



Walking Cities Lab:

Co-Producing Knowledge for Equitable
Urban Mobility

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1. Introduction



The Lab



The Walking Cities Lab (WCL) is an **interdisciplinary initiative** led by University College London that sheds light on **walking conditions, experiences, and practices** in cities where walking is difficult, unsafe, or neglected.

We work directly with communities living in unwalkable environments to understand and make visible their **everyday mobility challenges** and the strategies they use to navigate them. By building local capacity to collect and interpret data, the WCL strengthens **evidence-based advocacy** and empowers residents to engage meaningfully with decision-makers.

Our approach shows that even in the most unequal urban contexts, it is possible to meet the mobility needs of those most often excluded from planning and to create **safer, more inclusive streets** for everyone.

Vision

To establish an interdisciplinary, multicultural, collaborative, and inclusive **platform** for the **co-production** of innovative **knowledge, methods, and partnerships** in and about walking cities that are not walkable

Objectives

1. **Co-produce actionable knowledge** that advances walking as an accessible, safe and enjoyable mode of transport for all, culminating in a holistic, evidence-based, and practice-oriented framework
2. **Build the capacity** of a new and diverse generation of scholars and practitioners through a comprehensive learning ecosystem
3. Develop **knowledge-based strategies** and tools to influence policy and mobilise civil society around walking



Why do we work on walking?



Unwalkable cities are those where **walking** is **restrictive, unsafe, uncomfortable, or burdensome** - conditions that undermine walking as a basic, equitable and health-promoting mode of transport.

This reality is particularly pressing in low-income countries, where walking is the most common mode of transport in cities yet their walking environments remain overwhelmingly unwalkable. Despite accounting for most trips in these urban areas, **walking is routinely neglected in transport policy and planning**, leading to the reproduction of unwalkable spaces due to a lack of space, funding, and integration with other modes of transport.

This neglect forces pedestrians to navigate precarious, unsafe, and inequitable public spaces, **disproportionately affecting marginalised communities** in low-income settlements where walking is not a choice but a necessity.

Addressing these challenges requires rethinking urban mobility systems and **centring walking as a transformative intervention** for sustainable and inclusive urban development.

Against this backdrop, the WCL was established in 2019 to address the systemic oversight of walking. The WCL relies on **participatory, place-based research** to spotlight and transform unwalkable environments in rapidly growing cities with limited resources and stark socioeconomic inequalities.

Specifically, the WCL's core methods - **participatory mapping, journey audits, Jane walks, and stakeholder engagement workshops** - aim to uncover, document, and address the barriers pedestrians face. The Lab demonstrates that integrating **local ingenuity** with structured **co-production** can reframe walking as both an analytical lens and a catalyst for sustainable, inclusive mobility.

Existing research on walking has predominantly focused on the Global North, concerned with issues like car dependency, sedentary lifestyles, and health outcomes. By contrast, studies in Sub-Saharan Africa frequently adapt Northern frameworks, exploring links between the built environment and physical activity yet **failing to address the unique challenges** of cities where walking is dominant but unsupported by

Why do we work on walking?



formal planning. Such contexts demand approaches that account for **exclusionary urban configurations** and **structural inequalities**, as well as power relations shaping interactions between stakeholders, pedestrians, and public space.

Recognising the limitations of conventional planning, the WCL emphasises **co-production and capacity building** to transform precarious walking environments.

Want to learn more?

1a) Active mobility, equity and inclusion

Framed by the challenges of fragmented urban growth and unequal infrastructure provision in Latin America and the Caribbean, this paper explores the potential of **active mobility** - walking and cycling - as a **pathway toward more sustainable and inclusive cities**.

The study highlights **critical research gaps**, including the need to assess the social, economic, and environmental impacts of active mobility, its intersections with health, safety, and equity, and its integration with public transport. It concludes by setting out a research agenda that leverages **advanced data analytics** and **evidence-based policymaking** to strengthen

active mobility's role in reducing emissions, improving health outcomes, and fostering more equitable and efficient transport systems across the region.

[Continue reading](#)

1b) Walk this way: Pedestrian accessibility and equity in Barranquilla and Soledad, Colombia

The paper positions **walking as the most equitable transport mode**, delivering health and financial benefits but often neglected in the urban planning agendas of Global South cities.

To address limited evidence on inequalities in pedestrian conditions, it proposes a **framework linking pedestrian accessibility with walkability**, applying macro- and meso-scale measures in Barranquilla and Soledad, Colombia.

Results show a clear mismatch: **low-income areas have higher walkability indexes but lower accessibility**, while higher-income zones present greater accessibility yet reduced walkability, reflecting imbalances between supply and demand for walking trips.

The study concludes that **targeted planning policies**, implemented in the right locations, could increase walking, reduce inequalities, and

Why do we work on walking?



improve overall transport equity.

[Continue reading](#)

1c) Urban space distribution: The case for a more equitable mobility system

Addressing the challenges of urban space allocation, this study explores how the **prioritization** of private **motorized vehicles** impacts **transport equity**, **sustainability**, and access to **public spaces**. Focusing on Bogotá (Colombia), Valletta (Malta), and Freetown (Sierra Leone), the research uses high-resolution satellite imagery and GIS analysis to assess the distribution of space between motorized and non-motorized modes.

Results uncover **ongoing inequities** where car-oriented planning constrains walking and cycling and mirrors broader social, economic,

and political inequalities.

The study highlights the **need** for more **inclusive** and **sustainable urban design** and identifies both structural and context-specific factors driving uneven space distribution.

[Continue reading](#)



Who's Involved?



The WCL operates through a strategic **network of partnerships** that enable its research to be both rigorous and contextually relevant.

In cities where research is conducted, the WCL **engages directly with local stakeholders**, including community residents and organizations, municipal authorities, and urban planners. These collaborations are central to ensuring that the Lab's work reflects **lived experiences** and local priorities, enabling a **co-production of knowledge** that is both grounded and actionable.

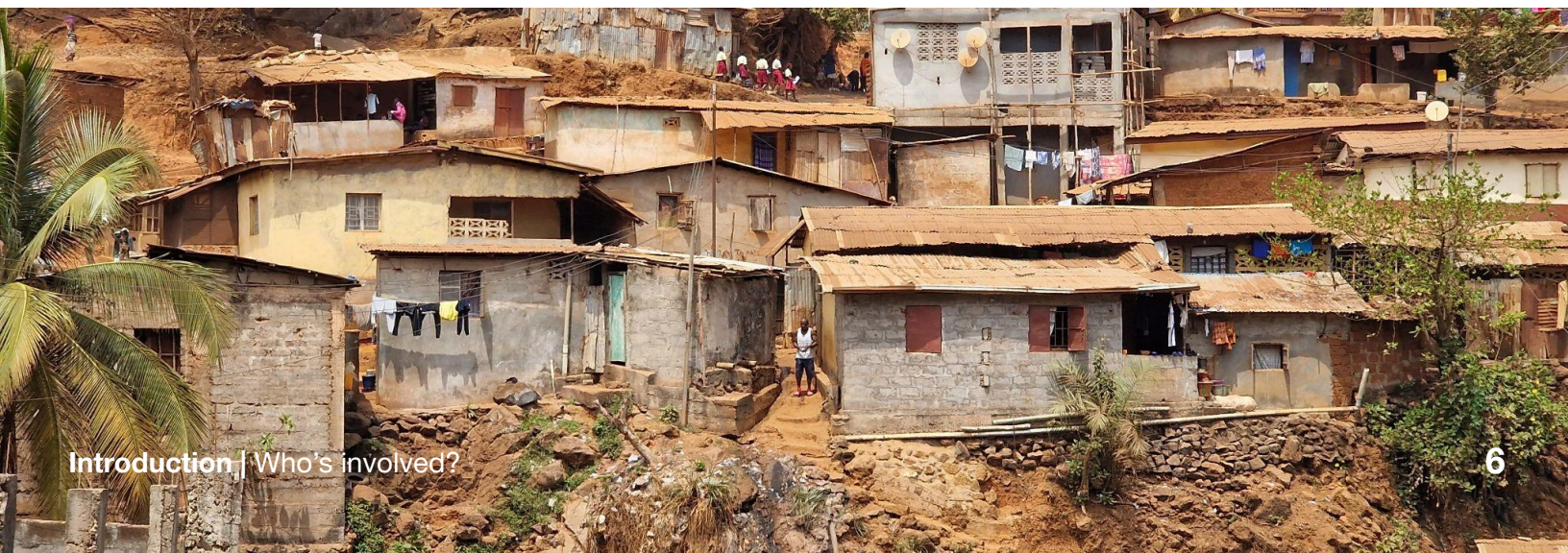
This work is anchored in a methodology developed by the WCL to address **critical gaps** in conventional walkability research - its geographic bias, its over-reliance on material metrics, and its tendency to overlook the politics of automobility in the

Global South.

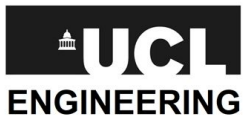
The Lab's approach has been refined across six core research sites and four linked projects in **Sub-Saharan Africa**, the **Caribbean**, and **Latin America**.

The WCL also maintains relationships with international **development agencies** and **global networks** focused on sustainable urban mobility and inclusive city planning. These alliances support the translation of research into **policy recommendations** and **implementation strategies**, extending the Lab's impact beyond academia.

Together, these partnerships - academic, local, and international - form a robust platform that enables the WCL to contribute to the design of safer, more inclusive, and more walkable urban environments.



Who's Involved?



Project locations



-  *WCL projects*
-  *Connected projects*

- 1. Jundiaí, Brazil
- 2. Benavides, Brazil
- 3. Fortaleza, Brazil
- 4. Freetown, Sierra Leone
- 5. Accra, Ghana

- 6. Maputo, Mozambique
- 7. Nassau, Bahamas
- 8. Barranquilla, Colombia
- 9. Concepción, Chile
- 10. Porto Alegre, Brazil



Current challenges



Walking, the most fundamental and ancient mode of transport, remains sidelined in urban transport planning despite its ubiquity and importance. The **overlooking of walking as a mode of transport** stems from its perceived harmlessness, the undervaluation of pedestrian needs by stakeholders with decision-making power, and inadequate policies to address walking infrastructure. Walking is **often seen as a default mode**, requiring minimal accommodation compared to motorised transport, which receives greater attention due to higher person-kilometres travelled and measurable impacts on congestion and emissions.

The historical roots of transport planning have reinforced this imbalance. From the mid-20th century, early methodologies **prioritised motorised infrastructure** - roads, highways, and parking facilities - with a focus on maximising economic efficiency, often measured by speed and vehicle capacity.

Over time, the technocratic “predict and provide” approach became dominant, anticipating demand and optimising supply while **relegating pedestrian pathways to the margins**. Cities shaped by modernist

ideals often equated paved roads and car-centric development with progress, further marginalising walking.

In Sub-Saharan Africa (SSA), the **colonial legacy** of spatial segregation combined with modernist planning ideals entrenched a car-oriented paradigm. Ministries of transport, frequently dominated by civil engineers, prioritised motorised road networks, while **fragmented institutions** and overlapping jurisdictions created additional barriers to addressing pedestrian needs.

Rapid urbanisation and rising incomes have further exacerbated motorisation, increasing traffic fatalities and reinforcing a focus on road safety rather than the development of adequate pedestrian infrastructure.

This neglect is most **acute in low-income areas**, where simple deficiencies - uneven pavements, inadequate crossings, and poor lighting - make walking difficult and dangerous. These conditions disproportionately affect women, whose mobility is constrained by economic pressures, time poverty, and social norms. Walking’s association with poverty and its perception as an “inferior” mode of transport

Current challenges



further marginalise those who rely on it the most.

The dominance of **automobility culture**, sustained by social norms and industry influence, systematically privileges drivers over pedestrians. Car ownership is often equated with **freedom, modernity**, and **economic success**, leaving walking infrastructure fragmented and poorly integrated into broader urban development strategies. As a result, **pedestrians** remain largely **excluded** from sustainable urban mobility systems.

Want to learn more?

1d) Walkability and the Right to the city: A snapshot critique of pedestrian space in Maputo, Mozambique

This research looks at walking as a way to uncover deeper social and spatial inequalities. Framed by the Right to the City, it repositions **walking not just as a basic form of transport, but as a potential equalizer**, while highlighting the social, physical, and individual barriers that shape unequal pedestrian access. Using interviews and a journey audit, the study finds

that while poor infrastructure makes walking difficult, **social stigma has an even stronger impact on how people perceive walkability**.

Low-income residents, who rely most on walking in underserved areas, face greater barriers than their high-income counterparts in claiming their right to move freely in the city.

The study calls for both urgent infrastructural improvements and the creation of inclusive urban ‘hubs’ of opportunity to make walking more equitable.

[Continue reading](#)

1e) Barriers to transition towards sustainable mobility in Sub-Saharan African cities

By situating urban growth in the context of mobility transitions, the paper considers the **extent to which Sub-Saharan African cities can avoid car dependence** through leapfrogging strategies and instead pursue alternative, sustainable mobility transitions.

Based on interviews with policymakers, local stakeholders, and community representatives in Maputo and Freetown, the research identifies **key structural barriers** to enable change, including **land-use and urban planning, governance issues, institutional** and **technical**

Current challenges



capacity and financing gaps.

The study concludes by offering targeted **policy recommendations** to strengthen institutions and build technical capacity in transport and urban planning.

[Continue reading](#)

informal transport in enabling access, while pointing to the need for greater public trust in these systems.

[Continue reading](#)

1f) Accessibility, (dis)advantage and everyday mobility practices and experiences

This study examines everyday mobility practices in Freetown and Maputo through the lens of accessibility and social and transport (dis)advantage. It introduces a framework that highlights how **social and transport disadvantages directly shape people's mobility choices** and the resulting (in)accessibility that determine individuals' experiences.

Drawing on qualitative evidence from eight neighbourhoods about mobility practices, the research reveals a **deep-seated aspiration for car ownership**, tempered by the urgency of other immediate material needs, as well as the dynamic nature of travel behaviour due to changing conditions during the day and throughout the year.

The findings also underscore the **central role of**

2. Methodologies



Approach and Framework



The WCL's conceptual framework views walking **holistically**, integrating observable and perceived determinants, experiential outcomes, and underlying structural forces shaping pedestrian mobility.

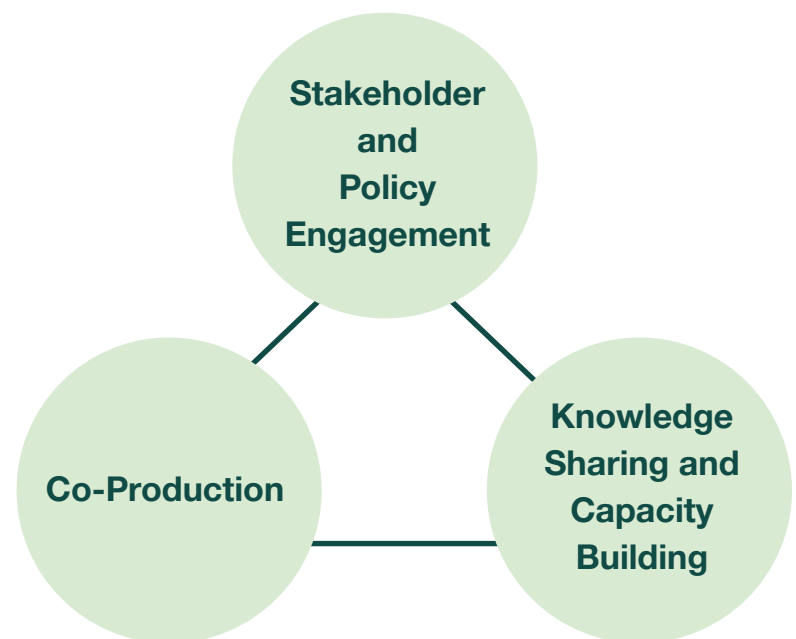
Critically, the framework bridges the **individual dimensions of walking** experiences, such as comfort, safety, security and enjoyment, with **collective aspects** such as community practices, social norms, and cultural meanings attached to pedestrian mobility. It also recognises how **structural factors**, including governance, socioeconomic inequalities, and institutional biases, profoundly influence walkability across diverse urban landscapes.

Building upon empirical research conducted by the WCL across Global South cities, our methodological framework is designed for translating **pedestrian-focused knowledge** into actionable policy and urban interventions.

This approach is grounded in **equitable partnerships, participatory methods, advocacy, and capacity-building processes** that empower communities to **co-create** context-sensitive solutions.

By systematically linking empirical evidence

of pedestrian experiences with **transformative action**, the framework supports concrete, knowledge-driven interventions capable of reshaping urban environments to become more inclusive, equitable, and genuinely walkable.



Knowledge-to-action methodology



2.1 Co-Production



At the heart of the WCL's methodology is **knowledge co-production**: a collaborative process that unites researchers, communities, government agencies, NGOs, private sector actors, and other city stakeholders to generate insights on walking and urban mobility.

This approach moves beyond the limits of traditional, top-down research by ensuring evidence is grounded in **local realities**, shaped by **diverse perspectives**, and aimed toward **transformative change**.

A key principle is amplifying the voices of those often unheard. Using an **intersectional lens**, the WCL highlights the specific mobility needs of different social groups and situates them within their wider historical, social, and economic contexts. This helps position walking not just as a technical issue, but as a question of **equity** and **justice**.

Participatory Mapping

As one of the core activities of the WCL, it serves as both a **research tool** and a mechanism for empowerment. Community members work alongside researchers, planners, and local decision-makers to document neighbourhood roads, paths, public spaces, and community-built

infrastructure using **satellite imagery** as a base. Participants annotate these maps with **perceptions** and **experiences**, revealing barriers to walkability such as unsafe crossings, inadequate lighting, or flooding hotspots.

Because multiple actors are involved throughout the process, the resulting evidence is both locally grounded and directly relevant for planning and policy. It provides a basis for **prioritizing interventions** and makes the needs of pedestrians more visible within decision-making spaces.

Journey Audits and Experiential Documentation

Complementing the mapping process, researchers accompany participants along their **daily routes**, documenting physical conditions, interactions, and challenges in real time. Wearable **360-degree cameras** and **georeferenced interviews** create a rich, citizen-led street-view database. This visual record not only makes hidden problems legible to planners but also provides evidence for advocating for targeted improvements.

Narrative storytelling and geo-narrative

2.1 Co-Production



methods are often integrated into the audits, allowing participants to share personal accounts that reveal the social and symbolic dimensions of walking. These narratives surface **intersectional challenges**, such as gender-based safety concerns, mobility limitations for older adults, or economic pressures that restrict transport choices, and connect them to the **structural forces** shaping the urban environment.

Want to learn more?

2.1a) Everyday walking environment and practices in informal settlements in Freetown

This paper presents a pilot study in Moyiba, an informal settlement in Freetown, examining its walking environment and daily walking practices.

The study used the Maptionnaire app to **map and audit streets** while also conducting **structured interviews with residents** to gather demographics, walking practices, experiences, safety perceptions, and to identify specific features and risks along their routes.

Results show walking remains the main mode of mobility due to topography and poor infrastructure, with residents creating informal paths, adding street lights, and placing benches

to reduce risks and improve walking experiences. The study highlights the **need for collaborative, participatory interventions** based on **everyday walking practices** to support co-production methods for improving local walking experiences.

[Continue reading](#)

2.1b) Self-built infrastructure interventions to (un)walkable streets: Pedestrian accessibility, safety and enjoyment

Using **geolocated structured interviews, spatial analysis, and photographic records**, this paper investigates the role of self-built infrastructure interventions in shaping pedestrian perceptions. It examines how these **community-led modifications** - speed bumps, streetlights, drainage covers, and shade structures - help people navigate a fragmented and often limited public infrastructure.

The findings highlight a strong **connection between these self-built interventions and pedestrians' sense of safety**, which emerges as the most pressing concern in their walking experience. They also underscore the potential of **recognizing self-built interventions infrastructure** for more inclusive urban strategies. Recognizing these everyday

2.1 Co-Production



interventions allows planners to align infrastructure with the real needs of diverse pedestrians and foster more inclusive urban environments.

[Continue reading](#)

2.1c) Planning for walkable cities in Africa: Co-producing knowledge on conditions, practices, and strategies

Drawing on **participatory mapping** and **qualitative interviews** with residents and institutions, this study examines the **conditions of the walking environment** and residents' **lived experiences of walking** in two Accra neighborhoods.

Findings reveal precarious environments - lacking road markings, traffic lights, and calming measures such as speed ramps - while national

and local development plans have largely overlooked walkability. This neglect underscores how planning and policy failures directly affects the urban residents' walking environment.

A **stakeholder engagement workshop** with academics, institutional representatives and residents discussed the results and fostered collaboration toward more equitable, sustainable walking environments. The study concludes by recommending a **community-based participatory planning strategy** to improve walkability.

[Continue reading](#)



2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



The second strategy focuses on operationalising co-produced knowledge to **shape policy** and **mobilise civil society**. The aim is to use the evidence generated to engage **policymakers** and international organisations in advancing a transformative agenda for unwalkable cities. This is pursued by creating spaces for **evidence-based dialogue**, where multidimensional insights are used to challenge entrenched narratives about walking and shift priorities away from car dependency.

The WCL's policy engagement strategy centres on **participatory workshops** that bring decision-makers face-to-face - often for the first time - with the lived realities of pedestrians and the structural biases that shape urban planning. These workshops use a combination of **experiential**, **diagnostic**, and **deliberative tools** to generate actionable insights and build shared commitment to change.

Policy Makers

Engaging policy makers teases out their view of walking within urban and transport planning, underscoring opportunities to be harnessed and biases to be addressed for committed **investment** and **planning** for walking. Inviting policy makers to focus on

walking as a cornerstone of any urban transport system also plants the seed to thinking about consolidation of walking environments rather than motorised environments. By opening a **space for dialogue**, decision makers are able to recognise the importance of walking within urban and transport policy. Furthermore, **planning connections** are created across different levels of government and bottlenecks are identified for policy and planning for accessible, safe and enjoyable walking conditions for all.

Technical Experts

Bringing civil engineers, economists, transport planners, and other practitioners into these discussions helps integrate walking into the **design of technical transport solutions**. Considering the needs of all public space users - street vendors, people with disabilities, users of non-motorised and public transport - reveals how walking is often invisible in technical planning and overshadowed by a focus on hard infrastructure and mass transit.

These dialogues also **expose gaps** in long-term planning, such as the limited attention given to maintenance and lifecycle management of pedestrian infrastructure.

2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



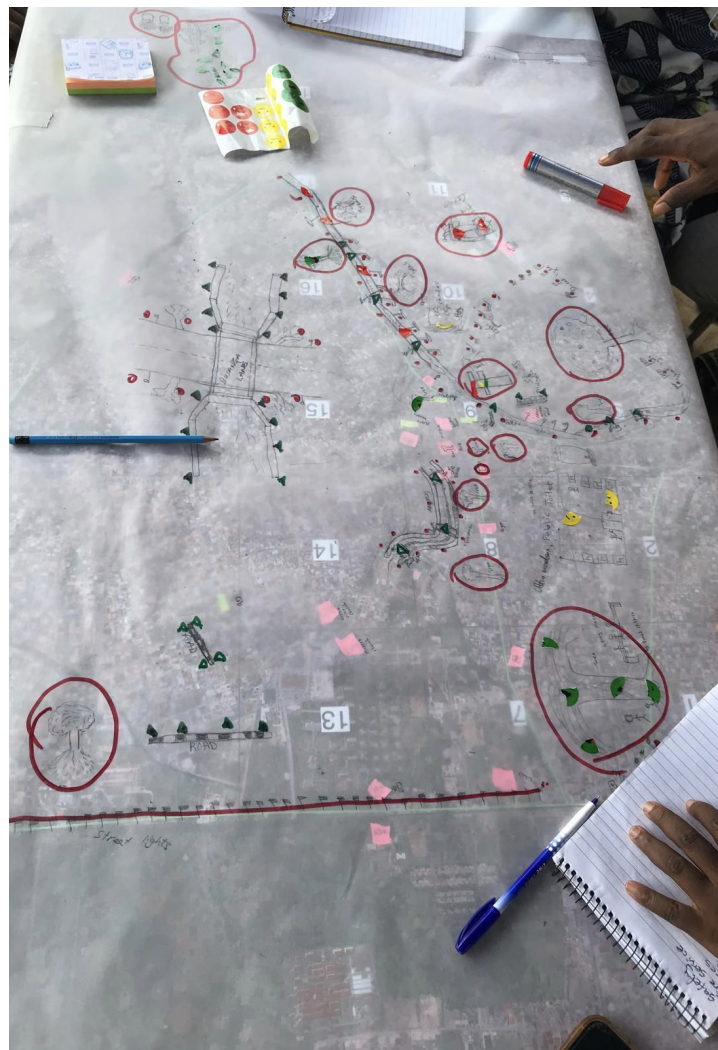
Communities

Engaging communities **strengthens** their **agency** by building knowledge, creating spaces for dialogue, and affirming their right to safe, accessible, and enjoyable walking. Pedestrians - particularly those from low-income areas with precarious infrastructure - are often overlooked in planning processes. Community engagement helps surface their **experiences, needs, and aspirations**, creating common ground that can accelerate policy decisions and implementation.

Stakeholder Workshops

Building on this process, the workshops bring together community members, policymakers, and practitioners in a shared space. These sessions incorporate a range of tools to stimulate dialogue, immerse participants in pedestrian experiences, and generate actionable insights.

As a core WCL engagement activity, **Jane's Walks** - community-led walking tours inspired by urbanist Jane Jacobs - invite participants to **explore neighbourhoods on foot**, sharing observations, experiences, and stories. Before the walk, participants reflect



on walking as a mode of transport. During the walk, they exchange positive and negative experiences, observe overlooked aspects of the urban environment, and suggest potential improvements. Afterward, **structured group discussions** focus on themes such as finance, governance, road safety, and walking infrastructure, allowing

2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



participants to collectively identify challenges and opportunities.

Ice-Breaker Surveys capture participants' perceptions of walkability and key demographic information, engaging them from the outset and establishing a shared baseline for discussion during the workshops. Breakout group discussions then explore local experiences in depth, identify policy gaps, and surface priorities for action.

Together, these engagements form a **multi-layered process** that blends embodied experience, rapid perception mapping, and structured deliberation. The goal is to move beyond abstract data and present walking as a lived, complex, and deeply social experience. By highlighting the

links between individual practices, collective actions, and the built environment, the workshops help policymakers see walking not only as a transport mode but as a **driver of equity, public health, and climate resilience**. These exchanges also serve to connect policymakers, technical experts, and communities, **building networks** that can carry the conversation beyond the workshop.

By bringing walking into transport and infrastructure debates, these sessions expose how it is often overlooked in planning and budgeting processes. This reframing plants the seed for **shifting investment toward pedestrian environments** rather than further expansion of car-centred infrastructure, supporting the development of safe, inclusive, and sustainable urban mobility systems.



2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



Advocacy

The Lab's participatory ethos extends to creating advocacy tools that **empower communities to engage with policymakers** and shape decision-making processes. These tools leverage co-produced knowledge to amplify residents' voices and foster dialogue between communities and urban governance structures.

By capturing **residents' narratives**, these outputs **challenge the dominant discourse** about walking and advocate for its recognition as a critical component of sustainable urban development.

Drawing on **focus group discussions**, it interrogates residents' perceived accessibility, how they shape differentiated everyday mobility and land-use practices at the individual and collective level, and its **implications for urban accessibility and sustainable mobility** in the medium to long-term future.

Findings show that **perceived accessibility** strongly **influences everyday mobility, land-use practices**, and **attitudes** toward **sustainable transport**. Residents balance immediate needs against long-term risks and collectively adapt the built environment to meet critical needs in the absence of adequate top-down interventions.

[Continue reading](#)

Want to learn more?

2.2a) Everyday accessibility practices and experiences in a context of transitions to sustainable mobility

This study examines the links between travel needs, preferences, attitudes, and structural factors such as urban form, poverty, and informality at different scales and across four Freetown neighborhoods with different levels of access and motorization.

2.2b) Walking cities that are (un)walkable: exploring lived realities

Drawing on **focus groups** and **interviews** with **community members** and **institutions**, this paper explores the everyday walking experiences of residents in two low-income Accra neighbourhoods. The findings show that while residents value walking for its social, health, and spatial benefits, they also describe it as stressful and unsafe due to infrastructural and behavioural barriers.

The study underscores the importance of community-level responses and **calls for a more**

2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



nuanced understanding of the lived experiences of walking as deeply interconnected with broader urban development challenges. It advocates for centering the perspectives of captive walkers to advance more equitable and inclusive mobility agendas in Africa and the Global South.

[Continue reading](#)

experiences of those affected by such decisions seeks to nuance debates about policy-reality gaps in African urbanism.

[Continue reading](#)

2.2c) Policy-reality gaps in Africa's walking cities: Contextualizing institutional perspectives and residents' lived experiences

Based on content analysis and **interviews with local-level stakeholders**, this study examines how walking is framed in Accra's urban policies and plans, focusing on how **institutional actors** address accessibility, safety, and enjoyment. These perspectives are contrasted with the lived experiences of **residents in low-income neighbourhoods**, revealing a disconnect between planning and policy narratives and everyday realities.

While accessibility and safety receive some attention, the dimension of enjoyment remains largely neglected.

This parallel between the frameworks shaping the walking environment and the lived



2.2d) Everyday perceived accessibility in unwalkable cities in Sub-Saharan Africa

This paper examines how residents of three

2.2 Stakeholder and Policy Engagement



low-income neighbourhoods in Accra and Maputo perceive their ability to access daily needs on foot, using **georeferenced household surveys**.

Participants mapped their routes, destinations, and emotional responses - fear, comfort, stress - towards walking. The analysis combined **spatial**, **socio-demographic**, and **perception data** through multiple correspondence and cluster analysis to identify accessibility profiles.

Findings show that perceived accessibility is shaped as much by social and emotional conditions as by infrastructure, with gender, neighbourhood context, and trip purpose playing key roles.

By centring the **lived experiences** of residents and **leveraging local knowledge** in both data

collection and interpretation, the study highlights the **need for pedestrian-centred planning** that tackles insecurity, discomfort, and exclusion alongside infrastructure provision in Sub-Saharan African cities.

[Continue reading](#)



2.3 Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building



The third strategy ensures the methodology's sustainability and adaptability. The WCL's focus on equitable partnerships produces outcomes that **strengthen local capacities** and foster innovative participatory research methods. A key result has been the **amplification of community voices**, ensuring they play a meaningful role in shaping local policy and planning.

Street Transformations

The WCL transforms unwalkable urban areas by engaging stakeholders in **collaborative street improvement initiatives**. In several cities, such as Accra, Freetown, and Maputo, residents lead efforts to install street lighting, build pedestrian bridges, and reclaim public spaces - such as converting abandoned land into sports fields - to **enhance safety and accessibility**. Projects like the Habitat Project in Maputo upgrade narrow alleys into functional streets, improving drainage, lighting, and social use. These interventions are low-cost but high-impact, rooted in local knowledge and community agency, and supported by partnerships with NGOs and local governments.

Dissertation Fellowship

The WCL, in partnership with the

Development Planning Unit (UCL), offers MSc Dissertation Fellowships that allow master's students to work with data collected by the Lab. Fellows are selected to **conduct research aligned with the lab's objectives**, contributing to a deeper understanding of urban walkability and mobility. The resulting dissertations are supported by the Lab's research team and intended for publication as WCL working papers.

Training for Community Leaders and Local Practitioners

The WCL actively engages **community leaders and local practitioners in training** to enhance urban walkability and mobility. Through participatory research and **capacity-building initiatives**, it empowers local stakeholders to take an active role in improving their environments.

Collaborating with local leaders and development partners, the Lab produces detailed **walkability maps** that foster ownership and serve as **tools for advocacy**, planning, and engagement with local authorities.

It also runs workshops for practitioners and

2.3 Knowledge Sharing and Capacity Building



community leaders on participatory urban planning, sustainable mobility, and integrating walking into development strategies, **equipping communities to lead efforts** toward more walkable and sustainable environments.

fostering citizen participation in urban planning and decision-making processes.

[Continue reading](#)

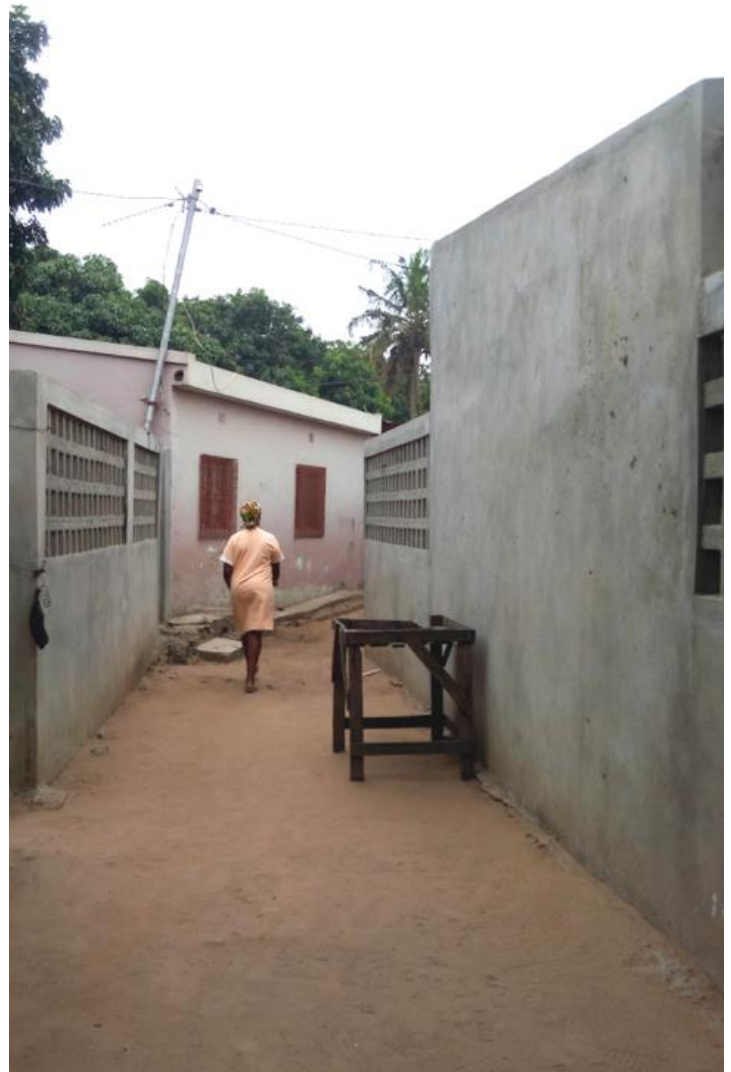
Want to learn more?

2.3a) Accessibility and sustainable mobility transitions in Africa: Insights from Freetown

Drawing on focus groups with residents and city-wide mobility and accessibility analysis in Freetown, this paper **maps travel patterns and their links with structural factors** such as urban form, poverty, informality, and social identities across different scales of the city.

The paper also presents evidence from a variety of methods that illustrate the significance of accessibility-centred information and analysis for establishing policy priorities for improving urban mobility and accessibility in the local, African and global contexts.

The research methodology intentionally included a **capacity-building component**, offering three-day workshops for young volunteer researchers. These sessions equipped participants with **skills in community mapping** and the use of **digital tools for research**,



Impact

**Tangible and intangible outcomes of the
Walking Cities Lab methodology**

Impact



1. Documenting community-led transformation

Systematically documenting the location and conditions of community-built infrastructure increases the likelihood that authorities will take notice of the community's needs, offer financial support and further advance the projects initiated by residents.

2. Creating spaces for empathy and learning

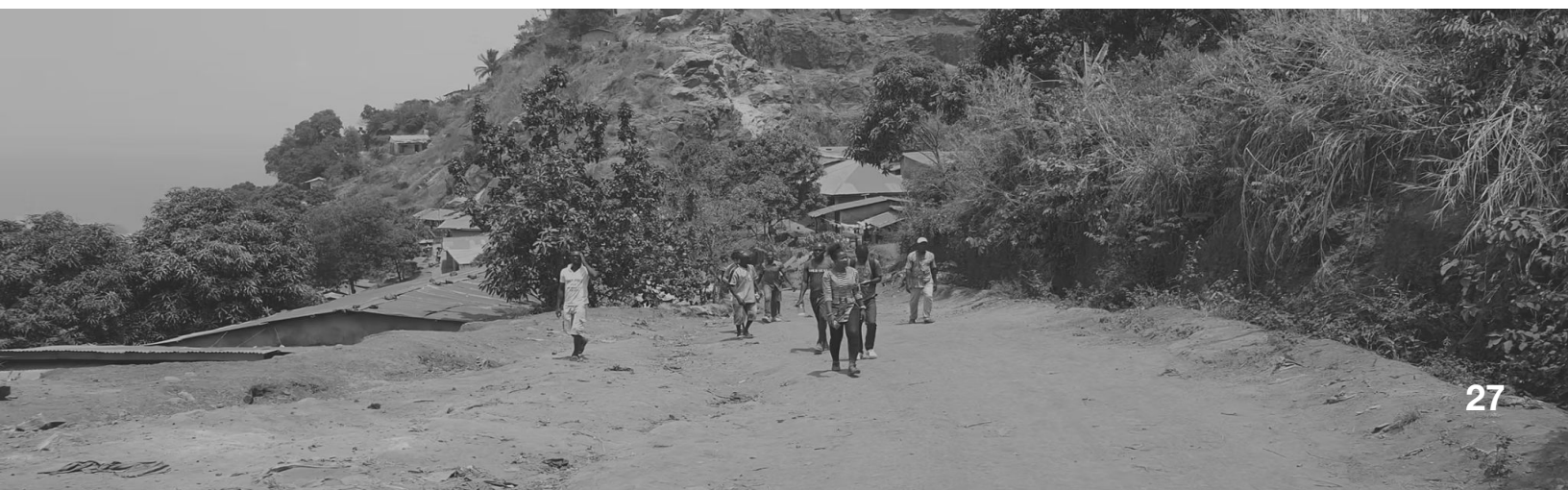
The Walking Cities Lab methodology encourages understanding and cooperation. Residents, planning professionals and governing bodies invariably end up working hand in hand after engaging with each other through the walks, discussions and community mapping exercises. Data collection processes create awareness in pedestrians about their rights and the outcomes of their walking practices.

3. Building a useful database for future projects

Research tools such as geolocation-based surveys make it possible to identify the number of plots, size and location within any given neighbourhood and highlight residents' priorities, which is essential data for any upgrading project.

4. Changing the narrative around walking

Prioritising and promoting walking as the most fundamental and sustainable form of mobility, even in disadvantaged communities, shifts discourses and attitudes from walking as a burden to an essential component of accessible, safe and enjoyable built environments, steadily diminishing the dominance of the private car as the ultimate status symbol.



Quick Links

Quick Links



Walking off the beaten path: Everyday walking environment and practices in informal settlements in Freetown

[See here](#)

Walkability and the Right to the city: A snapshot critique of pedestrian space in Maputo, Mozambique

[See here](#)

Planning for walkable cities in Africa: Co-producing knowledge on conditions, practices, and strategies

[See here](#)

Walking cities that are (un)walkable: exploring everyday lived realities in low-income neighbourhoods in Accra

[See here](#)

Policy-reality gaps in Africa's walking cities: Contextualizing institutional perspectives and residents' lived experiences in Accra

[See here](#)

Everyday perceived accessibility in unwalkable cities in Sub-Saharan Africa

[See here](#)

Self-built infrastructure interventions to (un)walkable streets: Pedestrian accessibility, safety and enjoyment in a neighbourhood in Accra

[See here](#)

Accessibility and sustainable mobility transitions in Africa: Insights from Freetown

[See here](#)

Everyday accessibility practices and experiences in a context of transitions to sustainable mobility: Qualitative evidence from Sub-Saharan Africa

[See here](#)

Accessibility, (dis)advantage and everyday mobility practices and experiences: the cases of Maputo and Freetown

[See here](#)

Barriers to transition towards sustainable mobility in Sub-Saharan African cities: The case of Maputo and Freetown

[See here](#)

Active mobility, equity and inclusion

[See here](#)

Walk this way: Pedestrian accessibility and equity in Barranquilla and Soledad, Colombia

[See here](#)

Urban space distribution: The case for a more equitable mobility system

[See here](#)



Contact us

**The Bartlett Development Planning
Unit (DPU)**

34 Tavistock Square, London WC1H
9EZ, United Kingdom

+44 (20) 7679 1111
dpu@ucl.ac.uk

*Designed and prepared by Marianne Sibaud. Photography by Daniel
Oviedo.*