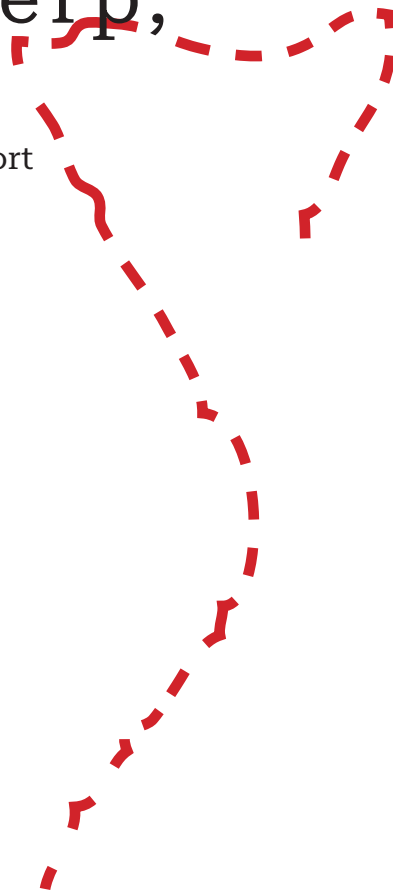


The streets transformations in:

Barcelona,
Lyon,
London,
Brussels,
Antwerp,
Paris

Field Visit Report



Catarina Breia Dias

PhD research in Urban and Regional Planning at the School of Architecture, Art and Design, University of Minho, with the support of the Future Design of Streets association.

march - april 2025



Avenida de Madrid, Barcelona.



Carrer dels Almogàvers, Barcelona.



Escola Francesc Macià, Barcelona.



Avinguda Meridiana, Barcelona.



Carrer d'Almeria, Barcelona.



Carrer del Comte Borrel, Barcelona.



Consell del Cent, Barcelona.



Consell del Cent, Barcelona.



Rue Henri Gorjous, Lyon.



Rue Sergent Blandan, Lyon.



Rue Garibaldi, Lyon



Alfred Places, Londres.



Gordon Square, Londres.



Rue de Lisbonne, Bruxelles.



Parc des Brigittines, Bruxelles.



Rue Haute, Bruxelles.



Lange Ridderstraat, Antuérpia.



Bredestraat, Antuérpia.



Lange Ridderstraat, Antuérpia.



Rue León Claudel, Paris.



Rue Capitaine Lagaiche, Paris.



Rue de Moscou, Paris.



Rue du Rivoli, Paris.



Rue des Archives, Paris.

introduction

The aim of this mission – a field visit to several European cities – forms part of the doctoral research entitled ‘Street transformations towards social, mobility and urban nature spaces: concepts and practices’.

Given the interest in and need to understand the case studies being analysed in this research, as well as their contexts, it was deemed essential to observe the most recent implementations and consult the various experts involved. The study is based on meetings, semi-structured interviews and site visits to understand the approaches of each intervention, in terms of both their spatial and procedural logic, and how they fit into the municipal programmes under analysis.

The subject of the study involves observing streets that have undergone interventions within the scope of municipal programmes. In addition to the streets, relating to implementation projects defined a priori, and the meetings and interviews with experts and stakeholders, which explain the context of the city and the projects, other implementations falling within the same municipal programmes are also selected, as they are crucial to understanding their overall vision. To understand the phenomena of urban adaptation, visits are also made to other interventions that have been significant in these processes, thereby giving rise to a certain informality in some of the routes that characterise this visit.

context

Antwerp, Barcelona, Brussels, Lisbon, Lyon, London and Paris are the cities selected for this phase of visits and observation. These cities are considered noteworthy for the implementation of ongoing municipal programmes that address the numerous challenges of European (and global) agendas and which, intending to create safer and more liveable cities, embrace paradigm shifts in both sustainability and mobility.

The programmes to be investigated in each city are as follows:

1. Barcelona: Protegim les Escoles, Eixs Verts;
2. Lyon: Rue Garibaldi (Lyon Part-Dieu/ Ville Permèable);
3. London: Highways Greening Accelerator;
4. Brussels: Boulevards du Centre/ Good Move Plan;
5. Antwerp: Antwerpen Breekt Uit;
6. Paris: Rues aux écoles, Plan Vèlo;

cities

1. Barcelona
2. Lyon
3. London
4. Brussels
5. Antwerp
6. Paris



methodology

This tour of six European cities will take place between 14 March and 13 April 2025, with travel (by train and plane) supported by the Future Design of Streets association. The mission will focus on most of the case studies that form part of the PhD research, although some visits have already taken place previously, such as those to Lisbon and Milan. This, however, represents the longest period of observation.

The period leading up to the mission corresponds mainly to the time when some visits and meetings in Lisbon serve as an exploratory phase to understand what observations and questions can be raised, but also to the period of contact with other organisations and experts in the various cities to be visited. The preparation lasted approximately one and a half months, organised around travel arrangements as well as coordinating train journeys, accommodation and the availability of the people contacted.

Contacts are established with various stakeholders, including technical staff from the municipalities under study, architectural firms commissioned for the projects, department heads in the fields of urban planning or public space design, and even research colleagues who could provide context for the city, thereby enabling cross-referencing and reflection on the subject under study. These contacts are drawn from an established network (established through of the Future Design of Streets association), but also through the search for and identification of these contacts via available channels.

For these pre-arranged meetings, semi-structured interviews are prepared. The purpose is to understand the programmes and interventions, their relationship with the city, and their integration into the urban fabric.

The main inquiries were generated from the central questions of the research: How are the projects being conducted and implemented? What types of streets result from these new challenges in reconciling dimensions such as the urban environment and mobility? What kind of strategies and approaches emerge from municipal programmes?

Although these issues had been defined in advance, it was anticipated that they might need to be redefined as a result of an initial observation (before the meetings), or even depending on how each participant might explain the scope of the programmes, the process or the intervention, or, at the very least, their analysis of them. Essentially, the aim was to understand all the issues described above, as well as the key elements of the processes and spatial solutions.

Some of these meetings resulted in walks around the city accompanied by a brief explanation of the city itself, recent transformations and other programmes currently being implemented. I was also provided with technical data sheets relating to the implemented projects, which had been previously filled in with information gathered and available online or via open-source channels.

Concerning the spatial interventions included in each programme analysed, these are observed and analysed in situ. They are observed and described in relation to the site and its surroundings. To this end, we use observation, photographic documentation, mapping, and audio recordings of some conversations, particularly in Lyon, Barcelona and Paris. Some video recordings are also made, with the support of a colleague, Marta Morais Miranda. This support takes place in Barcelona, serving as a guide for filming that will be carried out in the other cities. These videos are intended as a brief teaser (work in progress).

The observations are supported and reflected upon, based on the conversations taking place with various experts, but also drawing on feedback from street users, who provide 'off the record' insights into their impressions of the spatial proposals. These are essential contributions to guiding our view of the elements present in the street design and to understanding how people move through and use these spaces.

field visit

The field visit combines street observation with documentation through photographs and/or film, to capture the essence of how the space is used or of those passing by (where possible), as well as the details of the intervention.

As mentioned, the visit last approximately one month. The duration of the visit varied depending on the size of the city and the proposals each city contained. As the sites were visited, new observations were made and described, and these influenced the subsequent interviews or meetings.

The data collected proved crucial, particularly the empirical analysis of visits to the sites and streets under study. These various meetings with experts and/or colleagues are fundamental, contributing to the contextualisation of the programmes, as well as strengthening the network established here. This aims to be essential, since one of the initial difficulties regarding these visits is the contrast between the amount of information assimilated during meetings—which are sometimes very brief—and the fact that these often raise further questions afterwards, as a result of the visits to the streets where interventions have taken place. Some reflections also emerge later, during the period when a cross-cutting analysis of all the collected data begins.

1. barcelona

(march 14-20)

Conversas/ Encontros:

- . Manuel Caldeira, PhD researcher at HHL Leipzig Graduate School of Management
- . Arauna Studio - Dani Rubio Arauna e Pep Quílez, Designer and Architect who developed the visual system for tactical interventions
- . Silvia Casorran, Sustainable Mobility and Urban Transformation Advisor, Former Deputy Chief Architect at Barcelona City Council
- . Xavier Matilla, Former Chief Architect of the Barcelona City Council
- . Andrea Balbe Orti, Direcció d'Estratègia Urbana, Gerència de l'Arquitectura en Cap, Gerència d'Àrea d'Urbanisme i Habitatge

2. lyon

(march 20-22)

Conversas/ Encontros:

- . Nicolas Gineyts, Project manager of Lyon Part-Dieu, Métropole de Lyon
- . Jonas Le Metayer, Ville Perméable, Métropole de Lyon
- . Sébastien Rolland, Urbaniste qualifié, Urba Lyon

3. london

(march 23-27)

4. brussels

(april 28-4)

Conversas/ Encontros:

- . Lotte Luykx, PhD researcher at Vrije Universiteit Brussel
- . Annekatrien Verdickt, Open Streets Brussels

5. antwerp

(april 2nd)

Conversas/ Encontros:

- . Simon de Boeck, PhD Researcher at University of Antwerp

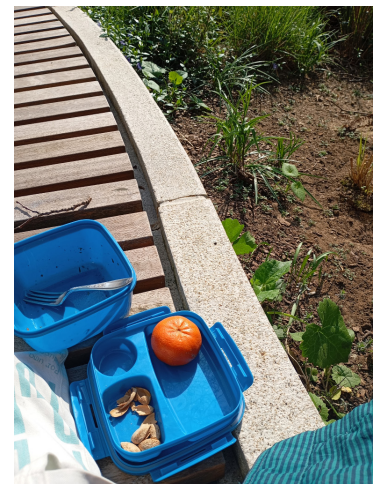
6. paris

(april 5-13)

Conversas/ Encontros:

- . Tiffany Maignan, Cheffe de projet territorial, Chargée de la démarche Embellir votre quartier (8e-17e-18e arrondissements), Direction de la voirie et des déplacements

Itinerary for the field visit, organised by city, including meetings and discussions.



LONDON 21 March

3 places
 Tottenham Road area park & is one of the best gardens as in core of the British Museum.
 A vegetable & home de Paris. Misses not because organization grounds production.
 His playground for kids as 14 yrs - the ~~space~~ 14 yrs.

3 places type squares 26 March 2025

OFFERBROOD
 Rest & fitness from University Central

They think that is a good place, even though that they were not there since always. They feel that parents are now really comfortable with the large space, where they could let children run, yet there's a lot of motorcycles that don't respect the signage. Also, about it in a place now for adolescents that have anti-social behaviours.



In between filming, meetings with research colleagues, field notes, lunches on the streets under observation, and other impressions.

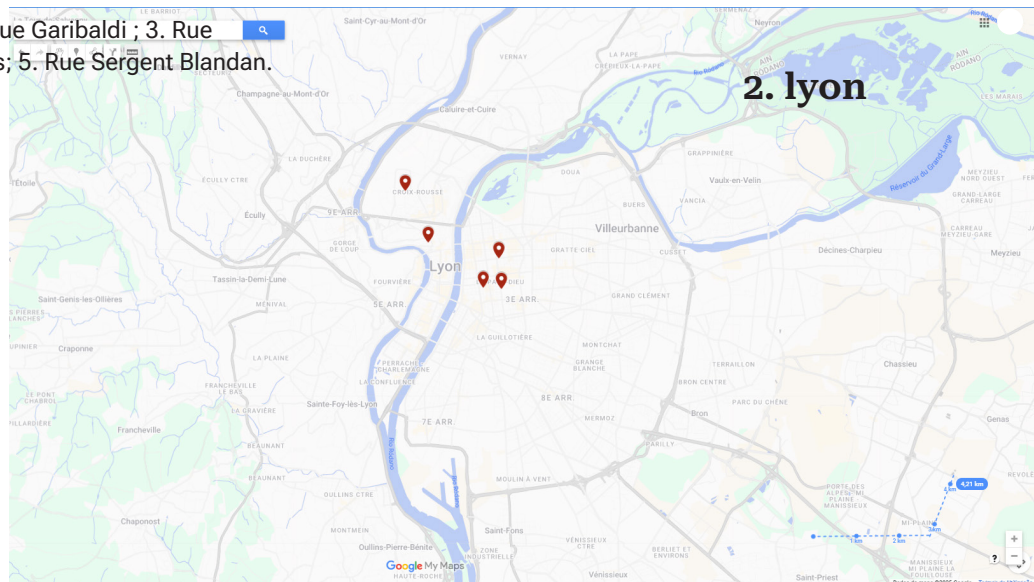


mapping of surveyed streets

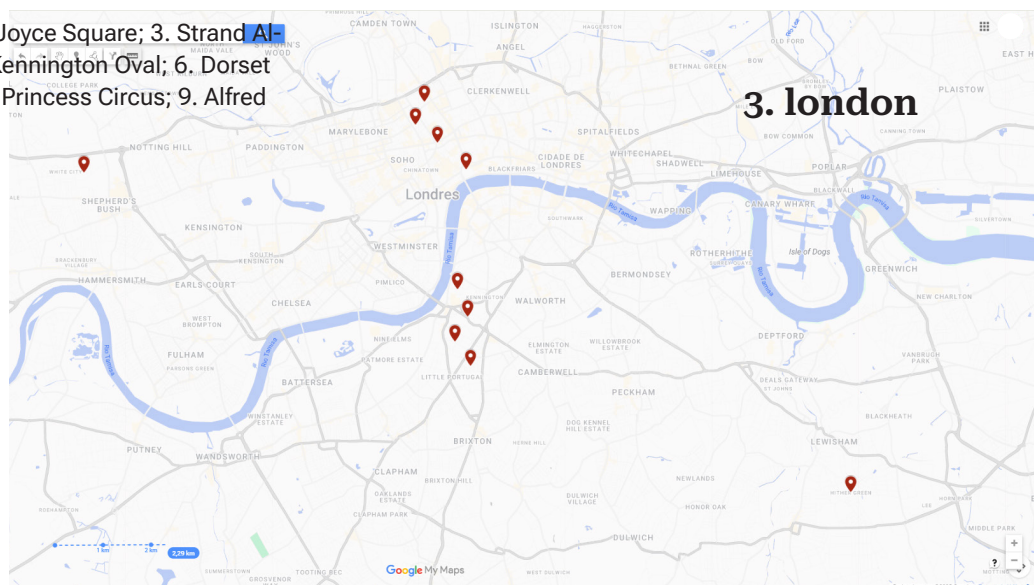
1. Carrer D'Almeria;
2. Carrer Del Comte Borrel;
3. Carrer Del Comte Borrel (Eixample, Superilla);
4. Carrer Dels Almogavérs;
5. Consell Del Cent (Eixs Verts);
6. Cristobal De Moura;
7. Escola Francesc Maciá;
8. Escola Lavínia;
9. Escola Entença;
10. Avinguda Meridiana;
11. Poblenou, Superilla;
12. Sant Antoni, Superilla.



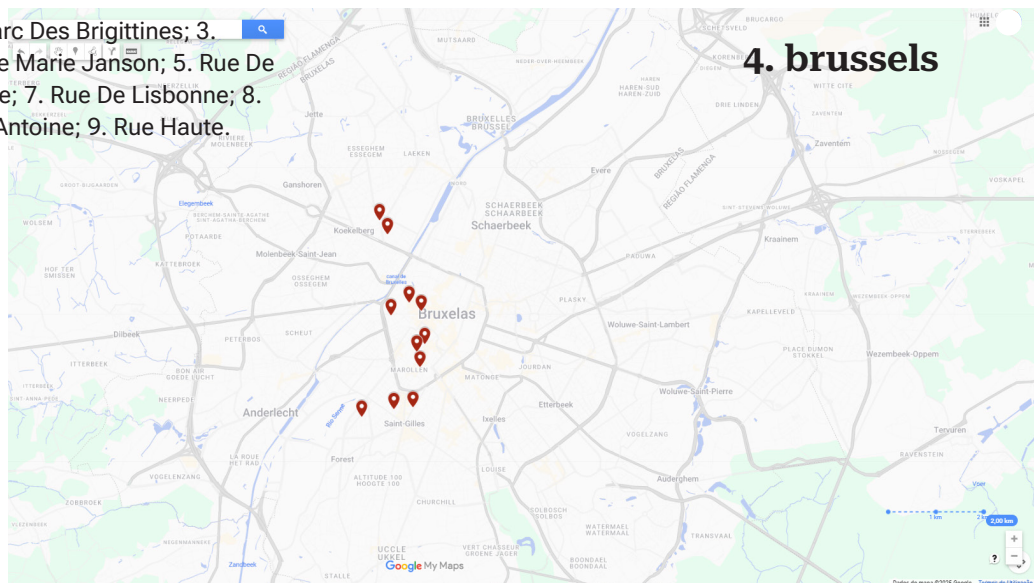
1. Rue De La Part-Dieu;
2. Rue Garibaldi ;
3. Rue Vauban;
4. Rue Henri Gorjus;
5. Ruè Sérgent Blandan.



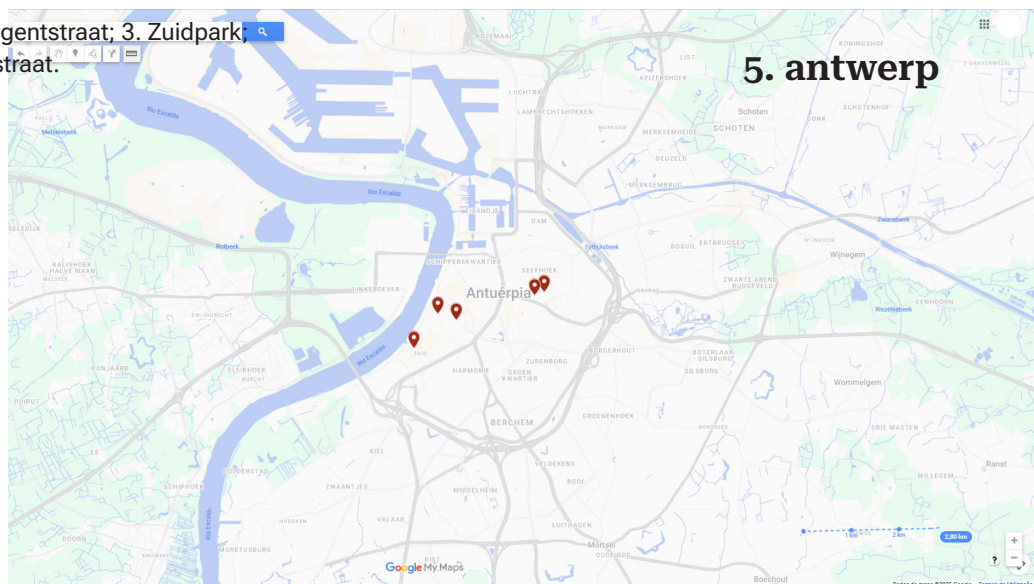
1. Vauxhall Walk;
2. Bridget Joyce Square;
3. Strand Al-dwych;
4. Hither Green;
5. Kennington Oval;
6. Dorset Road;
7. Van Gogh Walk;
8. Princess Circus;
9. Alfred Places;
10. Gordon Square.



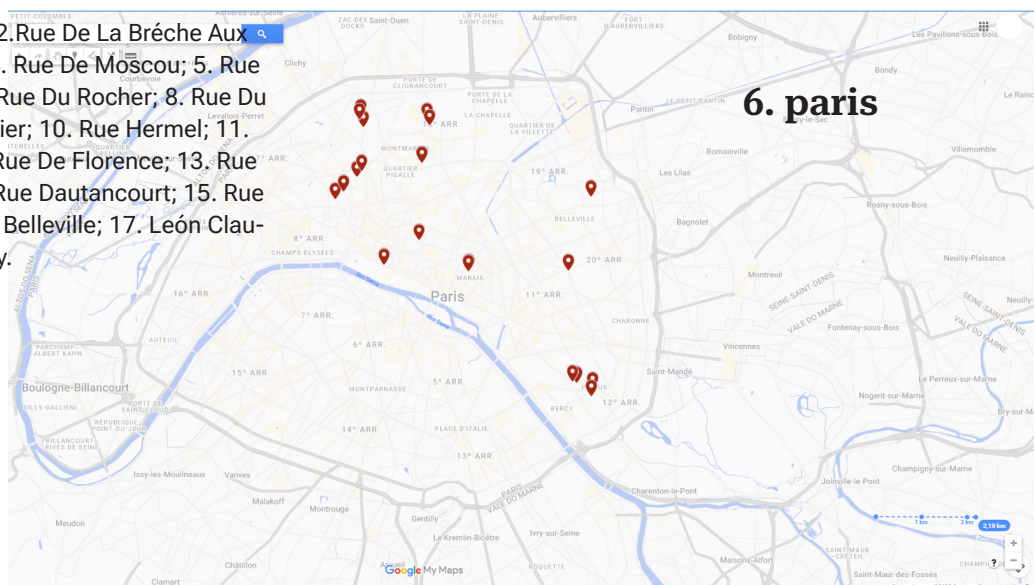
1. Boulevard Anspach;
2. Parc Des Brigittines;
3. Skatepark Chapelle;
4. Place Marie Janson;
5. Rue De La Braie;
6. Rue De La Senne;
7. Rue De Lisbonne;
8. Rue De Padoue - Parvis St. Antoine;
9. Rue Haute.



1. Lange Ridderstraat;
2. Regentstraat;
3. Zuidpark;
4. Bredestraat;
5. Bisschopstraat.



1. Rue De La Bienfaisance;
2. Rue De La Brèche Aux Loups;
3. Rue De Lacaille;
4. Rue De Moscou;
5. Rue D'orsel;
6. Rue Du Rivoli;
7. Rue Du Rocher;
8. Rue Du Temple;
9. Rue Elisa Lemonier;
10. Rue Hermel;
11. Rue Ferdinand Flocon;
12. Rue De Florence;
13. Rue De Capitaine Lagache;
14. Rue Dautancourt;
15. Rue Bignon;
16. Place De Fêtes, Belleville;
17. León Claudel;
18. Boulevard De Reuilly.



Map of the streets surveyed in the six cities visited. [Map's Link.](#)

from observation and analysis: reflections

Although this period of exploration is considered brief, the subsequent opportunity to visit these cities provides a broad insight into the relevance of the interventions and programmes currently underway. The operational nature of implementing these municipal programmes is recognised. The systemic change felt in the various cities grappling with their mobility issues is confirmed (Bertolini 2020, p.735), to explore the plurality of street uses, beyond mere travel, and the activities that take place there (Von Schönfeld & Bertolini, 2017, p.49; Casas-Valle et al., 2023, p.93).

In light of this observation, it understandable as relevant to walk through the city as a practice to observe its diverse dynamics and gather more empirical observations. During the period in which these visits took place, news was published that “Paris was to close 500 streets to traffic”. This news prompts the reflection that there is a debate and media coverage surrounding mobility and sustainability; however, when discussing these cities, we must understand their scale and what these measures represent. In part, this research contributes to an understanding of that very scale.

The on-site experience also made it possible to identify other relevant initiatives in the city that offer complementary approaches, such as programmes across the region, including ‘Paris Respire’ in Paris and ‘Obrim carrers’ in Barcelona.

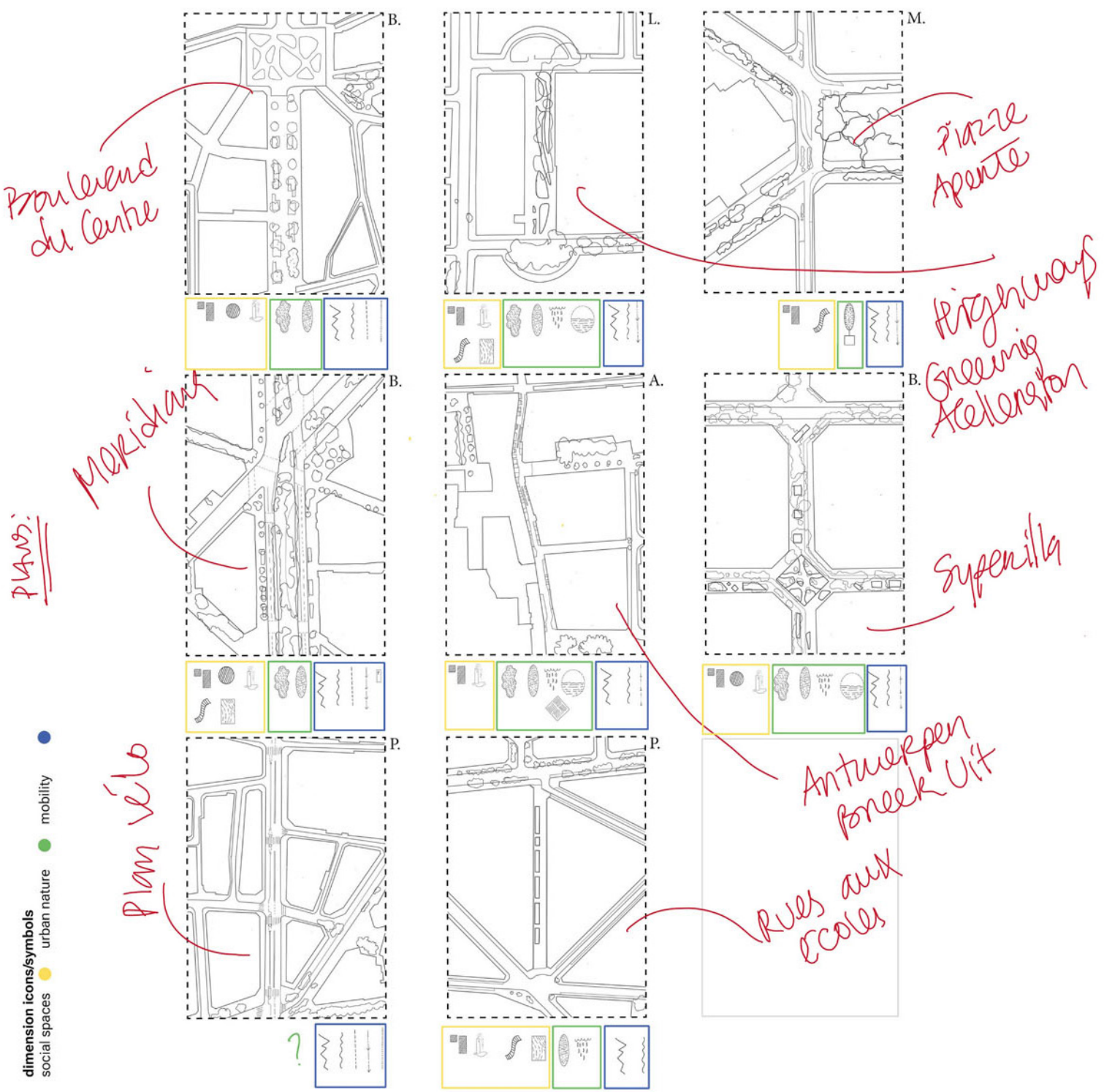
The conversations, street visits and meetings also provided a better understanding of the programmes, strategies and people involved. They reinforced the idea that these approaches stem from well-established public policies and visions, with highly structured guidelines, respecting the duration and implementation of the initiatives. They result from plans that are certainly ‘bold’, yet are nevertheless willing to operate through a process of ‘learning by doing’ and ‘doing by learning’, as (Holscher & Frantzeskaki, 2021, p.8) mention in relation to understanding that these solutions can use the city as a

laboratory, and to grasp how to work towards a more resilient urban context in the future (Evans et al. (2016, p. 1; Holscher & Frantzeskaki, 2021, p. 3).

The discussions provide a better understanding of the logic behind the toolkits and the criteria accompanying these programmes. These establish, from the outset, the introduction of a new spatial grammar—both in its elements and materialisation, and in the redefinition of typologies—and confirm the importance of working within these methods to achieve better operationalisation.

From this point onwards, some principles emerge that support the research and literature review, enabling an analysis of informal and more flexible approaches to streets, redistributing space (Bendiks & Degros, 2019, p.25) and serving a variety of uses beyond mobility (or in a particular form), and interventions and initiatives aimed at de-impermeabilisation and creating conditions for green infrastructure. Converging trends are also observed, specifically in the focus on tactical urbanism: practices that are effective and less costly to implement, and which also result in exploratory and experimental measures.

These reflections gradually took shape during the visits, but were only fully grasped at the end of this field trip. It is from this point onwards that the interpretation and understanding of the transformation of the streets, resulting from municipal programmes, become more evident. Consequently, later on, and as a result of this visit, these associations of concepts and illustrative examples (see next page) emerge, as well as the summary diagrams, which represent the survey of materials and solutions or convey the explicit discourse of the interventions and the logic of the programmes.



A diagram of the streets included in the respective programmes and analysed according to various dimensions – Social, Urban Environment and Mobility – principles defined for the research.

elasticity

Making spaces for elasticity means to facilitate that people can experience engagements on every step of this continuum from "active" to passive interaction. Architecturally, it suggests the integration of spatial situations with varying degrees of openness or exposure towards the wider context.

Hauderowicz & Serena, 2020, p.64



Rue de la Brèche aux Loups, Paris



Carrer de Roc Boronat, Poblenou, Barcelona

“de-hardening”

Prompted by more extreme rainfall events caused by climate change, cities specifically address the problem of rainwater run-off from sealed surfaces such as streets. In addition, streets form vast non-absorbent surfaces contributing significantly to the urban heat island (UHI) effect.

Furchtlehner et al., 2022, p.8



Consell de Cent, Rocafor, Barcelona



Regentstraat, Antwerpen

active mobility

These innovative design principles for public space require traffic flows passing through these areas to have a certain degree of informality and to an increased quality of life in urban areas.

Bendiks & Degros, 2019, p.25



Bredestraat, Antwerpen



Rue du Rivoli, Paris

city as a laboratory

Urban experimentation or real-world laboratories have become process tools to facilitate co-creative and innovative solution finding processes that empower actors to deal with urban problems, for example related to mobility, regeneration, community resilience or green job creation (...).

Hölscher & Frantzeskaki, 2021, p.6

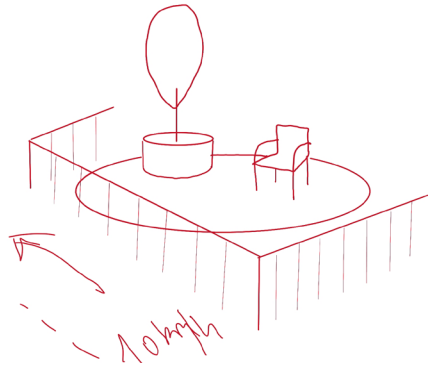


Rue de Lobau, Paris (Paris Respire)



Carrer de la Creu Coberta / N-340, Barcelona

1. Carrer de Provença



A lot of bicycles parked

SPEED RESTRICTION DUE TO ...

local 30 km/h

BUFFER ZONE BETWEEN CYCLE LANE + ROAD AND PARKING FOR:

- BICYCLE
- MOTORCYCLE
- LOGISTICS
- DISABLED
- EMERGENCY



ESTRUTURA DE SOMBREAMENTO A ENTRADA

ALARGAMENTO DO PASSADOU

FLOWER POTS



FENCES

FLOWER POTS

WORKED AS BARRIERS/LIMITS

PAINTING TO CREATE THE SPACE TO STAY

ELEMENTS TO PLAY

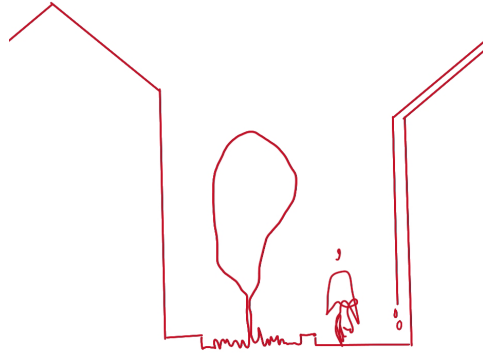
LONG BENCH TO HANG ON

CHAIR

CHAIR

AREA OF XAMPER

2. Lange Ridderstraat

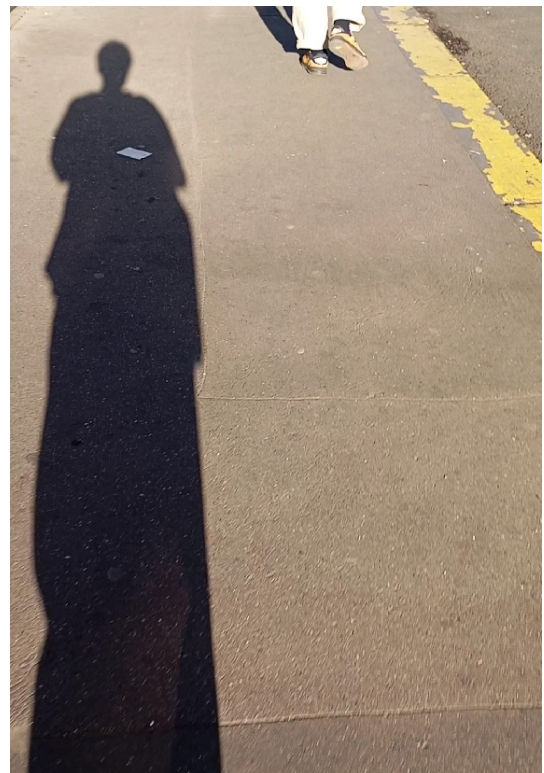


Observational drawings – survey of street features and schematic overview of the intervention: 1. Carrer de Provença, Protegim les escoles, Barcelona
2) Lange Ridderstraat, Antwerpen Breekt Uit, Antwerp.

Starting from a more informal and sensory perspective, and in contrast to the context of some Portuguese cities, we can see how these changes or configurations of street space—which have resulted from various policy measures, in addition to the programmes under consideration—endow the city with new ways of being, manifested in everyday activities and social settings, in the absence of noise, which is particularly noticeable because not only has the volume of traffic been reduced, but also its speed (many of the areas visited have a 30 km/h speed limit).

A key insight from this visit was understanding the measures and actions required to define a programme that extends across the entire city or has that very ambition, based on a paradigm shift: to implement significant interventions, whether in terms of their number – as is the case in Paris or Barcelona, where they serve the streets around schools – or in the way the city is intended to be restructured, as seen in Antwerp. To provide the city with various places recognised (even by its own population) as more liveable, safe and comfortable spaces.

An essential part of this period and research method was the use of walking as a tool. Wandering through the city is an empirical experience, yet one that is fundamental to our discussion of it. An open field of experimentation and exploration, which begins precisely with the act of walking and which has also been adopted as a methodology for new approaches to urban transformation (Avilla-Royo, 2023). Such practices had already been demonstrated by ‘Jane Walks’, Critical Mass, or the wanderings and drifts of the Situationist movement.



Walking and lingering, Paris.

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Field trip to various European cities as part of PhD research on Cities and Territory at the School of Architecture, Art and Design, University of Minho, with the support of the Future Design of Streets association.

march - april 2025