

## Living Streets

### → GHENT, BELGIUM

**KEYWORDS:** PUBLIC SPACE; LIVING LAB

**DURATION:** Since 2013

**WHO:** City Council, citizens and civil society organisation

**BUDGET:** Unknown

### SUMMARY

“Living Streets” – “Leefstraat” in Dutch - is a **living lab**, in which every year, between spring and autumn, residents can decide collectively to reclaim public space in the streets of Ghent. During this period, citizens can choose to close their street to traffic and organise different events and gatherings. This initiative aims to **transform the urban and environmental challenges** into new opportunities for the city and to create community cohesion. Living streets contributes to improving the city liveability by giving space to creativity, co-creation of new activities, and by turning the residents of Ghent into change agents in their own reality.

### GOALS

- Link residents to civil servants by bringing their ideas to the municipality;
- Rethink public space, mobility (and climate mitigation) in urban areas;
- Open up the policy making process by having residents decide on their streets;
- Foster personal interactions between neighbours’ and reinforce social cohesion;
- Test street design interventions and forms of resident participation;
- Serve as an example for other cities to develop similar projects.



Credits : Lab van Troje

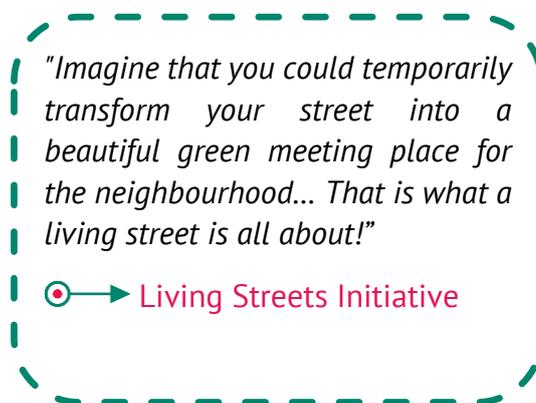
### HOW IT WORKS

The implementation of the project is coordinated by the association “Lab van Troje”, which acts as a **bridge between the municipality and the residents**, promoting and facilitating the development of the process.

One of the main challenges faced by the facilitators has been to find an alternative to street parking, in order to be able to replace parking spots with green areas. Residents worked on possible options with the Lab von Troje and proposed **different transport solutions** to go from a temporary parking space to the main streets. The initiative consists of two parts:

- The preparation process:

Residents develop a plan for their street and organise meetings to get **buy in from their neighbours**. As a crucial condition, any objection that raised by neighbours must be addressed, and a solution must be found (e.g. ensuring access to mobility for elderly people).



- The implementation phase:

Once the municipality accepted the plan, residents can implement the ideas and actions foreseen. During the implementation phase, the residents were supported by the municipality of Ghent with **in kind contributions** such as benches, but also with the necessary **administrative help** to transform the street into an open and safe space.

## TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIAL

Living Streets generated **new social dynamics** in cities, with regards to social cohesion, mobility, sustainability and organisation of the public space. Citizens felt empowered: they were able to decide with their neighbours about what an ideal street looks like, and what is necessary to get there. The municipality and civil servants supported the initiatives of the citizens, the exchange of expertise and the experimentation with co-creation. Ghent's experience has been used as a successful example to be replicated in other European cities, such as Brussels (Belgium), La Rochelle (France), Zadar (Croatia), Milton Keynes (United Kingdom), Turin (Italy), Ivanić-Grad (Croatia) and Rotterdam (The Netherlands).

### MORE INFORMATION

[Ghent Municipality's website](#)

[Energy Cities's website](#)

[Leefstraat website](#) (in Dutch)

