

PRACTICAL GUIDE



*for the organisation
of car-free days*



Codatu

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Introduction

CODATU is an association working towards sustainable urban mobility in developing countries. It supports urban transport projects in Africa, Asia and Latin America by providing training courses and by organizing scientific exchanges and technical cooperation.

The organization of car-free days is a powerful tool in terms of raising awareness as it demonstrates our cities' potential when free from traffic and enables citizens to reclaim the public space. This practical guide has been developed based on two examples of car-free days organized by CODATU: Kochi in India, and Tunis in Tunisia. Drawing from two examples, this guide presents the main features and shows that these events can in fact be organized within a short time period (1-2 months) and at minimal cost.

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Acknowledgments

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"Zumba class during the car-free day organized in Kochi (India), on May 1st, 2016" - © KMRL

01



WHAT ARE "car-free" days?

Car-free days began in the '90s as a way to demonstrate our cities' potential when free from traffic. The event is still very successful among urban populations around the world today. Many cities use this event to promote sustainable mobility and raise awareness of the need to reduce car usage, by blocking sections of road and banning motorised vehicles for a day. This type of event offers the opportunity to communicate about the advantages of such a policy in terms of pollution, congestion and road safety, while enabling citizens to reclaim the public space.

In 2004, approximately 1500 cities took part in this initiative. Gradually, however, cities of the global north have disengaged, with only 330 cities participating on 22 September 2015. However, numerous car-free days have been created in the form of monthly or weekly events (held on different dates), transforming this popular event into a global phenomenon. In a certain number of cities, such as Bogota, it has become a tradition and the scope of the event grows regularly.

In the context of its technical cooperation programmes implemented in many countries, CODATU helps to organise these car-free days. In Kochi (south India), it joined forces with KMRL (Kochi Metro Rail Limited), to organise their street party on 1 May 2016. In Tunis (Tunisia), in partnership with l'Amicale du Transport, an association of Transport Ministry agents and executives, it helped organise the car-free day "Tounes Tetnafes 2017" on 21 May 2017.

INFORMATION

Car-free days in Europe in 2000:

- *Public opinion 80% favorable*
- *The same number of people visited city centres as on any other normal day*
- *More people walked and cycled*
- *A significant reduction in noise pollution*

CERTU Evaluation, 2001

02

THE OBJECTIVES

of car-free days

The concept is simple: once a year, a month or a week (usually a Sunday), one or more major roads in the city centre are closed to traffic so that citizens can reclaim the public space. These events are aimed at promoting the use of active modes (cycling, walking) which are often neglected by the public authorities, who tend to focus on cars and motorcycles. In addition to walking and cycling, various sporting, cultural, artistic, and entertaining activities are organized during the event, with the aim of raising public awareness about road safety, environmental practices, and public health issues. In some cities, these car-free days have served as a lever to convince local authorities, shopkeepers and inhabitants of the merits of a sustainable mobility project, such as creating cycle paths and pedestrian zones. This is known as “tactical urbanism.”

INFORMATION

The objectives of car-free days :

To send a strong message and raise awareness in terms of :

- *health: to communicate about the health of inhabitants (air quality, road safety, urban stress, etc.)*
- *the public space: improve accessibility, reduce the visual effects of car pollution, offer citizens a safe and pleasant environment*
- *alternative mobility: demonstrate the use of active modes (bikes, walking, etc.) and public transport*
- *the environment: inform people about the dangers of greenhouse gas emissions*
- *the financial aspects: inform people about the costs engendered by car usage, as well as the negative economic impacts of pollution and road accidents*

Bringing authorities and the public closer through :

- *citizen involvement: a joint effort to organise the event*
- *a fun event: bringing people together for a pleasant activity*

03

A well-prepared TEAM



Who takes the initiative?

The nature of the people and institutions behind the initiative differs from one city to the next: it can be an NGO, another type of organisation, or a group of citizens. Ideally, the event should be quickly picked up by local or regional councils (when these institutions are not themselves the initiators), making it much easier to obtain authorisation from the various authorities, and to coordinate the event.

When to start organising?

To ensure the event is a success, it is best to start preparing the concept documents, as well as the procedures for obtaining authorisations, three months before the event. That way, once the authorisations have been acquired, you can start rallying the partners as soon as possible. At the latest, preparations must start in earnest six weeks before the event.



Whose help to enlist?

In addition to the organising entity, other actors involved in car-free days include:

- **The authorities responsible for the public space**
in most cases, this is the municipal, metropolitan or regional council, who grant authorisation for events in a public space. Their technical departments must also be involved in the logistical aspects.
- **The police**
they oversee security during the event, and manage traffic diversions.
- **The media**
it is important to ensure the event's visibility in the press, on the radio and television. Good communication will guarantee a well-informed public and therefore massive participation.

Depending on the extent and objectives of your event, other actors may be involved:

- **Public transport companies**
depending on the scope and reach of your car-free day, the local public transport authority may decide to increase its service and enhance its presence.
- **Associations and other organisations**
may wish to offer entertainment and provide activities.
- **Sponsors**
Depending on your budget, you may need to enlist the support of sponsors. Indeed, having one or several sponsors is important because it will increase the reach of the event, while also increasing the number of activities and/or entertainment on offer during the event (informative, cultural, entertaining, etc.). Sponsorship also improves the sustainability of the event for the long term.

03 A WELL-PREPARED TEAM



In order to fully supervise these different points, the organising committee must include members of the organising body and / or the structures involved, and be led by an Event Director. Each member will be entrusted with one of the aforementioned responsibilities.

Representatives of each public authority involved in the event can also directly participate in the committee (municipal / metropolitan / regional council, police, technical services, etc.). These representatives must be familiar with the procedures involved in organising a major event. This facilitates obtaining authorisations, coordination with the traffic police (diversions, signposting) and the emergency services (hospitals, fire department).

The organising committee is the lynchpin of the event's organisation. It must supervise and oversee the following:

1. Conception: the idea, objectives, scope, messages to be communicated, action plan, etc.
2. Formalities: obtaining authorisations, adapting the traffic plan, coordinating with the police and other public authorities.
3. Logistics: preparing for the inauguration, coordinating with public technical services and transport companies, etc.
4. Marketing and communication: communication strategy (producing posters/banners, generating presence on social networks, media relations, post-event communication, etc.), and possibly finding sponsors.
5. Activities during the event: liaising with citizens and service providers of the public space (for the set-up, dismantling, and cleaning) and coordinating volunteers.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

In the month leading up to the event, a team of organisers will need to work full time within the committee. Be sure to recruit adequate human resources.

04

THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

Define the scope

The first step is to define precisely where the event will take place. The site should be emblematic (an area subject to dense traffic where pedestrian facilities are lacking), and should factor in *the following elements*:

- Access must be maintained for the emergency services and refuse collection.
- Ease of access to public transportation and taxis.
- The possibility of diverting traffic and public transportation. The question of whether or not access to and from car parks should be maintained must also be addressed.



"Habib Bourguiba avenue free from traffic during the car-free day organized in Tunis (Mai 2017)" - © Mathieu Martin, CODATU

04 THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

Obtain the authorisations



Any event taking place in the public space requires written authorisations, which must be obtained from the municipal council, the police and sometimes from the regional or central authority. ***A dossier presenting the concept, objectives, date, and scope must be drafted and addressed to the authorities as soon as possible.*** By obtaining an authorisation, you can ensure that no other event will be held at the same time (race, bike rally, etc.). It is then up to the police or the municipal council's technical department to prepare a diversion plan and set up the corresponding signage. The presence/absence of street vendors will have to be discussed beforehand with the municipal council and the police, to avoid any confusion.

Start your communications campaign



Once you have obtained the authorisations, it is important to tell the local media (press, TV and Radio) with a press release specifying the date and the place. This information should also be provided to residents, retailers and street sellers operating within the area, as well the local emergency services (fire department and hospitals) in the event of road diversions. You may ask local hospitals to provide an ambulance on-site.

A communications plan should be defined, implemented and then reviewed after the event by the organising committee (see point 7).

04 THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

Organise activities with volunteer groups

Opening roads up to pedestrians is a great opportunity to organise activities of all kinds, so long as they are free of charge and that there is something for everyone. However, it is important to define a policy beforehand. For example, do you wish to allow commercial, religious or political participation?

In order to establish the programme of activities, you can contact various associations and organisations directly, or launch a call for contributions via partner platforms (networks of associations, cultural institutes, etc.).



“Concert on Habib Bourguiba avenue during the car-free day organized in Tunis (Mai 2017)” - © Mathieu Martin, CODATU



“Football match on Bourguiba avenue during the car-free day organized in Tunis (Mai 2017)”
© Mathieu Martin, CODATU

Discuss the needs and space required by any associations or organisations that wish to provide an activity. For example, for activities requiring an electrical connection, you must liaise with the municipal council to obtain a connection to the public grid. The next step is to assign each activity a time and place. A detailed map should be drawn up and given to volunteers and participants. The important thing is to ensure that there is always something going on and that the space is accessible to all.

It can also be useful to draw up a participation charter, which must be signed by the associations and the organisers, mentioning the free and voluntary nature of the activities, stipulating that public property must not be damaged in any way, and underlining procedures for installation and clean-up etc.

NOTE

In addition to the planned activities, you may well see other ones appear (bands, dancers etc.).

04 THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

A FEW IDEAS for street activities



Sports shops may offer equipment testing (scooters, bikes, trampolines, basketball nets, roller blades, skipping ropes etc.)



Local sports clubs (football, basketball, badminton etc.) may be willing to umpire a mini match or oversee some activities



Cycling clubs, offering a presentation about road safety in the city, or organising a race



Dance, gym, yoga and Zumba classes or demonstrations



Local artists / art and crafts clubs offering workshops: kite building, drawing, henna tattoos, design competitions, mural painting etc.



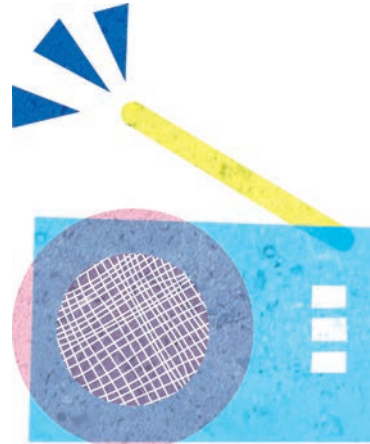
Bookstores and libraries can offer a reading corner



Associations and organisations can raise awareness about specific subjects (road safety, climate change, health, ecological practices, urban planning and transport etc.) The event could also be declared plastic-free, encouraging participants to bring their own water bottle and to fill it up for free.



Music groups and brass bands



Radio stations can also organise activities and set up a studio in the street



This is also a great opportunity for public companies to present their urban projects, their goals in terms of mobility and to open a dialogue with the population.

04 THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

Rallying volunteers

The following phase consists of putting a team of volunteers together by contacting schools, universities, clubs and local NGOs to ask them to help partner the event. A team like this is essential for the organisers in terms of the event's logistics. Once the list of volunteers has been established, you can divide up the various tasks and activities between them.

Meetings should be held regularly in the weeks leading up to the event to brief volunteers and partners on the organisation. A field visit should also be organised a few days before the event with the volunteers, during which a list of contacts and a map should be given to each volunteer, as well as an event t-shirt (or a yellow vest).

PRACTICAL ADVICE

Volunteers will be on the “front lines” of your car-free event. It is important to brief them beforehand. Put together volunteer info sheets to help your teams.

On the day of the event, provide your volunteers with a distinctive uniform (t-shirt, cap, etc.) so the public can spot them easily.

The advantage of holding a car-free day on a Sunday is that the volunteers tend to be available the day before, enabling you to go over the logistical details with them.

Volunteer's tasks include:

providing information to the public on the day of the event

helping set up and conduct the activities

discussing with the public to ascertain the general reaction (to assist post-event communications).

helping clear up after the event

04 THE MAIN PHASES OF ORGANISATION

The opening ceremony

The opening ceremony is an important moment, during which the local authorities, political figures (Mayor, Deputy, Minister, etc.), and the media are usually present. Depending on the scale of your event, you may wish to organize an opening ceremony with a speech, a parade, the releasing of doves, the hoisting of a flag, the cutting of a ribbon etc. Perhaps you wish to host a run or a bike race involving local sporting icons, to encourage civic engagement, or invite local political figures to officially start the day. At least one person on the organising committee should focus on the opening ceremony alone.

NOTE

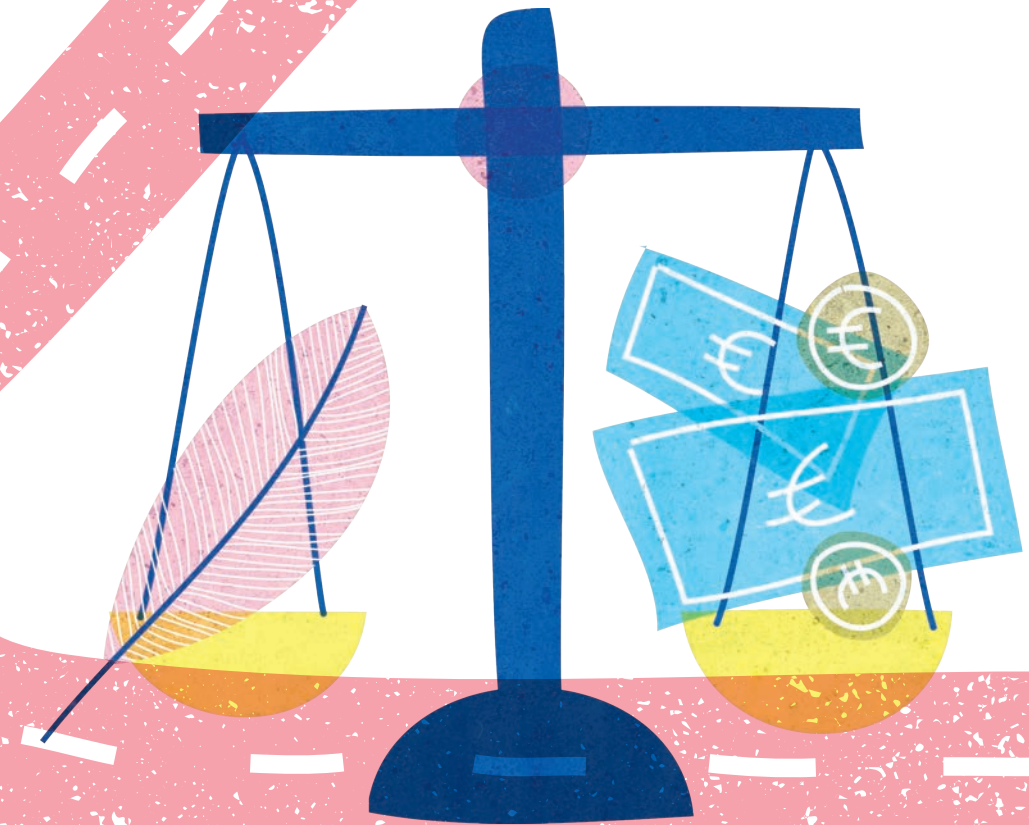
This inaugural portion of the event is often overlooked during the organisation, yet it is one of the most important aspects of your car-free day, at both national and international levels. Great attention should be paid to it.

05

Define the BUDGET

A key principle of a car-free day is to limit costs, thus ensuring the event's long-term sustainability. The two main expenses are communication (printing of documents, posters, banners, etc.) and the necessary equipment (stage, sound system, etc.). However, your partners may well take on these expenses.

Partners tend to cover costs related to the activity they are providing. However, depending on the budget, the organizer may provide tents, tables and chairs for the stands, as well as flooring, if needed. Ideally, traffic cones and barriers should be provided by the police. Volunteer t-shirts and other goodies can also be sponsored by one of the partners.



PRACTICAL ADVICE

A car-free day can also be organised as part of a decentralised cooperation project between two cities. In this case, part of the budget provided by the cooperation project can contribute to the funding of a car-free day.

06

Establish a

COMMUNICATION PLAN

It is important to start promoting your event well ahead in the local media, and across the city's billboards. Be sure to announce the date and location, and to highlight the goal of the car-free day. Mention the impact of such events in other cities / countries. As the date nears, successive press releases and interviews should reveal more detailed information such as the programme, the activities and personalities who plan to attend. Ideally, a single partner will take on the daily communication duties.

For a better implementation at a local level, it is best to choose a logo and a slogan that represent the city and speak to its inhabitants. Get it right and you will enlist local residents' support for the event and secure its sustainability.

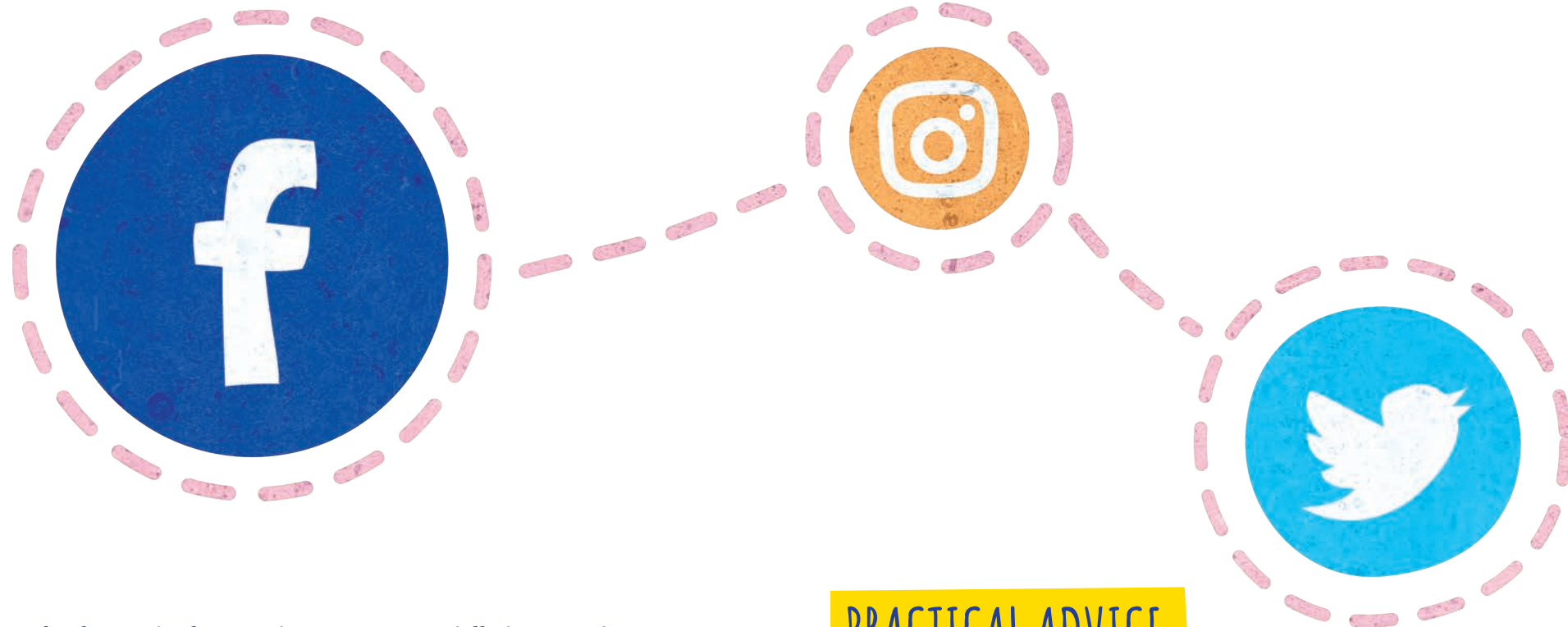


INFORMATION

In India, car-free days are organised under different brands :

- «Raahgiri» when organised by WRI-EMBARQ
- «Happy Streets» when organised by The Times of India newspaper
- «Theruvulsavam» when organised by KMRL in Kochi

In Tunisia, the slogan «Tounes Tetnafes» (Tunis Breathes) was chosen to represent car-free days and the resulting initiative.



Creating a Facebook page is also very important, especially in countries where a lot of information travels along these channels. This page allows you to announce the event and promote the activities, as well as provide practical information: place, time, access to car parks etc. It will also serve as a platform for discussion and exchange about the role of cars in the city, the need for pedestrian and bicycle infrastructures, and the city's potential to develop urban spaces. More generally speaking, it creates a forum for pedestrians' voices to be heard. A Twitter account would also be useful.

Finally, to provide even more visibility for your car-free day, it is a good idea to hold a press conference in the presence of a local authority official, but no earlier than 10 days before the event. Following this conference, interviews can be given and appointments can be made with local and national radio stations to talk about the event as much as possible.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

It is important not to spread your event too thinly on social networks i.e. it is best to have just one or two accounts that are regularly updated, rather than numerous dormant accounts. It is advisable to consider which type of social media will have the biggest impact in your city: Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, or others?

Content should be most abundant during the event, so that the car-free day can exist beyond its physical scope. Someone should be appointed to post information about the activities as they happen.

07

AFTER the event

The follow up

For maximum effect, a car-free day should be one aspect of a long-term plan to reduce car usage and improve quality of life in urban areas. The end of this event marks the beginning of the process, so it is important to think about and plan for the next phase.

First of all, post-event promotion is key: write up a report, use the positive comments of attendees and participants, and produce a press release about the air quality recorded during the event and other information. Publish this on social networks too. A car-free day is only useful if it becomes a regular occurrence. Following the success of your first event, be sure to repeat it at least once per year, if not monthly or even weekly. Communication will be essential if you are to convince local authorities.

PRACTICAL ADVICE

The organising committee should meet soon after the event to review it and discuss any highlights and difficulties.

Keep all documents, press releases, sponsorship charter, distribution lists etc. These will be helpful for the organisers of the next edition.

08

Key POINTS



- Set up a permanent organising committee
- Define the concept and scope of your event
- Obtain the authorisations from the relevant authorities
- Prepare and roll out a comprehensive communications plan
- List and organise activities with partners
- Seek financial support from sponsors
- Mobilise a team of volunteers to help organise and run the event
- Prepare the opening ceremony
- Think beforehand about how to enhance the impact and guarantee the event's sustainability.



Working for sustainable mobility in developing cities

For additional information,
feel free to contact us at the following address :

contact@codatu.org

Following your event, we would be delighted to receive your photos and videos, to share them among the CODATU network. If you would like to be added to our database, please fill out our questionnaire at the following address :

<http://www.codatu.org/actualites/journees-sans-voiture-bientot-dans-votre-ville>

USEFUL LINKS:

"A world without cars : cities go car-free for the day - in pictures"

article published in The Guardian on 26 September 2016 : <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/gallery/2016/sep/26/world-without-cars-cities-go-car-free-in-pictures>

"En ville, sans ma voiture !"

(In the city, without my car) evaluation of 22 September 2000: results and analyses, published by the CERTU Department of Mobility, Transport and Urban Services : http://lara.inist.fr/bitstream/handle/2332/1083/CERTU_Enville2000.pdf?sequence=2

"Journées sans voiture, bientôt dans votre ville"

(Car-free days, coming soon to your city), article published by CODATU on 25 September 2016 : <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/journees-sans-voiture-bientot-dans-votre-ville>

« Millions in India Join Movement to reclaim city streets »

by The World Resource Institute (WRI) : <https://www.wri.org/our-work/top-outcome/millions-india-join-movement-reclaim-city-streets>

"Paris introduces car-free Sundays"

article published by CityLab on 29 April 2016 : <https://www.citylab.com/transportation/2016/04/paris-introduces-car-free-sundays/480609/>

Retour sur la journée sans voiture à Kochi

(A look at Kochi's car-free day) article published by CODATU on 17 May 2016 : <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/retour-sur-la-journee-sans-voitures-a-kochi/>

***Tounes Tetnafes 2017 (Tunis Respire 2017)
Première Journée sans voiture à Tunis »***

(‘Tounes Tetnafes 2017 (Tunis Breathes 2017) : Tunis’ first car-free day’), article published by CODATU on 2 June 2017 : <http://www.codatu.org/actualites/tounes-tetnafes-2017-tunis-respire-2017-premiere-journee-sans-voiture-a-tunis/>



"Poster of Kochi car-free day"



"Poster of Tunis car-free day"



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