



Session 16 – Reinventing the city to make it more human
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THE CITY'S BUCKET LIST

Our planet is subject to dramatic climate change, which requires all of us to speed up our actions in order to save it. But we are so slow.

The depletion of natural resources is accelerating tremendously. Huge income disparities are creating enormous social tensions. Moving populations demand action. Rampant desertification needs forests. Exponential population growth requires more food, more oxygen, more energy, more water, more products, better waste treatment.

We need an agenda to implement change. Now! This will form the future city.

The city is the main driver of global change. More than half the world's population lives in cities and socio-economic problems and pollution increasingly make city life difficult. But this also means that any improvements to the city are incredibly effective, because they touch many lives and they have instant results.

So what cities do we want to have? Below are some of my hopes and targets. A bucket list: We need a city that offers equal opportunities to all. We need a city that is social and just. We need a city that is green and renewable. We need a city that is democratic and accessible. We need a city that is free and welcoming. We need a city that is cultured and meaningful. We need a city that is exciting and wonderful. And last but not least, we need a city that is intimate, personal, and beautiful.

THE HUMAN CITY

We need a more human-centred city. To create this city we need to listen to the voices of those who make the city. We need to ask them about the future and how they envision it. Can our cities be more responsible? More open? More curious? Can they be fearless and experimental?

THE DENSE CITY

The denser a city is, and the more walkable the services are for its citizens, the more diverse and sustainable the city can be. And the less arable land it occupies. In the days of Covid-19 the dense city might be a strange idea, but dense does not mean overcrowded. In fact some studies are now showing that other factors are bigger concerns in the spread of the disease than simple population density. We need to create a dense city that is also green and offers its citizens the qualities of suburbia without the same need for energy, transport and space.

THE EQUAL CITY

Social injustice makes many cities unaffordable for their inhabitants. All over the world housing has become a scarce resource, despite the fact that decent housing is a human right. We need a global housing effort to offer affordable and at the same time sustainable housing.



THE DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE CITY

Bad urban planning can cause unhappiness and in the end riots. A city that is mixed will not burn. Mixing people from all social backgrounds and providing enough social housing mixed among other housing is a guarantee for an inclusive city. Instead of apartheid between social layers we need to offer cohabitation to allow social interaction and social mobility.

THE INTIMATE CITY

The bigger a city is, the more we enjoy the small moments, the urban villages, the piazzas, squares and small gardens. In the large metropolis we all need our own small corners that we know and where we are known. Personal attachment to our neighborhoods makes them better. Urban planning helps by making the city intimate and not an open space dominated by cars.

THE CAR(E) FREE CITY

Cars are the new smoking. Many people like to use cars but we all dislike seeing them and walking next to busy roads. More and more cities are discovering that reducing the dominance of the car has a direct influence on their economic performance – in contrast to what we have been told over the last 70 years, fewer cars means more income in urban centres. We need smart solutions to keep our cities accessible and at the same time car free.

THE 3D CITY

The denser, intimate and pedestrian city also is a three dimensional city. It is not enough to have engaged and lively sidewalks – we need engaged and lively buildings with parks and public functions on higher levels, and connections between buildings on multiple levels. From vertical forests to vertical villages, life in the city could be comparable to an Italian mountain village. Creating the idyll in the city.

THE GREEN DIP

Cities today are heat islands and concrete jungles. What about cities that are real jungles or forests? Instead of covering the city in concrete, steel, glass, and brick we can also decide to make the city green and biodiverse. To have the city become essential in the greening of the planet.

THE DEMOCRATIC CITY

Citizens that are treated like adults able to decide for themselves – not just on how their apartment looks, but also on how their building and their neighborhoods work – are citizens that are happier and in control of their own lives. Feeling responsible for one's urban environment makes us treat it better.

THE RESILIENT CITY

Introducing the management of water and the production of renewable energy into our cities is the next step into making them more resilient and independent from the surrounding countryside. Their footprint gets smaller and the positive impact their having on the planet gets higher. Urban resilience also means a city with a mixed economy, with a mixed demography that can handle all kinds of events.

THE CONNECTED CITY



Les Rencontres Économiques – Aix-en-Seine
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Agir face aux dérèglements du monde
Dealing with world disorders

The latest technologies can be embedded into city life, although we need to do so while being careful not to create an Orwellian scenario. The use of technology to reduce the use of water, energy, waste, and to improve traffic are essential tools in the urban economy.

THE SPECIFIC CITY

Not every city needs to have a creative quarter, and not every city needs a hospital specialised in cancer. Specialising will reduce competition among cities and create centres of excellence with a regional function. This requires cities to collaborate and strategize, together, moving away from competition and moving towards strategic regional collaboration.

THE WONDERFUL CITY

Beautiful, high quality, wonderful urban areas are usually the historic parts of town. But there are exceptions in which brand new urban areas score high on liveability, lovability, and beauty. This is the model for the city of the future, for new and improved urban surroundings. Because we all want to live in a wonderful city.

THE SMART CITY BUCKET LIST

All this together turns the city into a truly smarter city. This is my bucket list. It regards all levels, all scales. It goes from XXS to XXL and vice versa: better materials, better facades, better houses, better cities and a better world. It goes from mass-produced vehicles and bricks to roads and infrastructure. It includes nanomaterials and large-scale planning. Even the smallest element helps. All these make up our next cities. Our human cities.

Winy Maas

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