Urban Doers Community

Smarter than Car

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Futurama Redux - Implementing Urban Sustainability Transformations

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Abstract

The problem of sustainability is that it calls into question not only what we do but who we are: our goals, our values, our collective narratives and social imaginaries. Transforming the foundational systems that both define modern global civilisation and make it unsustainable requires us to develop and pursue cultural narratives and visions of the future that are profoundly different than the ones that got us where we are today. The bold, mobility-based, utopian vision of the 1939 Futurama exhibit mainstreamed automobility by uniting a broad array of powerful stakeholders in a great project of societal reinvention, but it failed to consider the viability of its underlying assumptions or the long-term cost of its own maintenance.

Smarter Than Car's (STC) work contributes to sustainability transformations by addressing the disconnect between the operating principles of healthy, liveable, sustainable cities and those of the system of automobility, in which the motor vehicle serves as the default mobility technology and the logic of motor vehicle use dominates traffic organisation and the allocation of space in streets. STC has identified the Superblocks concept as having the potential to serve as an overarching, paradigm-shifting, high-leverage tool for urban transformation. Yet, despite the transformative potential of the Superblocks concept and its burgeoning popularity, the concept has yet to be fully implemented and none of the existing plans is consistent with the scale, scope, and speed necessary for urban sustainability transformations.

Efforts to realise the Superblocks concept have been hampered by a lack of sufficient scale, lack of fidelity to the core concept, and lack of both political will and public support. An implementation process designed to avoid these risks would prioritise: (1) the articulation of an attractive, easy-to-understand, and deeply desirable vision consistent with the necessary scale, scope, and speed of sustainability transformations, and (2) the assembly of a support coalition with enough power to ensure that the vision becomes a reality. To this end, STC introduces here a conceptual model of a four-phase implementation process that is especially concerned with vision and power, that can be universally applied, and that incorporates the agency of context-sensitive structuration forces.

Key lessons:

1. Sustainability requires rapid societal transformation, not piecemeal solutions. In order to tackle the problem of sustainability, we must call into question not only what we do but who we are: our goals, our values, our collective narratives and social imaginaries.

2. If you want to change behavioural norms, change the context that normalises them.

3. The Superblocks concept is a high-leverage tool for urban sustainability transformations with the potential to simultaneously address multiple issues.

4. The primary obstacles preventing automobility cities from becoming cities of superblocks are the lack of visions consonant with the challenge of sustainability and the lack of support coalitions capable of realising such visions even if they did exist.

5. To be effective, implementation processes need to be designed to produce appropriate visions and establish sufficient support coalitions; to be scalable and transferable, these processes need to be universal; to be viable, they need to respond to contextual differences.

Back to the Futurama

When city streets started filling up with cars in the first decades of the 20th century, traffic accidents and deaths rose sharply, sparking widespread protests. Automobiles were seen as incompatible with the crowded, unpredictable, and multifunctional city streets of the time, and many cities tried to ban them. By the 1960s, the opposite was true. Cities around the world were transforming themselves to suit motor vehicles and streets had been redefined and redesigned as places for motor vehicle traffic. What happened in the intervening years to trigger such a change? In a word, the Futurama.

An enormous, multifaceted, immersive exhibit funded by General Motors and held at the World's Fair in New York in 1939-1940, the Futurama aimed to sell cars not by touting the advantages of the products themselves but by selling a future that depended on them. Its chief designer, Norman Bel Geddes, shifted the focus, and thus the criticism, away from cars and onto the built environment. If the personal automobile is the embodiment of progress through technological innovation, then these old streets, old cities, old ways of thinking, planning, and building are hindering humanity's progress. The Futurama showed the world a future based on automobility that captured hearts and inspired the imagination. Within a generation, cities everywhere were indeed transforming themselves in its image. There was only one tiny problem with bringing the Futurama to life. It was never remotely sustainable.

This year, a worldwide fleet of 1.2 billion motor vehicles manufactured using a trillion kilogrammes of steel will burn 2.2 trillion litres of oil and send 1.5 billion used tires to landfills while traversing a global network of more than 65 million kilometres of roads. The average person will spend 4.3 years of her life in a car, driving an average distance of 1 kilometre per trip at an average speed of 10 km/h, paying 15-30% of her salary for the privilege. In total, car collisions have killed more than 60 million people, a grisly sum that grows by 1.25 million each year, and motor vehicle emissions are the main contributor to the air pollution that kills an additional 3.7 people annually. The transportation sector as a whole is directly responsible for 27% of global greenhouse gas emissions, and, as a primary enabler, is indirectly responsible for much of the rest. Far from utopia, the real-life Futurama is literally killing us.

The Problem of Sustainability Transformations

We are living in strange times. As our understanding of the nature and consequences of the sustainability crisis has deepened, sustainability has become universally recognised as a public policy problem. Gro Harlem Brundtland, the chair of the United Nations commission that produced Our Common Future in 1987 and thus the lead architect of the sustainable development policy discourse, even wrote in 2012: "In the face of an absolutely unprecedented emergency, society has no choice but to take dramatic action to avert a collapse of civilisation." And yet, not only has the sustainability crisis not improved in the half-century since it first officially became a global policy concern, it has worsened dramatically, with some aspects of it even continuing to increase their rate of worsening.

A troubling example is the fact that humans have emitted more greenhouse gases since the establishment of the UN climate change framework in 1992 than in all the preceding years of our species' history combined. With a scientific consensus that the climate crisis is an existential threat, a political consensus that it is the responsibility of the world's governments to lead on climate action, and a public consensus that governments should act immediately to resolve the crisis, how can such a thing happen? In a 2010 article titled "What's blocking sustainability?", ecologist and economist William Rees summed up the situation elegantly:

"Ours is allegedly a science-based culture. For decades, our best science has suggested that staying on our present growth-based path to global development implies catastrophe for billions of people and undermines the possibility of maintaining a complex global civilisation. Yet there is scant evidence that national governments, the United Nations, or other official international organisations have begun seriously to contemplate the implications for humanity of the scientists' warnings, let alone articulate the kind of policy responses the science evokes. The modern world remains mired in a swamp of cognitive dissonance and collective denial seemingly dedicated to maintaining the status quo.'"

Rees's point is well-taken, but rationality, logic, and evidence are only part of the equation. Perhaps the reason we appear to be in flight from thinking is that we remain in thrall to paradigmatic cultural narratives that have become maladap-

tive. As tools for organising and making sense of human experience, narratives are viewed by some scholars as so integral to human cognition that the notion of Homo narrans has been advanced. Humans "think, perceive, imagine, interact and make moral choices according to narrative structures" (Crossley, in Brown 2017). Philosopher Alisdair MacIntyre (1984) goes so far as to say, "I can only answer the question 'What am I to do?' if I can answer the prior question 'Of what story or stories do I find myself a part?'"

here is a "fundamental ontological connection" between narratives and paradigms (Fink and Yolles 2012). Defined by Thomas Kuhn (2012) as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values, techniques and so on shared by members of a given community", and by Donella Meadows (1999) as a society's "deepest set of beliefs about how the world works", paradigms are based on patterns of knowledge typically made sense of and transported through narratives. Paradigmatic cultural narratives are only useful, however, as long as they guide the societies that follow them toward desired ends. The paradigmatic cultural narratives of the Enlightenment, of modernity, of infinite progress, of economic growth – they have spurred humanity to incredible achievements and a position of dominance over all other life on Earth, but in living out these narratives we appear to have sacrificed long-term sustainability for an efflorescence that is likely to be astonishingly brief.

The problem of sustainability is that it is brutally difficult to accept, as it calls into question not only what we do but who we are: our goals, our values, our collective narratives and social imaginaries. It presents us with some seriously inconvenient truths and even more inconvenient choices that will need to be acknowledged, accepted, and incorporated into actions at every level of policy, practice, and both public and private life. Sustainability cannot be bargained with. If a system is unsustainable, it will by definition bring about its own collapse. If a system depends on some other system that is unsustainable, it will also eventually cease to exist. And many of the systems that constitute our modern urban world are fundamentally unsustainable or dependent on other systems that cannot be sustained. This includes the energy system, consumerism, food production, water use, manufacturing, transportation, urbanisation, communication, health care, waste, and so much more. Once again, William Rees provides a succinct assessment:

"To achieve sustainability, the world community must write a new cultural narrative that is explicitly designed for living on a finite planet".

And it must do so – we must do so – very quickly. For example, humanity's carbon budget for staying below 2˚C global warming may be exhausted as soon as 2030, and 2˚C warming may push us past a tipping point that makes 3, 4, or 5˚C warming unavoidable. Not only is the scale (nearly everything, everywhere) and scope (nearly every aspect of everything, everywhere) of change necessary for sustainability enormous, the speed of change must be unprecedented in its rapidity.

Futurama Redux

Transforming the foundational systems that both define modern global civilisation and make it unsustainable requires us to develop and pursue cultural narratives and visions of the future that are profoundly different than the ones that got us where we are today. As our name suggests, Smarter Than Car's work contributes to sustainability transformations by addressing the disconnect between the operating principles of healthy, liveable, sustainable cities and those of the system of automobility, in which the motor vehicle serves as the default mobility technology and the logic of motor vehicle use dominates traffic organisation and the allocation of space in streets. For us, the bold, mobility-based, utopian vision of the Futurama is both a source of inspiration and a cautionary tale. It succeeded in uniting a broad array of powerful stakeholders in a great project of societal reinvention, but it failed to consider the viability of its underlying assumptions or the long-term cost of its own maintenance.

In 2015, Smarter Than Car began the Futurama Redux initiative. We brought together an interdisciplinary team of academics, designers, planners, artists, and architects to reimagine the Futurama for our current times, both in terms of its vision and the process by which the vision is produced. Whereas the original Futurama built its vision around the logic of automobility and was largely the product of a single mind, Futurama Redux used systems thinking and sustainability science as its theoretical foundation and an approach of democratic, context-sensitive, co-creation. Our central question was, "what comes after cars & oil?" The Futurama Redux exhibition has since travelled to four continents, guided dozens of workshops, and produced a four-volume publication.

However, while Futurama Redux has done (in our opinion) a good job of diagnosing problems, explaining systemic dysfunction, introducing principles of sustainable societies, and suggesting design approaches for envisioning transformative change, it lacks a process for applying these lessons. The initiative has not yet provided any kind of guidelines or roadmap for implementing transformative concepts. Futurama Redux makes clear that the future won't look like the present, that the status quo cannot be maintained, and that the problem of sustainability both constrains our options and encourages us to think and behave in totally different ways, but how can it be used to guide practical action? If only there was an existing planning concept for urban transformation that encapsulated the lessons of the Futurama Redux...

Figure 4: The Futurama Redux interactive exhibition, source: Smarter Than Car

Figure 3: The Futurama Redux interactive exhibition, source: Trevor Dykstra

Cities of Superblocks

It is precisely the system of automobility that the Superblocks concept, developed by Salvador Rueda in 1980s Barcelona, confronts and challenges. In so doing, it may be the most promising contemporary planning concept for initiating a new urban paradigm based on sustainability and liveability. Here is how it works. Picture a standard gridiron street layout. Now only allow motor vehicle through-traffic on every third street. Align the new traffic scheme on both north-south and east-west streets so that the remaining motor vehicle through-routes define the edges of three-block by three-block traffic-calmed "superblocks" . Now you have neighbourhood-sized areas in which street space no longer has to be dedicated to cars and can instead be put to other purposes. At the same time, no place within a superblock is more than a five-or-so-minute walk from one of the edge streets, where the majority of shops and services, as well as public transportation stops, can be found.

The aims and scope of the Superblocks concept have changed over time, largely in service to different political agendas, and it still lacks an explicit definition. In an attempt to rectify this, the recent research project TuneOurBlock, in which Smarter Than Car participated, used an e-Delphi process with more than 50 experts to arrive at the following description of the purpose of the concept and the elements it comprises:

"The Superblocks concept leverages traffic reorganisation and the reallocation of public space to support urban sustainability transitions. By systematically reducing the number of motor vehicle through-routes, the Superblocks concept transforms the city into a mosaic of traffic-calmed neighbourhoods. Traffic reorganisation is applied at scales large enough to promote systemic change, such as that of urban districts or even entire cities. Individual neighbourhoods – superblocks – prevent motor-vehicle through-traffic, are walkable in scale, and redesign reclaimed public space to prioritise active mobility, climate adaptation, the improvement of local environmental conditions, and opportunities for diverse and inclusive public social life."

Figure 5: Status quo vs. Superblocks traffic grids, source: City of Barcelona

Inside superblocks, public street space formerly dedicated to motor vehicles can be repurposed for climate adaptation measures such as trees and swales, for social encounters, for recreational and athletic activities, and for other objectives decided upon by residents and community members. Motor vehicles retain access, but low speed limits and circular traffic routing discourage entry for vehicles simply passing through. Active mobility modes such as walking and cycling, however, are granted through-access on all streets. This shifts the mobility hierarchy as well as notions of how streets should be used and designed. In theory, the Superblocks concept not only calms traffic and reclaims public space, it undermines the technocratic automobility regime that has dominated traffic planning (and public space allocation) for decades and offers a new vision of green, sustainable, ethical urbanism. The result is, in essence, the vision put forth by the Futurama Redux, and a correction of the excesses and uncritical assumptions of the original Futurama.

When deployed at the scale of an entire city, the Superblocks concept offers a vision and accompanying narrative of sustainable urbanity that can be tailored to local needs and conditions in highly participatory ways. And it does so by simply altering traffic regulations and opening up new possibilities for spaces freed up by the new traffic scheme. After several initial implementation efforts in the 1990s and 2000s in Barcelona and other Spanish cities, the Superblocks concept received immense media coverage beginning in 2015 when Barcelona mayor Ada Colau made it the foundation of the city's mobility plan. Buenos Aires, Valencia, Berlin, Vienna, Leipzig, and Hamburg have all since developed plans to implement Superblocks, with cities in Australia, China, Taiwan, and Ecuador following suit. Yet, despite the transformative potential of the Superblocks concept and its burgeoning popularity, the concept has yet to be fully implemented and none of the existing plans is consistent with the scale, scope, and speed necessary for systemic sustainability transformations. To paraphrase William Rees, what's blocking Superblocks?

Conceptual Model of an Implementation Process for Cities of Superblocks

Full realisation of the Superblocks concept appears to have been hampered by a lack of sufficient scale, lack of fidelity to the core concept, and lack of both political will and public support. The transformative capacity of Superblocks is lost when the scale of implementation is too small. Compromising the vision by, for example, seeking to implement fragmented Superblock cells without an accompanying traffic reorganisation, or by failing to challenge the supremacy of automobility, hinders the ability of the concept to function properly. A lack of either political will or public support risks abandoning implementation prematurely, or else realisation of a compromised vision.

The first question for cities hoping to fully implement the Superblocks concept – and thereby maximise its impact and benefits – is how can the pitfalls that impede implementation be avoided? In other words, how would an "ideal" implementation process unfold? More broadly, how should cities plan for socio-technical transitions in support of sustainability transformations? To effect change in democratic societies, visions of preferred futures must engender buy-in from political parties and their constituencies, as well as from powerful special interests, while addressing both first-order problems and the systemic deficiencies that produce them. Additionally, if pathways for transition from current situations to preferred futures are to be of service, they must actually be capable of guiding cities from here/now to there/then, overcoming obstacles and negotiating power relations along the way.

An implementation process designed to avoid the risks noted above would seek to envision a future state in which systemic deficiencies are resolved, overcome resistance to change, institutionalise transformation, and co-create sustainable, livable, and equitable urban futures. In other words, it would prioritise: (1) the articulation of an attractive, easy-to-understand, and deeply desirable vision consistent with the necessary scale, scope, and speed of sustainability transformations, and (2) the assembly of a support coalition with enough power to ensure that the vision becomes a reality. The details of such a process would be heavily influenced by contextual determinants and thus vary from one city to another, but we propose here four universally applicable phases: (1) Futuring, (2) Planning, (3) Piloting, and (4) Institutionalising.

Figure 6: An Ideal Four Phase Implementation Process for Cities of Superblocks

Futuring

The futuring phase is concerned with diagnosing the root causes of problems, identifying actions capable of resolving them, and envisioning the societal changes likely to accompany such actions. It answers the questions "what are we trying to accomplish here?" and "what changes will that entail?" This phase consists mostly of discussions and workshops with the broadest possible range of stakeholders from all sectors of society to assess systemic problems and imagine a future state in which they have been resolved. It produces narratives and visualisations that serve as a foundation for communication and planning. Additionally, it seeks to identify "changemakers" and other potential leaders who can galvanise various populations into support, and to do so strategically in order to build a powerful support coalition. Without rigorous futuring, there is a high risk that plans will not reach the necessary scale and scope for systemic change and that support coalitions essential for such an endeavor will not be assembled.

Planing

The planning phase identifies the steps necessary for achieving the future envisioned in the first phase. It determines which actions have to be taken to move from vision to reality, and how, when, and by whom they should be taken. The planning process figures out how to work with and around existing laws, policies, practices, and funding mechanisms, and how to change those that cannot be made compatible. It is usually led by planning professionals, but politicians and members of different stakeholder groups as well as the general public play active roles. The planning phase produces a comprehensive implementation roadmap that begins with the current situation and leads to the desired future state. It also develops alternative routes in case progress encounters unforeseen obstacles along the way. Without a thorough planning phase, it is unlikely that any vision of systemic change will come to fruition. Planning unites goals, actions, processes, and people. It identifies obstacles and how to overcome them.

Piloting

The piloting phase is a combination of implementation and experimentation. The purpose of it is to test elements of the plan to learn how they function in practice (as opposed to on paper) and to discover important factors that may not have arisen in the planning process. A systematic piloting phase tests every major aspect of the plan, from changes in the built environment to public co-creation strategies to new policies and regulations. It identifies flaws in the plan and ways of improving them, and it allows stakeholders to find the most effective and efficient ways of working together. Without pilot projects, small omissions or mistakes in the implementation plan can lead to large and costly failures. Piloting is the final check of the plan before implementation begins in full.

Institutionalising

The institutionalising phase consists of the "re-normalisation" of all relevant systems, structures, and organisations around the concept of a Superblocks City. Instead of Superblocks being an exception to the rule, as they are now, in

this phase they become the rule. All the ways in which the Superblocks concept challenges current standards (of planning, of funding, of design, etc.) become guideposts for change. Most prominently, this includes regulatory adaptation and organisational restructuring. Full implementation of the Superblocks concept is unlikely to occur if it is constantly fighting against policies and procedures designed for the system it seeks to replace. A Superblocks City establishes a new normal, and institutionalising is the phase that helps ensure that change.

Structuration forces shaping implementation processes

On the surface, the four phases listed above are hardly novel; nearly all major contemporary projects affecting public space include them to some extent. It is not the phases, per se, that matter, but the objectives of each phase. A shallow futuring phase in which public participaton consists of a selection between three pre-prepared renderings does not have the same objectives as a deep futuring phase in which paradigmatic cultural narratives are articulated, assessed, and collectively rewritten. It is this level of depth in each phase that makes the process ideal for implementing transformational change such as the conversion of an "automobility city" into a Superblocks City.

While the progressive approach of vision-to-plan-to-proof-to-new-normal is meant to be universal, the four-phase implementation process is merely a framework, a structure with objectives. The goals of the overall process are always the same – to produce a substantive vision of a sustainable future, build a support coalition willing and able to realise the vision, and then to fully implement it – but the actual content of each phase is likely to vary significantly from one city to another depending on the relative influence of a large number of factors. We refer to these factors (drawn from both academic literature and our own experience) as "structuration forces".

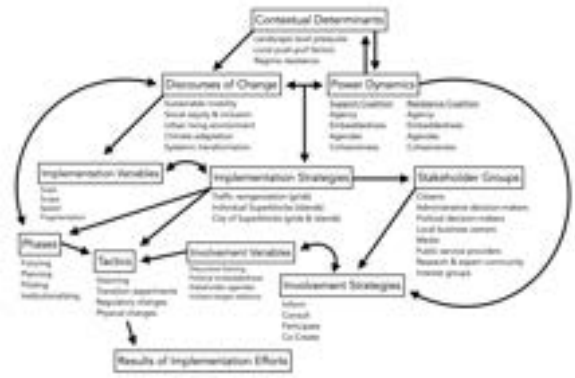

Figure 7: Structuration Forces Shaping Superblocks Implementation Efforts

Contextual determinants describe the situation that proposals for a Superblocks city are brought into. Landscape level pressures refer to the degree of pressure that comes from exogenous conditions, such as the price of oil or supranational climate agreements. Local push-pull factors are the forces that are pushing the city away from the socio-technical regime of automobility and pulling it toward something more sustainable. Regime resistance refers to the stability of the relevant status quo and the ways in which it is actively resisting change. Contextual determinants are, at least in part, shaped by power dynamics.

They also shape power dynamics in return as well as discourses of change, arguably the two most influential forces on the implementation of the Superblocks concept.

Discourses of change establish the local relevance of the concept; they identify the problems that Superblocks should be the answer to. Once discourses are established, it can be difficult to reframe them. Discourses delimit the concept and establish the kind of change that implementing it should foster. Power dynamics here refers to two opposing coalitions: support and resistance. How strong is each coalition? How close to the decision-making process are they? What other agendas are they attaching to their support or resistance? Are they tightly organised and clearly on the same page or does fragmentation impair their efforts?

Implementation strategies are the result of power dynamics acting on discourses of change and consist of traffic reorganisation (grids), individual superblock units (islands), or cities of superblocks (grids & islands). The combination of all three (discourse, power, strategy), in turn, shapes the implementation variables of scale, scope, speed, and cohesiveness, as well as the composition of stakeholder groups. The specific composition of stakeholders and their own power dynamics influence involvement strategies and involvement variables.

All of the above forces influence the number, type, and depth of implementation phases and the tactics employed to produces plan and then to implement them. The final results of implementation efforts are directly shaped by phases and tactics, but it is essential to identify how all the other structuration forces acted upon the situation and process that led to these phases and tactics. The reality of intentional transformational change is that every single step, every single claim, every single assumption and assertion, is rife with conflict. The extraordinarly difficult but absolutely critical job of those guiding the process is to convert any antagonistic conflict (zero-sum, fundamentally oppositional) into agonistic conflict (the constructive direction of difference and dissent toward mutually beneficial outcomes).

In order to put the conceptual model into practice, cities would need to embed the specific details and dynamics of local structuration forces into a four-phase action plan, and in so doing produce a unique, context-sensitive schematic guide to becoming a city of superblocks. Always keeping in mind the dual transformational drivers of vision and power, concrete objectives would be assigned individual tactics within phases to make sure the top-level objectives of each phase are achieved. Key questions would also be assigned to phases and sub-phase tactics to serve as checkpoints.

Two different applications of the model are foreseen. It could be used as an assessment tool for current Superblocks implementation efforts, especially in terms of alignment with sustainability requirements, transformational capacity, and the overcoming of regime resistance. Alternatively, the model could be used to guide the development and planning of future efforts to implement Superblocks Cities. Any attempt to implement large-scale changes to urban space, policies, and practices requires huge amounts of time and effort. This conceptual model is intended to make such attempts more effective by identifying obstacles and developing the capacity to overcome them.

Urban Transformation, Superblocks, and Sustainable Futuramas

There is no easy path to sustainability. The scale, scope, and speed of transformational change necessary to achieve it is not just daunting but difficult to fathom. It is not only how we do things that will need to change, and not even only what we do. The problem of sustainability is that it requires us to change why we do things. It requires us to realise that the paradigmatic cultural narratives that underpin so much of what we believed was progress have become maladaptive. It requires us to dismantle the socio-technical systems that reify those narratives. The problem of sustainability is that there truly is no alternative. That which is not sustainable will cease to exist.

What does all of this mean for cities? As the limits to growth continue to assert themselves and the symptoms of the polycrisis intensify, cities will need to become more self-sufficient, with diverse local foundational economies. They will need to be redesigned according to human scale, human speed, and human power. Massive climate-adaptation and resilience efforts focused on nature-based solutions will be needed. Cities will have to move away from the fossil-fueled, expansion-oriented automobility regime that reshaped them over the past century, only this new transformational era needs to accomplish its tasks in a timeframe that seems impossibly brief.

Because it has the potential to address so many of these issues simultaneously, and because it draws its logic from a different narrative than that of automobility, the Superblocks concept has the potential to serve as an overarching, paradigm-shifting, high-leverage tool for urban transformation. The primary obstacles preventing automobility cities from becoming Superblocks cities are the lack of visions consonant with the challenge of sustainability and the lack of support coalitions capable of realising such visions even if they did exist. Any attempt to implement Superblocks without these two critical elements is doomed before it begins, at least as far as its ability to catalyse systemic sustainability transformations.

And yet, the Superblocks concept continues to attract attention, and more and more cities around the world are looking to implement it. So, how can the obstacles hindering Superblocks cities be overcome? In our view, the process needs to fit the challenge. If virtually everything needs to change, then a process for reimagining everything (vision) and making sure the new vision can actually be implemented (power) is necessary. To this end, our conceptual model is of a four-phase implementation process that is especially concerned with vision and power, and that incorporates multilevel structuration forces and local contextual determinants.

When developing his vision for the Futurama, Norman Bel Geddes changed the prevailing discourse (cars in cities or no cars in cities) with a single statement: “Automobiles are in no way responsible for our traffic problem. The entire responsibility lies in the faulty roads, which are behind the times.” He recognised that infrastructure is essentially a context for behaviour. Change the context and you change the kind of behaviour that makes sense within it. Streets and cities and the ways they are designed “tell” us stories about how and who we should be

when in them. Bel Geddes understood that automobility would never become paradigmatic unless its infrastructural context was changed to suit it. The same lesson is embedded in the Superblocks concept, albeit to very different ends. If automobility cities around the world transformed into Superblocks cities and fully leveraged the potential of the concept, we would address the sustainability crisis in profound and far-reaching ways. Our hope is that the conceptual model presented here can contribute to making this happen.