

# GOLD VI

**Case-Based Contribution  
to Chapter 6: Connecting  
GOLD VI Report on Pathways  
to urban and territorial equality**

## Active Mobility and Public Spaces

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# Active Mobility and Public Spaces

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## **ORGANISATION NAME**

Global Platform for the Right to the City with the collaboration of Action Aid, Avina Foundation, Cities Alliance, Ciudad Viva, FIERCE, GAATES, ITDP, Kota Kita, Public Space Network, Safetiping, Sampapé, The Audre Lorde Project.

## **CITIES/COUNTRIES IT COVERS:**

Brazil, Canada, Chile, India, Indonesia, Kenya, South Africa, United States, Vietnam

## **CHAPTER**

6: Connecting

## **SUMMARY**

Claiming for the right to the city comprises considering the city as a common good, that should be fundamentally inclusive and accessible to everyone. Taking this into account, active and sustainable forms of mobility and quality public spaces play a key role in guaranteeing the social and economic appropriation of the city by its citizens. In that sense, non-governmental organizations around the world are key actors in promoting more equal urban contexts, by developing important research, projects, and urban design tools aiming for sustainable mobility through more walkable and cyclable cities. Besides that, those organizations are advocating to guarantee safer and non-discriminatory public spaces to vulnerable groups, also pressing and cooperating with the local governments for more inclusive public policies. This case base contribution will assemble some of those remarkable and diverse initiatives – mostly from the Global Platform for the Right to the City members - developed in different urban contexts to respond to localized demands, but that can be part of a wider collective social effort to guarantee the right to the city through quality public spaces and safe active mobility.



**One of the central components to guarantee the right to the city – considering the city as a common good – is the existence and promotion of quality public spaces, through which citizens can produce, transform and enjoy their own city.** Public spaces should be accessible, including all vulnerable groups' demands, contributing, in that way, to create safer and more diverse cities. Adequate public spaces allow access to urban infrastructure, foster cultural expressions and social participation, and support citizens to satisfy their economic needs. The quality of public spaces is also crucial to stimulate active mobility, as a more sustainable and healthy alternative to motorized modes.

Taking this context into consideration, many non-governmental organizations are championing more walkable and safe public spaces. Those organizations are leveraging public policies and local initiatives through advocacy, research, and data production. Sampapé<sup>1</sup> and Minha Sampa, for instance, were the protagonists for the adoption of the program *Ruas Abertas* (Open Streets) in the city of **São Paulo**,

which succeed to become a consolidated public policy.<sup>2</sup> Although a well-disseminated initiative worldwide, for the specific urban context of São Paulo (which is a 24/7 non-stop city that has an intensive car traffic even on Sundays), it can be considered an important innovation and a success of the civil society active mobility movements. This initiative contributed to change the citizens' perception and relationship with their own city, by offering an alternative to this car-centered megalopolis, which is deprived of free, cultural, and open-air leisure options. Paulista Avenue's case<sup>3</sup> turned out to be a successful experience, reaching up to 100.000 visitors per Sunday,<sup>4</sup> with a 97% visitor's program approval.<sup>5</sup>

The previous case highlights the importance of providing instruments to allow citizen's engagement in public policy and to intervene and occupy public spaces. It is an example of the democratic transformation of the city, one of the pillars of the right to the city. Other examples of this aspect can be found in the Kenyan context. The experience of Public Space Network,<sup>6</sup> in **Nairobi**, is a multi-stakeholder initiative, based on private-public-citizen

Kota Kita's "Women on Wheels" Project in the city of Surakarta  
Source: KOTA KITA

1. More information (available in Portuguese) in: <https://sampape.org/portfolio/paulista-aberta/>.

2. The "Ruas Abertas" was officially institutionalized by the municipal decree nº 57.086/216.

3. Paulista Avenue is the most important financial symbol of the city, usually described by its heavy traffic. Through the program, every Sunday, it can be spontaneously occupied by citizens who can perform diverse cultural and sports activities, allowing for their exercise of the right to the city.

4. According to local NGOs estimates: <https://www.mobilize.org.br/noticias/10877/paulista-aberta-ongs-pedem-conselho-gestor-mais-inclusivo.html>.

5. It is important to notice that the initiative acceptance went through a change in public opinion. In the beginning, local population and markets were apprehensive about the program because it would "disturb" the traffic, but it gradually changed. An evaluation report of the program was elaborated by local non-governmental organizations in 2019. It is available in: [http://corridaamiga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Relat%C3%B3rio\\_Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-Impacto-Paulista-Aberta\\_Maio-2019.pdf](http://corridaamiga.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Relat%C3%B3rio_Avalia%C3%A7%C3%A3o-de-Impacto-Paulista-Aberta_Maio-2019.pdf).

6. More information in: <https://www.publicspacenet.org/>.

partnership, with close contact with the City-County Government, promoting quality public spaces through the mobilization of community placemakers. Its “Changing faces competition”<sup>7</sup> motivates nairobians to transform neglected public spaces, resulting, in the last five years, in the direct engagement of more than 4.000 young people – who also had income generation possibilities – and 200.000 people indirectly impacted.

Although those previous initiatives aim to promote non-discriminatory access to public spaces as well as participatory mechanisms to public space design, it is also relevant to highlight initiatives that specifically address vulnerable groups, who already have more obstacles to be in and even access those spaces. For instance, the Laboratory for Social Change, funded by Ciudad Viva, in Chile, is championing active mobility from a children’s perspective, considering that the public space is often hostile to this group. Its “Kool Routes” program<sup>8</sup> focuses on children’s active mobility from home towards the school, providing a new perspective of experiencing this daily path, also strengthening children’s empowerment in transforming their city. The program also relates to the school curriculum, including citizenship formation, sustainable mobility, and gender safety workshops. Another example is from the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP)<sup>9</sup> which works globally to develop the “Pedestrians First” program elaborated to be a replicable tool<sup>10</sup> and a mechanism to easily measure walkability in cities, providing important data that can be useful for designing public policies with a special focus on babies, toddlers and their caregivers. ITDP also elaborates and publicizes different urban design guidelines and tool-kits<sup>11</sup> for promoting better streets for walking and cycling, considering that pedestrians and cyclists are among the most vulnerable road

users.<sup>12</sup>

Regarding inclusive mobility and public spaces, it is also crucial to consider gender aspects. Reproducing structural gender inequalities, urban policies are not designed by women and for women, and consequently, this group is seriously deprived of their right to the city.<sup>13</sup> Even though the conditions are not favourable, it is relevant to mention that women are important users of public collective transport and are responsible for most of the active displacements in the city,<sup>14</sup> especially short-distance ones – often related to care and domestic tasks. But on these daily displacements, they are often victims of sexual harassment and assault.<sup>15</sup>

In that sense, Action Aid is globally promoting the campaign “Safe Cities For Women”,<sup>16</sup> addressing safer urban contexts to women related through the improvement of public services such as housing, education, public lighting, policing and public transportation, with successful results in cities such as **São Paulo** (Brazil), and **Monrovia** (Liberia).<sup>17</sup> In **Ho Chi Minh City** (Vietnam), for instance, after the advocacy of Action Aid and other grassroots organizations, the local government agreed to install cameras on public buses in the city.

Safetipin, a social organization supported by Cities Alliance, is using technology to guarantee safer and inclusive public spaces for women, with three pilot projects<sup>19</sup> developed in close partnership with local governments. Safetipin developed three mobile apps that collect data and provide key information for public policymaking and public space users, so they can make informed decisions about their urban mobility. For instance, the apps’ data helped the **Delhi** Police to reformulate its patrolling routes.<sup>20</sup> Finally, **Kota Kita**<sup>21</sup> has also implemented pilot project on bicycle-based mobility for women

7. More information available in: <https://www.publicspacenetwork.org/about-cfc>.

8. More information (available in Spanish) in: <http://www.cambiarnos.cl/rutas-bakanes-a-la-escuela/>.

9. More information available in: <https://pedestriansfirst.itdp.org/>.

10. It was elaborated by international experts from different urban contexts, also from ITDP’s seven regional offices, using a more accessible language for policy makers and civil society.

11. One example is the “Streets for walking and Cycling: designing for safety, accessibility and comfort in African Cities” [2018], elaborated in partnership with UN-Habitat. More information available in: <https://www.itdp.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/Streets-for-walking-and-cycling.pdf>.

12. According to WHO [2020], more than half of road traffic deaths (1.3 million people per year, globally) are among vulnerable users such as pedestrians, cyclists, and motorcyclists. More information available in: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/road-traffic-injuries>.

13. As Fenster (2005) emphasizes: “Fear of use of public spaces, especially in the street, public transportation and urban parks is what prevents women from fulfilling their right to the city. [...] We have already seen how spaces are becoming unsafe because of lack of gendered participation in the design of urban spaces”.

14. According to the report “She Moves Safely” [2017, p.04]: “Women account for more than half of public transport users in Buenos Aires (54%), Santiago (52%). In Quito 64% of all trips made by women are made on public transport”. In São Paulo, a research developed by the City Hall found out that collective public transport and walking are responsible for more than 75% of women’s mobility in the city and 48% of those trips are motivated by education, health, and shopping. More information in Portuguese: [https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/Informes\\_Urbanos/44\\_IJ\\_mobilidade\\_mulheres.pdf](https://www.prefeitura.sp.gov.br/cidade/secretarias/upload/Informes_Urbanos/44_IJ_mobilidade_mulheres.pdf).

15. To illustrate this, according to UN-Women, for example, the city of Cuenca, in Ecuador, 90% of women living in urban areas have experienced some forms of sexual harassment in the last year [2018]. In Canada, one in three women are subjected to unwanted sexual behaviour in public spaces [2018]. Those situations also continue to occur during the covid-19 pandemics. More information available in: <https://www.unwomen.org/en/digital-library/publications/2020/05/brief-covid-19-and-ensuring-safe-cities-and-safe-public-spaces-for-women-and-girls>.

16. More information (available in Portuguese) in: <http://actionaid.org.br/publicacoes/linha-de-base-campanha-cidades-seguras-para-as-mulheres/>.

17. ActionAid Brazil together with local movements succeeded in guaranteeing street lighting in the favela of Heliópolis (São Paulo). In Liberia, Action Aid and local student organizations also succeeded in mobilizing local authorities to improve lighting in university campi. More information available in: [https://actionaid.org.br/wp-content/files\\_mf/1498585783Linha\\_de\\_Base.pdf](https://actionaid.org.br/wp-content/files_mf/1498585783Linha_de_Base.pdf).

18. More information available in: <https://safetipin.com/about-our-company/>.

19. Notably in Bogotá, Delhi and Nairobi.

20. Besides that, in Delhi’s case, more than 3.000 km were covered, and 25.000 audits were done throughout the city [2018]. Also, dark spots were mapped, and illumination was improved.

21. More information available in: <https://kotakita.org/women-on-wheels>.



in Indonesia, named “Women on Wheels”, not only promoting a sustainable alternative way for women groups<sup>22</sup> to transit through the city of **Surakarta**, but also allowing them to access economic and educational opportunities, contributing to their empowerment and autonomy. The project gathers a series of programs such as a safe cycling campaign and competition, a women’s bike clinic,<sup>23</sup> and a digital collaborative reporting platform of bicycle infrastructure conditions. It also comprised advocacy with the local government<sup>24</sup> seeking to improve infrastructure and facilities as well as pro-cycling regulation.

Concerning urban accessibility, The Global Alliance on Accessible Technologies and Environments (GAATES), for instance, worked closely with the **Ontario’s** Government (Canada), to create a technical guide to help the implementation and enforcement of its Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).<sup>25</sup> The guide provides background and best practice information for local designers to create accessible public spaces such as exterior travel paths, recreational trails, beach access routes, outdoor public eateries and play areas, accessible parking, and access to public services.

In addition, it is central to mention the contribution of organizations in providing safer and non-discriminatory public spaces for racialized groups. The “Redes da Maré”,<sup>26</sup> a Brazilian grassroots NGO, has been working with the right to public security and access to justice to the favelas’ residents, who are frequently discriminated against by institutionalized racism. The project offers socio-legal assistance and information to the access of justice, in close contact with public legal institutions such as the Public Defender’s Office<sup>27</sup> and the Public Prosecution, which already resulted in 60% reduction of the number of deaths in Maré’s community.<sup>28</sup> They also permanently monitor data on

violent situations in the community, publicising it in periodical reports.<sup>29</sup>

Finally, LGBTQIA+ communities are also victims of discrimination and violence in public spaces. Two **New York City** grassroots organizations are specifically working to tackle oppression: The Audre Lord Project<sup>30</sup> (focused on the racialized LGBTQIA+ community) and FIERCE<sup>31</sup> (focused on racialized LGBTQIA+ youth). Both organizations try to promote community-based approaches and campaigns to challenge police violence and harassment against racialized LGBTQIA+ groups, guaranteeing their access to safe public spaces.

In conclusion, the right to the city framework promotes active and sustainable mobility and quality public spaces as fundamental components to allow the full access of citizens to urban infrastructures, services and economic means, allowing for more equal access to the city itself. Mobility through public spaces must guarantee diversity, providing accessibility and safety for all its users. Vulnerable groups’ experiences should be considered in designing urban mobility and public space infrastructure, and in that way, non-governmental organizations have been playing a central role to amplify their voices and needs.

22. Notably a pro-cycling group, a general women group (from different neighbourhoods of the city), a university student’s group and a youth group.

23. According to the project’s report (2018, p.24), the clinic is “a do-it-yourself bicycle workshop initiative to provide tips for women cyclists on how to maintain and fix their bicycles for minor damages.” More information in: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b\\_uVPgGDuyHU7xKatzfsQYnz182HdPf2d/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1b_uVPgGDuyHU7xKatzfsQYnz182HdPf2d/view).

24. The pilot-project mobilized Surakarta’s Department of Transportation, the Department of Tourism and the Department of Public Work.

25. The AODA was enacted in 2005, aiming at making Ontario’s province accessible for people with disabilities by 2025.

26. Maré is the name of a favela in Rio de Janeiro city, composed of 16 communities.

27. For instance, in 2019, the Public Defender’s Office, together with the Redes da Maré NGO, mobilized a “Public Civic Action” aiming to reduce violent measures in police operations in Maré’s favela, avoiding resident’s violation of rights. More information (in Portuguese) in: <https://defensoria.rj.def.br/noticia/detalhes/9306-Decision-restabelece-ACP-da-reducao-de-danos-em-operacoes-na-Mare>.

28. More information available in: <https://www.redesdamare.org.br/br/info/22/de-olho-na-mare>.

29. This project is supported by Ford Foundation and Action Aid.

30. More information available in: <https://alp.org/>.

31. More information available in: <http://www.fiercenyc.org/>.

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In particular, the present paper has contributed to Chapter 6 on “Connecting”, which focuses on the role of local and regional governments in increasing urban and territorial equality through improving connectivity between and within cities and citizens through more equitable transport, infrastructure and digital connectivity planning and interventions.

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