

Is a Car Free Vancouver Possible?

by Stephen Elliott-Buckley - Thursday, June 03, 2010

<https://politicsrespun.org/2010/06/is-a-car-free-vancouver-possible/>

CarFreeYVR posted a nice video [below] discussing the motivations and inspirations for car-free days in Vancouver. With car-free days festivals coming again on June 20 on Main Street, Commercial Drive, Kits and the West End [happy Father's Day!], I'm excited to see hundreds take over the pavement.

But how does Vancouver ever become the first car-free city in North America? It's all about [systems theory](#).

Sure, elected leadership reflect dinosaur corporate interests. It will take us to "think outside the box" and embark on "grassroots mobilization" to self-actualize our "community organizer" vibes...and all the other cliches. But really, it's about understanding the interconnectedness of everything.

And it isn't necessarily about converting everyone who shows up to the festivals and getting them to sign a petition. It's about living the community we envision. People will come. They will enjoy the day. The next day they will watch cars drive over all the great kids' chalk art. A small part of their souls will be maimed.

Then next year we will have maybe more than four locations. Then we'll have more than one day. Then people will finally stop griping about bike lanes in the downtown.

And through this we simply manifest the reality we want. Systems theory. Let's see how [the main areas of systems theory](#) play out in car free days:

We move from understanding ourselves merely as isolated individuals to seeing ourselves as parts of a social, community whole. We are part of a hive mind. We have our own existence, but when we get to stroll down the yellow line of Main Street, we'll see how our neighbours are a part of us.

We will realize that the objects in our communities are not distant items, but connected to us. When cars drive on our streets, we are separated from all these objects. Sitting on the pavement in the middle of Main and King Ed chatting with friends and sharing popsicles helps us see objects as part of us, not alien.

In the end, we become more attuned to our context. We get to question it from the perspective of sitting on the road instead of bolting across King Ed on a yellow light to catch a bus.

When we adjust our normal relationship with roads we get to move past the normal and embrace the rich quality of alternatives: what we can do with streets if we don't let cars on them. Knowing comes from doing.

Instead of being humans with defined roles in an urban world, when we shift our relationships, we notice the patterns and processes that consume us. We enjoy different relationships and get to evaluate whether

we really need the prescribed, unquestioned patterns we have endured forever.

Finally, when we take the rubber off the road we get a chance to build new patterns and relationships with the people, landmarks, shops, artists and green space in our road communities. We can't get outside any box without experiencing an alternative. Imaginations can be powerful, but a car-free day is worth a thousand words.

And just like another great cliché bumper sticker: when the people lead, the leaders will follow. Eventually, the politicians will start showing up to car-free days because they'll realize there is a serious constituency there. That's where we earn the political legitimacy to force the leaders to follow our lead and start legislating car-free space.

And the fact that it's all an open source, volunteer coordination effort is just icing on the cake. Actually, really, though, if it were all sponsored by Red Bull or Dasani, it would flop.

So what are you doing on Father's Day? I know what I'll be doing.

[YouTube - Car Free Vancouver.](#)

[YouTube Video](#)