



AGORA THEMATIC DIALOGUE

15-minute City – a concept for all?

16 & 17 MAY 2023



Contents

Contents	2
Table of Figures	2
1 Context.....	3
2 Site Visit.....	3
3 AGORA Thematic Dialogue.....	5
3.1 Dialogue with Romanian Mission Cities	5
3.1.1 Bucharest Sector 2	5
3.1.2 Cluj-Napoca	5
3.1.3 Suceava	5
3.2 Discussion on key topics regarding the 15-Minute-City concept...6	
3.2.1 Topic: Speeding up the transition	6
3.2.2 Topic: Bouncing back rebounds	7
3.2.3 Topic: Jobs, jobs, jobs.....	7
3.2.4 Topic: Clever and smart	8
3.2.5 Topic: Come to me, sustainably.....	9
3.2.6 Other topics not chosen for discussion.....	10
4 15mC Position Paper	11
5 Annex: World Café – ENUAC event on 16 May 2023	12

Table of Figures

Fig. 1 & 2: Site visit at "Proiectul Liniei" ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe	3
Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8: Site visit at "Proiectul Liniei" ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe	4
Fig. 9 & 10: Dialogue with the Romanian Mission Cities ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe	6
Fig. 11 & 12: Discussion the 15-Minute City key topics in groups ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe.....	10
Fig. 13: World café discussion at ENUAC mid-term/kick-off event on 16 May in Bucharest ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe.....	12

1 Context

While providing an attractive narrative for urban mobility transition, 15-minute City concepts need to be specified further when focusing on implementation and adaptation in different contexts. Building on the experience and practice of Romanian cities taking part in the EU Cities Mission "Bucharest – District 2, Cluj-Napoca and Suceava", the AGORA invited participants from policy, research, business and civil society to discuss local challenges and critical issues for 15-minute City approaches.

Through the AGORA Dialogue, the aim was to start collaborating and co-creating on positions from policy and science towards proximity-oriented concepts and take these further in a position paper within the frame of the Driving Urban Transitions Partnership (DUT).

This was the on-site workshop and framework programme in Bucharest:

- Joint dinner of ENUAC projects and AGORA participants (16 May)
- Site visit for local implementation of 15minC measures (17 May)
- AGORA Thematic Dialogue (17 May)

2 Site Visit

The morning of 17 May - prior to the AGORA Thematic Dialogue - we visited district 6 in Bucharest, where we had a closer look at the implementation of 15-minute city measures in the "Projectul Liniei". There, the largest park in Romania is being built along old railway tracks.

Here are some photos of the rainy, but interesting site visit:



Fig. 1 & 2: Site visit at "Projectul Liniei" ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe



Fig. 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 & 8: Site visit at "Projectul Liniei" ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe

3 AGORA Thematic Dialogue

3.1 Dialogue with Romanian Mission Cities

As an entry point to the workshop, representatives of the three Romanian Mission Cities were introduced by our moderator and interviewed about their projects, experiences and challenges. An exhibition session with posters presenting the three Mission Cities where the audience could add comments, suggestions and additions to the respective challenges of the cities on notes was then organised.

3.1.1 Bucharest Sector 2

Challenge: How do we help people accept losing 'their' parking space?

Bucharest Sector 2 offers numerous urban cycle lanes, prioritizing sustainable transportation. However, political challenges often hinder the implementation of long-lasting projects. Energy efficiency, clean air, and the expansion of green infrastructure hold significant importance for District 2. Their strategic scope revolves around creating a "City of the people" rather than one dominated by cars. Shifting mindsets and controversies surrounding the 15-Minute City concept in the Romanian parliament present difficulties. Cultural challenges arise as many people in Romania feel entitled to parking spaces, even considering it a human right. The district faces a significant parking problem, with a large number of vehicles regularly parked on pedestrian areas, leading to a lack of fines due to widespread non-compliance. In response, the district has started constructing parking polls on sidewalks to address the issue.

3.1.2 Cluj-Napoca

Challenge: Towards a walkable city: between public policy and mindset

Cluj-Napoca has embraced sustainability with a Net Zero Strategy and Climate City contract. They envision a 15-Minute City, prioritizing walkability and meeting daily needs within short distances. An ecosystem approach integrates social, economic, and environmental aspects, engaging stakeholders and emphasizing public perception. The city center's walkability is growing in popularity, and by 2026, the public transport fleet will be fully electric. Cluj-Napoca celebrates Green Friday and plans a metropolitan car ring to alleviate traffic. Challenges lie in peri-urban settlements and commuting, addressed through a city imagination center. A fast track for green investments is sought, while the Cluj bike program improves bike lanes.

3.1.3 Suceava

Challenge: A shift in mindset, moving away from the car

Suceava, situated on the border with Ukraine, currently faces migration challenges. The city took a significant step towards sustainability by achieving a 100% electric public transport fleet last year, with plans to expand this throughout the metropolitan area by 2025. A shift in mentality and the need for a green wave are recognized as crucial. To support the adoption of electric vehicles, infrastructure for charging stations is required. Suceava introduced "Green Friday," offering free public transport every Friday, promoting both sustainability and safety considerations as part of their entry into the green transition. The creation of pedestrian-friendly spaces is considered important, although the removal of parking lots has been met with some resistance. The implementation of elevated pedestrian crossings and one-way roads has improved safety. However, the city still lacks sufficient infrastructure for cycling. Public debate regarding green transformation has not yet taken place, and some individuals continue to take parking spaces for granted. While the shift to public transport is still ongoing, the introduction of Green Fridays has led to increased public transport usage after just one month. A regular bus ticket costs only 50 cents (2.5 lei), and plans are underway to introduce electronic ticketing and information through

a dedicated app. Suceava has also improved public transport routes. Achieving a change in mindset and ensuring the comfort of residents are important considerations. The city has been running awareness campaigns, including initiatives in schools, to promote sustainable practices. Despite economic challenges, people are increasingly embracing sustainable options in response.

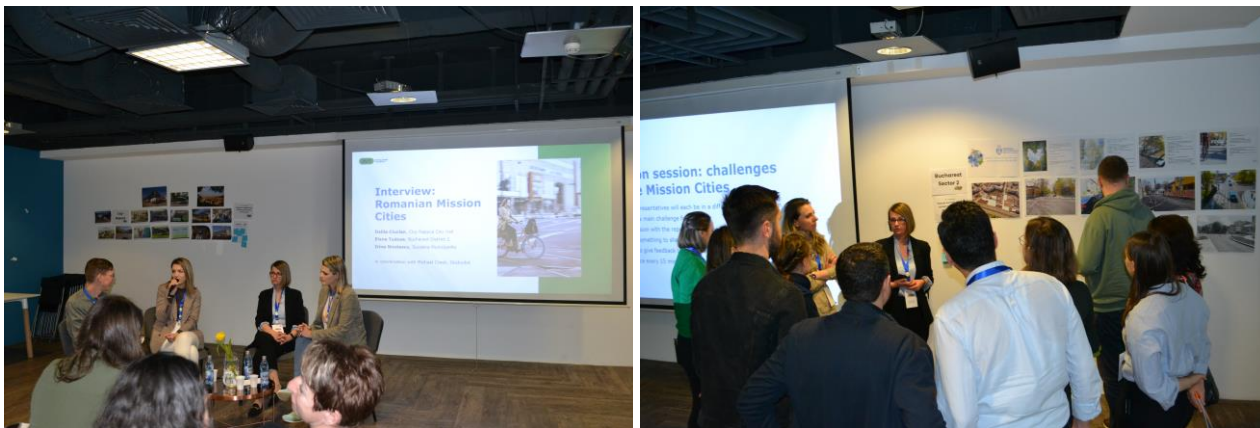


Fig. 9 & 10: Dialogue with the Romanian Mission Cities ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe

3.2 Discussion on key topics regarding the 15-Minute-City concept

After a dialogue with the three Romanian Mission Cities, the group selected six out of twelve key topics to discuss further for half an hour. The groups were formed spontaneously according to the interests of the participants. Two of the smaller groups were fused to ensure enough participants in each. Outcomes on each topic were recorded by each group on Response Cards. After the discussion, the whole group had ten minutes to read the Response Cards for all groups. They were each given six sticky dots with which to highlight key outcomes, which they could spread across the Response Cards as they wished.

The responses below are listed in order of the number of sticky dots each response received.

3.2.1 Topic: Speeding up the transition

The impending climate crisis allows for no further delays. Nevertheless, policies connected to urban mobility relate to all inhabitants of an affected area and often spur resistance. Thus, delays and half-hearted compromises are the general rule. In this context, how can potentials of experimentation and demonstration of measures be realised faster?

Response cards:

Long-term vision (11 votes)

- Contract to set the ambition
- Go beyond election periods

Involve people in the process (9 votes)

- Noticing and posting problems
- Bottom-up approach from citizens (not wait for top-down)
- Tactical urbanism to break resistance to experimentation

Proof of concept needed (5 votes)

- Demonstrate what is already possible



Crisis (2 votes)

- Big enough to make change happen

Awareness raising (0 votes)

- Campaigns to get buy-in

3.2.2 Topic: Bouncing back rebounds

The 15-minute City concept sets out to transform our cities. However, big interventions usually come with unexpected consequences, conflicting objectives and potential rebound effects. What are potential rebounds and unintended effects (e.g. in social justice or gentrification)? Which policies could cause them?

This challenge was fused with: **Let's all walk from now on!**

In 15-minute neighbourhoods, city dwellers have the possibility to fulfill their daily needs within walking or cycling distance. These transport modes come with a wide range of benefits for individuals and the urban society. However, by prioritising active mobility, is there a risk that people with mobility impairments get left behind?

Response cards:

Including all needs (18 votes)

- 15 min for whom?
- Walk/cycling... impaired mobility
- Homogenise needs, balance interests of core and outskirts

Green gentrification (6 votes)

- Higher prices due to public investment
- Closing streets for parks
- Co-benefits realised quicker + cheaper
- Change of socioeconomic structure by free time spending

Densification (6 votes)

- Pushing away public function (eg sports) & small businesses that cannot afford any more
- How to distribute increases in (land) prices?

Where is the money? (5 votes)

- Spending public funds (taking it away from other uses?)
- E.g. PT free
- New finance mechanisms

Bubbles (0 votes)

- Segregation / creating bubbles = staying within "your" (comfort) zone
- Shift mobility patterns (virtual mobility, more free time)

3.2.3 Topic: Jobs, jobs, jobs

One grey area of the 15-minute City concept is the distribution of jobs, where the public realm has little to no influence. Today, work-related mobility is usually located outside the individual 15-minute radius and thus would require further decentralisation of opportunities. What are potential options - in different time horizons to better connect work-sites to the 15-minute City?



Response cards:

Capacity at local authorities (10 votes)

- Municipalities should have enough staff for analysis, policy making

15-min neighbourhood to foster local economy (7 votes)

- Improve walking & cycling
- Increases local economic activity
- Jobs are kept and created

Better coordination of land use planning (5 votes)

- Better enforcement of existing regulations
- Support for mixed use and transit-oriented development

Leverage on telework and co-working (4 votes)

- Companies should support the use of co-working places financially
- Estimate the potential of telework to reduce commuting

Support decentralisation of activities (4 votes)

- To reduce the need to travel

Commute cost reimbursement policy (2 votes)

- Policy should not support long commutes (by car eg. company car)

Public transport is the backbone of the 15-min city (1 vote)

- Create better/more comfortable alternatives to car driving

Company mobility management (1 vote)

- Companies should be required to create a mobility plan to ensure linking to the 15-min city
- Appoint a mobility manager who coordinates it

3.2.4 Topic: Clever and smart

New and improved technologies provide options that make mobility services more flexible and convenient, improve accessibility, and incentivise changes in travel patterns. However, often such services turn out to be expensive to set up and offer little direct impact. Which potential can digitalisation bring to 15-minute neighbourhoods and which risks could arise?

Response cards:

Added value: Mobility app (9 votes)

- Get directions
- Buy tickets
- Show fastest route
 - ⇒ Behavioural change
- Be inclusive + just!
- Integrate all services

Smart buildings (3 votes)

- Resource efficiency
- Data regulations needed
- Citizen involvement
- Communicate funding opportunities



Resource monitoring (2 votes)

- For public authorities
- Resource efficiency
- Collect environmental slack
 - ⇒ Make improvements step by step

Keep on track! (2 votes)

- Add real new data/regulations
- Be open for new technologies
- Update applications according to needs
- Communicate!

Risk: Cyber security (2 votes)

- Data (personal,...)
- Sharing of data
- Ethical issues
- Training for users starting with small children
- Regulations
- AI (trust, legal background, ...)

3.2.5 Topic: Come to me, sustainably

The urban logistic sector will be key for implementing 15-minute neighbourhoods: If people should be able to travel less (far) to fulfill their daily needs, products need to come to them. What are interactions, synergies and trade-offs between urban logistics. with the 15-minute City concept?

Response cards:

Logistics is not just about transportation but also its affected processes (8 votes)

- Circular economy
- Recycling of materials or avoiding waste can reduce traffic needs

Address people's behaviour (5 votes)

- Ordering online affects what is happening on the road
- From a systematic point of view you should make people aware of their actions

Using existing infrastructure more efficiently (5 votes)

- All day streets are crowded, at night streets are empty
- Not all actions cannot be shifted due to noise pollution
- There are (technical/procedural) developments in this field

Push & pull (1 vote)

- How much can you force companies to cooperate?

Public fleets are not just about public transportation (1 vote)

- It's also e.g. about waste disposal, infrastructure cleaning
- How is "logistics" affecting the urban image?
- Can routes, workload etc. of logistics processes be optimised?

Find people-friendly solutions (0 votes)

- Changing environment needs also greener solutions
- EV charging should be not just thought for private persons



Fig. 11 & 12: Discussion the 15-Minute City key topics in groups ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe

3.2.6 Other topics not chosen for discussion

The game of lifestyles

The 15-minute City concept utilises an optimistic vision for cities, based on active mobility, dense neighbourhoods and principles of sustainability. Thus, it promotes specific lifestyles, which also entails disincentivising others. What lifestyles are more aligned with the concept than others and which consequences could this have for urban societies?

15 controversies in our cities

Lately, the 15-minute City concept has become one battle ground for a culture war on sustainability in cities – especially in Anglo-American cities. How can underlying fears be addressed and appropriate reactions to conspiracy myths look like?

The European way for everybody?

The 15-minute City concept has its founding idea in the structure and setup of European city centres. What do the concept and related policies offer for diverse geographical, climatic, socio-economic etc. contexts?

Give people a say (and a role)

Public acceptance of policies for urban mobility transitions is essential, people taking over active roles in these will be even more important. How can ownership in 15-minute neighbourhoods be promoted?

From centres to suburbs – and back

As a high share of city dwellers opt to live in low-density areas, we observe large flows in and out of cities every day, creating considerable environmental and social impacts. Characterised by car-dependency and mono-functional structures, these areas are often far from fulfilling 15-minute City principles. Which answer can the 15-minute City concept give to existing realities in the urban outskirts?

Organising the transition

Implementing 15-minute neighbourhoods will require incredibly high efforts to renovate and redesign wide areas of our cities, especially streets and public space. How will it be possible to implement this enormous transformation, in situations characterised by a lack of financial resources and skilled labour? How can priorities be defined?

4 15mC Position Paper

The discussions held in the AGORA Dialogue will be taken on in the elaboration of a Position Paper, which play a role as a **non-academic overview over discussions and deliberations on the 15-minute City concept** in DUT's 15mC Transition Pathway. There, we want to take up learnings reached so far, featuring in more detail:

1. Discuss and develop common positions (and definitions) in the Steering Group and central stakeholders, building on the DUT Roadmap. This can entail revisiting used definitions of the 15mC concept and our activities as well as necessary future activities that the 15mC Transition Pathway needs to take.
2. Co-create on content-oriented needs, open questions and critical issues for mobility transitions in our engagement formats (especially AGORAs).
3. Create an overview of the work done and learnings made so far in 15mC Transition Pathway.

Over summer we will continue to elaborate concept and inputs for the Position Paper further and we are planning for an online 15mC AGORA in autumn, where we will invite to continue the discussion and draft inputs.

If you are interested in contributing to the Position Paper, please reach out to Maximilian.Jaeger@austriatech.at and Lena.Zeisel@austriatech.at.

**Thank you to all the participants
for the interesting discussions
and to our moderator for
hosting the workshop!**

5 Annex: World Café – ENUAC event on 16 May 2023

Back to back to the AGORA workshop, the ENUAC mid-term/kick.off event took place in Bucharest took place as well. In this event, one world café session discussed on the 15-Minute-City concept as well.



Fig. 13: World café discussion at ENUAC mid-term/kick-off event on 16 May in Bucharest ©DUT / JPI Urban Europe

- Framing of the concept

- Is there a **need for a common definition** of what 15mC means? Clarity among the scientific community (and also for practitioners) would be helpful.
- There are **different “pathways” to becoming a 15mC neighbourhood** – the 15mC radius is more an outcome or results of a wide range of cross-sectoral policies
- Less a mobility-centred concept, but a neighbourhood-level, small-scale urban renewal approach (focusing an ambitious social service agenda) → Support cities to understand which function is needed where and in which dimension.
- Use as **umbrella term**
- Provide answers to (in form of argumentarium): What do we mean / want to reach by 15mC concept? Why do we need this?
- Accessibility by **proximity**

- Difference of building a new vs. transforming an existing neighbourhood
- Importance of public space
 - Flexible and multi-functional use of space / offers / infrastructure ("sleeping assets")
 - Reclaim public space (also for people who usually don't have a voice)
 - Shared e-charging infrastructure and shared cars
- Walkability
 - **Quality** of walking distance just **as important as quantity** (length; 15 minutes) – experience, security (e.g. a park can change over day-night cycles), opportunities (opening hours), temporary / seasonal changes
 - **Key aspects:** Access, quality of built environment, connectivity of a city, infrastructure
- Social justice
 - **Inclusiveness** – is the 15mC for all?
 - Should **cycling** be included in the definition of 15mC (as it is not accessible to everyone)
 - How to handle (green) **gentrification**? Is investment in the quality of public space – and thus potentially rising prices – the problem or does this lie in lack of regulation? What is the alternative – not investing in public space?
 - **Socio-economic diversity** → importance of community driven development
- Context-specificity and participation
 - Answers / measures have to be **context-specific** (x-minute City)
 - Importance of understanding different **needs and lifestyles**
 - Develop methods to capture (the diversity of) **specific local needs**
 - Relevance of **community driven development** – participation, co-creation, co-design
- Open challenges and critical issues
 - How to think **mobility of goods and people** better together?
 - Cities need to take responsibility, not only for people but also for goods → Behind every logistical need there is a logistical question
 - Logistics: Need for space for construction material
 - Future of shopping and demographic change → owners of stationary retail are retiring, online commerce continues to be on the rise
 - Which **forms** can the **15mC concept** take in **specific urban areas / situations**? → urban outskirts and suburbs, historic city, shrinking cities. Does it connect to the rural fringe?
 - How do **15mC neighbourhoods connect with each other** with efficient and sustainable transport?
 - How to address **destructive narratives and conspiracies** and underlying fears of change
 - How to address people's need concerning **work and education** in the concept? These are often excluded from concepts as
 - How can we go beyond a Euro-centric approach and involve experiences from the Global South? → 15mC concept inspired by qualities of European historic city centre.
 - How to go beyond the next "buzzword" – what needs to be done for implementation?
 - Need to involve more and different disciplines (e.g. psychology, media, political science, design) in taking the concept further
 - **Communication** – add to existing publicly used wordings for local communities (e.g. quartier, Kiez, Grätzl, barrio)
 - How can we detect and address **potential impact, undesired effects and potential trade-offs**?
 - How to make neighbourhoods lively (that were not like this before)?
 - How to involve people in interventions and change processes?