

Rethinking Mobility



with Young Adults

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This work, including the planning, design, and evaluation of the workshops, was undertaken by *Amna Azeem*. Alongside the project i-MOBYL, this work is also part of her Master's thesis, conducted in collaboration with the Mobility Lab Salzburg and under the supervision of *Dr. Martin Loidl*.

About

The Mobility Lab at the University of Salzburg is a team of individuals working at the intersection of mobility research and geographic information. In October and November 2025, the team conducted a series of mobility workshops, engaging students from the 4th year of Gymnasium at the SALIS Salzburg International School.

These workshops are part of ongoing research at the Mobility Lab, and are connected to the EU project i-MOBYL that explores how mobility can be understood through the lens of young people. It is a research and innovation programme spanning five European countries, including Austria (Salzburg), and aims to support the development and co-creation of youth-centred mobility solutions.

By positioning young adults at the centre of mobility research, and rather than relying on traditional frameworks that rarely capture youth experience, the workshops begin with a fundamental question:

“How do young people interpret and experience their everyday mobility, including what they notice, value, and aspire?”

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Introduction

Streets are one of the most important public spaces in our cities, serving as not only platforms for mobility, but also the places where children and young people walk, play, meet friends, and spend time of their daily routines. Yet, their voices are often overlooked when it comes to shaping these spaces. To fill this gap, the Mobility Lab has developed a walkability and bikeability assessment tool called *NetAScore*. We are currently developing a *NetAScore for Kids* version focused on integrating the mobility needs and challenges of children and young adults. Through direct engagement with school children, we aim to understand their experiences, challenges, and aspirations of everyday mobility. By integrating a crucial yet often missing layer in existing models and frameworks: the lived experiences and emotions of children and young people, through these workshops, we want to gather insights and validate key indicators for assessing walkability and bikeability for young people. The rich qualitative data gathered through workshops will be translated into youth-centred indicators and eventually be integrated into the *NetAScore for Kids* model.

But, why Schools?

Schools are at the heart of children's daily lives, and the surrounding streets are where they walk and bike every day, making them an ideal starting point to understand their perspectives. By involving school teens in the conversation, we aim to ensure that:

Mobility is shaped not just for them, but with them!

Hence, strengthening participation and engagement to co-create solutions where youth insights directly inform the project and guide child-informed decisions.

Methods and Tools

For the implementation of workshops, we adapted a range of activities and engagement tools from the Global Designing Cities Initiative's *Engaging Kids in Street Design Guide* and the *Placemaking Inclusion Cookbook* by Urban Foxes, both specifically developed to engage children in streets, placemaking and mobility projects.

Activities

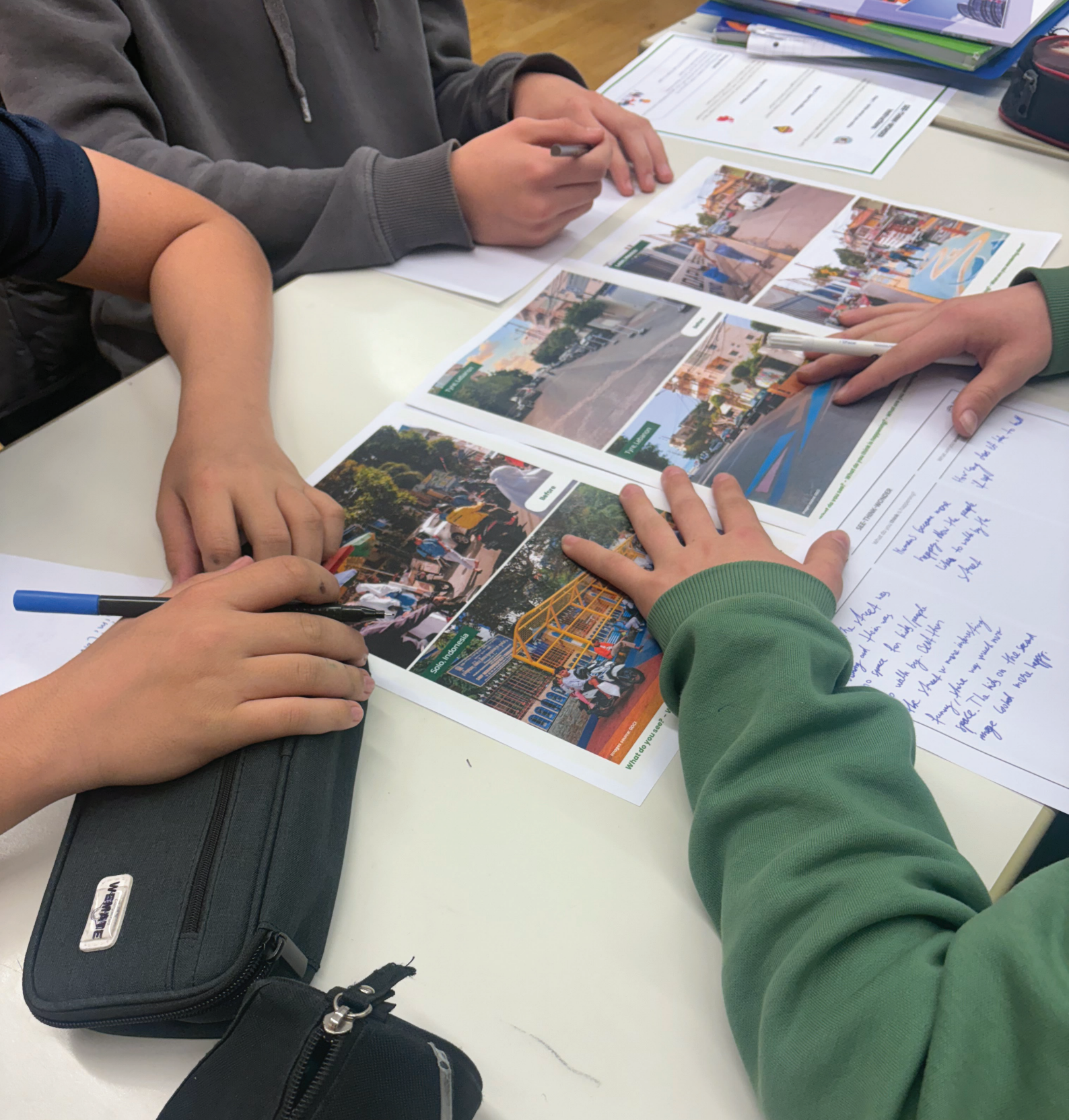
Following activities and tools were adapted:

| Tool | Activity | Focus | Adapted from |
|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------|
| See-Think-Wonder | Using street transformation images to explore what teens notice and value in streets. | Visual cues, priorities, and intuitive responses. | <i>GDCI Guide</i> |
| Ps. And Your Street | A reflective exercises where teens described how their journey to school makes them feel and why. | Perception based on memory, interpretation, and lived experience. | <i>GDCI Guide</i> |
| Street Evaluation | An outdoor assessment of the school street. | Sensory experience, safety, comfort, barriers, and opportunities. | <i>Urban Foxes</i> |
| Design your Dream Street | A creative activity where teens imagine and illustrate their ideal street. | Aspirations, needs, and mobility priorities. | <i>GDCI Guide</i> |
| Participants: 13-14 years old students from SALIS, 2 different classes, 23-24 students each class. | | | |
| Data collected: Written responses, text reflections, group notes, street sketches. | | | |

This report documents preliminary findings from the workshops' data, gathered, read, and interpreted within the framework of the *NetAScore for Kids* model. Eventually, a detailed analysis will follow, including a prioritization of indicators, which will be integrated into model implementation.

Simoultaneously, this work serves as a pilot study within the *i-MOBYL* project. It serves as a testing ground to explore methods, tools, and approaches before the project is scaled up and implemented more widely. As with any community engagement process, the workshops are experimental: the outcomes, insights, and lessons learned will help refine the approach. Both the process and the model can then be adapted and improved for future applications.

Preliminary Findings



See-Think-Wonder

The First Thing Teens Saw? Colour.

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Teen Perspectives at a Glance

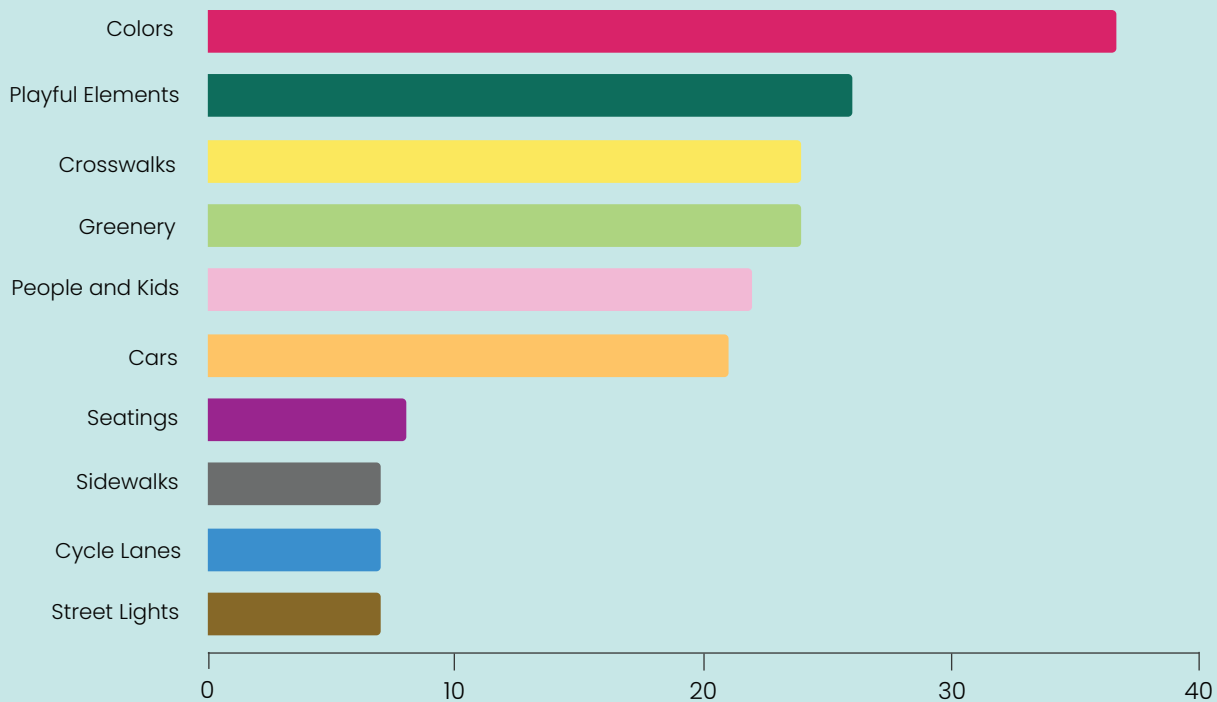
It was notable that students were susceptible to before-and-after contrasts, notably when streets shifted from car-dominated, grey environments to colorful, green, and people-oriented ones. This table summarizes how teens interpreted street transformation images using the See-Think-Wonder method. The activity helped reveal what young people notice first, how they interpret design changes, and the questions these changes spark.

| See | Think | Wonder |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Car dominance, parked cars, traffic (Before photos). • Colours and patterns on pavements and facades. • Safety elements like crossings, lights, bollards. • People, play areas, benches, social spaces. • Cleanliness and maintenance. • Greenery, trees, grass, plants. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Streets became safer. • Space was taken away from cars and given to people. • Design choices (colors, patterns, benches, trees). • Friendlier and more interesting streets, especially for kids. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “How long did this take to build?” • “How much did it cost?” • “Is it safe to play in the street?” • “Where do the cars go now?” |

Turns Out... Teens See the streets in Colour. (And Yes, They Care About safety too).

Doing some preliminary counts and interpretation of textual data and: Here is a list of features most mentioned by the teens during see-think-wonder :

Top 10 Elements that caught Teens' Attention



Teens had no trouble spotting the usual street elements, crossings, cars, people, trees, benches, lighting, bike lanes, and everything in between. They definitely noticed when streets felt safer or less car-dominated. But what really grabbed their attention? Streets where they appeared alive, colourful, greener with more places to sit, play, and just be.



Key Takeaway

Could colour be the secret ingredient teens want? Well,

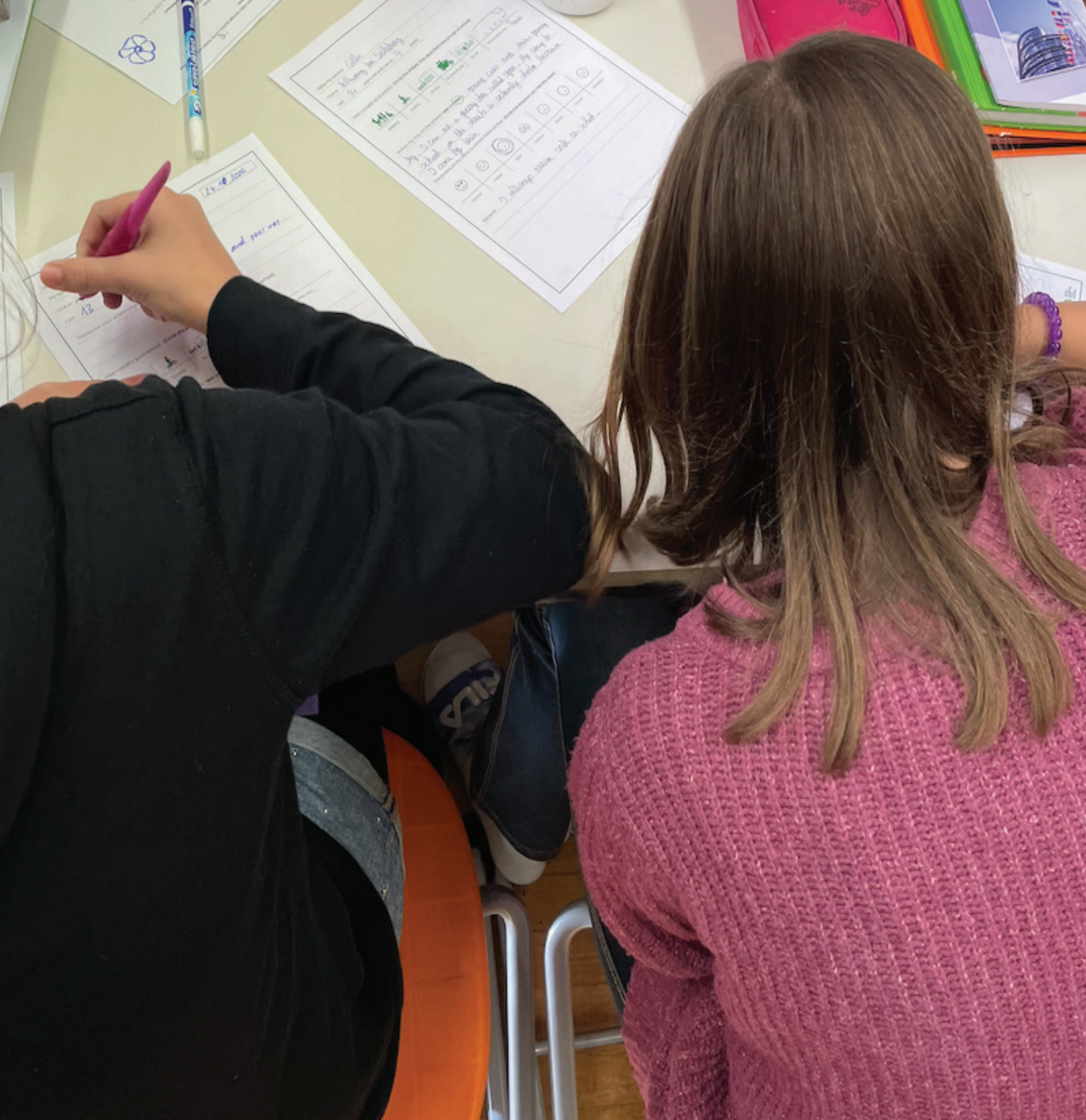
***Benches are nice,
but Colour Wins!***

Similarities

- ✓✓✓ Kid Friendly
- ✓✓✓ Inviting
- ✓✓✓ Colors
- ✓✓ Safe
- ✓✓ People
- ✓✓ Bigger Pavement
- ✓✓ Spaces to walk
- ✓✓ Seating
- ✓✓ More fun
- Clean
- Color Schemes
- Appealing
- Children
- Playful

Differences

- Traffic Police
- Location
- ✓ Crosswalks
- Plants / Cars



Ps. And Your Street

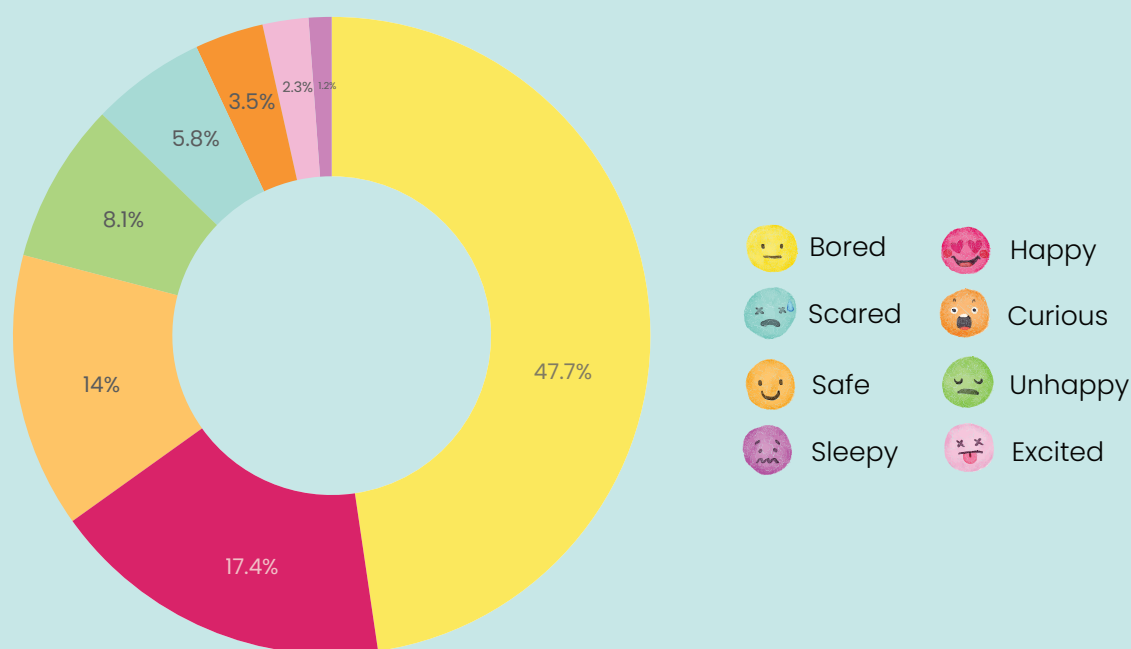
From My Street to Yours

This activity focused on students' everyday streets experience and their journeys to school, drawing on memory, emotions, and lived experience. Adapted from the GDCI guide, it encourages young people to express their personal stories, feelings, and dreams about their streets in a narrative, letter-style format. The original tool is designed for children in different cities or countries to exchange letters, but we adapted it for our context by creating an exchange between two different class groups. The letter exchange allowed us to understand how teens describe their streets in their own words, and helped reveal which street indicators they naturally pay attention to and find important. For implementation, the activity was carried out between two classes: Class A Sender, and Class B Receiver.

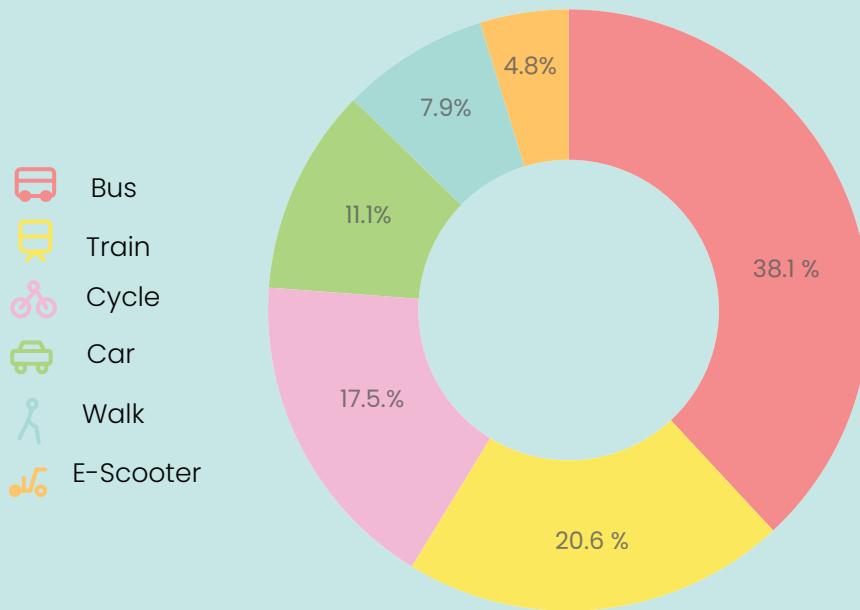
The Emotional Backpack of a School Day (Boredom is heavier than you think)

The feelings teens carry on their way to school are surprisingly consistent: boredom dominates. While some students mentioned safety, happiness, or excitement, most described their daily journey as uneventful and repetitive. This highlights a key insight ; the route to school rarely feels engaging or stimulating for young people.

Feelings that Travel with Teens on their way School

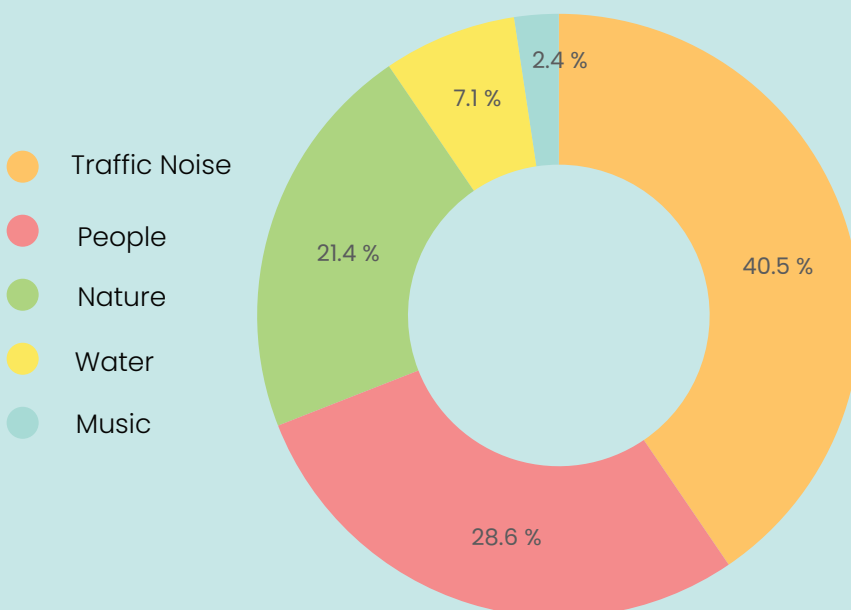


How Teens Travel to School



When describing what they hear on their way to school, teens mentioned traffic noise as the dominant soundscape. Honking, engines, and general road noise shaped most of their journeys, creating an environment that often felt busy, loud, and distracting. This aligns with how many of them commute: the majority travel by bus, moving through main roads and traffic-heavy corridors where vehicle noise is unavoidable. Their daily mobility experience is therefore strongly influenced by the sounds of traffic. A few mentions hearing people, nature and water.

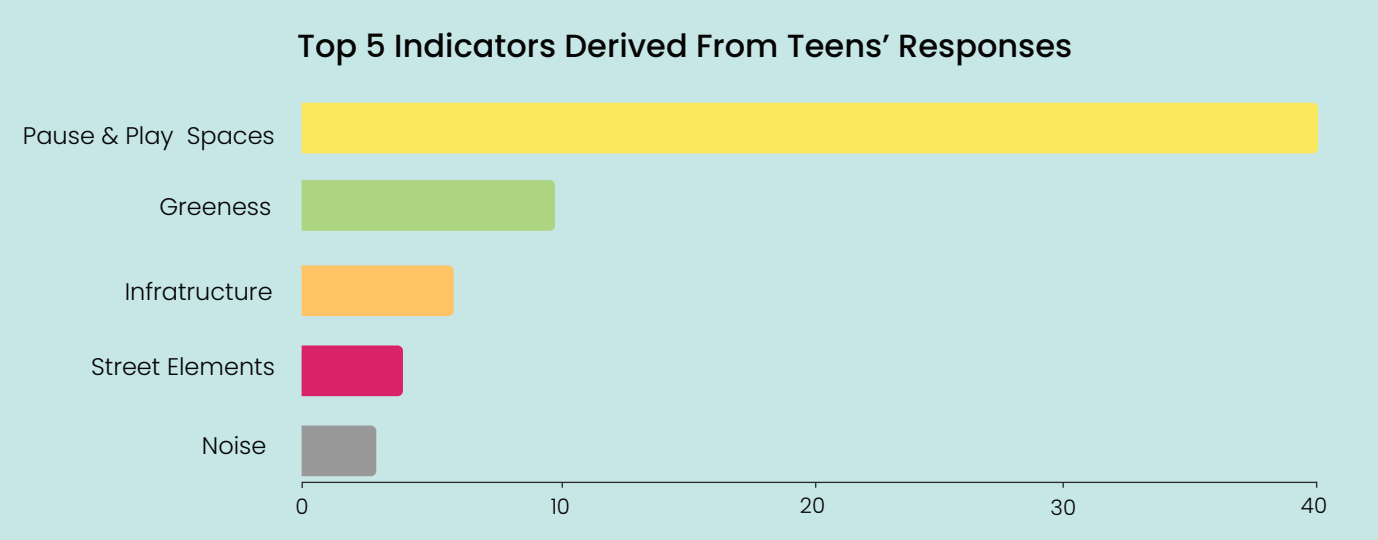
Sounds the Teens Hear on their way to School



Emotions and Underlying Reasons

| Feelings | Reasons |
|----------|------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Bored | “It’s the same every day”, “nothing happening”, “nothing to see” |
| Safe | “I always feel safe”, “nothing will happen” |
| Happy | Linked to safety, nature, friends, or music |
| Scared | Due to drivers, dark streets, noise, or empty streets |
| Curious | When streets were interesting to them due to people (rare). |

Based on what teens reported seeing on their daily journeys to school, and the reasons they linked to their dominant feeling of boredom, several indicators emerged as particularly influential. These indicators reflect what teens repeatedly mentioned as missing, uninteresting, or monotonous in their routes. The following five stand out as the strongest themes, showing a clear relationship between the visual environment and how young people experience their everyday mobility.



Yes, teens notice crossings, traffic, bike lanes, but what shapes their experience is the vibe. And the vibe changes with colour, trees, people, playfulness, and moments to pause. These indicators had the strongest link to how they describe their everyday journey.

Boring Streets are a design choice. Across first two activities, teens proved that what they crave isn't just safety; it's energy. The most important indicators weren't technical ones, but the ones that bring warmth and character : colour, nature, and playful touches. These turn a dull commute into a street you want to walk. Hence,

where

Grey Streets = Grey Feelings.

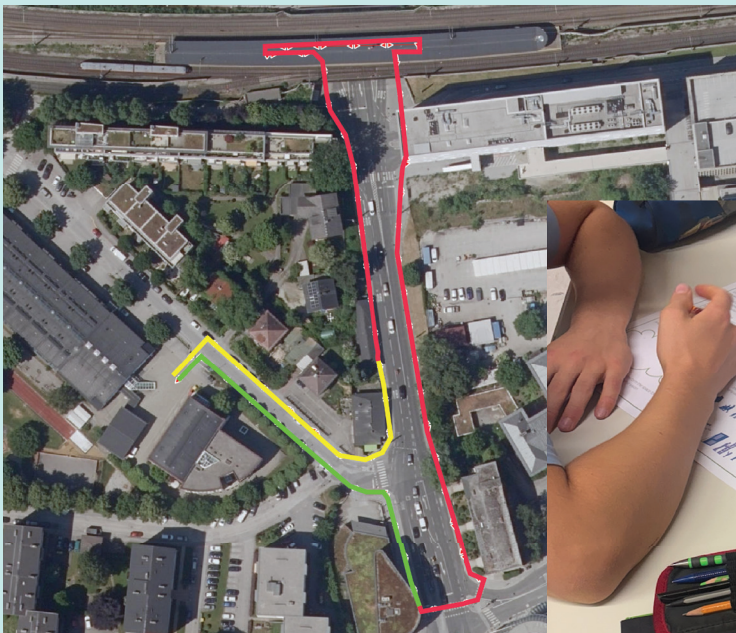
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Street Evaluation

Walking the Street they Know... Differently

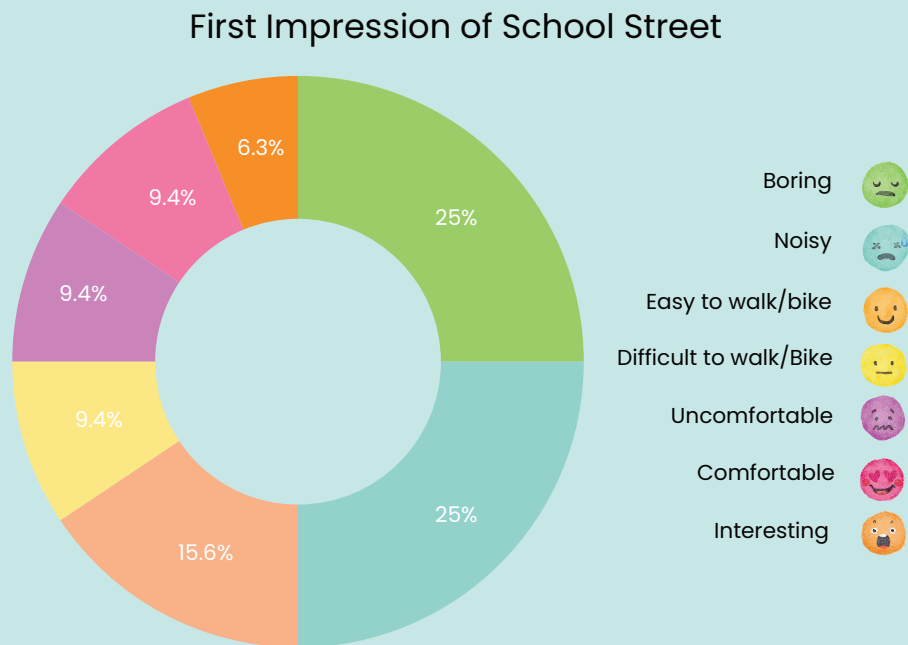
The outdoor session encouraged teens to explore, reflect on, and critically evaluate the streets they use every day. The walk focused on how safe or enjoyable their route feels, and what changes could make it more teen-friendly. Working in small groups, students evaluated the school street during a guided walk, starting from the school entrance and continuing towards S-Bahn station Aiglhof. This activity invited teens to observe their local streets in a structured yet creative way; introducing them to the idea that streets and mobility can be assessed using criteria they define themselves. In doing so, the exercise fostered critical thinking and helped them recognise the elements that shape their mobility experience.



The Good, the Bad, and Everything In Between

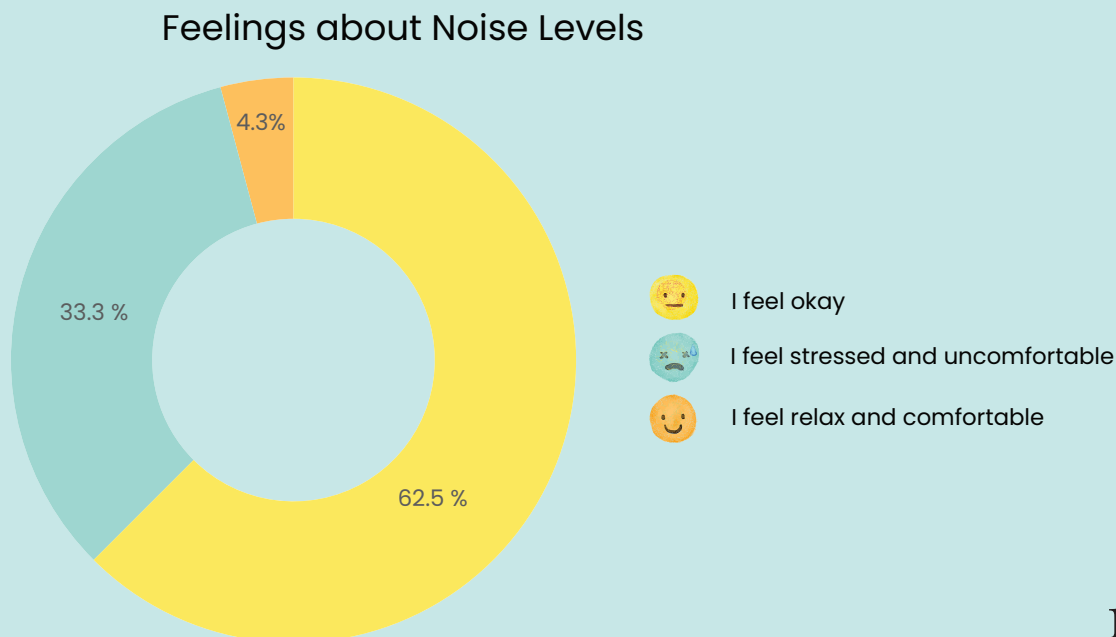
What the Street Says Before You Even Walk It?

At first sight, most groups described the school street as boring and noisy, with little that stood out visually or socially. While some students felt parts of the street were relatively easy to walk or bike, many also noted moments where it felt uncomfortable, unclear, or difficult to navigate. A few groups mentioned elements that felt “interesting” or even “wow,” but these impressions were much less common.



At First Sight... Meh!

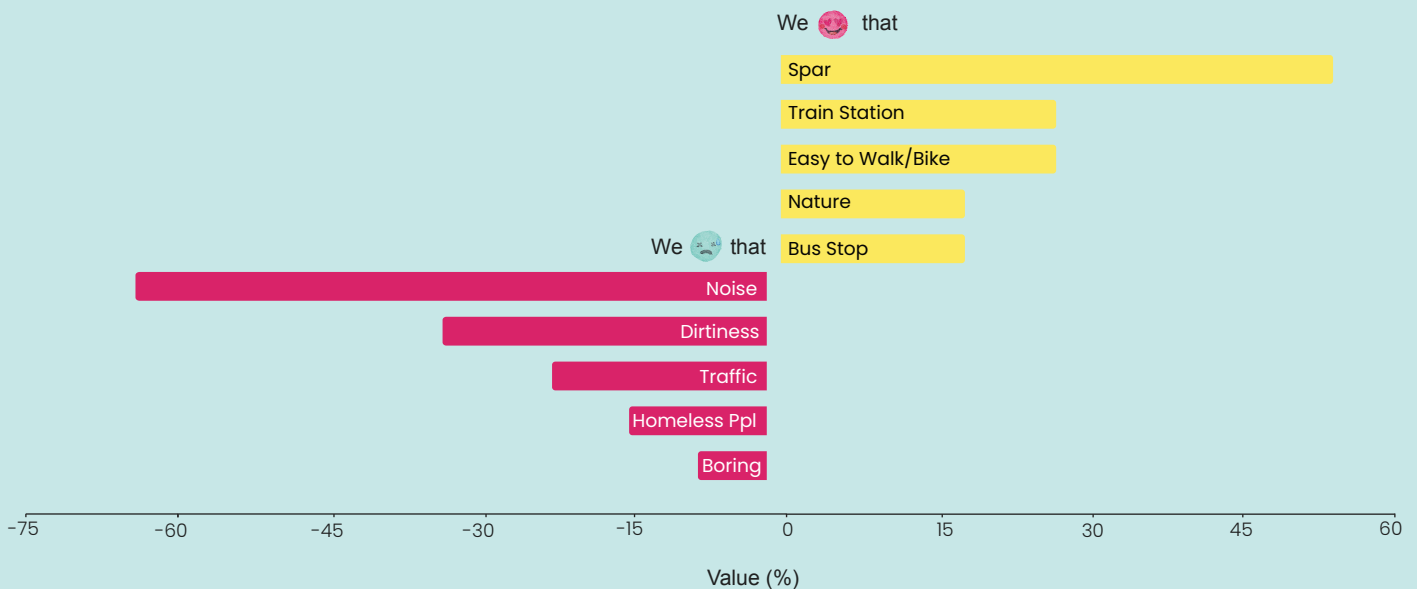
When asked about the noise level on the school street, most teens said it felt “okay” not quiet, but not overwhelming either. A smaller group found the noise uncomfortable, especially around traffic-heavy areas. Only a few students described the street as relaxing, showing that calm moments are rare along this route.



What Teens Liked vs Disliked

Students appreciated the things that made their school street walk comfortable and convenient, public transport options (bus, S-Bahn), nearby shops like Spar, wide sidewalks, and clear crossings. They also liked the small moments of calm or greenery along the way.

What Teens Like vs. What Bothers Them



Their dislikes focused on what made the street feel stressful or unpleasant: loud noise, traffic, trash, cigarettes, and moments when they felt unsafe around certain people. They also pointed out poor bike lanes and not enough time at crossings, both of which made moving around feel uncomfortable. Lastly, some of them again expressed not liking the street because it is boring.

Not an Empty or Unsafe Street; Just an Uninspiring One

Across all groups, teens identified many “good” elements; bus stops, benches, crossings, trees, grass, buildings, showing that the school street isn’t empty. But what’s missing? Colour? Fun? Anything visually engaging? Despite having the right components, the street still feels uncomfortable, and noisy to teens. However, one feature that needs to be highlighted here that stood out across all groups, a small detail that speaks volumes about the street’s overall character is: **SPAR!** It is a small grocery store and the only one in close proximity to school. Located next to the bus stop, a natural pause point for the students making one of the few active elements on the street, highly relevant to their daily routines.

Key Takeaway

The Main Character of the Street turns out to be :



What do you like in the street? List positives

WE ♥ THAT... There are many busses (bus stops) wide cross walk, near train station, SPAR nearby

What do you like in the street? List positive

WE ♥ THAT... we have a SPAR close to our school we have a hospital next to our

What do you like in the street? List positives

WE ♥ THAT... crosswalks, S-Bahn Station, SPAR, squirrels, a few trees, hospital

What do you like in the street? List positives

WE ♥ THAT... here is SPAR here is Bus and Stan

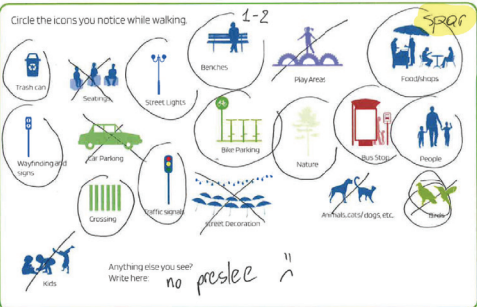
What do you like in the street? List positives

WE ♥ THAT... Fresh Air SPAR

3. The street is cool because of the SPAR

The street is boring because there is nothing interesting

The street is good because there is SPAR



And on my way, on the streets I see and hear... MOTORCYCLES, etc.

CARS, TREES, PEOPLE, LAMPS, TRAFFIC LIGHTS, CROSS WALK, HOVER,

BILLA, MANY HOUSES, SPAR, BUSES & TRAINS, FORESTS, ANIMALS

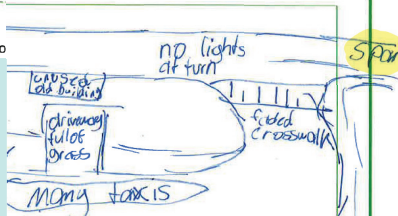
boring gray, SPAR

if... cars, people, you!! SPAR if

And on my way, on the streets I see and hear... many cars and train passing

by. I can see a grocery store called SPAR. My school on the street is extremely short. I come by train.

The streets on my route to school make me feel... (Circle the emotion you feel the most)



SPAR fast bus, free fuel in SPAR to sit more chairs and decorations

YOUR Dream Street

① Pink street

→ Trees
Playground
Dancing/Music
Traffic Signal

② Safe Street

Clean
Colorful

③ Seatings
Less traffic
Colorful

Street lights

④ More free spaces

Water taps
Ban e-scooters

⑤ Bikeable

Speed bumps

Pink

Trees

Bike lane for little kids

⑥ Bike lanes

Nature

Cleaner colors

⑦ Trees

Buses

Free food

Crossing

Flowers

Scenes

Decoration

⑧

Easy to bike

Seasonal Decoration

Nature, Benches

Covered areas

⑨

Cleaner

TUKS TUKS

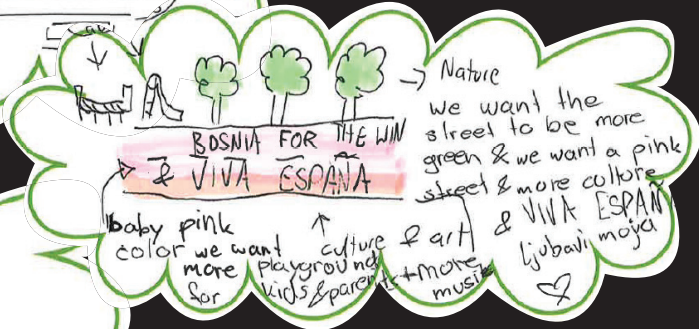
Better bus times

MUSIC

Design Your Dream Street

Their drawings tell the whole story.

No Graphs. No Numbers. Just Dreams, Paper, Pens, Imagination!



Seperate bike lanes, more nature

quieter cars, safer for children
Split the street going up to SPAP in two for
bikes & people, more trashcans,
cleaner, colourful,

colourful, designed, more plants
more kids friendly,

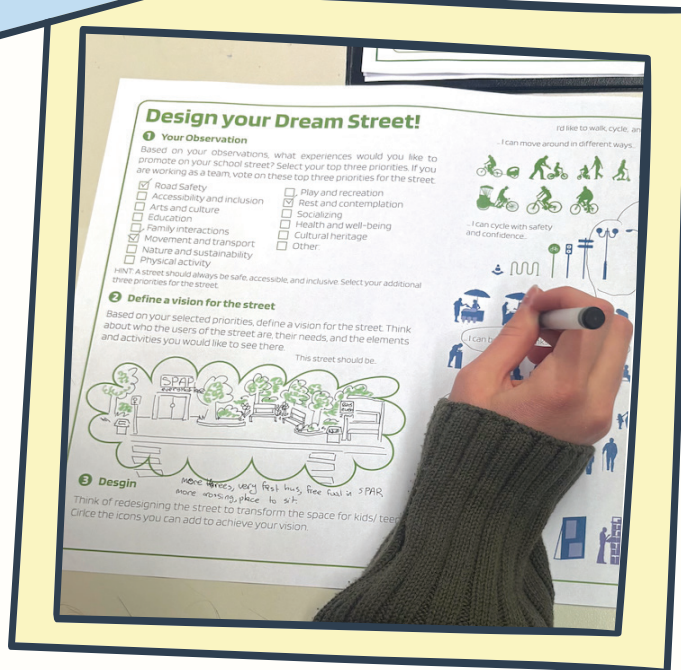
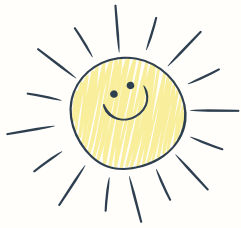


Hills for the bikers to make it more
fun + speed bumps (like 6-7)
to slow down the cars
and everything should be pink

clean
Easy to bike and walk
seasonal decorations
colorful
nature
covered walking areas (rain)
safe
have Benches
Movement & comfortable transport

There should be lots of space
for cars and transports, but also some
safe space for people. There should
be many trees and plants, and also
road signs for safety.

clean The streets should be clean, have
park, ~~with bike~~ ^{with bike, foot, car}
Benches, crossroads, ~~with bike~~ ^{with bike, foot, car}
trashcans, more bus/train times, more sits in bus/train



Conclusion

This report began with a question: How do young people interpret and experience their everyday mobility, including what they notice, value, and aspire? Well, their voices, reflections, drawings, and evaluations have now given us that answer and made one thing clear:

When young people are invited to shape mobility, they don't just answer questions; they reveal what streets could be.

I would like to conclude it with a simple yet another thoughtful question:

What kind of streets do we want young people to grow up with? Streets that rush them through, or streets that invite them to slow down, notice, and belong?




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