

# Constructing a World-Class Tramway System: Building Identity through Innovative Urbanism in the 'Glocal' City of Strasbourg, France

Investigation & Framing Question: What purposes and constituencies are served by street-level, rail based urban transport?

Drew Williamson  
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Senior Thesis Poster  
ds.lclark.edu/aaw/thesis/



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## THE STRASBOURG CASE

1. The tram began as a radical local solution to pollution and traffic in the city center

- In 1989, Socialist mayoral candidate Catherine Trautmann pushed for tram and restricting cars
- Modernist perception aided tram's victory, when compared to VAL (light metro)
- Tramway plans were forced through by mayor, though initially, the concept was very contentious



2. Innovative implementation brought about a global audience unexpectedly

- **Technopolitics of Visibility:** the use of visible infrastructure and technology as a tool to embody political goals (downtown hub prominently shown above)
- Futuristic design and implementation of first line led to global interest in Strasbourg's tram.

"  
Nous allons continuer de l'innovation à mobilité."  
-We will continue innovation in mobility.  
Gilles Brochard, Transportation Chief

## LOCAL

- Designed with social equity in mind
- Tram respected existing architecture, creating new public spaces via pedestrianization
- Tram designed to shift local travel behaviors, provide frequent service to all residents, developmental goal of linking the poorest neighborhoods with the city center
- Focus is on how residents engage with the built environment

**'Glocality':** In contrast to urban development solutions that seek to leverage private investment and establish global reputation through eco-initiatives or "spectacular infrastructure," Strasbourg has focused intensively on local solutions to traffic and pollution with socially equitable transportation. Their approach represents a rebellion against privatization of space, and has boosted the city's global reputation through innovation and by re-creating public space. Strasbourg's tramway exemplifies how global and local ideologies and identities are linked.

## GLOBAL

- Strasbourg has become a pioneer in urban mobility and is seen internationally as a model for their success in pedestrianizing centre-ville, rapid expansion, and futuristic tram designs
- Strasbourg created a city "brand" around the tram, to bolster the city's claim as the "Capital of Europe"
- Global recognition reinforced civic pride in the tram, enabling rapid expansion of the network

"  
marketization of the social, typical of contemporary capitalism, camouflages the hard facts of inequality through bland neoliberal rhetoric ... without addressing the underlying social and economic base."  
Maria Cristina Paganoni

## SOLUTION?

By creating & linking nodes of public space through the tram, Strasbourg demonstrates that cities can become (or remain) more successful by balancing competition for private capital with quality public services available to all citizens.

3. Worldwide attention expanded local political efforts and boosted the tram's acceptance amongst citizens.

- Mayor Trautmann's social agenda claims ideological victory, 92% of Strasbourg's residents approved of tram in a 1999 survey
- Tram underwent major expansions between 2002 to 2008, even under conservative leadership
- Minimal conflict was only over what exact route the tram would take



4. Political leaders and citizens sought to create a "new city style" around the tram

- "Meshed" network design was an innovation for a relatively small metropolitan area like Strasbourg
- Line to Kehl, Germany is the first int'l tramway in the world (new tram bridge pictured above)

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