BAMBINI TOOLKIT HOME ZONES AND PLAYING STREETS
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Introduction

How to organise home zones and playing streets?

Not every child has a playground in the area or a place where it is safe to play or to cycle. More and more cars take over the streets where kids used to play. Streets are not safe anymore. There’s little space left for recreation and social contacts. This is the everyday life of young families. Home zones and playing streets can be answers to this.

A neighbourhood is more attractive to households with children when there are more playing facilities. Above all, home zones and playing streets will help to improve the vulnerable position of the children when they are on the street. Children are allowed to play in the street and can learn how to ride a bike in a safe environment. It can be used as a motivation for people to be more careful when they participate in traffic. Home zones and playing streets are an opportunity for parents, children and local authorities to work together and create a safer and more liveable neighbourhood.

The toolkit home zones and playing streets describes the state of the art of home zones and children streets in eleven European countries\(^1\) on the one hand and how to organise this on the other hand.

\(^1\) Austria, Slovenia, Belgium, The Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Italy, Bulgaria, Germany, Greece and France
1 Home zones

A street where living is pleasant for all

1.1 State of the art

Most of the partners² define a home zone as being a **residential area** especially designed for pedestrians and to hinder car use. In some countries, only inhabitants and emergency services may enter a home zone by car. A special road sign marks the zone. Pedestrians are given right of way and children are allowed to play in the street. Speed is limited from walking speed to 30 km/h and parking is only allowed within designated spaces. When leaving the area, fluid traffic has the priority. If a home zone is present, it is fixed. Home zones, as defined above, are considered to be rather rare, except for Belgium.

DTV and the Centre for Health and Development used a different definition. For them, a home zone is a street in a residential area, with reduced speed limits (30km/h) and designed in such a way as to slow down traffic. In Romania and Belgium, these streets can be found near school areas. In all countries, home zones are taken up in the national legislation. Except for France and Romania, also the local legislation is involved.

1.2 Definition

A home zone is

1. a zone in a fixed state
2. a zone on in a residential area
3. a zone where a speed limit applies max. 30km/h
4. a zone with an infrastructure to limit speed
5. a zone with green accents (trees, bushes...)
6. a zone with an infrastructure to prevent non-local traffic
7. a zone where only parking in marked places is permitted
8. a zone where it is clear that the car/car driver is a guest
9. a zone which is designed to enhance social contact
10. a zone which is designed to ensure access for all
11. a zone with no different levels for different road users

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² AMBEE, ARENE, FFFG/AMOR, Municipality of Hissar and Energy Agency of Plovdiv, REACM-ANATOLIKI S.A. and Mobiel 21
To define an area as a home zone, at least 7 of the characteristics listed above must be true. The first one, a fixed state, is obligatory.

### 1.3 Benefits

A number of benefits can be linked to setting up a home zone in a street or an area. In what follows, a list of the most important benefits is displayed:

- Less accidents
- Less injuries
- Less noise
- Less exhaust gases
- Less discomfort due to vibrations
- Less cut-through traffic
- Better living quality
- Better pedestrian crossing
- Better traffic safety
- Better sense of traffic safety
- More chances for social contact
- More room for playing
- More room for pedestrians and cyclists

### 1.4 Stakeholders

There are many stakeholders involved in the process of installing a home zone. Below is a list of possible stakeholders. Try to make a list of stakeholders yourself and put this next to this list.

- Municipality
  - Technical expert on mobility
  - Alderman of mobility
  - Local police
- Inhabitants
  - Inhabitants of the street/area
  - Inhabitants of neighbouring streets
  - Residents’ associations
- Economical actors: Shop holders in the street, companies
- Social actors: youth associations, ...
1.5 Step-by-step-plan

Step 1: Choose a municipality with whom you want to work

The state of the art made clear that there are significant differences between the partner countries in their legislation on home zones. Some have legislation (like Belgium), some have no legislation at all (like France) and some have legislation and a traffic sign but no home zones implemented (Bulgaria). It is important that you have some national or regional backup, so that what you plan to do, is legally supported. Examine first how our definition of a home zone can fit into your national legislation before you start contacting municipalities.

When this first research is done and you have a clear framework to work with, you can start to contact municipalities. This can be done in two ways:

- Bottom-up: Maybe you have already contact with a residents’ association that wants to transform a street into a home zone. You can contact the municipality of this street to find out if there is an opportunity to work together.
- Top-down: Municipalities may already have planned a transformation of a street into a home zone, but haven’t set up a participation process yet.

Step 2: Set up a working group

After you have selected a municipality, you need to set up a working group. This group of people has to take care of the process, has to contact all stakeholders and has to phrase out the problems, causes and solutions. Send a letter to the inhabitants or organise a meeting to recruit inhabitants for the working group. Make clear from the start that this working group will develop common ideas, problems, solutions and visions taking into account possible designs of the municipality. Everybody's opinion, question and suggestion will count, but it must exceed personal importance. Try not to exceed the maximum of 15 persons. Be sure that you can work with a properly balanced group of people who is interested in this matter and who wants to engage themselves to think and participate.

Be sure to take into account, from the start, the inhabitants of the area concerned but also the inhabitants of nearby neighbourhoods or other interested parties (police, shop holders, sport centre, school). You may or you may not involve a representative of the municipality (technical service) from the start. However, it may be a good idea to set up a first meeting without someone from the municipality, especially when the first meeting will handle the phrasing of the problems. Nevertheless, it will have a positive effect on the relation with the municipality when you invite them. It can also be a good idea to invite a mobility expert. This can be done already in the first meeting or you can wait until the moment you are handling the solutions. Be aware that children also have a valid opinion and view on the situation in their street and on traffic safety.

You will reach more by being positive and constructive. Make clear that you prefer not to lose time by e.g. organising petitions. Better invest in clarifying the problem and suggesting possible alternatives.
Step 3: Phrase problems and causes – Information gathering

Before you start, **define the problem area** where you want to remediate. After that, you need to know the following:

- **Basic information:**
  - Basic smart **legal conditions** and procedures (see also step 1)
  - **Local mobility plan:** it is possible that the national, regional or local government has a plan or a design for the village/city. It is possible that the streets are classified into different types of streets. You have to know this beforehand, because this may exclude streets as candidates to transform into a home zone.
  - **Good practices** of home zones (in neighbouring municipalities/other countries)

- **Policy information**
  - Who is the **contact person** in the municipality?
  - Did the local authorities already have a **discussion or made decisions** on the subject.

- **Local information**
  - Who is the **road maintenance authority**?
  - Are there road **works planned**?

After this, you can start to define the problem. We give you some **questions** to guide you:

- **Safety:**
  - How many **injuries**, with cyclists and pedestrians involved, were there in the street in the last 3-5 years?
  - How many **casualties**, with cyclists and pedestrians involved, were there in the street in the last 3-5 years?
  - Which zones in the street are **experienced as dangerous** by pedestrians and cyclists?

- **Pedestrians**
  - Are the pedestrian areas **comfortable** and safe? Why (not)?
  - Are there **street lights**?
  - Is it safe to **cross the street**? Are there zebra crossings?

- **Cyclists**
  - Is it safe and comfortable to **bike in the street**? Why (not)?
  - Is it safe, possible to **cross** the street?
  - Liveability of the street; does this street invite you to live here, walk here, stay here?
  - Is there a coherent **street scene**?
  - Is the **intensity** of the passing cars acceptable?
  - Is the intensity of the passing **heavy transport** acceptable?
  - Is there **cut-through traffic**? If yes, when, how much, where?
  - Is it possible for all road users to have **their place** in this street?
The next step is to try to determine the cause(s) of each bottleneck. If you know the cause, it is easier to suggest possible solutions. For example: Cars drive too fast in a street. A cause may be that the street is too wide, having no barrier or infrastructure to limit speed.

### Possible problems/bottlenecks:

- (Too) much traffic
- Cut-through traffic
- Too much heavy traffic
- Objective and subjective safety problems
- High speed
- High amount of parked cars
- Lack of green accents
- Difficult to cross the street
- Comfort for pedestrians
- Not enough place to meet as inhabitants
- Comfort for cyclists
- Safety for cyclists
- Accessibility of school, community centre...

Try to give attention to the children in the street when looking at the problems. Ask them how they experience their street and the problems. E.g.: let the children make a drawing of the current situation.

### Gathering the problems/bottlenecks by:

- Brainstorming
  - Point out the bottlenecks by everyone on a map
  - Make a list of all bottlenecks of all participants
- Making a bottleneck walk of bike ride
  - Make a walk or a bike ride and note down all bottlenecks
  - Make a walk or a bike ride and make pictures or make a movie
- Questioning of witnesses, especially parents and children

Your definition of the problem is an important instrument. It guides your communication with the municipality. Be aware that most citizens should be able to identify the problem as one of their own.
Step 4: Phrase your objective(s)

Based on the definition of the problems in the previous step, you can formulate your objectives. These objectives point out, as concrete as possible, what you want to reach on the long term. Designing and implementing a home zone takes several years. Be realistic in defining your objectives. Next to the long term objective, e.g. a safe street where all drivers don’t drive faster than 30km/h, you point out what the short term objectives are between now and the ultimate result, e.g. handing over a file with all bottlenecks to the municipality.

Step 5: Phrase possible solution(s)

To design possible solutions for the problems, it is a good idea to contact a mobility expert. This can be someone of the municipality or someone who has no connection with the legislation at all. A latter kind of person allows the group to device (creative) solutions to the problems, without taking into account time or budget constraints. Someone from the municipality will always reckon with budget constraints and this will limit dreaming. Elements you need to take into account while designing a solution:

- **Infrastructural image** of the street:
  - Mix of activities in the street (shops, restaurant, school, playground, …)
  - Green accents in the street
  - Monuments and landscapes in the street
  - Transverse section and linear profile of the street
  - Street Furniture
  - Road marking
  - Road surface and the material used
  - Traffic signs
  - Street lights

- **Residential activities**
  - Temporary social activities (fair, …)
  - Activities tied to a particular area (entrance of a school, cultural centre)

- **Effects on the environment**
  - Vibrations
  - Noise
  - Emissions

Try to involve the children in the street. You can ask them again to draw their ideal street. How does their ideal street look like?

It may be a good idea to look into funding possibilities at the local, regional and federal level. Sometimes they partly fund projects that concern adaptations in infrastructure. This may help to persuade the local authorities to start the project.
When all the above is done, you have a complete file you can hand over to the municipality and other parties involved. The working group is responsible for the follow up of this process.

1.6 Tips

- A working group is essential in this process.
- Have a good file with bottlenecks, causes and solutions.
- Expert support may be very useful, especially when designing possible solutions.
- Cooperation with the municipality is of course essential.
- Communication to all stakeholders is very important.

1.7 Case studies

A. Berchem (Belgium)

Berchem is an area in the south of the City of Antwerp (Belgium). The district lies between two urban roads, causing a lot of cut-through traffic. The district is characterized by linear streets and very large junctions, enhancing the speed of cars. This district is the home of many families with children. The area needed to be reconstructed in a more child friendly way. The idea to implement a home zone with a speed limit of 30km/h originated from the inhabitants themselves. To work on this topic, a residents’ association was created.

- Problems/bottlenecks:
  - Cut-through traffic
  - High speed of the cars
  - A lot of parking cars
  - Dangerous junctions
- Objectives
  - Keep out cut-through traffic
  - Limit speed of local traffic to 30km/h
  - Shared space
  - Increase the liveability of the street
  - Solve parking problem of the inhabitants

Two years after the inhabitants started the group, the municipality dispensed € 27.000 to restructure this area. The city servants created the design of the area.
- **Solutions and evaluations: the following measures were taken**
  - Large and busy junctions became pleasant squares:
    - The largest squares were designed as shared spaces with some green accents, benches, ...
    - The other squares were designed with bulges of the footpath. The free space is used for green accents and benches as well.
    - The entrance of the home zone was accentuated as a shared space to limit speed and to make car users aware that they are a guest in this street.
  - Other interventions:
    - A little roundabout with green accents
    - Speed limiting infrastructure such as a speed bump.

- **Comments of the inhabitants:**
  - Use of materials was elementary.
  - Green accents: accentuate the junctions.
  - Current street lighting is not enough.
  - Street benches: there are a few street benches but more are requested for.

- **Evaluation by the inhabitants:**
  - Safety and comfort for the cyclists increased.
  - The speed of the cars remained still too high.
  - The comfort and safety of pedestrians increased.
  - The street scene became more pleasant and enhanced social contact between inhabitants.

  The engagement of the inhabitants was high. Although there was a lack of planning and communication from the municipality to the inhabitants.

**B. Freiburg (Germany)**

Freiburg is a city in Germany with 210,000 residents and the city is still growing. Freiburg has a long tradition of environmental friendly policy and especially in traffic policy. Some general aspects of the traffic policy in Freiburg are:

- Large pedestrian zones
- An extended system of public transport
- Traffic calming systems
- Promotion of bicycle traffic

Due to the extension of the inhabitants, new urban districts were developed. Vauban is the most known example. The most important principles in Vauban are the following:

- Shared parking lots outside home zone
- Speed limit of 30km/h
- No go-through traffic by channeling individual motorized vehicle traffic
- Car free streets
- Extended system of public transport
- Noise protection
- Shared green spaces
- The beginning and the end of a home zone is made clear by signs on the street or by infrastructural changes.

The standard type of the streets in Vauban and other home zones in Freiburg are streets in one level, without curbs and mixed types.
2 Playing Street

A street where a child can be the child he is.

2.1 State of the art

Concerning the definition of a children street or playing street, there is much less consensus among the partners. In general, two types of definitions are used. Some partners define a children/playing street as being a road where mixed traffic is allowed, but only at a limited speed\(^3\) (e.g. near schools). Other partners\(^4\) indicate that children/playing streets are streets where no ongoing traffic is allowed and children can play freely. In Belgium, children/playing streets are only closed for traffic for a short, determined period of time, often during the holidays.

Irrespective of the definition used, children or playing streets are much less common than home zones. Only the Netherlands and Bulgaria indicate the presence of children streets (first definition) in their country. Considering the second definition, children/playing streets are only present in Belgium and to a smaller extent in the Netherlands. In Romania, streets may be closed when certain events occur (e.g. European Mobility Week) but not solely for the purpose of creating an area where children can play.

At the meeting in Freiburg, the partners decided to use the second definition. We also decided to use the term *playing street* instead of children street. Playing street expresses better the content of the term.

2.2 Definition

A playing street is

1. a street that is temporary designed as a street where children can play
2. a street within a home zone
3. a street that is temporary closed for motorised traffic
4. a street where only residential parking and local traffic is allowed
5. a street where the situation of a playing street can extend from a half a day event to a two weeks or more event per year
6. a street where the rules of the playing street are defined by locals and municipality
7. a street that has an infrastructure for children to play

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\(^3\) ARENE, Municipality of Hissar, Energy Agency of Plovdiv, Centre for Health and Development DTV

\(^4\) AMBEE, REACM-ANATOLIKI S.A. and Mobiel 21.
To define an area as a playing street, at least 5 of the characteristics listed above must be true. The first one, a temporary state, is obligatory.

2.3 Benefits

There are a lot of benefits associated with playing streets. In what follows, a list of the most important benefits is displayed:

- Children can play in the street.
- It is healthy to play outdoors.
- Children can play together and share their toys with each other.
- Children do not have to stay indoors because of lack of playing facility in the neighbourhood.
- Children can learn how to ride a bike in a safe environment and they can practise skills on the street.
- Parents know that their children are safe when playing in the street.
- Children play just out front their homes.
- Adults can to come out into the street and meet one another.
- Neighbours get to know each other (better) and learn to negotiate with each other.
- Locals learn to negotiate with their local authority and might even learn to negotiate with other partners.
- A long term negotiation with local authority can result into structural procedures, e.g. village renewal, home zone, ...
- School holidays, Wednesday afternoons and summer weekends are the ideal time to organise a playing street.

2.4 Stakeholders

In its strict definition, a playing street is for children who are too young to wander around in the streets by themselves, or with friends, without supervision. But in reality, all inhabitants of the street are part of the target group of a playing street.

Parents, locals, a residents committee or a youth service, all are able to organise playing streets. The initiative can also be taken by the local authority. They activate the possibility to organise playing streets by encouraging the residents. If the local authority is not the initiator of the playing street(s), they still have to be involved as a partner because they are the ones who authorize the temporary closing of a street.

When you need help with the organisation of a playing street or you need information or toys/playing tools, other possible partners may be: town services (information, youth, traffic,
mobility, technical service, ...), police, the bench of Mayor and Aldermen, the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure, local traders, youth associations, etc.

2.5 Step-by-step-plan

Step 1: What to consider when you think of organising a playing street?

When considering organising a playing street, you have to evaluate a few characteristics of the street you have in mind:

- The street has a speed limit of maximum 50km/h.
- The street has an overall living facility and has no through traffic.
- The street is free of public transport.
- The street hosts no police service, fire brigade or hospital.

Be sure to check the legislations in your country or municipality. Sometimes there are restrictions or regulations you have to take into account while organising a playing street. For example, in Belgium, you cannot organise a playing street without permission of the local authorities.

Step 2: Organise an opinion poll and inform the local authorities

In order to see if people are interested in organising a playing street, start with an opinion poll. Based on this poll, hand over an application form to the local authority. Experience learns that your application has a higher chance to get approved if the neighbours agree with the application. For example, in different Belgian communities, it obligatory that at least half of the neighbours agree with the organisation of a playing street. So, it is best to ask your neighbours’ opinion before handing in an application. And while asking about opinions, you can also inform your neighbours about playing streets and the consequences involved. The neighbours, who agree to set up a playing street, may sign a list with their name, address and signature.

When handing over your application for the acknowledgement as a playing street to the bench of Mayor and Aldermen, let it be clear which part of the street will be transformed into a playing street, when it will take place and what the playing hours will be. If your street is qualified to be a playing street, you can go ahead. If your street is not qualified, ask your local authority to motivate by letter why they have made that decision.

Step 3: Set up a working group

It is best to set up a working group with people who want to organise a playing street. They can coordinate the organisation and keep in touch with the local authority and the neighbours. Sending out a letter to all neighbours is one way to recruit volunteers. If you don’t have enough volunteers, talk to some of them in person, this is often far more efficient. Try not to exceed the maximum of 10 persons. Be sure that you can work with a
properly balanced group of people who wants to engage themselves in the organisation of the playing street.

**Step 4: Work out the details of the organisation**

The decision is made, a playing street will be organised in the street. The neighbours are enthusiastic, the local authority supports the initiative and a working group has been set up.

Firstly, check if all members of the working group and a responsible person from the local authorities agree on how the playing street will be organised. We list up a general framework for a playing street:

- A playing street has a **temporary** state with a **specific time** period.
- A playing street has to be **announced**. Some countries have a specific traffic sign. If this is not the case in your country, maybe you can develop a sign yourself? Be sure to include all the necessary information, e.g.: “playing street from 14h till 18h”.
- The **crush barriers** will be arranged by the local authority. Normally only the road maintenance authority has the right to place barriers and traffic signs but, if a street has to be blocked every day in e.g. the summer holidays, this is not workable. In agreement with the local authority and the police, a local person can be made responsible to place the crush barriers him or herself. The persons responsible have to place the crush barriers when the playing street starts and have to remove them after playing street hours. It is best to look for a storage place in the street or in the neighbourhood to maintain the barriers outside playing street hours.
- Setting up a playing street means that **every part of the public road is available to play**, which is perfect for trainee bikers and skaters. Pedestrians, skaters and playing children have the right of the way over all other road users. Playing children in playing streets are equalised to pedestrians, but the rules for crossing streets and the use of sidewalks are not applicable.
- A **few more people** can enter a playing street besides playing children:
  - Drivers, living in the street or having a parking lot, driving at walking speed.
  - Bikers, when needed they have to go on foot.
  - Emergency vehicles, driving at walking speed, without endangering the children. Children must be able to play freely.
- Only local residents are allowed to **park** in the playing street. If you want to agree with the local authority that this cannot be allowed, you first have to inform and question all residents in the area. A temporary parking ban in one street can cause trouble in the neighbouring streets. Therefore it is better to have an agreement with the residents and the local traders beforehand.
- During the period of the playing street there are **some restrictions**:
  - Through traffic is not allowed in a playing street, even trash trucks cannot enter.
• Traffic with the following destinies is not allowed: local traders, babysitters, family, doctors, lawyers, ...
• Deliverers and doctors or nurses on house call cannot enter the street with their car.
• Vehicles owned by non-residents are always bound to be left outside the playing street. Blocking only half the street as a playing street can be a solution to that. In that case, traffic and parking is still possible in the other half of the street.

Besides these general regulations, the working group has to think about the organisational details:

- Which part of the street will be blocked as a playing street? Consider the following issues:
  • How many children live in the street? In which parts of the street do they live?
  • How many houses are standing in that part of the street that will be blocked as a playing street?
  • Which of the local traders and other services and centres have to be reached?

- Make, if necessary, arrangements with the local traders, services and centres.

- Who wants to be the person responsible for the playing street? Make sure you ask several people, so they can take turns.

- During with period and during which hours will the street be a playing street? Who will block the street with the crush barriers?

It is the duty of the local authority to bear in mind the safety of the playing street. It is not obligatory to have an insurance for a playing street but, as a local authority, it is recommended to be insured for ‘Civil Liability and physical accidents’. Discuss this beforehand with your local authority. It is best to be insured before the start of the playing street. If the local authority has no insurance, the parents will be responsible for the actions of their child(ren) and if anything happens, their personal insurance will be consulted.

Do not wait too long to get started. It can take a few weeks or even months for everything to be arranged.

Step 5: Organise extra activities

The purpose of a playing street is for children to play carefree and safely. Of course you are free to organise some extra activities. Contact the local authority or the youth service when you are out of ideas or when you need some playing tools. Some towns’ or cities’ youth services offer a trunk full of toys. Make an agreement about which playing activities are allowed and which are not, e.g., playing soccer or playing loud music can cause trouble.
It is possible to organise a grant opening of the playing street with some beverage and snacks. This helps people to connect to each other more quickly. To announce your playing street you can make use of a local newspaper or website, the regional press, neighbourhood newsletter, ...

A playing street is an ideal occasion for neighbours to get to know each other (better). You can organise some activities for them too, during or after the playing street. Some coffee and cake, a street barbecue or maybe a workshop led by a neighbour with a special hobby, can do miracles in bounding neighbours.

You can also organise a playing street during a low-traffic event. In that case it is a must to plan some extra activities, such as: popular sports, street animation, demonstration of ‘new’ and ‘odd’ bikes, a bike decoration contest, a jumble, a workshop ‘how to repair a bike’, ... It is also possible to place some big toys in the street, for example a skate ramp or a ping-pong table.

When the period of the playing street is finished, you can organise a final event. This is also a perfect time for thanking all volunteers for their efforts.

**Step 6: Inform the neighbours**

Inform your neighbours and the neighbouring children with a letter, a poster or a flyer announcing the playing street. Do not forget to also inform the people of the neighbouring streets. The working group decides upon the necessary agreements and communicate these to the neighbours. The communication to the neighbours should entail:

- General information about playing streets (see step 4)
- The period and time the playing street will take place
- Agreements on placement and removal of the (special) barriers
- If and when there is a supervising party
- Information about special activities that will be organised
- Information about the insurance of possible companions and the children

Do not forget to mention the contact information of the person(s) responsible, in case neighbours have additional questions and/or remarks.

**Step 7: Evaluation**

After the first period of organising the playing street has finished, you can ask your neighbours’ opinions about it. You can do this in a formal way, by distributing an evaluation form or informally by just having a chat with your neighbours. If you organise a final event, you can do a short evaluation there. The neighbours’ opinions can help to approve the organisation of the next playing street.
2.6 Tips

- A street is a playing street during a specific moment of time. Playing hours have to be the same during the entire period the playing street is organised. You are not allowed to change playing hours daily; the hours have to be agreed upon by all parties before the playing street is installed. The local authority makes the final decision. In case of rainy weather, it is best to block the street anyway. In that way children are still able to play outside, if the weather clears up unexpectedly.

- You may install the whole street as a playing street or only a part of the street. In case of a long street, it may be better to block only a part of the street. That way it will be easier to keep an eye on the children.

- It is possible for the neighbours to agree on taking turns in keeping an eye on the children. However nobody can be forced to do so. Each parent will still be responsible for his or her own child. A playing street is not a day care centre.

- During playing hours it is safe for children to play in the street, but before and after those hours the street is a normal public road dominated by traffic. It is important to draw the children’s attention to that matter, e.g. you can have an official ending of the playing street. Parents play an important role in this.

- As a resident of the playing street you have to take into account that children in the neighbourhood can be interested too.

- If a neighbour has a very important activity planned during the period of the playing street, which cannot be done after playing hours (e.g. moving), then this activity must be allowed. A playing street is not installed to boycott normal life. Ask your neighbours beforehand if they have such an activity planned and take this information into account when organising a playing street.

2.7 Case studies

A. Deinze (Belgium)

In Belgium, a playing street is a public road that is temporarily blocked by crush barriers for a certain time. The crush barriers are equipped with C3 traffic signs with an underscore that
says “playing street”. (KB, 28 October 1998) The playing street is known in several municipalities and has different appearances. Here you’ll find some examples to get an idea.

In Deinze, the playing street is a traditional happening. Children can play in the streets at prescribed afternoons from 14h till 17h. The marketplace is traffic free. All children and youngsters of the city from 7 to 17 years old are welcome. All youth associations participate. Animation is present and attractions are placed in the playing street, e.g.: an obstacle track, a cycle track, a climbing wall, a haunted house, … The playing street ends with a balloon contest.

B. Schoten (Belgium)

In Schoten, a playing street is announced with an eye-catching, colourful logo having the shape of a joyful warning triangle with laughing exclamation marks. The local authority selects some summer playing streets suggested by locals. During the months of July and August playing streets are blocked for traffic every Monday and Thursday afternoon. Residents are informed about the new, temporary status of their street and about the consequences involved. Two residents of each playing street and the alderman for youth sign a district contract. Those two residents are the godfathers and godmothers of the playing street. It is their job to keep an eye on the children and to watch over the placement and removal of the barriers. All residents receive the full agreement regulation. The driving ban doesn’t apply for the residents, emergency services and cyclers. In Schoten, parking in a playing street is forbidden. Soccer is allowed, but only with a soft ball.

C. Bruges (Belgium)

The bench of Mayor and Aldermen, the youth council, various town services and the locals of Bruges decided to organise a playing street in the middle of town. During the months of July, August and September the chosen street is blocked every Wednesday afternoon from 14h till 18h. Normally, the street is a busy, small street in the centre of the town. The street hosts a hotel and a bed and breakfast, but the owners agreed with the temporary blocking of their street. There is a parking ban in the playing street. Parked vehicles are hoisted out of the street to reassure the safety of the children and to avoid possible car damage. The technical service delivers the crush barriers and the traffic signs. The residents are responsible for the placement and the removal of the barriers. The local authority has arranged a permanent stand to put the barriers outside playing street hours.

A group of six parents regularly meet to arrange the practical organisation of the playing street (activities, questionnaires, letter draft, contacts with the youth service and the police, …). There is also a fixed contact person who helps the residents, police and the local authority with questions and information. The local authority has an insurance for ‘Civil Liability and physical accidents’ for the children, volunteers, parents and guardians.

The playing street was announced by letter, informing the neighbours about the concept of a playing street. Children were invited personally. They received a poster to draw on. Most parents hung this poster at their window. Two parents supervised the playing street in turns. They watched the children to stay between the barriers, watched over the placement and
removal of the barriers and over the parking ban. A policeman and the town guard also supervised on a regularly basis.

Playing freely was the main objective of the playing street, but some parents also organised specific activities for the children, such as telling fairy tales, painting, badminton, ... During the opening day of the playing street season there is cake and coffee for the neighbours. The initiators want to involve as many neighbours as possible. Sometimes neighbours enter the street with coffee during playing street hours. Contacts between neighbours are very close, also outside playing street season. At the closure of the playing street season, many people open their house for their neighbours to come by and eat some pancakes.

Every Wednesday afternoon people would rapport about attendance and activities in the playing street book. The first season of the playing street was evaluated with an evaluation form. Neighbours who did not fill in the form were visited personally. The following ‘tips to improve’ were mentioned:

- toys for all ages,
- divide the street into a rough playing part and a soft playing part,
- organise an activity for the neighbours at the end of the playing street,
- a playing street afternoon in the snow.

D. Salerno (Italy)

Salerno is situated in Campania (south-west of Italy) on the gulf of the same name on the Tyrrhenian Sea. Salerno is the main town in the Costiera Amalfitana with a population of nearly 147,000. The area around Salerno has been settled ever since pre-historical times. The city is mostly known for its Schola Medica Salernitana (the first University of Medicine in the world) and popular among tourists from all over the world with its famous buildings and landscape. Furthermore, the port of Salerno is one of the most important in Italy.

Salerno is a demonstration city in the Trendy Travel project. One of the events in Salerno is the Piccola Grand Italia. These are Car free Sundays, (2 times within Trendy Travel) when the inner city area is closed for cars and given to the people. There are thematic walks with presentations, energy walks (explaining energy saving strategies and examples), thematic cycle trips, music, and street artists.

5 http://www.trendy-travel.eu