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# 'COOL STREETS' TO RETURN PUBLIC SPACE TO PEDESTRIANS AND RESIDENTS AND FOR CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

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## **Short Description**

"Cool Streets" is a heat adaptation measure. In three city areas, particularly affected by heat, fully shaded streets sections became car-free and were opened as recreational areas for residents for a limited period of time. The evaluation of the action shows high acceptance and manifold social effects.

## **Main part**

In the city of Vienna days with temperatures above 30° have already increased from 9 per year during the period of 1961 - 1990 to 15 days per year during the period of 1981 - 2010. In 2040, in average every fourth day in summer is expected to be a heat day. Enormous heat affects everyone, especially children and old people. Therefore the project "Cool Streets" was created in 3 of the hottest areas of Vienna.

On the initiative of the Vice Mayor of the City of Vienna, three fully shaded streets sections became car-free from 9 August to 8 September 2019. Also parking, entry and exit were not allowed there. Cycling was still possible. The presence of pedestrians on the roadway was also permitted as playing on the street for children. Benches and other furniture were provided on the parking spaces. As far as possible temporary spray showers or other water sources were installed. For a period of four weeks many events took place in the "cool streets", initially initiated by public institutions, later organized by the residents themselves. A climatic survey proved that measure contributed to local cooling in the record summer 2019: between 1.3 and five degrees less could be recorded in the cool streets.

The "Cool Streets" action was evaluated in terms of its effectiveness in adapting to heat waves in the city and its acceptance by local residents by the author. Objective was to draw a picture of public opinion on this innovative measure and the community's and individual benefits. Also suggestions and recommendations from residents and other visitors on the cool streets were collected and lessons learned for further actions were derived. 518 residents were interviewed. Of these, 87% rated the "Cool Streets" as a positive measure against the heat summer, 66% said that the "Cool streets" were a good balance to a warm home and 92% would like to see the campaign repeated. Even fewer parking spaces were not a problem. The success of the concept.

It is because of the success that in 2020 "Cool Streets" are planned for almost all city districts in the City of Vienna. Twenty-two "Cool Streets Plus" will be implemented mainly where most urgently needed according to the heat. For more information on insights in the concept of the "Cool Streets" and the results of the evaluation please contact [w.unbeaun@tbwresearch.org](mailto:w.unbeaun@tbwresearch.org).

## **What is new?**

The project "Cool Streets" is an offensive approach in the field of climate change adaptation. It is also a successful experiment to return public space to pedestrians and residents, and also in the emergence of new spaces to stay and play. The project was a top down initiated approach that was easily adopted in a bottom up way. Residents got the opportunity to appropriate public space in a most beneficial way. They learned to understand public space not only as a transport area but also as a space to stay and to form.

## **What is transferable to other cities and regions?**

"Cool Streets" is a small scale project with strong local anchoring. The project was implemented in an

experimental style that allowed for being open to results. It is easy to implement by low costs. Many European cities are also suffering from increasing summer heat and limited access and availability of public space for residents. The idea can be easily transferred to other cities.

### **What are outcomes and conclusions?**

The project “Coole Streets” is an offensive approach in the field of climate change adaptation. It is also a successful experiment to return public space to pedestrians and residents, and also in the emergence of new spaces to stay and play. The project was highly accepted by residents. Repetition is desired. Against the expectation even the limitations for car traffic were highly accepted.

The experimental style and the limited project duration encountered barriers and reservation on both sides the public and the city administration and its success empowered to shape further projects.

### **Who are the main target groups?**

Main target groups for this topic are local (planning) authorities, city planners, open space planners, city district managers

### **And what now? - what will change? - what is the relevance for the future?**

The Corona crisis proved the importance and distribution of public space in large cities even more. Lack of travel opportunities, strong concentration of the population on their homes and the direct living environment, the loss of alternative leisure and recreational opportunities, but also the distance regulations now required the increasing number of cyclists and pedestrians in many places have made the unequal distribution of space between different user groups clearer. In many places, the infrastructure for walking is not even sufficient to maintain the one and a half metre distance, people move to the street level to pass each other at a distance and parks and green spaces are overcrowded.

Many large cities have set signs and have rededicated traffic areas and assigned those to walking and cycling in some cities spontaneously. Encounter zones have been established that offer space and quality of stay. The concept of “Cool Streets” has thus taken important steps in the right direction and made public space reorganized and usable in a forward-looking way. Against the background of further global warming and limited travel opportunities, the reallocation of public space to pedestrians, cyclists and residents for climate change adaptation, for improving life quality and for fostering climate friendly inclusive mobility remains an up to date topic in urban areas. It is not only important to preserve the successes achieved before and during the corona crisis, but to continue working consistently to ensure that public space has not only room for motorised movement but is an attractive space of active mobility and residence.