

Sustainability | Individual communication

IC - (20910) - ARE PEDESTRIAN STREETS PATHS OF MOVEMENT, A COMMERCIAL SPACE, OR A SOCIAL SPACE? A COMPARATIVE STUDY IN MONTREAL, CANADA

Huu Lieu Dang¹; Thi Thanh Hien Pham¹

1 - Département d'études urbaines et touristiques, Université du Québec à Montréal

Background and objectives

Cities increasingly embrace tactile and temporary urbanism to improve their street liveliness. Pedestrian streets become one of such strategies, especially since the COVID-19 pandemic, that cities use to handle social distancing measures and boost the local economy. Against that backdrop, we ask how the microscale physical characteristics of pedestrian streets impact their usage and appropriation by people, especially their stationary activities. The Montreal case merits investigation because of the diversity of 13 commercial streets pedestrianized in 2021.

Process and methods (for empirical research)

We examine two commercial streets that were temporarily pedestrianized in summertime, having different goals and designs of pedestrianization. In summer, 2021 we conducted a systematic observation of users in each street, at 20 times slots (from 9 a.m. to 9 p.m.) on Fridays and Saturdays- the most crowded days of the week. Statistical analyses of observation points were undertaken in R-Studio and ArcGIS. We also support our quantitative analyses with policy analysis and a press review.

Main results (or main arguments in the case of critical reviews)

We find that microscale physical characteristics have differential influences on usage. In both streets, large groups are consistently more present in terraces provided by restaurants. Individuals and small groups, especially young adults, tend to be found in street segments having high environment/physical qualities (benches and shade) in Wellington but not in Mont-Royal. Three other groups have their own ways of appropriating the streets, independently of the street characteristics, i.e., homeless people, seniors, and street vendors. We also show that the pedestrian campaign did not fully respond to the local's demand regarding greening and public furniture, underline the preponderant role of commercial usage of the streets and question the publicness of the pedestrian streets in Montreal.

Implications for research and practice/policy | Importance and originality of the contribution

Our research enriches the literature of street liveliness (Mehta 2007, 2021) and the relationship between design and appropriation (Goličnik, 2010). The findings also help designers to create more inclusive and lively public spaces.

Palavras-chave : street liveliness, appropriation, pedestrian street