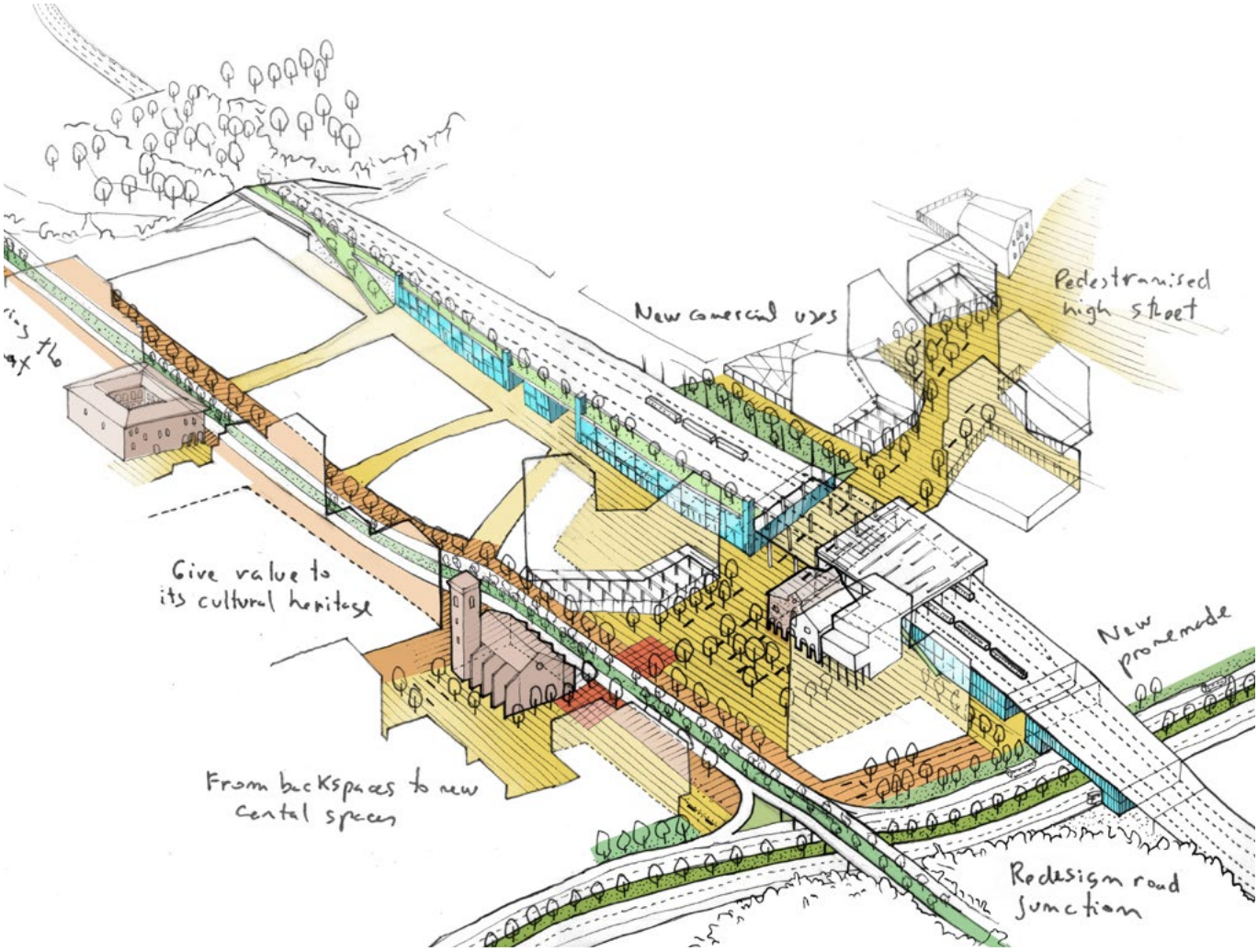
SUMP promotes active mobility in Gdansk

RiConnect themes:
Rethinking for integrating the infrastructure

How to physically integrate the infrastructure? The goal of our second theme is to ensure that mobility infrastructure is accessible, surrounded by active spaces and without leftover areas

Read time: 3 minutes_Written on 07 April 2021

While mobility infrastructure connects the entire territory (territorial scale) it must also be understood as part of the public space and heritage of neighbourhoods it passes through (local scale). Mobility infrastructure is one of few urban elements with this multi-scale feature. Taking into consideration this aspect, rethinking infrastructure for simultaneous integration at local and metropolitan levels and activating all residual spaces in its proximity has enormous potential to alter the current situation, attaining a more liveable and interesting metropolis.



Many neighbourhoods and municipalities in metropolitan areas have absorbed within their urban fabric all kinds of crossing infrastructure, designed thinking merely about the longitudinal connection for motorised vehicles and now overused. These neighbourhoods often are related to socially segregated areas with low quality urban spaces. Such areas have lost their local identity, which existed before the infrastructure was built. In many cases, these neighbourhoods are stigmatised and overlooked when considering potential locations for allocating growth in metropolitan areas. Redesigning the mobility infrastructure and its surroundings as the front door and centre of these neighbourhoods could radically improve their urban situation.

Towards a redesign of mobility infrastructure and its surroundings

"Redesigning the mobility infrastructure and its surroundings as the front door and centre of these neighbourhoods could radically improve their urban situation"

Rethinking the infrastructure should also consider the area's location and where it passes through. The infrastructure and its periphery should be reconsidered. What was previously the marginalised part of the city will become integrated within it, making the city more attractive and liveable. To an extent this infrastructure should become the public space and entrance point to neighbourhoods, taking into account its local reality and identity. The network will focus on three points:

- Redesign of infrastructure and its surroundings to improve its urban quality and convert backspaces into new central spaces.
- When possible, minimise wasted space redesigning road junctions, safety distances, slopes, etc.
- Incorporate new elements and uses to "domesticate" the infrastructure.

Towards giving value to its cultural heritage

Two of mobility infrastructure's fundamental assets are that the land is public and that it has been used in a collective fashion for many years. It has therefore accumulated urban memories and has become part of the identity of citizens. To this end, the following are the two main points to be discussed:

- **Public land heritage**: in some cases redesigning the infrastructure may make it possible to free up land that is no longer required for infrastructure and can be repurposed, for example developing a sort of mixture to a neighbourhood, selling the land to fund some of the infrastructure reshaping, or other uses.
- **Cultural heritage**: giving importance to the infrastructure's cultural value may help redesign and rethink the infrastructure and which role it should have. Mobility infrastructure is also the asset used by the population to discover and interact with the territory. Understanding the infrastructure as part of our heritage could help build a landscape inviting people to see it and live in it. For example, Porto's roads were built on the ancient city's border. Giving importance to this idea, perhaps to not doing similar, may provide a compelling argument for this proposal.

Case studies

Waterfront Renewal, Thessaloniki

During the waterfront renewal, over five kilometres of underused hard to access spaces containing many automobiles were replaced with a pedestrian walkway with 870 new trees and bicycle lanes (Nikiforidis-Cuomo Architects, s.f.).

Renewal of Thessaloniki's waterfront

The waterfront renewal project created a relationship between the city and sea, intensifying the local character, integrating life on the new seafront into the overall urban fabric, while simultaneously emphasizing the area's ecological character and its role as Thessaloniki's "green lung".

C-245, AMB

"C-245's urban integration will be the starting point for a long process of urban revitalisation, placemaking and regeneration"

The new project will give a more pleasing quality to the historical road that connects five municipalities across the metropolitan area of Barcelona and gives priority to public transport and active mobility (bike lane and wide pedestrian walkways) at the expense of automobiles. C-245's urban integration will be the starting point for a long process of urban revitalisation, placemaking and regeneration.

The new metropolitan avenue © AMB

Good practices

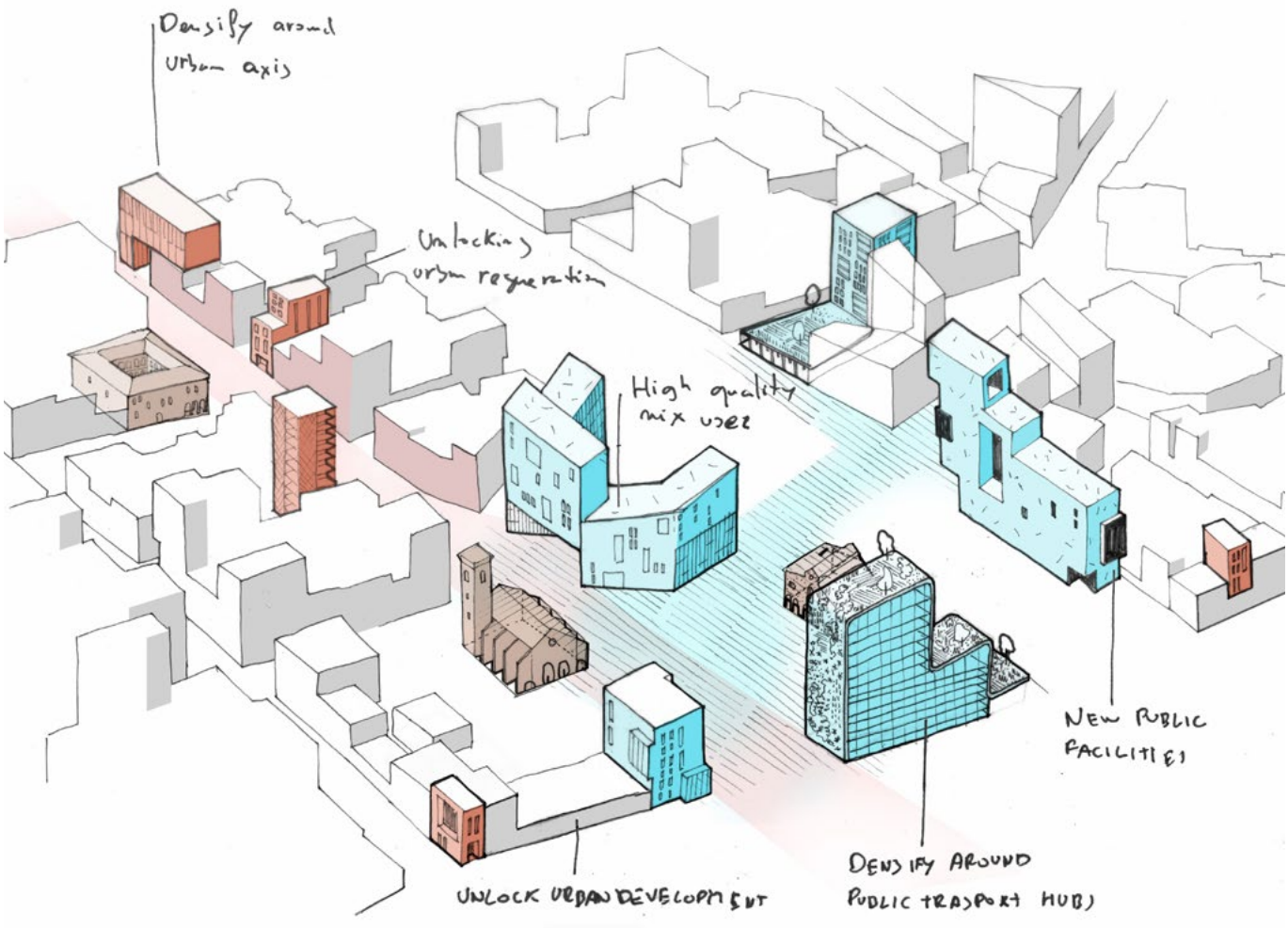
- From Urban Highway to Living Space
- Seine Riverbank, Paris
- Boulevard Périphérique Transformation, Paris
- Woonerfs, Netherlands
- Cheonggyecheon Corridor, Seoul
- Left Bank Quay of Garonne River Landscaping, Bordeaux
- Northmoor Homezone, Manchester
- B-23 Urban Integration, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
- Singelfietspad, Antwerp
- Sotto Il Viadotto, Roma
- Place de la République, Paris
- Metro of Porto Integration, Porto
- Rambla de Sants, Barcelona
- "Baana": reuse of an old railway pass, Helsinki
- Morlans Tunnel, Donostia / San Sebastián, Spain
- Gran Via de Llevant, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona

RiConnect themes:
Planning the metropolis

Rethinking mobility infrastructure offers the opportunity to have a positive impact in the metropolitan scale, through sustainable urban development

Read time: 3 minutes_Written on 08 April 2021 and edited on 09 April 2021

Levels of mobility are related to the urban settlements supported (density, types of urban uses, etc.) as well as offering and costs (money, time, etc.) of transport available. Planning the territory with sustainable mobility criteria in mind and the other way around, rethinking mobility from a territory standpoint is required for having a short distance metropolis. People, activities, facilities, workplaces, leisure and gateways to public transport must be located close by, ideally under 15 minutes by foot or bicycle. This strategy fosters sustainable neighbourhoods, builds local communities, reduces social segregation and diminishes needs of mobility's highest costs.



"The objective is a short distance metropolis, more sustainable and less dependent on cars"

Cities began an unprecedented urban expansion when more efficient transport was invented: trains and subsequently, automobiles. New mono functional areas were built to allocate industrial estates, residential areas, public facilities and leisure and consumer complexes, all of which were physically segregated and linked by automobile only. This rapid suburbanisation process was structured with segregated car infrastructure, producing all aforementioned externalities. Rethinking this mobility infrastructure is therefore a wonderful opportunity to change the current situation, unlock opportunities for mixed uses, urban intensification and urban regeneration. The objective is a short distance metropolis, more sustainable and less dependent on cars.

Towards intensifying the main public transport stops

Mobility infrastructure creates polarities. Some uses of the territory enforce centralities, and both should be considered jointly. Rethinking mobility infrastructure can create new places that are highly accessible by public transport. In order to take advantage of this privileged situation and reduce dependence on automobiles, housing, services, and workplaces should be located within walking distance, usually 400-800 meters, to the greatest extent possible. Nonetheless, levels of density, use and complexity should be planned carefully to be sensitive to surroundings and not affect local identity (Sim, 2019). Amsterdam is working on this idea. Main points have been raised by the Transit Oriented Development Institute (Transit Oriented Development Institut, n.d.), and can be summarised in:

- Walking proximity to public transport station
- Well-defined open space with active ground floor and sidewalk cafes
- Mixed use – lively, vibrant places
- Pedestrian scale with reduced and out of sight parking

Towards unlocking urban regeneration and urban development

"Reshaping mobility infrastructure could completely change the character of the place from an ugly place to a central and desirable place"

Reshaping mobility infrastructure could completely change the character of the place from an ugly place to a central and desirable place. This shift could cause a chain reaction towards neighbourhood regeneration. For example, converting what was a noisy road to a central avenue could mean a new main street for that neighbourhood with new buildings containing new cafes, shops, open spaces, housing, offices and services. This new potential urban regeneration and development might be considered in order to enhance local identity, rebalance its urban uses (mixed-use neighbourhoods), and slow the effects of gentrification. In other cases, this could serve as a chain reaction for new urban development or major urban transformation (brownfield recovery) that may help decentralise the metropolis and reduce commuting distances. Paris and the Barcelona Metropolitan Area are working on this idea.

Case studies

La Sagrera, Barcelona / Plaça Europa, L'Hospitalet de Llobregat

After Cerdà square, Gran Via was a motorway. With the integration of the motorway, the new avenue became the front face of the neighbourhoods and activated all surrounding spaces.

Lineal park along la Sagrera

Today, large facilities like Barcelona's City of Justice, Europa Square (a new economic district), Barcelona's trade fair, houses and services are located around the avenue. Public transport was also improved to provide services for these new uses: two or three new metro stops, interchanges and bus lanes have been implemented gradually.

Rose de Cherbourg, La Défense, Paris

The traffic junction between D913 and N13 in La Défense, Paris, has been a barrier to access between La Défense and the Puteaux neighbourhood (LILA, 2014). The Rose de Cherbourg(link is external) project prioritises pedestrian flow alongside the boulevard, creating new public spaces in order to become a new civic point of the neighbourhood and allocate over 100,000 m2 to offices, student dormitory lodging, commercial space and housing.

View of the proposed new public spaces

Good practices

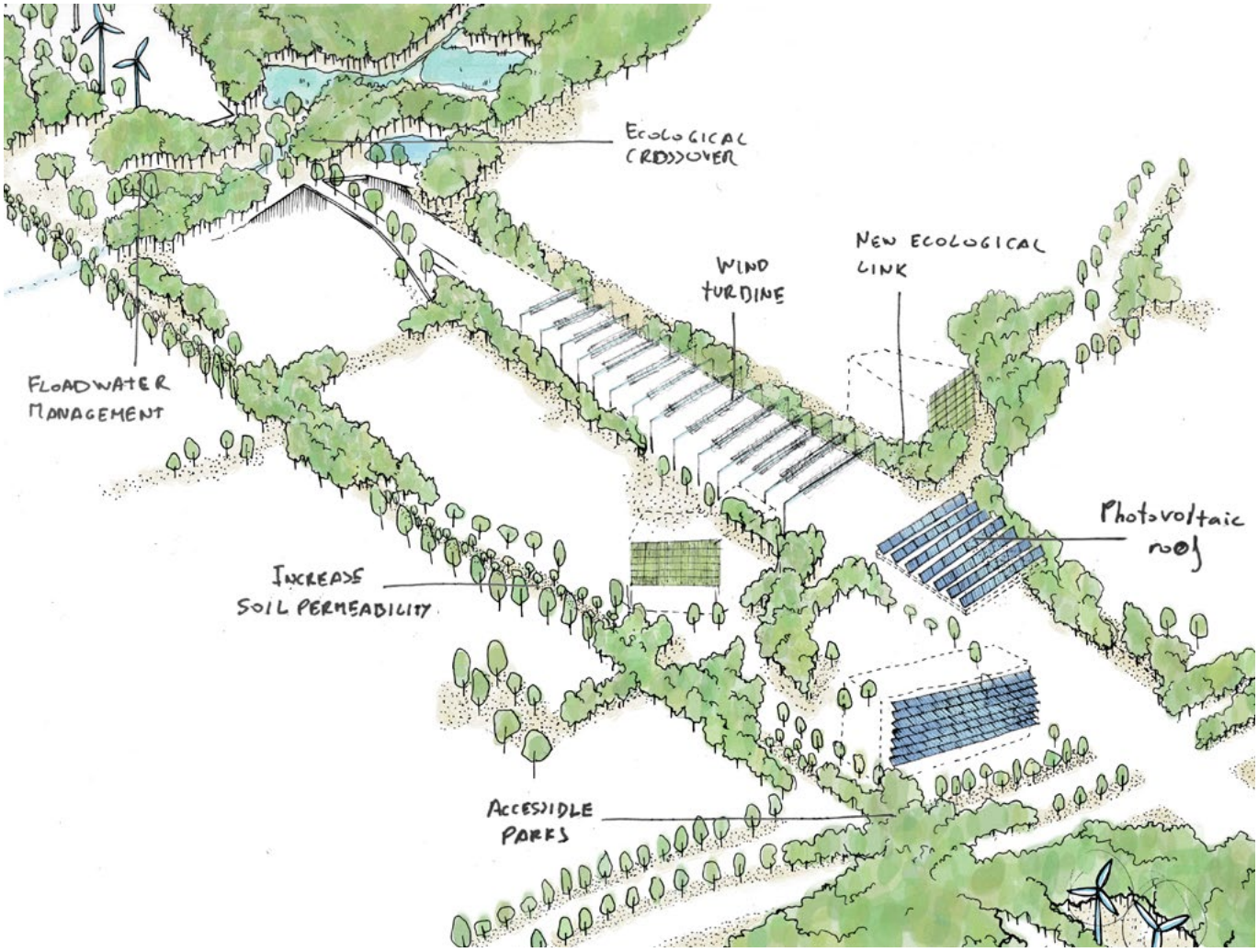
- Amsterdam Zuidas, Amsterdam
- Paris Bédier - Porte d'Ivry, Paris
- Bjorvika Barcode, Oslo
- Amsterdam Central, Amsterdam
- Transit-Oriented Development Model, Montreal
- Tysons Urban Center, Tysons Corner, USA

RiConnect themes:
Rethinking for adding ecosystem functions

The continuity and proper functioning of the ecological metabolism is often interrupted by mobility infrastructure. Therefore, rethinking infrastructure can help both protect nature flows and add new ecosystem functions

Read time: 3 minutes_Written on 09 April 2021

Mobility infrastructure has the potential to not only play a neutral role in the environment, but to contribute actively in improving it. Its lengthwise proportion, vast dimensions, "kidnapped" spaces and other features could be repurposed to add ecosystem functions for a more complex, inviting, efficient, equitable, sustainable and attractive mobility infrastructure.



In recent decades, mobility infrastructure has been designed and built to be as efficient as possible to deliver its primary demands. However, in many cases, it has not taken into account the places it traverses. We have analysed the externalities on the built environment, but infrastructure also significantly effects ecological systems. Modern mobility infrastructure's ecological footprint has an effect on lost habitats, fragmentation of habitats, non-native invasive species, landscape quality, pollution, associated or ribbon development (Davenport & Davenport, 2006).

During the first phase, the network came up with (Thessaloniki and Gdansk specially), two main strategies that are being developed during the second phase, discussed below:

Towards a better environment

At this time in history, infrastructure must assume a more active role in ecosystem: a role making it possible for natural spaces that have been buried, sometimes by the infrastructure itself, to be recovered. Integration of infrastructure with the landscape, removing the barrier effect and recognising the site's characteristics of the site and identity, will make it possible for biodiversity to be recovered. It will also foster a new relationship between infrastructure and the environment, enhancing its qualities and resilience. Some strategies already identified are: re-naturalisation of the infrastructure, ecological corridors to reconnect green infrastructure, a new way of understanding infrastructure, and others.

"Integration of infrastructure with the landscape, removing the barrier effect and recognising the site's characteristics of the site and identity, will make it possible for biodiversity to be recovered"

Towards assuming metabolic functions

Infrastructure can also assume metabolic functions, including water management or energy production. This active role could help mitigate the effects of climate change. Some strategies, among others, brought up by partners are: flood management, water decontamination, aquifer recharge, sustainable energy production and supply (for transport and cities).

Case studies

Plantage Middenlaan, Amsterdam

Plantage Middenlaan prioritised pedestrians and cyclists progressively until cars were replaced completely. Increasing permeable surface area (such as grass) over asphalt has contributed to capturing storm water and diminishing the consequences of floods.

Before

After

Daejeon–Sejong bike highway, South Korea

The Daejeon-Sejong bike highway was built to connect the cities of Daejeon and Sejong, around 32 kilometres, in the centre median of a six-lane highway. Solar panels cover the bike lane, generating electricity while offering cyclists protection from the sun and rain.

©Sports+Health magazine

Good practices

- Ecological Corridor, European Green Belt, From Finland To Greece
- Ecological Corridor, Wildlife Overpass on Trans-Canada Highway, Banff National Park, British Columbia
- Ecological Underpasses for Animals, France, Germany and Spain
- Environmental Recovery of Llobregat River, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
- Ultra Low Emission Zone, London
- Low Emissions Zone, Metropolitan Area of Barcelona
- Highway Beautification, North Carolina

Barcelona Metropolitan Area

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area, Lead Partner of the RiConnect network, is developing a forward-thinking vision for a more equal and sustainable metropolis. To do so, acting in mobility infrastructure is key, and RiConnect is part of such efforts

Read time: 4 minutes_ Written on 22 July 2021, and edited on 23 July 2021

The Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB) is the public administration of the metropolitan area of Barcelona, which occupies 636 km2 and encompasses 36 municipalities with more than 3.2 million inhabitants. The metropolitan area occupies a strategic position in southern Europe, in the middle of the Mediterranean corridor that connects Spain with the rest of the continent. This privileged position has allowed it to become the epicentre of Catalonia.

Its territory includes the agricultural areas of the Llobregat River Delta, the fully urbanised areas of the Barcelona plain and the large green areas of the massifs of Garraf and Collserola and the Marina mountain range. Within Spain, the AMB is the only existing metropolitan government and the largest metropolitan conurbation in the western Mediterranean, generating half of the total GDP in Catalonia.

© Servei de Comunicació, AMB

The AMB was set up in 2011 and replaced three existing metropolitan entities, namely the Mancomunitat de Municipis de l'Àrea Metropolitana de Barcelona (Union of Municipalities of the Metropolitan Area of Barcelona), the Environmental Agency and the Metropolitan Transport Agency, in an effort to rationalise and simplify metropolitan governance by creating a single administration. The entity manages different areas related to territory and urban planning, mobility, environment, economic development and social cohesion and takes part in actions and activities that help develop its territory into a more sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis for all.

The AMB also works to provide its citizens with basic needs such as water, housing and sanitation. As such, it has competences in the areas of waste management and is involved in most water-cycle activities. The institution is responsible for handling the large volume of waste that the metropolitan area generates, while promoting its reduction, sorting and possible reuse. In regards to housing, the Barcelona Metropolitan Area holds the authorities on land and housing policies established by urban laws. It also defines land and housing policies within the Metropolitan Urban Master Plan with the aim of ensuring intermunicipal solidarity in these actions, along with exercise of the constitutional right to housing. In addition, the AMB carries out territorial planning actions to assign land to industrial and tertiary uses, promotes affordable housing, and is responsible for the construction of public facilities commissioned by metropolitan municipalities. In this regard, it is also heavily involved in managing public spaces such as parks, beaches and rivers, and it manages the urban improvement services, uses, maintenance, activities and projects carried out in these areas.

In doing so, the AMB is aware of the future challenges facing metropolises. Nowadays, **more than 70 % of the European population lives in urban areas,** three-fifths in metropolitan areas. Contemporary metropolises have become **places of welfare and opportunity** and drivers of innovation and productivity. However, challenges such as unemployment, poverty, the lack of affordable housing, mobility issues and air pollution are also concentrated in metropolitan areas. In order to tackle these issues, the institution pushes national and supranational governments for increased recognition of metropolitan areas as drivers of change and innovation and as crucial stakeholders for the development of efficient policies at local, regional, national and European levels.

© PDU

The efforts to adapt to the challenging environment are taking shape in the new Metropolitan Urban Master Plan (PDUM) the AMB is now drafting. This plan aims to improve the entire metropolitan area of Barcelona and its municipalities based on the desire to meet the needs of the metropolitan population in accordance with the territory's capabilities and opportunities. General objectives include strengthening metropolitan solidarity; promoting the metropolitan capital; naturalising the territory by enhancing the values of the biophysical matrix; improving the efficiency of the urban metabolism and minimising environmental impacts; promoting social cohesion through housing, public space, facilities and public transport; rehabilitating and recycling urban fabrics; increasing urban complexity and habitability; promoting the competitiveness and sustainability of the metropolitan economy; and encouraging active and sustainable mobility by rethinking metropolitan infrastructures.

© TAVISA

As part of the endeavour to redefine the metropolitan area, the **RiConnect network will be crucial to rethinking the infrastructure** needed to reconnect people, neighbourhoods, cities and open spaces. Its aim is deeply linked to the PDU's objectives, and it is helping to foster exchange and knowledge on different issues, first by consolidating a more compact metropolis, with a proximity model that brings activities closer to people, creates lively neighbourhoods and consumes resources rationally; secondly, by integrating infrastructure into neighbourhoods and their environments, which will erase physical and social barriers, restore ecological connectivity and transfer road spaces and wasteland to be used for active mobility, new green areas or even new neighbourhoods; and thirdly, by structuring a public transport network that serves the whole metropolis, promoting a shift from cars to other modes.

Consequently, involvement in the RiConnect project will build on the AMB's efforts in five main areas: urban planning, public space, transport, sustainability and international cooperation. Regarding transport, the AMB actively promotes and takes part in creating more sustainable, resilient, healthy and equitable modes of transport by implementing electric charging stations, low carbon emission zones and shared bicycle services, as well as through the expansion of bicycle lanes and the electrification of buses throughout the metropolitan area, among others.

"the institution participates in more than 30 European projects"

To accelerate these changes, international cooperation is key. Through its International Relations and Cooperation department, the **AMB works to raise the external profile of the metropolitan area** and its actors, to position them in international networks and agendas and to act in their interest by lobbying the European Union, the United Nations and other multilateral organisations. Thanks to these efforts, the institution participates in more than 30 European projects, creating synergies and exchanges with European metropolitan areas' regions and cities, while it is also involved in international cooperation projects promoting sustainable urban development in other Mediterranean, Central American and African metropolitan areas within its spheres of competence.

As a result, through the RiConnect project and its other activities, the AMB continues to lead the way, together with other metropolises, in building and sustaining a healthy, cohesive, inclusive and attractive metropolis.

Vervoerregio Amsterdam

Our partner Vervoerregio Amsterdam Transport Authority connects 15 municipalities working together on a region where people and places are effectively connected so that everybody can easily reach their destination

Read time: 2 minutes_ Written on 15 October 2021, and edited on 20 October 2021

The Amsterdam metropolitan area sprawls over 1,003 km2 around the city of Amsterdam and consists of 15 municipalities. Its current population, primarily concentrated in Amsterdam (55%), Haarlemmermeer and Zaanstad (20% combined between the two) stands at 1.54 million people. This figure is expected to increase to 1.8 million by 2040. The average unemployment rate is around 4.3% and is higher in less populous metropolitan municipalities.

The Vervoerregio Amsterdam (VA) was founded as a regional infrastructure and transport planning authority in 2017. It was founded due to the national government's abolition of city regions and following a tradition of municipal cooperation that began in the 1960s. Since then, it has linked metropolitan municipalities and transport and mobility stakeholders in the area in order to improve connections and accessibility in the region. Its main responsibilities, which were shaped primarily by local, regional and national jurisdictions, are to develop traffic and transport policies; to deliver tram, metro and bus services; to build and maintain local and regional rail infrastructures; to coordinate and plan studies for regional infrastructure projects; and to provide funding for mobility-related projects.

© VA

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The Vervoerregio Transport Authority's democratic legitimisation stems from its Regional Council, where all municipalities are represented according to their population. The three-member VA executive board is made up of transport deputies from the three largest municipalities (Amsterdam, Haarlemmermeer and Zaanstad) who are elected to four-year terms. The role of the Vervoerregio Amsterdam Transport Authority is to co-fund mobility infrastructures in the region and to harmonise municipality plans to ensure regional consistency. The Authority also develops infrastructure projects, but they remain within the respective district's jurisdiction.

Cooperation programs exist between the Transport Authority, its municipalities and the national government in order to jointly develop future mobility infrastructures ("Samen bouwen aan bereikbaarheid" **Programme / Building Accessibility Together**). The Vervoerregio Amsterdam Transport Authority creates a common policy for the municipality that should be applied throughout the region. These policies also consider traffic flow and redistribution of traffic volumes.

During the 2013-2018 period, the Transport Authority noted a slight decrease in car use, an **increase in the use of public transport** from 4% to 5%, a 2% **increase in bicycle use** and a significant **upswing in pedestrians** in the city centre. Amsterdam faces significant challenges surrounding choices of means of transport and a modal shift connected directly to the (re)allocation of space for transport purposes. Learning about what types of measures yield benefits is extremely essential.

A major challenge in this field of work is **integrating transport infrastructure with public space and urban development**. This is a particular challenge in dense areas with many stakeholders. Some train stations are currently perceived as neighbourhood borders. Determining how to reorient the urban space towards the station and turn its operations into the heart of the area is a monumental challenge.

The Transport Authority's goals are to **improve the quality and safety of door-to-door travel** and to help integrate mobility into the urban environment. Directly improving urban design around a station or transport node is a logical aspect of promoting this goal. Another objective is to increase the proximity of daily services. The VA is now continuing in this line by encouraging cycling as a solution, making urban public transport more attractive and sustainable and improving intramodality. This means developing better bike parking areas, improving public areas around mobility nodes and doing so with fewer resources: making smarter use of existing infrastructures and obtaining maximum results for the cost.

© Max van den Oetelaar

In the RiConnect project, the Vervoerregio hopes to find examples and input on how the participation of different stakeholders can help the VA to achieve its strategic goals. In this case, the goal is to **improve Lelylaan Station and connect it to its surroundings**. In doing so, we hope to build a framework for future Vervoerregio projects where building new coalitions through participation will result in better results for the VA and other stakeholders. We also hope to create a initial internal understanding for **cooperation in European projects** so that internal processes for future European engagement are ready, as we think this is vital to **reinventing and innovating the Vervoerregio**. Furthermore, we expect to improve our knowledge on how to integrate urban development and infrastructure, specifically establishing Lelylaan Station as a part of the Nieuw-West neighbourhood rather than as a different entity, as it is perceived now.

Walk and Roll Cities:
Transformation towards people-centred streets

Article by Iván Tosics,
Programme expert of the URBACT RiConnect APN

Iván Tosics is one of the principals of Metropolitan Research Institute (MRI), Budapest. He is a mathematician and a sociologist (PhD) with long experience in urban sociology, strategic development, housing policy and EU regional policy issues. Since 2011 he is one of Programme Experts of the URBACT programme. He teaches at the University of Pécs, Department of Political Studies, Doctoral School. He is vice chair of the European Network of Housing Research (ENHR), executive committee member of the European Urban Research Association (EURA) and was member of the HS-NET Advisory

Meet the URBACT cities exploring links between mobility and public space to promote sustainable, inclusive, attractive urban areas

Read time: 5 minutes_Written on 22 December 2021

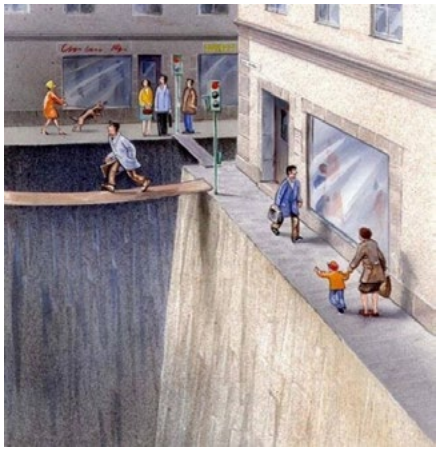
In recent decades, mobility in cities has become strongly dominated by cars. The moving and parking of quickly expanding numbers of cars led to the shrinkage of public space available for residents.

In order to reverse the dominance of cars, since the 2010s many European cities have started to explore new measures to deter the use and storing of cars on streets, and support alternative uses of public spaces. Three ongoing URBACT Action Planning Networks address these issues: Space4People, concentrating on parking management and pedestrianisation; Thriving Streets, on streets as public spaces and placemaking; and RiConnect, dealing with the links between regional and local aspects of mobility infrastructures.

Under the banner of #WalkAndRollCities, these three URBACT city networks decided to set up a collaboration to explore the links between mobility and transport and public space use, and collect good practices on progressive changes in cities. Set to run until summer 2022, their joint activities include a series of three seminars, and a LinkedIn group for case studies and debates.

> To challenge the space for cars © Getty

A car dominant urbscape © Karl Jilg



The first URBACT #WalkAndRollCities webinar

The first webinar of this collaboration was held on 29 November 2021. In his keynote presentation, Tiago Lopes Farias, CEO at CARRIS – the Lisbon Municipal Bus and Tram Operator, and associate professor at Instituto Superior Técnico, University of Lisbon (PT), highlighted Lisbon's main efforts. The starting point was the strengthening of powers at metropolitan level – stretching over 18 municipalities, and 2.9 million people, only 0.5 million of whom live in Lisbon itself. This enabled new efforts to streamline the public transport system across the whole metropolitan area, starting with a ticketing reform to introduce a new, integrated tariff model. This was followed by efforts to establish a joint public transport company for the whole area.

"The starting point was the strengthening of powers at metropolitan level (...) This enabled new efforts to streamline the public transport system across the whole metropolitan area"

Cities from the URBACT networks Space4People, Thriving Streets, and RiConnect have been sharing their experiences of strengthening urban sustainability by giving more ground to active mobility modes and enhancing the people-friendly use of public spaces. Here are a few interesting examples presented during the recent webinar. (See the #WalkAndRollCities LinkedIn group) for more details.)

Arad (RO) implemented **pilot pedestrian interventions** on one of the main boulevards of the city. The majority of people supported the idea to expand walking areas, mainly as a leisure form, especially on weekends or during warmer weather. The city recognised the importance of building trust through active communication, complemented by delivery, in the form of pilot interventions.

Bielefeld (DE) focused on **parking management**, to give public space back to people, reducing street parking and changing vehicle access regulations to the city centre. The five-month period of idea raising was followed by a five-month-long testing phase, during which opinions about the pilot projects were collected. The process will end with a four-month evaluation and decision-making phase.

Nova Gorica (SI) aimed to restructure a square in the historic core area of the city by removing parking spaces while installing a pop-up kiosk to enhance public activities – as shown in the photo. A detailed insight into the issue of space only became possible when the vision-building period was followed with a concrete action, making the idea visible for residents. The pilot intervention sparked heavy debates between residents, which led to further changes being made.

Nova Gorica: removing a car, installing a kiosk

Antwerp (BE) wanted to **stimulate change in a peripheral neighbourhood** where the share of younger people, preferring bikes instead of car use, is increasing. The temporary installations of the city, aiming to create more space for pedestrians and slow down car traffic, however, were not prepared and discussed properly. The municipality has learnt a lot from this failed experiment: how temporary interventions should be prepared; what needs have to be taken into account; and how important it is to engage residents fully in discussions, by municipal employees who get enough resources to organise that.

The Métropole du Grand Paris (FR) is aiming to **calm traffic on a four-lane national road** running through the centre of a peripheral municipality. The attempts to 'localise' the road by creating new crossings and green spaces will hopefully incentivise private actors to invest in housing and prompt the regeneration of heritage buildings. For the idea to succeed, coordination between different levels of governance is of crucial importance.

Transport for Greater Manchester (UK) aims for similar interventions in a peripheral sub-centre of the Greater Manchester metropolitan area. The aim is to **'humanise' the entry area of a motorway** by improving the crossings, creating streets for all, and introducing a quality bus service. Manchester hopes that this will lead to longer-term changes in the mobility behaviour of local residents.

Then came COVID

All these efforts in URBACT cities started a few years ago. Then suddenly, in March 2020, Covid-19 hit. The quickly introduced lockdown measures brought dramatic changes in the first months, which planners couldn't have dreamt of earlier: huge decreases in car use, alongside much more intensive use of public spaces. In some cases, areas originally used by cars were even 'stolen' for temporary measures.

A few months later, however, a very unfortunate rearrangement started: the use of cars increased again, and in many cities reached higher levels than before the pandemic – not least because people continued to avoid public transport. As a result, pressure was growing to eliminate new measures favouring walking and cycling in cities. Municipalities now face the dilemma of how to react to the anger of car drivers while listening to the (often less well-articulated) opinion of pedestrians and cyclists who are satisfied with the public places which were expanded for their use.

In Budapest, one of the newly installed bike lanes had to be redirected to the pavement in order to give back partially a lane to car drivers.

© Iván Tosics

Claus Köllinger, Lead Expert of the Space4People network, told the URBACT #WalkAndRollCities webinar: "Due to increasing car use, if nothing changes in centres, depopulation and retail extinction can happen. There are many alternative futures for central areas possible, such as Disneyland, large gastronomy bars, entertainment centres, or good mix of different functions. Wise interventions are needed to favour the last option, and this requires to push back car access to the central areas."

Positive visions for mobility and public space use in the post-Covid city

Over the course of the webinar, important statements were articulated towards a positive vision for the post-Covid city. As Béla Kézy, Lead Expert of the Thriving Streets network, said: "Mobility – how far you can go in a given amount of time – should be replaced by Access – how much you can get in a given amount of time.

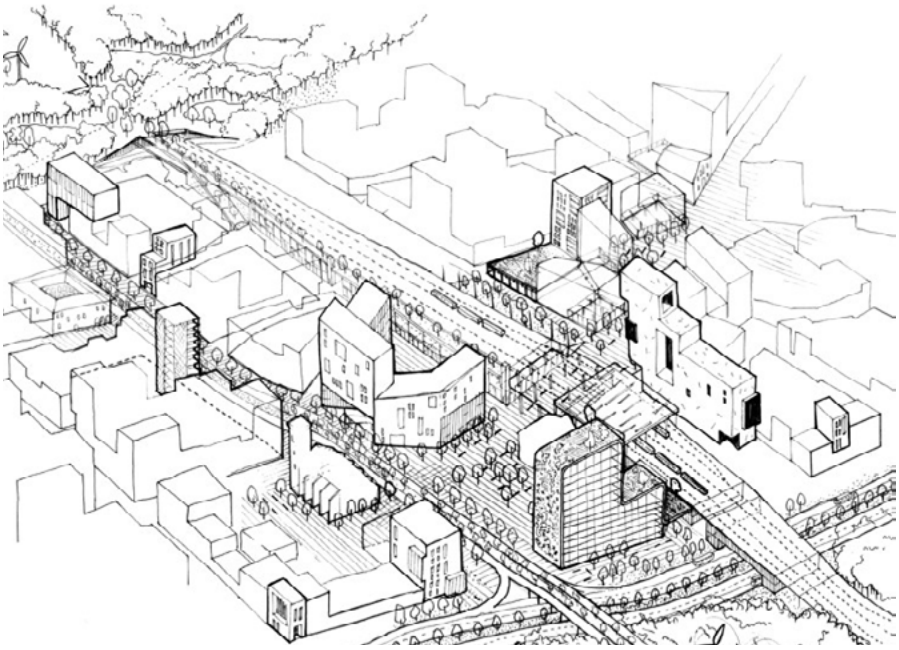
The '15-minute city' idea aims to provide access instead (or besides) mobility, for which you need proximity, diversity, density, ubiquity."

There are no standard solutions for changing existing neighbourhoods along these principles; the concrete needs of people always have to be studied and understood first. It might be useful to ease strict zoning regulations – such as allowing a café to open in a residential area – and handing over places to community functions, for example opening up existing public buildings in the evenings and putting in new community buildings wherever possible.

Roland Krebs, Lead Expert of the RiConnect network, emphasised the need for integrated solutions. He said: "Old infrastructures, which were once in the centre of activities, are overdone by new layers, totally changing the earlier important places, making these peripheral and through-locations. Over time, transfer places become monofunctional, losing identity and human scale. The task is to re-arrange earlier-built infrastructures by new uses, urban intensification and urban regeneration, assuring more mixed functions than just stations for exchange between mobility modes. In peripheral areas, all this needs strong multi-level government cooperation."

Rebuilding a transfer station area.

© RiConnect



"The task is to re-arrange earlier-built infrastructures by new uses, urban intensification and urban regeneration"

In his keynote address, Tiago Lopes Farias addressed the question of how to build on the pandemic-created momentum of changes towards less car dominant mobility and public space use, by raising new aspects for consideration:

1. Customer needs and mobility patterns will change due to teleworking, e-commerce, growing expectations of customers due to accelerated digitalisation, increased attention to the 'local' (15-minute city), safety concerns.

2. New mobility players are coming in, and an innovative and dynamic ecosystem will be built up, based on more electrified, shared technologies. All these need space and raise the challenge of how they can be connected.

3. All this leads to the scarcity of space: how to better manage urban space and mobility services towards more sustainable cities. Where to put the bike-share rack, the e-roller rack within the same physical space? To whom to give parking space: residents, long-term visitors, loading of goods? But first other questions have to be asked: is the space for parking, or a bus lane, or pedestrians…?

4. Added to all that, there is a growing pressure to reduce our carbon footprint. In Lisbon, the bus fleet will be zero emission by 2040… the first 15 electric buses are already running, but depos also have to be changed…

Tiago Lopes Farias said: "We need to change, adapt how we live, plan, manage our lives. This means that also mobility patterns have to be changed. But it should be ensured that public transport remains the backbone of urban mobility, and that cities remain the centres of urban areas."

Serious barriers endangering sustainability changes

The first webinar of URBACT Walk And Roll Cities ended with an emphasis on the need to connect changes in mobility and public space use to each other. The leading role has to be played by the public sector, based on the cooperation of municipalities in the metropolitan areas, in partnership with private actors and in active consultation with the population.

It is, however, not at all easy to reach the envisioned changes. There are already signs in many cities of an approaching financial austerity, which would heavily affect services, public transport amongst the first. If the next decision has to be about which line to shut down or how to save money by decreasing the frequency of services, little room will remain for innovative ideas about the future. Thus, financing and resourcing of mobility services is one of the most important questions for the near future. This will be the topic of the next URBACT #WalkAndRollCities webinar, planned for the first quarter of 2022.

All the materials of the first webinar will be available on the URBACT Walk And Roll Cities LinkedIn group, open to all. Join up to discover new information about Walk And Roll Cities, and contribute with innovative ideas for improving mobility and public space in towns and cities across the EU.

You can also donwload the PowerPoint presentation on the event's page.

When is a Wasteland? A Critical Understanding of Infrastructure and Residual Spaces

Article by Brian Rosa,
Ad-hoc expert of the URBACT RiConnect APN

Brian Rosa is urban geographer and photographer, and Marie Skłodowska-Curie Research Fellow at the Department of Humanities, Universitat Pompeu Fabra. He is an Ad-hoc expert at RiConnect, where he supports the research of case studies and the social impact of infrastructure projects.

Urban peripheries in Europe tend to be disorderly landscapes, and the overlay of infrastructures often create areas depicted as ‘wastelands’

Read time: 3 minutes_Written on 31 Janurary 2022

In this article, Brian Rosa reflects on the definition of such spaces and the uses they host. He also looks at transformation processes that aim to repurpose these residual spaces.

Urban peripheries in Europe tend to be disorderly landscapes, and the overlay of infrastructures often create areas depicted as ‘wastelands’. In this article, Brian Rosa reflects on the definition of such spaces and the uses they host. He also looks at transformation processes that aim to repurpose these residual spaces.

One thing that automobile and railway passengers have in common is that, upon entering the peripheries of cities in Europe, they are likely to come across landscapes which seem disorderly, obsolete, or without clear purpose. These places—whether sites of obsolete or existing industry, warehousing, low-income housing and informal settlements—are in fact created and sustained by the presence of urban infrastructures. Large-scale urban infrastructures such as highways, railways, and ports have long been associated with disorderly and poorly-defined landscapes on the fringes of cities: residual spaces of various scales without clearly defined purposes, often re-appropriated by a variety of formal and informal uses (light industry, warehousing, recreation, squatting, etc.). Though they seem separate from the urban fabric, they serve an essential function to cities; these are spaces that were conceived for flows of materials, people and of capital, tending to pay little mind to the impact they have at the ground level. While transportation infrastructures allow cities to exist, not everyone gains equal benefit from their dominating physical presence on urban peripheries: they have created barriers and boundaries to mobility, disproportionately impacting low-income communities.

Ninth Ward in New Orleans, Louisiana

There are many terms used to define these spaces, with one of the most common being “wasteland.” Presumably all European languages have some equivalent. In the wake of deindustrialization, expanding development pressure, and the increased desirability of waterfront properties, spaces of infrastructure on urban peripheries have become the focus of urban design, environmental remediation, and other forms of physical transformation. While these sites are often defined as under-utilized and in need of renewal; it is rare that they are fully without use, and these zones often serve as important residential, work, and recreational environments for vulnerable communities. This raises an important question: when is a site or landscape characterized as a wasteland, as opposed to simply being a blank spot on a map? In my research I have found a site becomes a depicted as a wasteland by authorities and the press at the point when it is perceived as under-productive and requiring transformation. In this sense, the use of the term “wasteland” is almost always ideological.

“When is a site or landscape characterized as a wasteland, as opposed to simply being a blank spot on a map?”

In recent years, we can see examples of projects around the world—especially in the Global North—that involve the dismantling and burial of urban highways and the transformation of spaces along, beneath, and above transport infrastructures as new forms of linear public spaces—so-called “infrastructural reuse.” I think we can safely argue, with examples like New York’s The High Line, that the residual spaces of elevated transport infrastructure have become the primary focus of high-profile urban design and landscape architecture projects worldwide. Often, these projects are incorporated into green infrastructure, public space, and sustainability mobility initiatives. They are often framed in terms of removing physical and symbolic barriers within cities, but are also deeply tied into the processes of stimulating property values.

The High Line in New York City: before and after.

While contexts will differ, including levels of development pressure, landownership, the relationship between the state and the private sector, and levels of public participation in decision-making processes, these transformations invariably raise political and ethical questions. These concerns are often underplayed in urban policy and planning: in cities with redevelopment pressure, the recuperation of infrastructural spaces is often explicitly associated with the economic, social, and cultural transformation of urban districts. Thus, gentrification becomes a key concern, as the previous inhabitants of "wastelands" and their surroundings are often displaced; members of the public that are able to use these spaces may not be the same people that previously occupied that locale. This is sometimes described as a process of "green gentrification," in which the sustainability-minded transformation of the urban fabric leads to the displacement of low-income communities.

Based upon these arguments, I would like to emphasize that planners and designers think about how they can work with the pre-existing characteristics of these spaces—few of which were every truly 'empty' or 'wasted'—and to take proactive measures to incorporate the people who use and dwell in these spaces in their transformation. Clearly, this is not something that can be achieved by design and planning alone; it requires proactive collaboration with policy makers and community organizations to consider how improvements to environmental conditions and sustainable mobility can serve to benefit pre-existing residents and commercial activities.

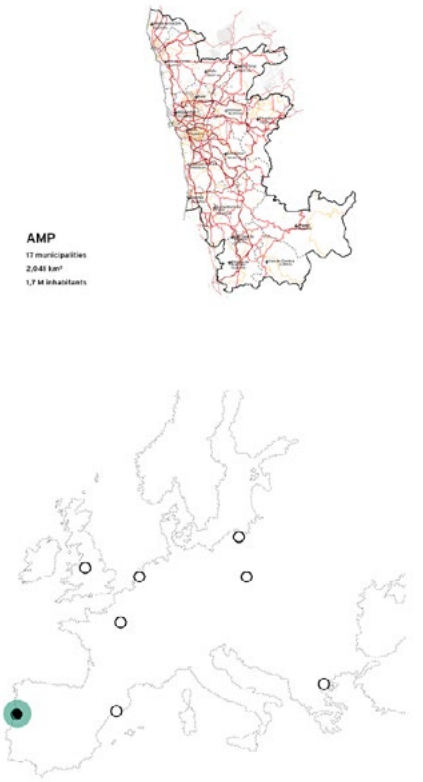
Porto Metropolitan Area

The Porto Metropolitan Area covers a vast territory with dispersed population. This offers a great diversity, resulting in an area of fantastic beauty suitable for living, investing or tourism. However, it also poses mobility challenges and a great dependency on car traffic, and RiConnect wants to help overcome such issues by better integrating mobility in urban areas

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 07 February 2022

AMP is an intermunicipal entity aimed at fostering cooperation both among municipalities and between institutions in charge of supramunicipal networks. Its main duties include promoting the planning and management of the economic, cultural, social and environmental development strategy; articulating municipal investments of intermunicipal interest; managing programmes to support regional development; and planning actions associated with public entities.

City of Porto © A Caixa Negra



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Since it was founded in 1991 by 9 municipalities, the AMP has grown and is now comprised of 17 municipalities. There have been four important milestones in the composition of AMP:

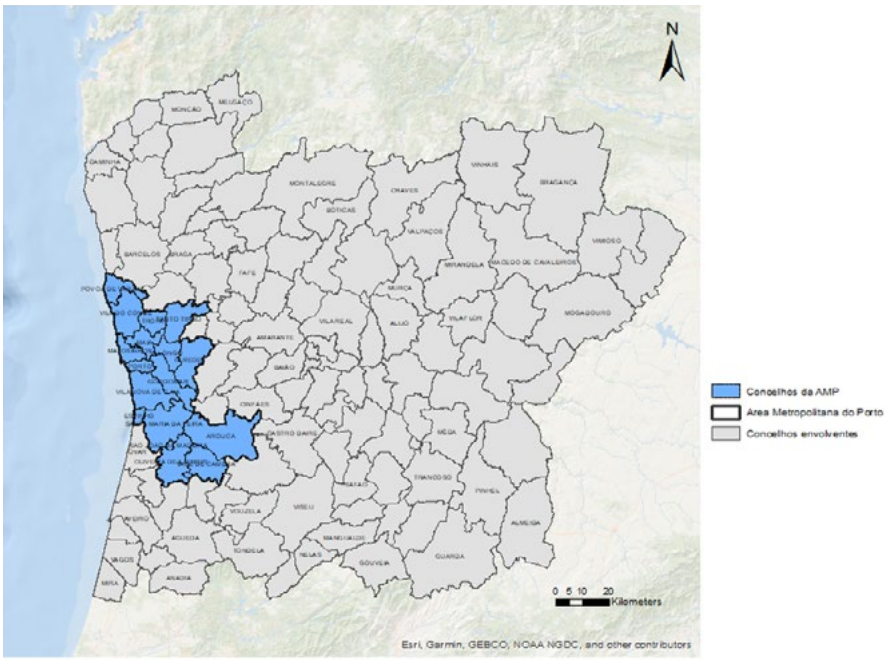
1991 Founding	9 municipalities	Espinho, Gondomar, Maia, Matosinhos, Porto, Póvoa de Varzim, Valongo, Vila do Conde and Vila Nova de Gaia	1 NUT III
2003 1st Enlargement	14 municipalities	Arouca, Santa Maria da Feira, Santo Tirso, São João da Madeira and Trofa	3 NUT III
2008 2nd Enlargement	16 municipalities	Oliveira de Azeméis and Vale de Cambra	3 NUT III
2013 3rd Enlargement	17 municipalities	Paredes	1 NUT III

AMP is located in the Northern Region of mainland Portugal in the northwest of the Iberian Peninsula. It is bordered to the west by the Atlantic Ocean, to the north by CIM Cávado and CIM Ave, to the east by CIM Tâmega e Sousa and CIM Dão-Lafões and to the south by CIM of Aveiro.

AMP occupies an area measuring 2,041 km2. The most extensive municipality is Arouca, with 329 km2, and the smallest is S. João da Madeira, with 8 km2. Area-wise, AMP represents 10 % of the North Region and 0.2 % of Portugal's mainland. It consists of 27 cities and 69 villages, which correspond to 50 % of the cities in the Northern Region and 18 % of the total cities in mainland Portugal.

Due to its diverse composition, AMP has a rich natural and cultural heritage. Therefore, it is an area of fantastic beauty and incredible potential, whether for living, investing or tourism.

Regarding its place in the national urban system, Porto Metropolitan Area is one of the two major conurbations in Portugal. There are medium-sized urban areas in the north and south of AMP, such as Póvoa de Varzim and Vila do Conde, Trofa and Santo Tirso (in the north) and Oliveira de Azeméis (in the south). The central area of AMP is the most urbanised, covering the municipalities of Porto, Matosinhos, Maia, Gaia, Valongo and Gondomar.



Location of the AMP

In 2019, AMP had 1,728,226 inhabitants, 47 % of whom were male and 53 % female. The most populous municipality is Gaia, with more than 300,000 inhabitants, while the least populous is Arouca, with almost 21,000 inhabitants. However, the municipalities with the highest population density are Porto, Matosinhos and S. João da Madeira. The space occupation in the AMP is not uniform at either the metropolitan or municipal level. The way people are distributed directly relates

> "The construction of a first-level high-quality network that allows for rapid movement and accessibility between the AMP municipalities"

to the way infrastructures, means of communication and economic activities are organised. Consequently, the most densely populated municipalities are those with the largest area of urbanised land, that is, the most central municipalities in the AMP. Activities related to the tertiary sector and industry are also concentrated in these municipalities, while agriculture and forestry are still very present in the most peripheral municipalities.

The population dispersion in the AMP, combined with a mobility system focused essentially on road transport, contributes to the fact that private car mobility represents 69 % of the modal split. Road infrastructure plays a fundamental role in the way mobility is organised in the territory: cars have been at the core of mobility planning for a long time, and this is reflected in the way the road network is organised at the regional and local level. However, internal travel within the AMP is still very time-consuming: moving between some municipalities still takes too long, and not the entire metropolis is served by motorways. One of the projects foreseen in the Metropolitan Mobility Plan is the construction of a first-level high-quality network that allows for rapid movement and accessibility between the AMP municipalities and good connections among the existing local networks.

km	AROUCA	ESPINHO	GONDOMAR	MAIA	MATOSINHOS	OLIVEIRA DE AZEMÉIS	PÓVOA DE VARZIM	PAREDES	PORTO	SÃO JOÃO DE MADEIRA	SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA	SANTO TIRSO	TROFA	VALLE DE CAMBRA	VALONGO	VILA DO CONDE	VILA NOVA DE GAIA
AROUCA		52,0	56,6	66,8	65,5	32,6	95,9	69,3	56,9	29,8	43,1	79,3	85,1	21,0	64,1	87,9	55,5
ESPINHO	51,4		28,6	30,1	27,1	43,4	54,2	47,7	21,7	24,7	18,0	53,2	53,5	42,7	42,5	46,2	17,2
GONDOMAR	56,1	27,2		17,1	17,7	48,0	46,2	36,6	8,8	39,4	35,7	35,1	35,5	47,4	11,0	38,2	10,9
MAIA	67,5	30,1	19,4		12,5	59,4	32,1	33,7	12,1	50,7	43,0	26,1	13,3	58,7	16,2	24,1	18,2
MATOSINHOS	64,9	26,2	22,4	11,2		56,8	30,4	36,1	9,5	48,1	39,2	34,8	23,6	56,1	18,5	22,4	15,2
OLIVEIRA DE AZEMÉIS	31,9	43,9	48,5	58,7	57,4		87,9	61,3	48,9	10,3	18,1	71,3	77,1	12,2	56,0	79,8	47,5
PÓVOA DE VARZIM	93,9	52,0	45,9	30,3	28,5	85,8		59,6	35,3	77,1	64,9	38,3	21,9	85,1	42,0	3,9	41,0
PAREDES	69,9	47,6	36,4	33,1	36,0	61,8	60,8		33,1	53,1	53,7	36,7	38,9	61,1	20,2	52,8	37,7
PORTO	58,5	22,9	7,7	11,4	12,0	50,4	39,1	32,7		41,7	34,0	31,0	31,4	49,7	15,2	31,1	3,8
SÃO JOÃO DE MADEIRA	29,8	23,8	39,6	49,8	48,5	8,9	79,0	52,4	40,0		7,5	62,4	68,2	12,1	47,1	70,9	38,6
SANTA MARIA DA FEIRA	37,0	17,4	35,6	42,2	40,0	16,3	67,2	55,1	31,5	7,5		60,3	60,6	23,4	44,4	59,1	30,1
SANTO TIRSO	79,9	52,1	37,1	25,8	34,3	71,8	37,6	37,3	31,3	63,1	60,7		11,6	71,1	33,2	36,6	35,9
TROFA	85,8	42,3	37,7	13,5	24,7	77,7	21,9	39,4	31,9	69,0	61,3	12,0		77,0	20,0	18,7	36,5
VALLE DE CAMBRA	21,0	42,5	47,0	57,2	55,9	11,6	86,4	59,8	47,4	12,0	23,4	69,8	75,6		54,5	78,3	46,0
VALONGO	63,7	41,4	10,0	15,9	18,8	55,6	43,6	20,0	15,9	46,9	47,5	32,7	33,0	54,9		35,6	20,5
VILA DO CONDE	92,4	50,5	44,3	28,7	27,0	84,3	3,5	58,0	33,8	75,6	63,4	36,8	18,9	83,6	40,5		39,4

DISTANCE

>= 50 km

Travel time between the City Councils of each municipality (minutes)

The improvement of the road network and its conditions also depends on a greater balance between the different modes of transport. Consequently, there are several projects taking place in the AMP that aim to promote the use of public transport (such as the Reduction Support Programme Fee – a reduction in the price of transport tickets, and the extension of Metro do Porto - construction of two new lines) and soft mobility (expansion of the bicycle network).

The area that AMP selected for the RiConnect project is a showcase of most of the urban and mobility challenges in the metropolis: heavy traffic, lack of safety for cyclists and pedestrians, absence of public space and green areas, difficulties using public transport, territories segmented by roads, etc. This area has an enormous potential to experiment with solutions that reverse the current trend and can serve as good practices to be replicated in the rest of the AMP territory. In addition, experiences with other metropolitan partners can offer innovative solutions to AMP's problems.

Therefore, RiConnect is a very important opportunity for AMP to advance towards better mobility and urban planning.

Gdansk–Gdynia–Sopot Metropolitan Area

Our partner Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (OMG-G-S) fosters the cooperation between the tri-city and its surrounding municipalities. Home to the main port in Poland and a vibrant economy, it is the fastest growing area of the country, posing new challenges for mobility and urban development

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 11 February 2022

The Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (formerly the Gdansk Metropolitan Area or GOM) was established on 15 September 2011 to strengthen cooperation and achieve the harmonious development of the entire metropolitan area around Gdansk by making the best use of its potential of member cities and municipalities, while at the same time respecting their differences and unique features.

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Its establishment was an initiative of Gdansk Mayor Pawel Adamowicz, who in early 2011 invited dozens of local governments to discuss the issues of the metropolitan area. It was not the first time this topic had been raised, given that discussions had been taking place since the early 1990s, when the fact that Poland needed to support the development of large urban areas was first identified. Since 2011, several important metropolitan cooperation initiatives have been conducted; for example, the Gdansk Bay Metropolitan Council, the Gdansk Bay Metropolitan Communication Association and the Metropolitan ticket have all been created. However, none of the initiatives has led to the formalisation of cooperation in the wider metropolitan area. The establishment of the association was also a reaction to the lack of legislative action regulating cooperation in metropolitan areas.

The discussions which led to the establishment of the Gdansk Metropolitan Area lasted several months. They were attended by many mayors, presidents and governors and the presidents and councillors of municipalities, cities and counties, as well as the publishers of the major regional media.

Currently, 54 local governments operate within OMG-G-S, which covers a total area of nearly 6,700 km^2 and has 1.55 million inhabitants.

The Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area is the fastest-growing area in northern Poland. It is also a significant hub of integration processes in the Baltic Sea region, as well as being an important link in the transport chain, connecting the north and west of Europe with the central and southern part of the continent.

In addition, the area is a gateway to the world for the Central and Eastern Europe countries, which are the natural catchment area for the two largest seaports in Poland. These are the only Baltic Sea ports which have a direct connection with the ports of Southeast Asia. The international importance of the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area is also shown by the ever-expanding network of air connections available from Gdansk's Lech Walesa Airport, the number of companies with foreign capital and the number of local companies which have invested abroad. It is further proven by the number of international agreements signed with our universities, the increasing number of foreign students and the number of joint research projects.

Gdansk as seen from the Motława river. In the center, the Brama Żuraw, a medieval port crane

© muskat.pl

Likewise, there is recognition of the Gdansk brand, which around the world is associated with 'Solidarity', the struggle for freedom and the award of the Nobel Peace Prize to its leader Lech Walesa.

Its association with the successful organisation of the UEFA EURO 2012 football championships has further enhanced the Gdansk brand.

These and other factors give the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area a high international ranking, placing it within a network of metropolitan areas. It is these factors which mainly determine its competitiveness, considered alongside parameters such as GDP and population.

"There are different levels of networking, such as local, regional, national, continental and global, yet the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area can rightfully take its proper place in each of these"

There are different levels of networking, such as local, regional, national, continental and global, yet the Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area can rightfully take its proper place in each of these.

Think infrastructures in context: human ecosystems

Article by Bahanur Nasya,
Project manager of Eutropian
RiConnect Ad-hoc expert

Bahanur Nasya is an architect and film maker with years of experience in international research projects, in the field of urban development and social innovation. As a project manager in Eutropian, she is conducting many initiatives with special attention to the relationship between environmental

We often wonder why some infrastructure projects are loved and cherished by citizens while others aren't. It's not only the quality of the project that determines its success but the acceptance it receives from citizens as well.

Read time: 8 minutes_Written on 04 March 2022

Change is often only possible when a community gets behind a project, owns the solutions, lives the change and actively adopts the proposed solution to their reality.

However, community-led solutions are difficult to achieve, especially if the proposed solution is too new and has little grassroots support. The mechanisms of ecosystem building come in useful under such circumstances to help yield positive involvement.

Central Amsterdam © Bahanur Nasya

"Community-led solutions are difficult to achieve, especially if the proposed solution is too new and has little grassroots support. The mechanisms of ecosystem building come in useful under such circumstances to help yield positive involvement"

RiConnect is an Action Planning Network consisting of eight metropolises focusing on the improvement of mobility infrastructures. These eight metropolitan areas all want to reconnect people with urban and natural spaces. They would like to foster use of public transport and promote active mobility by reducing externalities and social segregation, especially when the inclusion of local actors is crucial for urban regeneration processes, spatial and process designs. During the webinar held on September 22, 2021 by the RiConnect Action Planning Network (APN), we discussed **three different layers of local ecosystems**, which can support the action plans of the participating cities. The goals of these actions need to address social objectives to ensure that citizens support the process. The proposed **action can only become successful if it garners popular support**, which is solely possible if it somehow improves social life on site and offers citizens benefits.

In order to achieve such a goal, we proposed to examine the level of economic development, social cohesion and gender equality in the communities of the RiConnect cities. These criteria are **significant and telling layers of our urban tissue;** they can ensure an increase of public life activities, boost the availability of local jobs and opportunities, contribute to city wide access, increase administrative income streams, broaden levels of diversity and safety, and improve societal wellbeing. Such improvement would **place the infrastructure and environmental mobility projects of RiConnect in a very positive light**, consequently garnering an increase in local support for the projects. Yet, these topics were not found to be placed at the core of local action plans, even-though local coalitions in these fields can have significant impact. Enclosed is a quick look on the visions of the participating cities for their planning area.

Site and metropolitan area	Vision
Kodra MDAT - Major Development Agency Thessaloniki (GR)	To **transform Kodra ex-military Camp sustainably**, while conserving its natural resources, as well as historical and cultural heritage. The team aims for social equality and economic prosperity in their project.
Arranha AMP - Porto Metropolitan Area (PT)	Make "Arranha" **a pleasant place to live and work.** Connect the territory around the circular road around the city and make it more cohesive, green, inclusive, and sustainable.
Avinguda del Vallès AMB - Barcelona Metropolitan Area (ES)	Avinguda del Vallès is the new civic, green, and business axis which connects Montcada, Cerdanyola, Ripollet and Barberà. Public transport and active mobility at its core, the tree-lined avenue will **link public spaces with different qualities to a continuous corridor**.
Lelylaan VA - Vervoerregio Amsterdam (NL)	The area around the station Lelylaan will be **a vibrant area where the older urban identity will be preserved but adding a boost of liveliness** and fresh impetus. There will be an increase in functions around the train station, it will become an attractive area and gathering place.
OdkorkujMYHEL OMGGS - Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (PL)	Hel Peninsula will become a **friendly and safe space**, with a good transport system.
Livry-Gargan MGP - Greater Paris Metropolis (FR)	The future neighbourhood will be organised around streets dedicated to different ways of transportation and **allow mixed-use and include housing**, different economic activities, as well as shops and facilities.
Skawina KMA - Krakow Metropolis Association (PL)	**Improving the quality of life of inhabitants and passengers** by connecting the train station to the centre of Skawina, with multifunctional areas.
Oldham TfGM - Transport for Greater Manchester (GB)	Acting in a peripheral centre with bus and tram connections, in order **to improve infrastructure integration and enhance social life** and retail.

"By failing to address a specific group and their needs, we end up creating a general concept that fails to inspire individuals or groups"

Citizens rarely have mobility patterns that place their movements from one concrete point to another (i.e. point A to B). Daily commuters generally find themselves in need of **travelling to and through multiple destinations**. Especially when given that today's busy lifestyle requires picking something up the way to work, meeting someone along the way for a quick coffee or break, travelling to various locations or stopping by shops in between. This makes it necessary to include a holistic approach in mobility planning, to ensure that proposed novelties facilitate a range of activities and allow citizens **to utilise combined routes**. Given the current gender based structures in our society, women are more likely to take on more multi-destination trips than men. Improving their routes and rides with public transportation, streets and ways will thus create a long-lasting impact. First, this is because women predominantly raise the kids or deal with their daily issues and schedules, which requires bringing them along on trips or dropping them off; and secondly, men also combine various tasks to take care of on their routes (including tasks involving children) - and we can **support gender equality in our societies by promoting and offering multi-destination options to all**, so that all members of the society can take on various responsibilities because they are combineable and achieveable.

We generally prefer to have a more general approach when creating a design, and aim to ensure our concepts can offer solutions for all. This is the achilles heel of urban planning, because by failing to address a specific group and their needs, we end up creating a **general concept that fails to inspire individuals or groups** to feel empowered and/or take ownership of the implementation. The first step to begin a dialogue with citizens groups is by addressing them directly, recognising their needs and sharing out activities with them, thus creating an effective difference in the co-creation approach. Being specific can not only help with the communication but also help us determine whom we are missing. Some RiConnect cities already have a disproportioned ratio of a specific user profile type of their projected area. This imbalance can be rectified by designing the places, activities and offers in the area for other gender, ethnicity, age groups etc. Bringing economic activities in transportation hubs can help make the lives for employees and citizens much easier. Enclosed are examples in which urban regeneration was approached and taken on as a local ecosystem, with significant impact on the local infrastructure.

Case	Economy	Cohesion	Gender	Sources
Stará Tržnica Bratislava (SK)	Entrepreneurship, crafts ; Creation of a hub with diverse business	Diverse and small scale entrepreneurs	Empowering female vendors	Full article
Mar Movilidad Madrid (ES)	Connecting initiatives to form companies	Creating work opportunities and making marginal viewpoints visible	Engaging with female entrepreneurs	Full article
Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative Rotterdam (NL)	Activating dormant resources (skills, culture,...)	Supporting vulnerable groups (85% migrant background)	Empowering unemployed women	Full article
Magda's Hotel Vienna (AT)	Combination: tourism and refugee empowerment	Training of newcomers	Project managed by women	Full article
CoSto Paris (FR)	Enabling small business owners to increase their competitiveness	Supporting local commerce as a social net	Empowering female vendors and customers with home delivery services	Full article

The enclosed inspirational cases are from different European contexts and can inspire RiConnect cities to involve strategic partners in their project. Such collaboration efforts can enhance local impact, garner local support and help gain partners for their endeavours.

Temporary-use as market

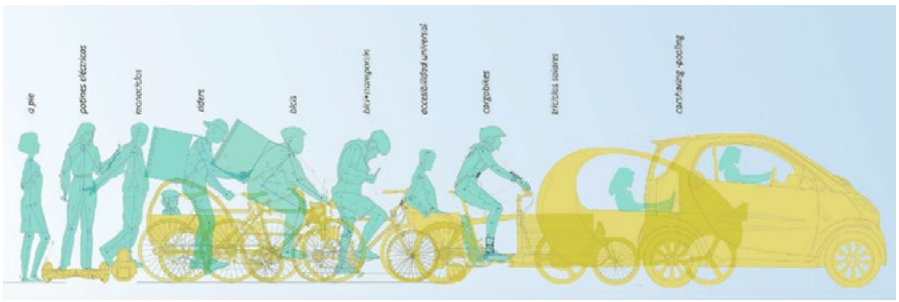
© Yilmaz Vurucu

Stará Tržnica

Alianca Stará Tržnica is an NGO managing a historic market hall in the centre of Bratislava in Slovakia. The location is **directly connected to the local transportation system**, but the area around the market was viewed as being unattractive and seldom visited in the early 2000s. The building is owned by the municipality, but was formerly shut down due to lack of interest in the market and the high operating costs. With a redevelopment plan, which combines a temporary food market with cultural events as well as other commercial activities, the market could be re-opened by the Old Market Alliance. Next to running the building in an economically sustainable way, while gradually renovating it, the project yielded **success in activating the space and the neighbourhood in the heart of the city.** They combine entrepreneurship and craftsmanship while **empowering female entrepreneurs and facilitating social activities.**

> "The project yielded success in activating the space and the neighbourhood in the heart of the city"

The Kodra project (MDAT, Thessaloniki) can adopt this model by **empowering an intermediate organisation** that can operate the park with a balanced concept that combines commercial and social activities, which will liberate the municipality from duties related to maintaining the place and activating or restoring the heritage buildings. In Skawina (KMA, Krakow) this mixed-use-model can be employed in the space in and around the train station. This would allow a pop-up market and the organisation of events and exchange activities on site to play a role in increasing the popularity of the train station and linking it to the other important points in the town. This would also assist promoting train transportation as a viable and popular option for mobility, which would combine all other aspects of public life. In the area around Lelylaan train station (VA, Amsterdam), such an approach could lead to an area management, with multiple options and activities around the station. The place would attract attention, which would allow it to be perceived as being more enjoyable and functional, as well as safer.



Different modes of mobility

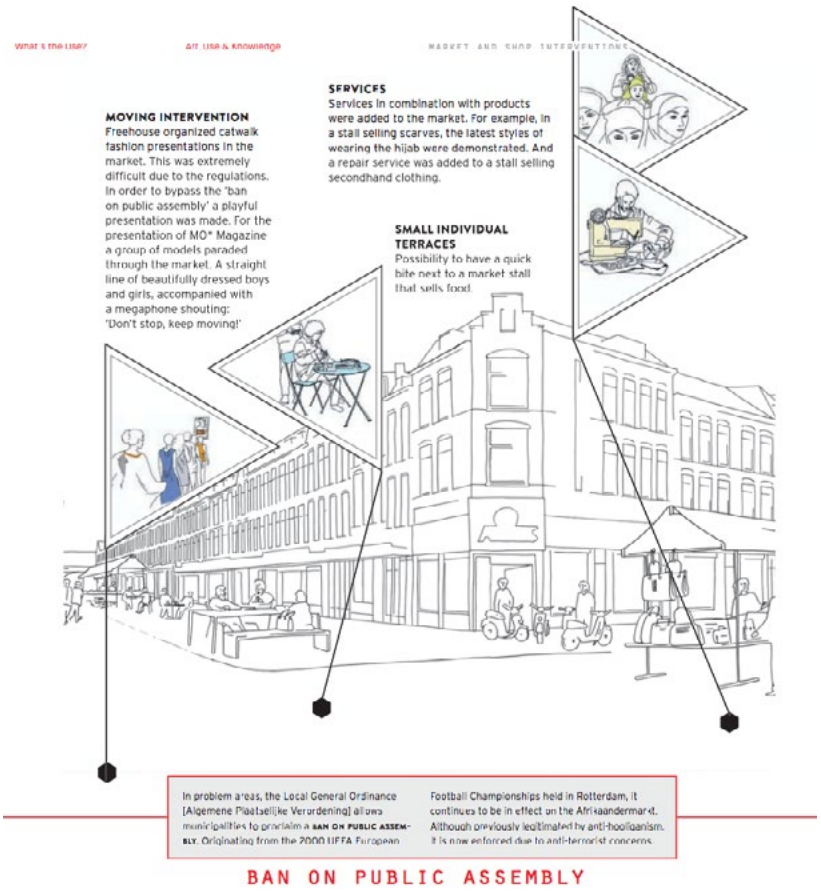
© Mar Movilidad

Mar Movilidad

MAR Movilidad is the **mobility hub of the Mares Madrid project**, located in the Spanish capital. Supported by UIA, the project aims to transform the city by focusing on a few neighbourhoods such as Vallecas. The partners work on alimentation, recycling, energy, care and mobility, which is also aptly named MAR Movilidad. The neighbourhood of Vallecas was specifically identified as

having **promising potential** given that local residents have a strong tradition of community activities, resistance, cycling initiatives, recycling and genuinely care about inclusiveness. The **Mar Movilidad hub brings active actors together** in the city and supports them in their transition to sustainable mobility by evaluating, rating, and improving active mobility options on the ground. The aim is to develop **new economic opportunities for the social and solidarity economy**, while paying attention to sustainability.

In the Oldham case (TfGM, Manchester), it is very important to identify the local mobility needs and **support sustainable modes of transportation group by group**. The high load of traffic can be reduced and relaxed by developing incentives for pedestrians or various bike-users, and by empowering other sustainable traffic participants. The action plan of the city can obtain great support and have a significant impact on the short distances in neighbourhoods. In the Avinguda del Vallès project (AMB, Barcelona), having differentiated plans for different modes of mobility can help make the big project more tangible. Active mobility participants can connect, interact and support each other in a sustainable way. Working with specific user groups would increase the chances of citizens changing their mobility habits for good. Multiple modes of transportation also have to be kept in mind in the OdkorkujMYHEL project (OMGGS, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot). Land connection to the peninsula is very narrow, which leads to traffic jams. By using different modes of transportation that transport more people per ride; having smaller vehicles such as e-bikes; or increasing opportunities via the waterways, the mobility plan can create enjoyable, reliable and space saving alternatives. The concept needs to be embedded as part of an overarching goal for the area. For instance, the connection of different ports from the mainland to the peninsula, by providing different water transport routes, can also strengthen the connectivity with main land destinations and may offer, especially visitors, with a very different and unique alternative for transportation. In this way, the new offer may be well accepted, instead of resisted as a limitation.



Afrikaanderwijk graphic

Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative

Afrikaanderwijk Cooperative operates in South Rotterdam's Feijenoord area in Netherlands. It began as an art project and evolved into becoming a cooperative. They bring together existing workspaces with entrepreneurs, producers, social organisations and the market. The project started with a **mapping of the unrecognised skills and competences** of residents in the Afrikaanderwijk neighbourhood. The neighbourhood was suffering from problems of low education,

unemployment and bad reputation to boot. The cooperative now helps residents use their competencies in the neighbourhood kitchen, the catering company, the textile workshop and the cleaning company. This project especially activates **formerly unemployed women** in the area and improves their inclusion in public life, making the places more diverse and dynamic.

"By awakening dormant resources within the neighbouring municipalities around the Avinguda del Valles, the project could ensure access to essential necessities on a route of shorter distances and via more pleasant routes"

Connecting the residential areas with opportunities to work is an important task in the regeneration process of neighbourhoods. In Livry-Gargan (MGP, Paris) the awakening of dormant resources such as opportunities for working in residential areas can **contribute to short-distance-mobility-patterns**, which can decrease the need for motorised transportation and give free valuable street space to pedestrians and bike users. In the Avinguda del Vallès (AMB, Barcelona) mobility by car had a tremendous impact on how communities organised their public life (shopping, leisure, mobility, education…). By awakening dormant resources within the neighbouring municipalities around the Avinguda del Valles, the project could ensure access to essential necessities on a route of shorter distances and via more pleasant routes. A similar path could be relevant for the communities around the round-road in the Arranha project (AMP, Porto). By mapping and activating local actors who can benefit from sustainable mobility, the project can gain significant support and perhaps acquire funding for implementation.

Diverse team

© Magdas

Magdas Hotel

Magdas Hotel is a **social business hotel** based in Austria's capital of Vienna. They rely on cooperation, existing resources and a social vision. Refugees, volunteers and professionals of the hotel **transformed a former retirement home**, located at the Wiener Prater, to a grand budget hotel. The hotel takes integration seriously and has defined programmes for different kinds of people. The hotel trains refugees to acquire skills and competences in the hotel industry, enabling the chance for a multicultural encounter between people, while benefiting from the cultural background of the employees and travellers. Placing **tourism under a social umbrella sends valuable messages** and is a very important hospitality alternative for national and international travellers. Despite the great impact of the pandemic on the hospitality industry in the city, Magdas is invited for further collaborations across the city because of their inclusive approach.

Magdas uses the social business concept to create new opportunities within the tourism branch. A similar approach could be used by the Arranha (AMP, Porto) team. They could bring some social values and engagement in the shopping centre determined neighbourhood. Also, the mobility transition in the Hel peninsula (OMGGS, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot) can make a bold statement by involving vulnerable or underprivileged people in the core of their business. With selected operators of the new water transports, the project can attract attention and improve mobility for everyone. In Kodra (MDAT, Thessaloniki) the model of social inclusiveness could help the project consciously involve people with less means or possibilities. Such a concept could develop the social layer of the project tremendously by ensuring them access, work and (affordable) mobility to the park.

CoSto program

SEMAEST is a Parisian semi-public company specialised in commercial revitalisation, operated through the Vital Quartier program in France. It launched the CoSto program, which **matches local shopkeepers and ICT startups for new digital retail solutions**. The shopkeepers in the CoSto network can test new digital solutions over several months, for free. They can evaluate and observe impacts on their profile and capacity in this trial period. It can **ensure the survival of shops while keeping neighbourhoods and communities lively**. Young start-ups have the possibility of testing and improving new products based on real demand with the

Supported bookshop

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provided tools. Local and international competition continues to become harsher and more challenging, especially with lockdowns during the pandemic, resulting in small businesses urgently needing this kind of an investment and support. **Small shops carry great importance for a sustainable mobility program as a place of employment and also as destinations of public life**. Short distance activities especially support citizens travelling by foot or those relying on public transport, most of whom are women, kids, minors and the elderly.

"A connected local community could be recognised as a stakeholder to negotiate with and co-develop with"

In the Hel Peninsula (OMGGS, Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot) the tourism branch has to keep an eye on local and small entrepreneurs and the interests of the residents of the peninsula. Facilitating their activities with technological and networking support can enhance their capacities - they can grow to an ecosystem with identified stakeholders. This can be strengthened through digital tools, activities that connect them and networking tools to assist them. Similarly, the Lelylaan team (VA, Amsterdam) can benefit from a local alliance between the interest groups in the Lelylaan area. Here, the local development plans foresee new buildings with new inhabitants. A connected local community could be recognised as a stakeholder to negotiate with and co-develop with. Strengthening small shops in Oldham (TfGM, Manchester), can be another way to promote sustainable modes of transportation, which can occupy public space and highlight the urgent need for transitions in the traffic.

The **pandemic has had various impacts on our public life**, which sometimes, due to lack of alternatives, resulted in favouring car traffic and international retail businesses, with tremendous impact on the lives of especially vulnerable people. By creating a mobility plan that strategically includes social, ecological and economic sustainability, we can **embed our ambitions in an overarching framework and ensure a holistic positive impact** on the lives of our citizens. Tackling these aspects can contribute to the success of the RiConnect metropolises. Even though the partners of the project are not responsible for all these fields of expertise, they can be initiators on the ground, playing a role in **activating the ecosystems around the infrastructure hubs** in their metropolitan areas. We believe that keeping the above mentioned examples and potential scenarios in mind can help steer conversations, dialogues and collaborations with local actors. Having actors in these fields as allies in the Action Plans can increase their urgency and perhaps chances of implementation.

Get ready for the urban future: Space for all, with or without pandemic

RiConnect Lead Expert Roland Krebs reflects on the impact of the pandemic in mobility and the use of public space. The aftermath of COVID-related lockdowns has accelerated changes in the urban realm: offering temporary public spaces and advancing towards innovative models. Through examples in Vienna, the article shows how change is possible to offer spaces for all.

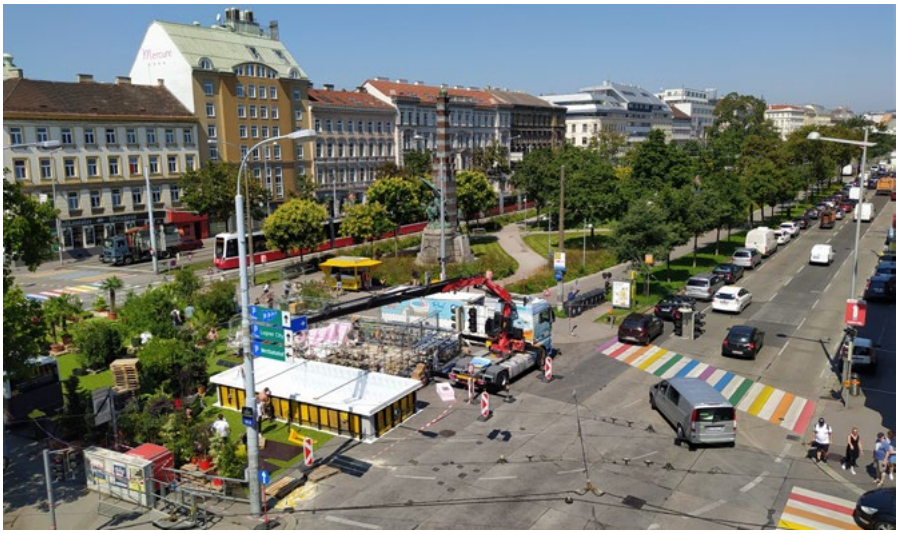
Read time: 4 minutes_ Written on 10 March 2022

The value of public space for people was much more visible over the multiple lockdowns we witnessed in 2020 and 2021 than it had been for decades before: with restrictions to move outside such as closed parks and other recreational options, the importance to provide public space for people to move outside their homes was imminent, specifically for denser urban areas where people do not have any outside parts attached to their living spaces – be it a balcony, terrasses or a piece of green space.

Placemaking projects in Vienna during the pandemic © City of Vienna

During our first virtual Transnational Meeting of Phase 2 held on June 29 and 30, 2020 of the RiConnect Action Planning Network (APN), we discussed how cities across Europe **temporarily turned road space into shared spaces giving priority space to pedestrians and cyclists over the crisis**. Due to the COVID-19 situation in Spring 2020 and its implication to our lifestyle in metropolitan areas, we are living in quite challenging times of uncertainty and complexity regarding our planning decisions. Cities where immediately responding by expanding public spaces for pedestrians and cyclists. For most of the cities it was a shift in mobility behaviour and it turned out that the **"city-at-eye-level" and "15-min-city" approaches are more important than ever**: Avoid commuting and have everything in close proximity could be potential local solutions for future development of our cities: proximity, closeness and businesses around the corner reachable with short walking distance proof to be interesting concepts especially in metropolitan areas that we might want to follow through RiConnect.

To keep the required physical distance of one meter even in dense urban areas and reduce the risk of spreading the virus, in May 2020 the City of Vienna declared 15 streets, located in different districts to be temporary shared spaces for use by pedestrians, bicycles, and cars with speeds limited to 20 km/h. Criteria for selecting the streets varied but among them were narrow sidewalks, dense neighborhood population, and few parks and green spaces at a walkable distance; another 20 streets have been opened entirely to pedestrians. **The main goal was to give citizens more space to go outside without risking an infection.** However, those projects were not only ad-hoc decisions by the city government during the pandemic, the city since 2018 is constantly implementing strategies to create a better walkable city and –at the same time- combat urban heat-islands and adapt to climate change.



The Gürtel-Pool in Vienna – a controversial placemaking project in Vienna

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During the virtual Transnational Meeting, **I conducted a virtual bike-ride and site visit in Leopoldstadt in Vienna.** Leopoldstadt is the second district in Vienna, close to the historic city centre. The district has an extension of about 19 km2 and has a population of around 105.000 inhabitants. During the COVID-19 crisis the district together with the city government introduced a quite significant number of measures to create more space for people in one of the densest and culturally diverse areas of Vienna. The virtual site visit was conducted "live" via zoom, accompanied with inputs through presentations and a "soundtrack" provided during the 3-4 min commutes between the stops. Some stops were accompanied with pre-organized on-site meetings with experts. The virtual site visit in Vienna served as a pilot to break the ice for other virtual site visits for the following Transnational Meetings to be conducted by our URBACT partners in the eight metropolitan areas.

I would like to highlight some projects that shaped Vienna during the pandemic in 2020:

- To keep the required physical distance of one meter even in dense urban areas and reduce the risk of spreading the virus, the City of Vienna declared about **15 streets, located in different districts, to be temporary shared-spaces for use by pedestrians, bicycles, and cars with speeds limited to 20km/h.** Criteria for selecting the streets varied but among them were narrow sidewalks, dense neighborhood population, and few parks and green spaces at a walkable distance; another 20 streets where cars were already banned have been

opened to pedestrians. The intent is to give citizens more space to go outside without risking infection. Many other cities are moving to give their citizens more recreation space. New York City closed 64 km streets to cars in May 2020 and planned to close a total of 160 if the crisis continues.

- **The Donaukanal** (Danube channel) is one of the most important recreational areas in the heart of the city. Until 15 years ago, the public space was neglected and was perceived as disturbing and unsecure place, with drug abuse just as one of the issues. At the start of the transformation into a more active public space in 2005 restaurants were created with a placemaking agenda of cultural activities and festivals supported by bars and leisure zones. In 2010 guidelines were drafted to specify general urban rules for its further development of the Donaukanal, which is activated by short-term contracts for certain commercial and non-commercial areas commissioned to bars, artists, and entrepreneurs. One criterion was the quality of the architecture of the temporary structures. **During the pandemic the Donaukanal remained one of few open public places for all.**

- In the 2nd district of Vienna, **the Trunnerstraße has been recently converted into the Else Feldmann Park**: Several existing green pockets were unified and connected to form a total of 3,400 m2 of open space. **A 50-meter-long wall was torn down in April 2020, instead of the sealed road-space, a new park was created,** which has been open since the beginning of october 2020. Numerous residents took part in the planning process from autumn 2018. During participatory discussion-sessions in several stages of the design, residents as well as institutions and associations made numerous suggestions that were incorporated into the design. The street-to-park conversion was planned to be implemented before the pandemic; however, its construction was accelerated and came in the right moment during the crisis.

- Another project that the city of Vienna **implemented** was **a temporary "Gürtelpool"** on one of Vienna's ring roads. **During the pandemic summer of 2020, this controversial project was implemented with a swimming pool, green areas with sunbeds, a kiosk, a stage for events and a bus in which you could stay overnight.** Located in one of the most densely populated districts around the Westbahnhof with around 15.000 inhabitants per km2 and hardly any available green spaces, the project provided temporality public place that could be used in the summertime. However, until the 1950s, the area already had a permanent public pool at the same location that has vanished due to the demanding increasing space-requirements of the inner-city highway.

A new permanent bike highway for Vienna as a result of the pop-up bikelanes

© City of Vienna

In times of the pandemic, we learned how much people require accessible public spaces in dense, urban areas. The short-term measures were intended to give people more space and adapt public space to physical distancing restrictions, responding to many challenges generated by the current health crisis. Also, the crisis showed how flexible public administrations like the one in Vienna can be: tactical urbanism interventions were quickly designed and implemented. Those kinds of interventions were implemented in many cities in Europe. Some short-term measures were made to be permanent because it was the right moment to do so. **It is great to see car-free streets and similar measures of converting cars-streets into thriving, active public spaces popping-up.** During the first virtual RiConnect Transnational Meeting in June 2020 we agreed that the active and leading role of **the public sector in times of crisis now should continue to prepare and adapt our cities for climate change**, getting ready for a sustainable, greener urban future with more public space for everybody.

The RiConnect Chronicles 03: Kick-Off Meeting Phase 2

Issues such as why rethinking mobility is important were covered at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 3 celebrated online in June 2020, where all partners laid the structure to start the second phase of the project. The Kick-Off Meeting of the Phase 2 was aimed to activate the network, exchange on the impact of the pandemic, and share our capacities in activating the URBACT Local Group.
A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 03, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

Krakow Metropolis Association

The Krakow Metropolis Association aims to foster cooperation for the sustainable development of the Krakow Functional Area. To do so, the entity supports transport operation and manages the implementation of Regional and European funds, while it also created the Krakow Metropolis 2030 Strategy - a document that guides the future of the metropolis.

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 30 March 2022

The Krakow Metropolis Association was established on 24 June 2014. It is a non-profit organisation: it neither performs an economic activity nor belongs to the governance level. The KMA was created to implement the Integrated Territorial Investments (ITI) Strategy for the Krakow Functional Area which were identified in the 2014–2020 Regional Operational Programme for Malopolska Region. The KMA is managed in a partner-like manner, guaranteeing board members constant access to information on the current status of ITI implementation.

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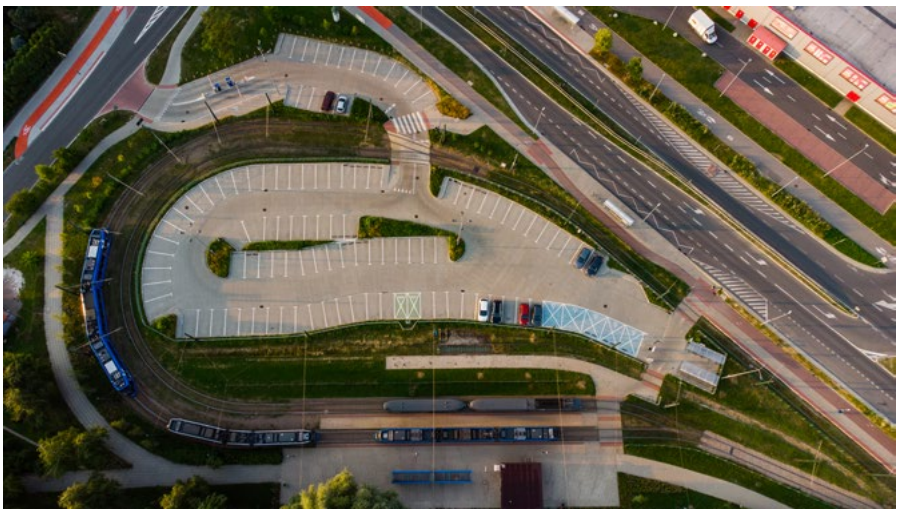
The Association is an organisation of fifteen local government units (The City of Krakow and 14 neighbouring municipalities - Biskupice, Czernichów, Igołomia – Wawrzeńczyce, Kocmyrzów – Luborzyca, Liszki, Michałowice, Mogilany, Niepołomice, Skawina, Świątniki Górne, Wieliczka, Wielka Wieś, Zabierzów, Zielonki) that creates and institutionalises a platform for cooperation among municipalities. It oversees an area with strong functional connections between the region's capital city and the surrounding municipalities. The Krakow Metropolis Association is comprised of 15 municipalities and 1.1 million inhabitants. The area of this territory is 1275 km2.

Our challenge

The association's main goal is to foster cooperation for the sustainable development of the Krakow Functional Area in order to improve its inhabitants' quality of life. To do so, it seeks to improve the state of the environment and promote environmental awareness in order to implement the principle of sustainable development. Moreover, Krakow Metropolis is a forum where municipalities agree on common development policies and participate in constant problem-solving.

The Krakow Metropolis Association supports the planning and functioning of public transport, especially by carrying out analyses on transport, collecting data to develop traffic models and then advising the municipalities on transport activities. The KMA is the intermediate body for Integrated Territorial Investments, including transport projects. Therefore, the association plays a supporting and coordinating role in the transport planning in the Krakow Functional Area.

The challenge for the KMA in the context of ensuring a high quality of life for its inhabitants is to coordinate the activities of different municipalities to reach common metropolitan goals. Participation in various projects is an opportunity to develop and test solutions that may later spread to other municipalities.



Park and Ride facility in Bieżanów, in the outskirts of Krakow, aimed to reduce car traffic inside the city center

© KMA

What we do?

The Krakow Metropolitan Association developed the Krakow Metropolis 2030 Strategy, which was adopted in December 2019 and includes seven areas of cooperation: education, social services, smart governance, environment and space, mobility, leisure and culture, and economy. This document is a tool to coordinate the implementation of metropolitan development policies. Ultimately, it is planned to be applied by individual municipal councils in every municipality within the Krakow Metropolis Association. The second important challenge for the KMA is preparing a Sustainable Urban Mobility Plan for the Krakow Functional Area.

Developing these documents will be the foundation for another programming period (European Funds for 2021-27) and will provide support for all municipalities

in the functional urban area as they plan and implement Krakow Metropolis Association development policies.

We try to develop methods of working together towards an effective partnership by holding meetings and workshops, such as thematic forums in development policy, air quality, mobility, public procurement, spatial management, economy, leisure time and culture. In addition, we engage in national and international partnership cooperation, such as Interreg, Urbact III, Horizon 2020 and the Regional Operational Programme for Malopolska Region (KMA4Bussiness).

Achievements

The municipalities belonging to the KMA adopted the Plan to liquidate coal boilers in the Krakow Metropolis by 2022 on 11 October 2018. The document contains recommendations for municipal policies and the municipalities' common position concerning the external conditions related to replacing coal boilers. According to the provisions of the Plan, by June 2019, a detailed inventory of heat sources had been carried out in all municipalities near Krakow. Every year, the KMA runs an information and educational campaign in the media with the slogan 'Let's stand together in the fight for clean air'.

"The RiConnect project is an example of learning good practices from partners within the KMA's activities and sharing our experiences"

Furthermore, the funds obtained from the ITI Strategy allowed the municipalities to implement projects involving economic activity zones, energy efficiency of buildings, low emissions, sustainable mobility and waste management.

An important part of the KMA's activities is cooperation with foreign partners internationally. In this sense, the RiConnect project is an example of learning good practices from partners within the KMA's activities and sharing our experiences.

More information about the KMA

If you want to learn more about the Krakow Metropolis Association, please visit the website: http://metropoliakrakowska.pl/

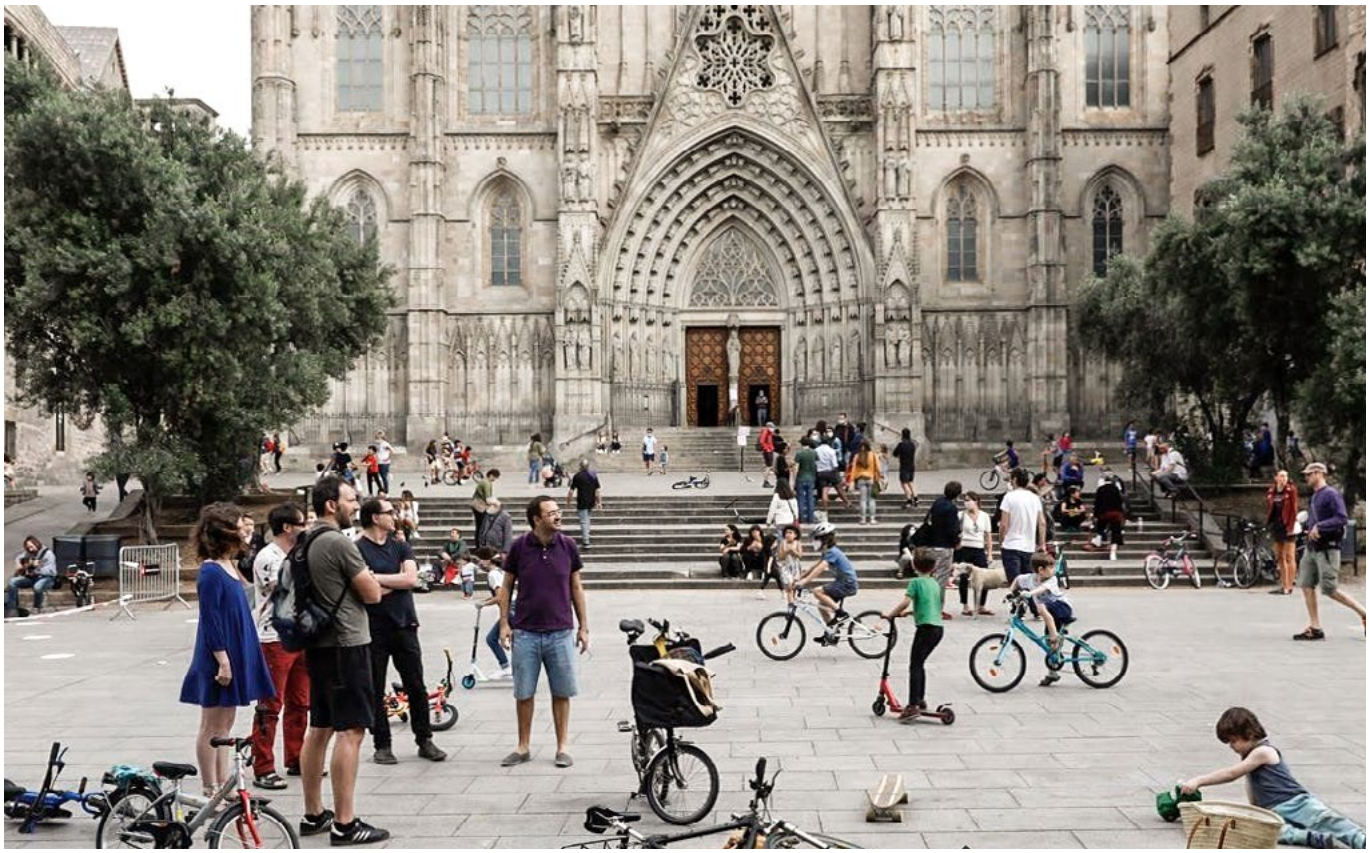
People-friendly public realm: transforming the city towards a new model

A closer view to the public space transformations in Barcelona and its metropolitan area, which have been accelerated due to the pandemic

Read time: 4 minutes_ Written on 15 March 2022

In recent years, the metropolitan area of Barcelona has been developing strategies to change the model of the city, shifting from the predominance of polluting private motorised vehicles to active mobility, increasing the space used for walking and cycling, and moving around in public transport. The pandemic has sped up this transformation process, which involves searching for and applying new solutions to create a more inhabitable, sustainable, healthier and fairer metropolis.

Kids playing in the formerly tourist-crowded Cathedral Plaza in Barcelona by Ferran Nadeu © El Periódico



"The pandemic has sped up this transformation process, which involves searching for and applying new solutions to create a more inhabitable, sustainable, healthier and fairer metropolis"

Throughout the months of the health crisis, several municipal measures were promoted to **encourage sustainable mobility and guarantee social distancing.** These measures included **increasing pedestrian spaces** with car-free streets, safe and accident-free pacified areas with no noise and air pollution, reducing the speed of motorised traffic, and extending and consolidating bus lanes and cycle routes. Temporary safe itineraries were also established to be able to walk and do sport while maintaining social distancing, and access facilities such as markets, health centres, schools and parks. Furthermore, **at weekends some critical routes** in terms of volume of traffic (like the Via Laietana) were included into the 'Obrim carrers' (Let's Open the Streets) programme with the slogan 'There's a lot going on where cars don't enter', **transforming the city's thoroughfares into people-friendly spaces.**

"Let's open streets"
© AMB and Ajuntament de Barcelona

The links between COVID-19 and urban mobility provide opportunities to obtain immediate and long-term health benefits. At the beginning, there was a rise in the use of cars and motorcycles as people were concerned about keeping physical distance between each other; however, at the same time there was an **increase in active transport**, such as cycling and walking. The challenge is to **re-establish confidence in the use of public transport**. We have a critical opportunity to make positive long-lasting changes to health by more active, inclusive and sustainable urban mobility solutions.

For some years Barcelona has been **in favour of tactical urbanism**, a tool used in many other cities around the world to quickly change the use of public space, to achieve significant impacts with quick, low-cost and reversible actions that convert the city into an urban laboratory, where alternative functional models are tried out to respond to these urgent challenges and check whether they satisfy the community's needs.

These tactical urban planning initiatives are highly visible and by just painting coloured strips in streets or adding urban furniture and flower boxes that can be moved if necessary, it is easy to highlight the new temporary uses given to public space and **establish new relationships between citizens** and the urban space that often used to be reserved in its entirety for motorised vehicles.

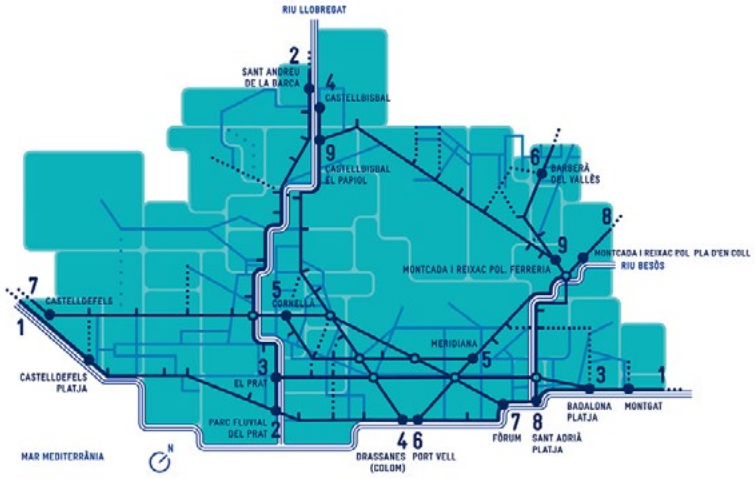
Tactical urbanism
© AMB and Ajuntament de Barcelona

The need to gain space for citizens during the pandemic led to taking action in many streets. This resulted in a **new fabric of pacified areas** to maintain social distancing and gain more walking space; new squares and places for sitting down were created, and the areas surrounding schools were protected, with safe, traffic-free accesses and areas for playing and socialising. Likewise, in busy streets and ones where pavements were very narrow, large concrete platforms were built to widen pavements, which were decorated with trees planted in big pots.

The pandemic also led to urgently authorising **new bar and restaurant terraces** or extending those that already existed. The extra space on streets was gained by using large concrete blocks and pylons, using parking space instead of in detriment of pedestrian areas, thus reversing the standards.

To create **safe and new cycle routes**, in both urban and metropolitan areas, the AMB planned to build a further 75 km of 'Bicivia', the metropolitan cycling network, of which 70 km are tactical, to be implemented immediately by painting road surfaces; the remainder are previously planned strategic connections.

"The need to gain space for citizens during the pandemic led to taking action in many streets"



Bicivia scheme
© AMB and Ajuntament de Barcelona

Barcelona was also based on an obsolete model of city, with a large part of its streets and commercial premises dedicated to the tourist industry. With the closure of borders and mobility restrictions, these places suddenly saw themselves empty, useless and decontextualised, and they no longer made sense in a city where there are currently no leisure demands for tourists, in terms of streets (shops, bars and restaurants) and uses (tourist accommodation, cultural attractions, etc.). Given this unwanted scenario, local residents managed to **recover their possession of parts of the city**, recovering uses that had been put to one side in benefit of the monopoly of tourist exploitation, such as peacefully strolling along the Rambla, playing ball in the Catedral Square or having the chance to visit emblematic facilities like the Sagrada Família, which has been open to citizens.

Strict lockdown also took the pressure off the city's limited number of green spaces, which, due to the spring, burst into life with exuberant vegetation and fauna much less stressed by human impact. This clearly showed the benefits and brought to light the need to **rethink the relationship with nature**, making it possible to alter the conception of urban green spaces and advance towards ecological management and the promotion of nature. Strategies were developed that consider **biodiversity as one of the central values of a quality urban space**, such as not cutting back herbaceous plants and bushes to let them bloom, the gradual substitution of asphalt with surfaces that have better drainage and green areas that can lower temperatures, increase humidity and provide shade from the sun, thus achieving cleaner air and, in conclusion, a healthier metropolis.

"Public spaces are indispensable for promoting health and well-being, social relationships, and they also help to keep the city alive at a business, cultural and social level"

The capacity limitations of closed spaces made it difficult to open shops, bars and restaurants, as well as prevented cultural and sports facilities from continuing with their normal programmes; however, at the same time, it was an opportunity to **bring many of these activities outside into the open air**, thus contributing to their democratisation and having a very positive impact on citizens' physical and mental health. The restrictions also **boosted local commerce** and many people **(re) discovered neighbourhood shops.** All this accompanied by good weather resulted in a more intensive use of streets, squares, parks, gardens and sports areas, which became the main places for leisure, get-togethers and public life. This had a positive effect on citizens' coexistence and clearly showed that public spaces are indispensable for promoting health and well-being, social relationships, and they also help to keep the city alive at a business, cultural and social level.

The progressive recovery of pacified public spaces is necessary, and it must **guarantee social diversification of uses and activities** that have to coexist simultaneously in the same space at the same time. It must also create a balance between right of use and health safety, paying special attention to people in vulnerable situations, guaranteeing a cross-cutting and non-discriminatory approach, using resources in a sustainable way for a fairer, friendlier, greener, more inclusive and resilient metropolis.

Superblocks

Therefore, it is important to decide whether many of the measures that are being applied temporarily could be of a permanent nature, and to study their feasibility. Actions that in some cases have already turned into structural elements, extending **their implementation to the framework of the 'Superilla Barcelona' (Barcelona Superblock) project**, a green axes competition to define the model of a '21st-century street', which will progressively be implemented in Barcelona, with priority on pedestrians, leisure, relaxation, green spaces and biodiversity.

How do we move? Towards a new mobility behaviour in metropolitan areas

Mobility planning has a great influence in the physical and social structure of urban areas. In this article, RiConnect Lead Expert Roland Krebs advocates for mobility planning as a trigger for metropolitan development, where favouring public transport and sustainable mobility can foster new activities.

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 11 February 2022

For many decades since the beginning of modernism in the 1930s, the urban development of cities was based on making the territory accessible for cars. The concept of the separation of functions through zoning (see: "The Athens Charter", 1933) and the increased speed of how we move around the territory led to a spatial dispersion of uses and subsequently, urban sprawl. This resulted in territorial fragmentation, increased usage of natural resources, pollution, accidents and so forth.

The N3 in the Grand Paris Metropolis - a scare in the city of Livry-Gargan © Google maps

The infrastructure that was created after the post-war economic boom led to **barriers in our cities**, not only in the historic city but also in the metropolitan area. These mono-sectorial planning decisions of road infrastructure projects - mostly national public investments – left scars in our metropolitan areas that resulted in a separation of inhabitants by their social or migrant status, gender, religion, and other factors.

RiConnect contributes to the discussion of these topics; **mobility planning will be a facilitator for metropolitan development, a true enabler of other interventions in urban regeneration that will be triggered locally**. During our first Thematic Meeting of RiConnect's second project phase in October 2020, we discussed about mobility in metropolitan areas. The goal for RiConnect in the mobility realm is to:

- Support different mobility types to ensure adequate accessibility
- Optimise the use of combined means of transport in favour of more efficient mobility
- Promote mobility systems based on using means of transport that will assure accessibility for everyone
- Create integral and multi-sectorial urban solutions and combine mobility and transportation planning with sustainable urban regeneration of public spaces, local economic development among other disciplines.

"Cities like Brussels and Vienna observed over 40 % of increase of cycling in the month of May 2020 compared to 2019"

Today, the pandemic is heavily affecting the debate, because when public transport is not available or is deemed insecure due to risk of infection, workers and care-workers among other commuters from systemically relevant jobs were cut off from the supply of public transport and they were forced to use the car. On the other hand, the pandemic showed that the public realm locally became more important when people stayed at home during the multiple lockdowns; and active mobility patterns like taking the bike are also becoming to be a true option for mobility – even for long distance commuting in metropolitan areas – however, the infrastructure shall be available and reliable for active mobility. The local municipalities reacted quickly with this kind of temporary cycling infrastructure that was created from one day to the other. Cities like Brussels and Vienna observed over 40 % of increase of cycling in the month of May 2020 compared to 2019.

Temporarily Improved Bike Infrastructure in Vienna due to increase of bike use
© Roland Krebs

So, how can we maintain 'good' mobility habits caused by the pandemic in the post-COVID-19 reality? **When providing the right bike infrastructure which provides safe rides, people will start using it**. However, it is important to allow a transitional period from cars to other types of mobility and to strike the right balance between all different types of mobility. Nowadays, it is also important to explain that **public transport is safe** to re-balance the mobility share. This will be a challenge for all service providers in metro-areas, however there must be a proper offer of public transport. But providing service is one side of the story, the other is that whenever a new hub is created or upgraded, the (wasteland-)area around it could potentially be integrated in an ecosystem of metropolitan hubs.

In the sense of above-mentioned challenges and problems, our RiConnect partner Krakow Metropolis Association (KMA) is working on a metropolitan strategy of de-centralized hubs to create accessibility of the main centre of Krakow and decrease

Infrastructure as a barrier in the Porto Metropolitan Area
© AMP

car use in the metropolitan area. Krakow metropolitan area has a wide array of challenges: overcrowded roads, lack of mobility infrastructures and public spaces throughout the metropolitan area, and a lack of good infrastructures and services connecting the suburbs and city core with public infrastructures. To deal with these issues, the metropolis is promoting **Integrated Territorial Investments**, which act on several aspects in locations all around the metropolis. On the one hand, there is an effort to create a system of **Park and Ride areas throughout the metropolitan area** associated with train-tram stations or bus loops. In the long term, though, the city is creating a new **Fast Agglomeration Railway** system to connect city and suburbs and **cut travel times in half**. And finally, core action is being taken in the city to better **integrate existing infrastructures** and offer more room for soft mobility. The RiConnect Pilot case of Skawina will develop ideas on how to improve the mobility share to trains and at the same time, regenerate the town centre of Skawina as a hub in the metropolitan area.

"The RiConnect Pilot case of Skawina will develop ideas on how to improve the mobility share to trains and at the same time, regenerate the town centre of Skawina as a hub in the metropolitan area"

Another case study from our partner Amsterdam Transport Authority (VA) showed the success of developing a **central mobility hub** in the heart of the City of Amsterdam, the **Amsterdam Central Station.** Located on an artificially created island, the station has kept improving its connections with its surroundings by building new roads over the years. However, the **growth of its intermodal status** with buses and ferries, the greater need to reach the station by foot or on bike and a growing interest in using the riverside have pushed towards a **complete redevelopment of the northern side of the station**, formerly occupied by a busy road. To do so, the **road has been buried** underground, enabling a continuous network of public spaces, and adding **commercial areas** on the ground floor. A **bus station** has been located on the first floor instead, and the riverfront has been converted into a **promenade** shared by cyclists and pedestrians.

5 and 15 min walking and cycling distance from Lelylaan Station in Amsterdam
© VA

In a smaller scale, the RiConnect Pilot case in Amsterdam, **Lelylaan Station**, wants to replicate the success of Amsterdam Centraal. This station is rated as one of the worst in the country considering its design and feelings of safety. This project will be about an integrated urban strategy to connect the neighbourhood with the station better and create a functional and people-oriented hub in the metropolitan area of Amsterdam.

However, the existing project for Lelylaan, 'Poort van West', does not tackle the surrounding areas of the station. With our RiConnect project, we aim to enhance this neighbourhood in cooperation with local stakeholders. We can expect that as the use of the station will increase enormously the coming years, the use of its surroundings will also increase. Yet, this area is not yet designed as (socially) safe, comfortable, and enjoyable. With the input of stakeholders from within the area, we aim to enhance the area and come to solutions that are experienced by the area's everyday users.

The heavily fragemented Barcelona Metropolitan Area
© AMB

Mobility planning is the most powerful discipline for the development of metropolitan areas; it was before, but it is even more post-pandemic; however integrated solutions are required to trigger sustainable, green, just urban development (see: "The New Leipzig Charter", 2020). For RiConnect partners the potential development vision would be mobility-hubs in the metropolitan area as sub-centres in a system of centralities, well connected with massive public transportation infrastructure. Those areas could **add value through mixed-use patterns including density-housing, services provision and decentralisation of metropolitan functions**, local job creation and provision of public space locally but in metropolitan networks of green spaces, in short-distances to reachable with active-mobility patterns.

Key to success is **communication**: active mobility modes are usually safer, cheaper, and faster than cars, yet this message must be delivered successfully. Also, the **pandemic has offered a priceless opportunity** to encourage cycling and to create friendlier public spaces. Another aspect is the **gender sensitive mobility-planning.** If everything we do in our cities is great for an 8-year-old and an 80-year-old, and consider the female view of the city, it will be great for everyone. Finally, **public transport must be made accessible and affordable**, with discounts for children and the elderly, and the payment methods must be kept simple. The public must be made **aware of the effectiveness** of public transport. In this sense, the RiConnect Network is working on integrated solutions for metropolitan areas with visions that support the metropolis with local action that will improve people's life significantly.

The RiConnect Chronicles 04: Thematic Meeting 1

The network focuses on four themes, which have been discussed in several thematic meetings. Thereore, the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 4, celebrated online in October 2020, dealt with the topic of 'Rethinking how we move', leading to an enriching exchange of knowledge as shown in this article.

A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 04, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

More Than Voids – Rethinking for Integrating the Infrastructure

Roland Krebs, RiConnect Lead Expert, shares his view on the leftover spaces around mobility infrastructure. A better integration of infrastructure can lead to the activation of surrounding spaces and an improvement of public space, adding value to formerly unoccupied areas.

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 07 April 2022

Two of the key questions of RiConnect are how we can integrate the mobility infrastructure in metropolitan areas and how could those areas be transformed into human scale urban areas. Metropolitan areas, especially on the fringe, tend to be fragmented and socially segregated with low quality urban spaces. We speak of “space left over after planning”, residual spaces or urban voids that were left over after higher-level infrastructure decisions. Over the time, those areas tend to be filled up with monofunctional uses, for example shopping malls, logistic areas, or low density residential areas without any concrete development vision and goals and no access with public transport, because those areas may be governed by municipalities in functional agglomerations that have no coordination between them. This lacking coordination leads to negative externalities of urban sprawl and even more dependency on cars.

Urban Fragments of Uses in the Barcelona Metropolitan Area © Google maps

RiConnect wants to develop strategies to activate those urban voids, and integrate them into the fragmented urban structure, create connections around those segregated areas with active mobility and create meaningful, quality urban spaces that might even become economically interesting mixed-use hubs. RiConnect is analysing these mobility infrastructures and urban voids and develops a set of diverse planning targets and solutions:

- Rethink infrastructures and shift from individual car use to public transport
- Consider internal growth, potentially activate and add value to these places
- Stop monofunctional and low-density land consumption and unplanned city growth
- Develop visions to increase modal share of walking and cycling (together called: active mobility) and force individual car transit to shift to public transport.

"Two of the key questions of RiConnect are how we can integrate the mobility infrastructure in metropolitan areas and how could those areas be transformed into human scale urban areas"

Our project partners develop area-based solutions that will be important pilot plans to be potentially rolled out in future projects in their respective metropolitan areas. In our research of RiConnect we analysed the nature of mobility infrastructure of all partnering metropolitan areas and identified three main typologies of infrastructure:

- **Nodal Infrastructure** – Mobility Hubs and urban regeneration of the surrounding areas: Vervoerregio Amsterdam (VA), Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), and Krakow Metropolitan Area (KMA)
- **Linear Infrastructure** – conversion of a National Road and integration with its surroundings: Metropole Grand Paris (MGP), Barcelona Metropolitan Area (AMB), and Porto Metropolitan Area (AMP)
- **Areal Infrastructure** – integration of Green Infrastructure and Mobility: Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot Metropolitan Area (OMG-G-S) and Thessaloniki Metropolitan Area (MDAT)

The newly constructed Park and Ride Area in Skawina, Krakow Metropolitan Area.

© KMA

How can the partners of RiConnect integrate Infrastructure and build a better human-scale metropolis? We identified three criteria for re-development of metropolitan areas:

- **Space underneath and above infrastructure:** improve the infrastructure, activate under-utilized areas, improve the surrounding towards human-scale and active mobility, promote a mobility shift to carbon-free mobility
- **Horizontal mixture of different forms of mobility:** reduce space for cars and favour public transport, 15-min-approaches, create human-scale public spaces, introduce place-led development approaches and test with placemaking interventions
- **Conversion of obsolete infrastructure:** convert into active public spaces, regenerate areas, and make historic value visible, reduce car-use and promote public transport to access these areas.

Integrated Project of infrastructure conversion by MVRDV in Seoul
© MVRDV

We are concluding that there will be a rapidly growing mobility demand in metropolitan areas, especially public transport (rail and bus), but also, active mobility. The high-level decisions from national and regional governments sometimes leave out a local dimension with the spatial and social impact of those decisions. It reveals a huge gap of multi-governance decision making. A solution to overcome the culture of mono-sectorial metropolitan planning is to introduce an **integrated planning approach** that includes **mobility-visions** that are interlinked with urban design, economic development, social, cultural, and environmental dimensions. Metropolitan areas and functional agglomerations are certainly more than the sum of urban voids. An integrated project vision might avoid newly fragmented areas and might repair the damage already made with **integrated urban regeneration projects.**

The RiConnect Chronicles 05: Thematic Meeting 2

Rethinking for physically integrating the infrastructure is one of the overarching goals of the network. As such, we discussed the issue and learnt from successful projects at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 5, celebrated online in February 2021.

A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 05, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

Towards a Resilient Ecosystem – Rethinking for adding ecosystem functions

How to integrate ecosystem functions in infrastructure? RiConnect Lead Expert Roland Krebs reflects on the impacts of mobility infrastructure in urban climate, and on the possible solutions to mitigate the effects.

Read time: 5 minutes_ Written on 15 April 2022

RiConnect is seeking to develop integrated solutions in metropolitan areas; one of the key features of sustainable urban development is the development of green infrastructure. Around summertime, urban heat waves are in the media, with peaking temperatures around 40°C which makes living our cities a burden.

Climate change and its implication to our lives is undeniable and a transformation towards greener cities must start now. Metropolitan areas are especially vulnerable: insulation of soil is higher, green area distribution is low, there are more cars etc. For our biodiversity this has a negative impact and consequently, also to human health. A greener metropolis would provide long-term environmental and economic benefits like a better integration of the recreational areas into the metropolitan urban fabric, and a better community cohesion by articulating and activating the green assets in the metropolitan area. This would lead to a better ecosystem integrity and subsequently has health benefits for the residents of metropolitan areas.

Green areas on a former rail viaduct in Rotterdam © Stela Salinas, RiConnect Communication Officer

"We observe that infrastructure is dominating the natural spaces"

The metropolitan area must be thought like a whole eco-system and mobility infrastructure needs to be rethought towards a more integrative element in this ecosystem. We observe that infrastructure is dominating the natural spaces. They could be restored and re-integrated into the landscape. The road or train infrastructure might disappear under the ground and the natural space rehabilitated. But also, the space underneath the infrastructure (e.g. bridges) could be opened and activated for sport or culture, a communication between the neighbourhoods would eliminate barrier effects, cohesion effects would be generated. In the long run, biodiversity will be restored, and identity through the accessibility rebuilt. However, these are mid- to long-term goals that are not easy to be financed, but certainly they enhance the quality and resilience of the environment. But, it might only take simple placemaking measures to create permeability of the barriers and open the paths that might connect neighbourhoods in a fragmented metropolitan area.

In the core of the solutions towards green metropolitan areas are the so-called **Nature Based Solutions.** It is about the implementation of projects that will not harm the environment or minimize the negative impact of those implementations. While building new infrastructure, the protection, restoration, and maintenance of the ecosystem is key to the success. In order to fulfil the vision of a sustainable metropolitan area, the protection of the biodiversity and human wellbeing is key. The metropolitan areas will be improved by reducing the greenhouse gas emissions through creating denser settlements, and reducing car traffic through mixed-use patterns and efficient public transport. Keeping nature clean means to provide benefits in the long term.

The key to success is the **combination of a set of integrated measures and actions** to create a sustainable and eco-friendly urban development. As a rule, single actions might not be effective, combining one or several measures would be more efficient. Some of the key performance indicators are:

- Dense Settlements and mixed-use patterns, avoid traveling in the metropolis
- Heat Island Effects in metropolitan areas
- Un-sealed parking lots
- Consumption of agricultural land
- Food production in the metropolitan area
- Effective Public Transport as an alternative to individual cars
- Creation of hubs in the metropolitan area
- Green Facades of Buildings
- Greening the Infrastructure hubs
- Activating obsolete infrastructure with green elements and parks
- Add value to mobility infrastructure with recreational activates like running tracks, bike corridors along the infrastructure

"Microclimate simulations would help to improve performance of the urban interventions during the urban design"

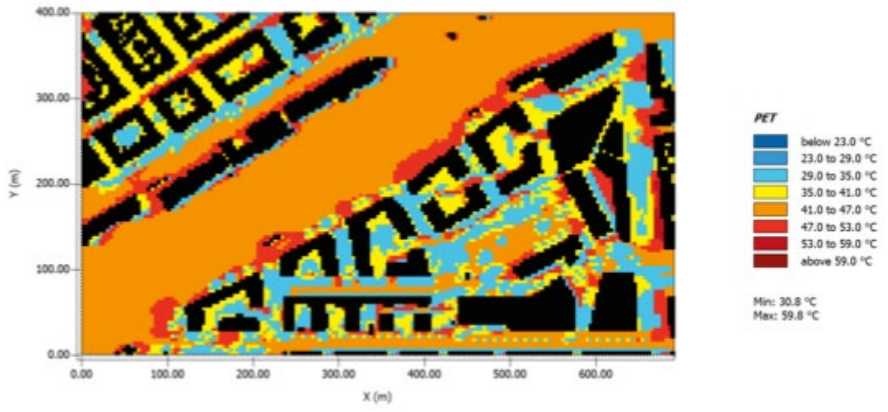
Let me pick one essential indicator for ecosystem functions in metropolitan areas. **Urban heat islands** are troubling metropolitan areas more and more. Heat waves during summer days and nights make living in the city uncomfortable. The green area distribution is not well developed, larger green infrastructure like cooling parks is not available. Microclimate simulations would help to improve performance of the urban interventions during the urban design.

For example, the City of Vienna together with the National Railway Company (ÖBB) is developing a 9-ha inner city **brownfield project** called "Neues Landgut" in the 10th district of Vienna, next to the Main Train Station. The site is heavily affected by the heatwaves that come from the train tracks that are located along the south-western border of the perimeter. The former logistic site has not a single tree, a reduction of negative externalities must be found. Now, the city agreed with ÖBB that each real estate project - 90 % of the area will be residential, 4500 new residents will live there - has to perform a **micro-climate simulation and quality control** with the following parameters:

- Min 20 % of façades of buildings have green elements, balconies delivered with installed irrigation
- Green Roofs and photo-voltaic system
- Inner courtyards of blocks with trees

- Improved performance of trees (shadows) in the park
- Active terraces on buildings available for the residents (create decentralized active green)
- 4 m2 per new resident of usable public park and green areas
- Public spaces have to provide permeable features, e.g. follow the sponge-city approach
- Mixed-use with library and educational campus (primary and secondary school + music school)
- Active ground floor zone with 2.000 m2 leasable area to create a new commercial hub with shops and workplaces
- For 30 m2 of net residential area 1 parking space for a bike, one third available in the ground floor zone.

Masterplan Neues Landgut in Vienna
© Superwien



Heat Island Maps to improve performance of green area
© Greenpass

Another interesting project is the construction of a **bike-highway** along the river "Wien" in Vienna. Due to the lack of bike infrastructure in the west of the city of Vienna, the administration decided to activate the riverbed and bank of a river. Today the new infrastructure is very well used; even cultural events are conducted in the riverbed. The project has several functions and demonstrates how **integrated ecosystem functions** could work:

- Flood-control during floods
- Bike Lane of 7 km with 10 entrances and 2 emergency exits
- Link to important transportations hubs and cycle routes of the city and metropolitan area

- Seasonal opening, according to the situation of potential floods
- Recreation attraction and linear park for walking, runners, bikers and commuters into the city centre.

A metropolitan bike lane along the Wien river in Vienna
© City of Vienna

The RiConnect Chronicles 06: Thematic Meeting 3

The integration of ecosystem functions within infrastructures is a major concern for RiConnect. Consequently, the topic was widely discussed at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 6, celebrated online in April 2021.

A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 06, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

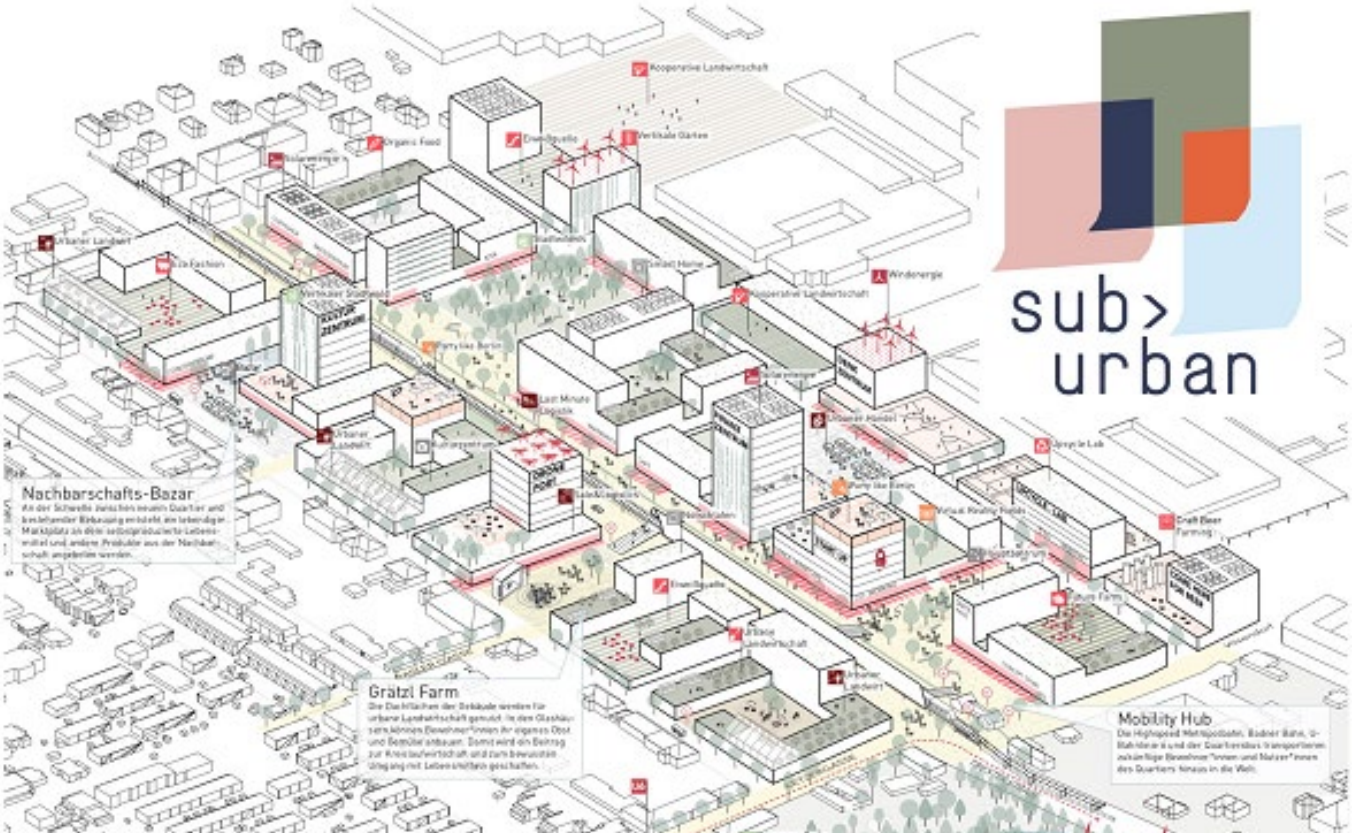
The Place-based Planning Approach – Rethinking Metropolis Planning

RiConnect Lead Expert Roland Krebs covers the confluence between urban planning and mobility infrastructure in this article. The integration of infrastructure can lead to new urban development, creating strong, mixed centralities.

Read time: 4 minutes_ Written on 15 April 2022

Imagine a metropolitan area with a well distributed share of public space, parks, recreational areas, a metropolitan area where you do not need a car anymore, because you live close to a train station. Your commute to work is comfortable, sometimes to take the train, sometimes your bicycle takes to work on the 10 km bike-highway, and sometimes you just work from home, because your building provides a high-quality co-working space. The childcare is just 5 min away, you have time for your family. You buy grocery from the food-coop around the corner, you enjoy cultural events in the city. You have reserved a car from your car-pool in your building, for your weekend-trip with your family.

An integrated vision for a hub in the Vienna metropolitan area © Superwien



Many factors in the metropolitan planning system are needed to provide such an urban-rural lifestyle – **the following planning decisions will lead to the described scenario**:

- A system of **mass public transport** that allows **quick commutes** in the metropolitan area
- **An efficient active mobility planning** that facilitates **long distance**, but also **local commutes** by walking and cycling
- **A mixed-use urban planning scheme** for metropolitan areas for creating development nodes and hubs
- **A landscape planning that defines active public spaces**, large scale parks (Cooling effects!) and important walking connection in the metropolitan area for leisure
- **A quality-oriented urban design of projects** that include **mixed-use, commercial, and non-commercial uses on the ground floor** zones, and define quality of decentralised office spaces for residents (co-working, home-office)
- **A mobility concept** for residents with a **pool of cars** and **cargo-bikes** of the area you are living in (and you don't need the car to buy things)
- **Creative bureaucracy** is needed, at municipal and metropolitan level, **that enables creative ideas for metropolitan projects**
- **Social services,** especially all-day long child-care taking
- **Funding of local projects** with **metropolitan impact** and importance
- Governance model that enables **development of a common vision** and goals for the metropolitan region
- **A metropolitan planning agency** that enables the above-mentioned **collaboration of the different fields** of planning, decision making and balancing of public and private interests.

"We want a more dynamic, sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis"

RiConnect is working with our partner cities towards the goal of **getting closer to sustainable mobility solutions** and link them with **integrated planning solutions** to rethink, reuse, recycle, regenerate these obsolete mobility infrastructures. We want a more dynamic, sustainable, equitable and attractive metropolis where everyone can interact with everyone and move freely regardless of their age, social rank and where they live. We have to break up with the negative mono-functionality of the settlements in the metropolitan area and create a mixed-use, proximity and short distances of the essential functions of life: mobility, leisure, work, culture, etc.

A precondition for successful metropolis development is **a working and efficient mobility system**, less dependency on cars and a short distance metropolis. Of course, you might not get it all, and small steps are needed to move towards this goal. Our partners have initiated this process with their **Integrated Action Plans**. The baseline of RiConnect are metropolitan areas that resulted from an unprecedented urban expansion when more efficient transport was invented: trains and subsequently, automobiles. This rapid suburbanisation process was structured through the speed of cars and mono functional areas were built to allocate industrial areas, residential areas, public facilities and leisure and consumer complexes, all of which were physically segregated and linked by automobile only.

Co-creation workshops and a dialogue to create a tangible project vision in Barcelona
© AMB

“t is essential to develop a metropolitan vision”

How can we fix it? It is essential to develop a **metropolitan vision**, for example, less car use and the integration of the urban fragments through walking paths. However, **integrated local action is needed for specific sites**. The urban regeneration process could be triggered by the **Integrated Action Plans** that define activities to fix the past, but also enable new developments. For instance, the activation of urban voids like brownfields or former industrial buildings could be the trigger for urban development. Wherever possible, hubs for culture, jobs, shopping, recreations will be defined through the given opportunities. Each development pole in the metropolitan area has a different connotation, and the solutions will be specific for the given context.

Placemaking is a core activity as part of the creative bureaucracy in Thessaloniki
© MDAT

A great example is the **Metropolitan Area of Thessaloniki (MDAT)**. MDAT is developing a large park, **Kodra**, in the municipality of Kalamaria located in the east of the metropolitan area of Thessaloniki that **will have an impact to the green area distribution in the whole metropolitan area**. In total, there are about 15 abandoned military camps that lay unused within the urban dense fabric of Thessaloniki’s metropolitan area. The new park has a size of 36 hectares and was selected to be open to the public. The project has a clear metropolitan vision, but local actions, so we called it a place-based solution in a metropolitan context. MDAT gets active as a creative bureaucracy and convinces that Kalamaria municipality will facilitate and enable the project. The funding might come partly from the metropolitan development agency.

The RiConnect Chronicles 07: Thematic Meeting 4

The metropolitan scale is vital when rethinking infrastructure, given that the challenges are larger than city limits, and planning must be made accordingly. A rich discussion on metropolitan planning was held at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 7, celebrated online in July 2021.

A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 07, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

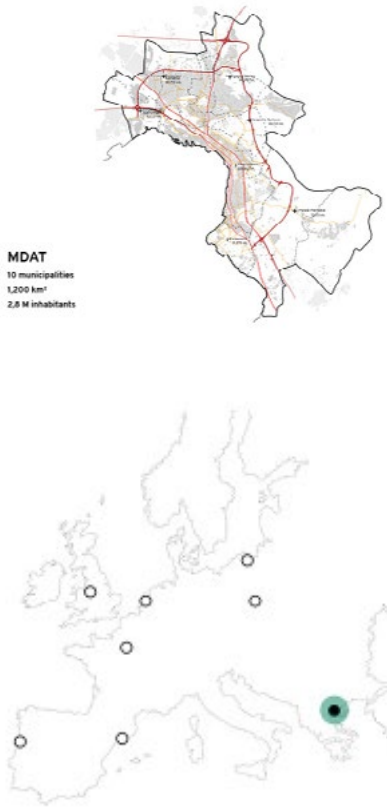
Major Development Agency Thessaloniki

Our Greek partner empowers the Thessaloniki metropolis and supports municipalities in managing and implementing sustainable urban development, mobility and accessibility plans and projects

Read time: 3 minutes_ Written on 21 April 2022

The Major Development Agency Thessaloniki (MDAT) S.A., former Metropolitan Development Agency Thessaloniki S.A., as set up in 1994, is a Development Limited Special Purpose Company, covering the 11 Municipalities of the greater metropolitan urban district of Thessaloniki. The participating Municipalities are Thessaloniki, Kalamaria, Pavlos Melas, Ampelokipoi – Menemeni, Kordelio- Evosmos, Neapoli – Sykies, Delta, Oreokastro, Thermi, Chalkidona and Pylaia – Hortiatis, as well as the city organizations NOESIS - Thessaloniki Science Park and Technology Museum and CERTH (Centre for Research and Technology Hellas), as Organizations of the Local Government of the wider metropolitan urban area of Thessaloniki constituting its local government shareholders.

The Umbrellas by Zongolopoulos, a public artwork at the New Thessaloniki Waterfront © MDAT



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MDAT S.A. operates as a Local Government Organization on the basis of the Laws 3852/2010 “New Architecture of Local Government and Decentralized Administration - Code of Municipalities and Communities”, 4674/2020 “Strategic development perspective of Local Government Organizations, regulation of issues within the competence of the Ministry of Interior and other provisions”, in combination with the provisions of 2190/1920 and 4548/2018, as in force.

One of the milestones of the cooperation of the Municipality of Thessaloniki with MDAT S.A. is the development of the Resilient Strategy 2030, by joining, in 2014, the 100 Resilient Cities (100RC) network. This is considered as a unique opportunity to implement a robust, participatory approach and create a long-term strategy to address current and future challenges, and in doing so to connect with other cities and organizations across the world via the 100RC network. The 100RC methodology provided an innovative model for the local authority to develop a holistic city strategy in collaboration with adjacent municipalities, local academic institutions, the nonprofit sector, private stakeholders, citizens, and communities of the city. More than 40 organizations and 2000 citizens participated in our resilience dialogue, ensuring the strategy aligns with and complements other strategic initiatives in the local, regional, national and international domain, including the city’s 5 year Operational Plan 2020 and European Strategy for 2020. The Resilience Strategy is based on eight city values (Social Cohesion, Local Identity and Heritage, Environmental Management, Health and Wellbeing, Youth Empowerment, Multi-stakeholder Engagement, Technology Adaptation, Economic Prosperity), which represent our city’s identity and guide how we will plan for the future. The values cut across four main goals that together form the basis of the strategy. The Company’s operation as a Development Organisation consists in

Cover of the Resilient Strategy 2030
© MDAT

providing Management and Technical support to its local government shareholders for Development Planning and preparation, maturation, promotion in financial means and implementation supervision of Municipal projects, projects with significant inter- and supra-municipal scale and cooperation plans, in collaboration with other Development Bodies of the Local Government and the Public and Social Sector.

Therefore, the company operates within the context of the coherent "Strategic Sustainable Urban Development of the Major Integrated Spatial Investment of Urban Metropolitan Thessaloniki" that MDAT S.A. promotes for development planning, in the framework of EU financial mechanisms eligible in Greece, as well as other National, European and International financial, lending or donation instruments. In such context, MDAT S.A. forms a Technical and Management support mechanism for the local authorities and the social partners of the wider public sector and the area of civil society.

Some of the most important Engineering Services Department's projects developed and implemented (ongoing), as results of the cooperation between MDAT S.A. and our shareholders are presented within the following pictures:

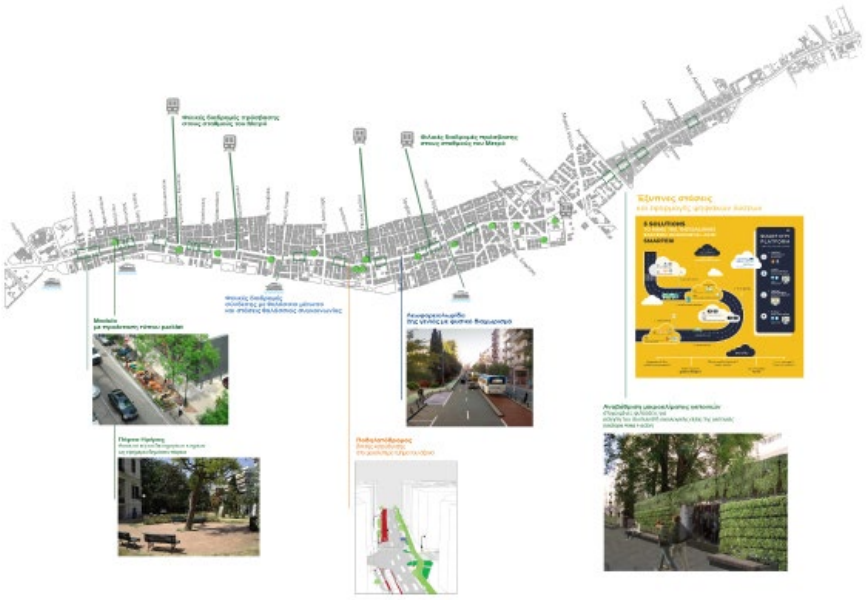
Restoration and reuse of the Building A2 at the former of Camp Pavlos Melas and transition into City Hall and Museum of National Resistance, Municipality of Pavlos Melas
© MDAT

Vosporos park redesign and greening, Municipality of Ampelokipoi – Menemeni
© MDAT

Further to the Engineering Services Department, the Management and Implementation of Sustainable Development Projects and the Social Resilience and Inclusion Departments aim at the design and implementation of business planning and development projects. These work as a development mechanism of public interest of the bodies of the urban metropolitan Municipality of Thessaloniki for the production and dissemination of design and methodological tools at the local and supra-local planning level, covering all the areas in which the Local Government directly or indirectly exercises policy and intervenes during the exercise of its development planning and project implementation.

Within implementing a series of important projects in programmes, such as Interreg Europe, Interreg Mediterranean, Horizon 2020, URBACT, etc., policies and strategic action plans are being investigated and developed that integrate joint urban and transportation planning, innovation and smart cities interventions, urban, natural environment, as well as social inclusion and resilience, by encouraging participatory activities.

We participate at the Management and Implementation of Sustainable Development Projects Department in strong partnership schemes, including URBACT RiConnect network, in which we feel very honored to participate, comprising of Organisations and experts with great experience in the field of Urban and Transportation planning, but also with Civil society organisations. These projects aim at the promotion and dissemination of research, interventions at metropolitan scale, development of an integrated ecosystem of innovation and knowledge and the connection of research results, innovations and applied knowledge with the policies of local government at the level of the wider region of Thessaloniki.



REMEDIO - **RE**generating mixed-use **MED** urban communities congested by traffic through **I**nnovative low carbon mobility s**O**lutions: Redesign and upgrade of a major urban axis within a high-participatory approach for the development of the proposal
© MDAT

The ultimate goal of our activities is to support the City in all sections, concerning contemporary urban environments, issues of sustainable urban development, mobility and accessibility, promotion of emblematic projects of metropolitan scale and development of feasible planning tools and intelligent digital applications to upgrade the City's functions, the level of service to the citizens, with emphasis to vulnerable groups, and the improvement of the quality of life.

Moreover, the MDAT S.A. Social Resilience and Inclusion Department is in close cooperation with the Municipality of Thessaloniki for the development of a city-wide social and affordable housing strategy in Thessaloniki to combat homelessness and housing exclusion, supported, also, by the URBACT ROOF Network, since 2019. It intervenes in a Greek context where there is no overarching housing policy, 0% social housing stock and one of the most severely affected countries in the EU in terms of housing cost overburden for low-income households (over 70%). The participatory processes involved has led to joint planning with NGOs, local authorities, universities, activists, practitioners, ministry representatives in the city actively engaging in the initiative and collectively designing measures. Within this framework, MDAT S.A. is proud to be the winner of the European Housing Innovation Award 2021 through its policy initiative: Instigating Holistic Social and Affordable Housing Policies in Thessaloniki. Among 12 finalists from countries from the UK, Germany, Slovakia, Ireland, Belgium, Norway, Bulgaria and Italy, MDAT S.A. has been awarded for the integrated and participatory processes it has been adopting in developing a first of its kind local Housing Strategy for the Municipality of Thessaloniki in collaboration with public and private actors across the city.

"The ultimate goal of our activities is to support the City in all sections"

Finally, our continuous effort is the inclusion in European Union projects and actions, in view to turn the climate and environmental challenges into opportunities, in all policy areas, and for all, in a sustainable, green and coherent economy.

RiConnect Mid-Term Review: Linking the Metropolitan Agenda with Place-Based Solutions

In July 2021 RiConnect initiated a mid-term review process with the purpose to reflect on the project status for our eight partners. Here are the views of our Lead Expert, Roland Krebs, on our achievements and the steps to come.

Read time: 5 minutes_ Written on 28 April 2022

RiConnect is seeking to integrate mobility infrastructure into a formal planning process in order to activate urban voids, wastelands etc. and reconnect those areas with concrete, place-based solutions. These solutions were developed by the respective stakeholder groups in a co-creation planning process. In October 2021 we all felt that it was about time to meet in person and reflect on our work and progress. During this meeting an in-depth feedback process of the draft Integrated Action Plans was conducted, including peer-review sessions about the Draft Integrated Action Plans.

Group picture in Zuidoost, Amsterdam, in our Transnational Meeting 8 on October 2021 © Stela Salinas, RiConnect Communication Officer

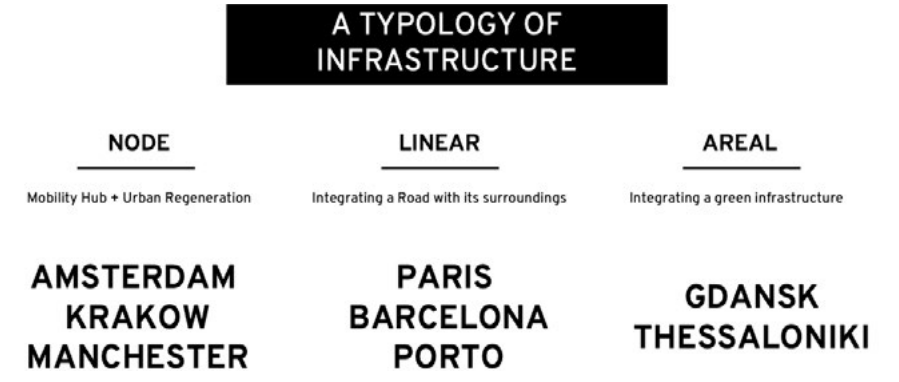
How it all started: During the very first Transnational Meeting of Phase 2 in June 2020, we introduced some creative concepts how to overcome the burden of online meetings without being present in the host city. During this Kick-Off meeting, I conducted a virtual site visit from my hometown Vienna and moved with the bicycle on some interesting spots in the city, all filmed through my phone camera. In the following meetings, our partners followed with other creative inputs to present their city cases, live-streams, online discussion panels, drone flights, videos etc. and reflected with the peers solutions in metropolitan planning.

"The purpose of those meetings was to trigger knowledge exchange with local and international experts in the fields of the respective meeting"

In total we had four Thematic Meetings that were hosted and co-hosted by the eight partners with the following topics: a) October 21-22, 2020 "Rethinking the way we move", hosted by KMA and co-organized by TfGM, b) February 4-5, 2021 "Integrating the Infrastructure", hosted by AMP and co-organized by OMGGS, c) April 2-5, 2021 "Adding Ecosystem Functions", hosted by MDAT and co-organized by VA and d) July 6-7, 2021 "Rethinking Metropolis Planning", hosted by MGP and co-organized by AMB. The purpose of those meetings was to trigger knowledge exchange with local and international experts in the fields of the respective meeting, with an outstanding list of high-level professionals and experts in their fields. All four meetings were accompanied by a graphical recording by artist and architect Milagros Hurtig from superwien (figure 1).

Graphical recordings that accompanied the RiConnect Thematic Meetings
© RiConnect

To support the partners with European expertise in brownfield transformation and the development of urban voids next or under (obsolete) infrastructure, we initiated a collection of good practices of more than 20 cases that are structured through 3 typologies of infrastructure a) nodal b) linear and c) areal or enclosed infrastructures. We are further developing this knowledge to prepare the RiConnect Final Report (figure 2).



RiConnect Good Practice Research
© RiConnect

We organized four webinars meant to support the partners in the understanding of development of integrated action plans and to support thematically the multi-sectorial approach in the search of place-based solutions (see figure 3):

RiConnect Webinars
© RiConnect

a) November 30, 2020, **"When is a wasteland?"** by Brian Rosa, researcher in Barcelona

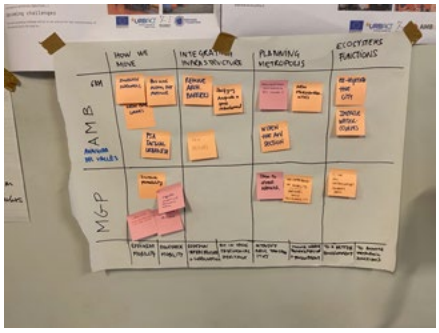
b) March 16, 2021, **"East New York, Brooklyn – an integrated approach to transit-oriented development"** by Winston von Engel, director of the Brooklyn office the New York City Department of Planning, New York City

c) June 8, 2021, **"Placemaking Europe – Strategic actions to turn public spaces into places we love"**, by Charlot Schans, director of Placemaking Europe, Amsterdam

d) September 22, 2021, **"RiConnect ecosystems: economy, cohesion and gender – tackling social aspects for an integrated project approach"**, by our ad-hoc expert Bahanur Nasya, Eutropian, Vienna.

Overall, the partners learnt extensively from the online inputs sessions and used the gained knowledge in their Integrated Action Plans. **The Mid-Term Reflection revealed that 75% of partners feel they had progressed as expected, or more than expected.** Only two partners feel that they had less progress than expected. All partners have concluded the draft version of the Integrated Action Plan. We introduced techniques how to define 'Emerging Topics', a compilation of challenges and potentials that were derived from co-creation workshops and stakeholder interviews, and how to combine them with project goals and actions with the help of a **'Logical Framework'**: an innovative methodology to visualize the integrated planning approach and the interconnectivity of "Emerging Topics", "Goals" and "Actions".

Sample of a Logical Framework
© AMP



Poster from Peer-Review Process focusing on integrated proposals during MTR and our first meeting in Amsterdam – a dream of meeting in person became true

During the project development, **we accompanied the partners with exhaustive capacity building and training sessions.** For example, we compiled a **RiConnect Co-Creation Toolbox with about 25 tools that our partners can use** for a) scoping, b) assessment, c) design and planning the actions and d) evaluation. Numerous training session were held about 'mapping and interview analysis' and the integrated planning approach. To activate the methodology for our partners, we organized feedback sessions for specific steps of the project, e.g., 'roadmap', for the 'vision and goals', and 'how to draft an IAP'. Additionally, before starting with the co-creation phase of the project, the partners developed workshop concepts and co-creation scripts on how the partners wanted to use the RiConnect co-creation-toolbox.

The main take-away from the Mid-Term Review process is that the partners feel that the project addresses metropolitan planning and urban design in the right way: strategic, tangible solutions with metropolitan impact are being developed, in co-creation between the relevant local actors. There are still several constraints that challenge projects such as the partners' organizations, the metropolitan dilemma, the multilevel governance among other issues. However, the priorities in the project are set right and all partners managed to prepare a good quality draft Integrated Action Plan. Now we are working on delivering a meaningful Integrated Action Plan. **We cannot wait to present it to the broader audience! Stay tuned!**

The RiConnect Chronicles 08: Mid-term reflection + Field trip

The Mid-term review process had a relevant milestone at the RiConnect Transnational Meeting 8, celebrated in Amsterdam in October 2021, where we discussed our progress and set the path towards the end of our IAPs. In addition, we also held a field trip to visit relevant infrastructure projects around the Netherlands, in the Hague, Rotterdam and Utrecht.
A summary of the discussion is available at The RiConnect Chronicles 08, a record of events in the order in which they occurred, to highlight the most relevant ideas to the topic dealt with during this meeting.

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