



Transforming Streets in São Paulo

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Using paint and removable materials such as cones, flower pots, beach chairs, and umbrellas, ITDP Brazil, in partnership with the Bloomberg Initiative for Global Road Safety (BIGRS), is creating safe, pedestrian-friendly spaces in São Paulo. The goal is to improve the efficacy of the city's "reduced speed zones"—areas designated as unsafe for pedestrians—and increase compliance of the 40 km per hour speed limit. These tactical urbanism projects build support for new street designs and reduce the amount of space dominated by cars.

Sao Miguel before (inset) and pop-up intervention
Photos: ITDP Brazil

Drivers long ignored the speed limit in the São Miguel Paulista neighborhood. There was no law enforcement or street design to slow them down. In 2016, BIGRS and ITDP organized a pop-up tactical urbanism intervention to show the potential of a simple street redesign. It launched with a day of cultural activities for the local community—97% of who approved of the new design, according to a survey during the pop-up intervention. The successful pop-up resulted in an invitation for ITDP to repeat the experience in Santana neighborhood during São Paulo’s Architecture Biennale. “Now it’s a place where people walk slower,” said Zuleide Muller, a local resident, “Cars slow down. When there is mutual respect, people begin to respect each other more.” A few months later, the city began planning pedestrian safety improvements in the José Bonifácio neighborhood. The city tested the proposed design at a three-day intervention in May 2018. For the first time, the city’s road safety team led a tactical urbanism intervention and began to see its value as a tool to test solutions and engage in a community dialogue.

The street redesigns in Santana and José Bonifácio were permanently implemented by the city in 2018. This shows that tactical urbanism can create momentum and speed up processes that are otherwise slow and often met with resistance. The ultimate beneficiaries, of course, are the people of São Paulo. Local resident Sergio Fernandes agrees, “We should spread this. There must be more interventions in other places.”

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The Santana neighborhood of São Paulo was transformed with a pop-up installation, leading to a permanently improved intersection with traffic-calming measures and increased pedestrian safety. Photos: ITDP Brazil