

Workshop 2: Making the new mobility culture quickly visible

Easy and innovative examples of mobility measures

How quick is quick? And what role does public space play in increasing the visibility of walking, cycling or public transport as alternatives to car travel? Both questions were answered by Hugo Terrile, Undersecretary of Traffic and Transport in Buenos Aires, with his impressive presentation covering the rapid transformation of Downtown BA. Within two years, an effective restructuring of bus routes led to the highly walkable redesign of most streets in so called Micro-Centro. Another strong emphasis was put on making intersections safer for pedestrians, mostly accomplished with paint and street furniture. In addition, cycle lanes were built systematically along all types of urban streets, from shared spaces to the main avenues. In total, Buenos Aires is beginning to think and design the city for people, and not around cars.



Image: Redesign of an intersection in Buenos Aires, Argentina

Copyright: Gobierno de Buenos Aires

Neighbouring Montevideo is in an earlier stage of this transformation, as Pablo Ferrer, Head of the Traffic Division, explained. Nonetheless, also the capital city of Uruguay is beginning to treasure public space as a key component for the increase of urban quality of life.

This is very much in line with the findings of Daniel Sauter, a pioneering researcher on walkability from Switzerland. Studying the human interaction and behaviour in public space ultimately leads to good urban design. People almost immediately respond to human-centered spaces, allowing for easy transitions between walking, sojourning, talking or shopping. Sauter made clear that measuring the impact of lower speeds, wider sidewalks or

better street furniture in terms of an increased number of customers or people sitting in sidewalk cafes will also increase the political relevance of walking.



Image: Living Street in Ghent, Belgium
Copyright: Lab Van Troje, Ghent

Improvements may oftentimes be very simple. The city of Ghent made very positive experience with so-called “Living Streets”, a bottom-up redesign process now covering 22 streets throughout the city. As Wolfgang Aichinger, Consultant on Sustainable Mobility, explained, the city officially closes smaller streets for car traffic upon request from the neighbourhood. It is up to local residents to design new street furniture and experiment with new forms of urban mobility such as cargo-bikes or electric cars. These processes are funded through online crowd-funding campaigns and facilitated by a local planning office.