

CARLOS MORENO

FOREWORD BY
JAN GEHL

AFTERWORD BY
MARTHA THORNE



THE 15-MINUTE CITY

A **SOLUTION** TO SAVING
OUR TIME & OUR PLANET

Praise for *The 15-Minute City*

“Carlos Moreno has done cities and society a great service by showing us the vital importance of the 15-minute city, where we can work, send our children to school, shop, and carry out all of life’s crucial activities in close proximity to where we live. Paris and leading cities around the world have embraced this concept. This book is a must-read for mayors, urbanists, and everyone who cares about cities.”

—**Richard Florida**

Author, *The Rise of the Creative Class*

“With his new book, Carlos Moreno provides a major contribution to architects, urban planners, and city authorities by proposing pragmatic solutions for humanizing cities in all climatic environments and on all five continents. Restoring proximity in today’s urban landscapes is a program capable of ameliorating the quality of life and the well-being of people. Innovative ideas and urban planning approaches are a hope for achieving the social cohesion missing today when social, economic, and environmental inequalities threaten communities worldwide and disproportionately affect the poor. I congratulate the author and hope that the book will reach a larger audience and be read not only by professionals but also politicians.”

—**Regina Gonthier**

President of the International Union of Architects UIA

“The simple power of proximity—making sure we have more things we need and want close by—is one of the most important bedrocks of better city-making, and no city has presented it better than Paris under the leadership of Anne Hidalgo and supported by the concepts of Carlos Moreno. More cities and communities are translating this critical concept into real urban change, and that’s a really important thing for our future. We have Carlos to thank for that.”

—**Brent Toderian**

City Planner and Global Advisor to Cities;
Former Chief Planner, Vancouver, Canada

“By placing the citizen at the heart of urban planning, Professor Moreno unveils an innovative exploration of the 15-minute city concept. This transformative approach reshapes our cities and communities, making them better and happier places to live, work, and thrive.”

—**Narek Arakelyan**

Secretary General, FIABCI (The International Real Estate Federation)

“Carlos’s concept of a 15-minute city is simple—and powerful. Half of all urban homes that will exist within our children’s lives do not exist today. We have a magnificent opportunity to build and improve today’s cities following the exquisite advice in this book. Everyone who likes people and cities should read it, especially decision-makers.”

—**Gil (Guillermo) Penalosa**
Founder, 8 80 Cities

“What we intuitively know is essential to urban life is much too often lost or forgotten—it has become invisible to the eye. Being able to interpret these basic human needs into concept, and translating that concept into policy, is the genius of the 15-minute city. Instead of seeking to create a formula, or a design manual, Professor Moreno is formulating what is essential for life in the cities to thrive: proximity.”

—**Jesper Eis Eriksen**
Executive Director, Henrik F. Obel Foundation

“For millennia, cities have been prodigious engines of commerce and culture, yet nowadays, they are mostly an unqualified mess of cars, long commutes, soullessness, and stress. *The 15-Minute City* convincingly narrates the electrifying possibilities of a different city life, one that reinscribes humanness, proximity, connections, and well-being at the center of the urban fabric.”

—**Bruno Giussani**
Author; Global Curator, TED

“What is the 15-minute city? It’s the city of proximity, where you can find everything you need within 15 minutes of your home. This is a prerequisite for the ecological transformation of the city, while at the same time improving the daily lives of Parisians.”

—**Anne Hidalgo**
Mayor, Paris

“The urban agenda is the space in which we will win the excitement and commitment of citizens to the revolution of green and social progress. The 15-minute cities are that brilliant idea that turns the complex into the simple, the transformative into the attractive, with a common thread to think and test the changes. We must thank Carlos Moreno for helping us to understand and promote the necessary changes—to conquer clean, healthy, and close cities, on a human scale, for the neighbors.”

—**Teresa Ribera**
Vice President, Spain; Minister, the Ecological
Transition and the Demographic Challenge

“Through this book, Carlos Moreno guides us to a world at a human scale, redesigned to bring urbanized spaces back to the people who inhabit them. The concept of the 15-minute city inspires us to transform our cities so that quality of life and well-being are put at the center. No doubt that this idea has been and will be embraced by so many cities in Europe and elsewhere as one of the paradigms of how cities are confronting the climate crisis.”

—**Júlia López Ventura**

Regional Director for Europe, C40 Cities

“My dear Carlos, I fully admire your work.”

—**Edgar Morin**

Sociologist, writer, father of complexity analysis

“Carlos Moreno’s work on the 15-minute city combines a wonderfully clear, and even old-fashioned, idea—that we should all be able to get around our neighborhoods and easily reach most of the people and things we need within a ‘happy proximity’—with cutting-edge scientific findings on urban networks and complex adaptive systems. I think that’s why this work has broken through to a global audience and started a much-needed debate about the mistakes we’ve made and the reforms we will need. We have to do better—and we can, as this important book demonstrates.”

—**Michael W. Mehaffy, PhD**

Executive Director, International Making Cities Livable (IMCL)

“Carlos Moreno rescues the forgotten paths of a humanist, solidarity, and inclusive urbanism, respectful of all the ecosystems that make up the complexity of a city and anchored in the circular economy.”

—**Carmen Santana**

Architect, urban planner, 2021 Spanish
urban planning award recipient

“The 15-minute city popularized by Professor Carlos Moreno proposes a positive and comprehensive approach for the ecological revolution that humanity urgently needs to adopt. In early 2020, C40 was the first global organization to support this concept, encouraging mayors across the world to adopt the 15-minute city concept as part of their green and just transition. Today, we are joining forces with Professor Carlos Moreno to call for a new model of urbanism that is built in harmony with people and nature.”

—**Hélène Chartier**

Director of Urban Planning and Design, C40 Cities

“Carlo Moreno’s highly inspiring book is an essential work for renewing urban planning frameworks and practices. As a performance piece, it is a veritable guide to imagining desirable sustainable urban futures.”

—**Vincent Kaufmann**

Professor, Ecole Polytechnique Fédérale
de Lausanne (EPFL)

“When I think about Carlos Moreno’s 15-minute city concept, it is more than just a novel way to organize our urban communities. What Carlos really teaches us is that we must think and act differently in order to create a better life for everyone who lives in cities. It’s a bonus that he proposes a formula that can deliver a better future for all of us. Bravo, Carlos!”

—**Dr. Jonathan Reichenal**

Founder, Human Future; professor; author

“Carlos Moreno’s work joins and builds upon a great tradition of urban thinking and activism, asking and answering this basic question: How is it best to live in cities? The state of our planet—and perhaps of humanity itself—hinges upon how we shape and manage urban centers. Carlos Moreno has defined clear visions of the way forward. Building on the great work of his predecessors—Lewis Mumford, Jane Jacobs, Camillo Sitte, and others—Carlos Moreno lays out a clear and compelling course for the world’s cities, today and well into the future.”

—**Thomas Vonier**

FAIA, RIBA; Former President, American Institute of Architects (2017);
Former President, International Union of Architects (2017–2021)

“Beyond the confines of car-centric celebrations, it becomes evident that our planet would find greater happiness in embracing this alternative. The narrative of *The 15-Minute City* unfolds as a remarkable tale of transformative urban planning. It champions sustainability, resilience, and an elevated quality of life, all while drawing inspiration from the rich tapestry of cultural and social values. In this journey, I take immense pride in my affiliation with a network of visionary leaders like Carlos Moreno from across the globe who share an unwavering commitment to this cause.”

—**Gaetan Siew**

Former President, International Union
of Architects (2005–2008)

“Professor Carlos Moreno is a trailblazer, a visionary mind who has boldly reimaged urban life, prioritizing people over vehicles. In *The 15-Minute City*, his life’s work and research come together to offer a groundbreaking vision for the future of urban living.”

—**Ayumi Moore Aoki**

Founder and CEO, Women in Tech® Global

“Living on humane, verdant, and traditional streets on which it is easy and pleasant to walk or cycle and which don’t break up a town into artificially separate zones is the natural human condition. We now also know that it supports happier, healthier, and more sociable lives in which we tread more lightly upon the planet. What was once a ripple of conjecture has become a storm surge of evidence. This important and beautiful book sets out the journey back from cities scarred by traffic modernism and how we can restitch our towns for the benefit of people, place, and planet.”

—**Nicholas Boys Smith**
Director, Create Streets

“During her re-election as Mayor of Paris in 2020, the 15-minute city was at the heart of Anne Hidalgo’s campaign, in which I was heavily involved.”

—**Jean Jouzel**
Climate scientist; Nobel Prize IPCC (2007)

“Professor Moreno’s vision of people-centered urbanism, based on proximity, accessibility, and mixed-use, is crucial to reducing emissions, achieving our sustainable development goals, and building a better future for all.”

—**Sharon Gil**
Lead Sustainable Urban Development,
UNEP (United Nations Environment Program)

“With his book of unique value, Carlos Moreno integrates the philosophies of Aristotle and Plato into contemporary urban challenges, advocating for cities to prioritize human well-being and happy proximity over vehicular dominance. Drawing from the Athens Charter of 1933 and Platonic theories of constant flow and unchangeability, he envisions cities where communities and pedestrian-friendly designs coalesce within a 15-minute reach of the constant flow of the perceptible world and the unchangeability of the conceivable world.”

—**Nikos Fintikakis**
Professor, IAA (International Academy of Architecture);
Board member, Panhellenic Association of Architects

“Have you always wondered why the juvenile Le Corbusier—with his inhuman doctrine of ‘zoning, car-friendly city, machine à habiter,’ pronounced at the Athens CIAM in 1933—had the impudent success that all colonial countries have since then experienced on their own bodies? The answer is as brutal as it is sobering: the cutting-edge ‘Six Goals for Urban Ecology,’ postulated by Walter Gropius, his wife Ise, and Sigfried Giedion at the Zürich CIAM in 1931, were erased by Adolf Hitler’s seizure of power. Ninety years later, Carlos Moreno finally

offers us the toolbox for mapping and programming this displaced—but not lost—Urban Ecology.”

—**Jana Revedin, PhD**

Architect; theorist; President, Global Award
for Sustainable Architecture

“It’s no coincidence that at the height of the health crisis linked to the COVID-19 pandemic, the city of Paris appointed an elected official to be responsible for the city of the quarter-hour. It’s a sign of the relevance of Carlos Moreno’s eponymous concept. The idea is all the more relevant in that it responds to the concept of resilience, which has taken hold in cities around the world, highlighting the need for proximity and accessibility to public services on a daily basis. *The 15-Minute City* is not an end in itself, but it can be the common thread running through a program of urban transformation that will make it possible to achieve a resilient, sustainable, and peaceful city.”

—**Dominique Perrault**

Architect; member, French Fine Arts Academy

“We need a radical transformation of the spaces we inhabit. In this great work, Carlos Moreno brilliantly proposes making proximity and the humanization of our cities the key drivers in the urban revolution we have to promote. Cities to celebrate life. So, let’s get down to it!”

—**Idoia Postigo**

General Director, Bilbao Metropoli-30

“Suddenly, we realized that what we assumed to be inevitable in cities was avoidable: traffic, pollution, unnecessary travel, inequalities, and concentrations of wealth in some areas but chronic lack of services in others. If there is a positive legacy of the pandemic era, this is it: having imagined what, until recently, was unimaginable. Carlos Moreno’s 15-minute city is perhaps the one that most represented this possible breakthrough, and the fact that it’s making its way around the world is great news.”

—**Jaime d’Alessandro**

Journalist, La Repubblica

“Carlos Moreno has been able to synthesize in a single concept, the 15-minute city, the reinvention of proximities, with sustainable and inclusive cities. He has broken the mold, spreading quickly and globally, a change in the urban model that in the past would have required decades. *The 15-Minute City* will help save the planet by developing sustainable and livable cities.”

—**Pilar Conesa**

CEO, Anteverti; Curator, Smart City Expo World Congress

“People will be happier—they will live in a better world—thanks to the search for mixed, compact, and accessible cities. *The 15-Minute City* is a path towards cities for life. Knowing and understanding the thinking that Carlos Moreno and his team have built brings us closer to a better life.”

—**Jorge Pérez-Jaramillo**

Former Chief Planner, Medellín, Colombia
(2016 Lee Kuan Yew World City Prize)

“Carlos Moreno is a superb human being and a remarkable multidisciplinary scientist. His research and work reveal the importance of proximity in our cities. While the quarter-hour city is now a world-renowned concept, it is first and foremost a philosophy for living happily in our cities. The proximity of services, urbanization that favors human relations, soft mobility, and the strengthening of social ties are at the heart of the urban harmony demonstrated and desired by the quarter-hour city that Carlos Moreno tirelessly promotes.”

—**Serge Orru**

President, Paris Climate Academy Orientation Council

“As the United Nations system’s specialized agency for sustainable urbanization, it is UN-Habitat’s role to follow the debate on new concepts and models that can assist cities and countries in the sustainable urban transition. In particular, the 15-minute city concept powerfully communicates and promotes UN-Habitat’s approach to people-centered sustainable cities and neighborhoods. Rarely has an academic concept like the 15-minute city gained such attention from decision-makers and urban professionals across the globe. This is why we chose to feature the concept in our latest World Cities Report and to award Professor Moreno the Habitat Scroll of Honour in 2022.

We are joining forces with Professor Moreno and partners in the Global Observatory of Sustainable Proximities, which we believe will be a vehicle to promote proximity and ‘15-minute cities’ on a larger scale. The Observatory was recently highlighted among the high-impact action coalitions that can be key in accelerating the achievement of the 2030 Agenda by localizing SDGs in cities globally. Professor Moreno’s latest book is taking stock of the development of the concept as well as showcasing best practices. It will most likely be a very important work for urban decision-makers and professionals to support the transition towards sustainable cities in this decade of action.”

—**Maimunah Mohd Sharif**

Former Executive Director, United Nations Human
Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat)

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WILEY

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This book is dedicated to the extraordinary Jane Jacobs, whose relentless thought, commitment, and passion have forever transformed our urban narrative. Her birthday, May 4, should be known worldwide as “Jane Jacobs Day.”

The point of cities is multiplicity of choice.

When distance and convenience sets in; the small, the various, and the personal wither away.

Jane Jacobs, *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, 1961

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Foreword

THE “GOOD OLD days” ended abruptly in 1933. More specifically, the 1933 *Athens Charter of City Planning* was the true end of the urban “good old days.”

Modernists defined the modern city as a machine for living. For this efficient machine to be fully operational, it was essential to separate the city’s functions into different districts—you work here, you live there, you play there, and transportation corridors connect the monofunctional areas. Different functions and different people should not only be in different areas but also be in different buildings. Until this time, cities had always been made up of spaces—spaces for life and people. In his famous map of Rome in 1748, Nolli defined the city by its spaces. But from 1933 onward, the focus shifted from the “cities of spaces” to the “cities of objects.” The result was a farewell to public spaces and public life as well as a farewell to a regard for pedestrianism that had been built into all the older cities. The older cities had been built for people first. From 1933 on, faster modes of mobility were needed to link the widespread districts.

Then came the automobile, or rather the automobile invasion. Before World War II, the industry was new and limited, but from the sixties onward, the car invasion became a tsunami. Traffic and parked cars filled every space in the old cities and began demanding endless

amounts of infrastructure to serve the widespread monofunctional city districts. The cities exploded, people were spread in all directions, and for some 60 years *mobility* has been the key word to all city planning. All over the globe, everything was made to make the cars happy—in most places, quite successfully. In short, Modernist city planning and the car invasion complemented each other perfectly. The slow city of the past became a “fast city.” Forgotten were concerns for public life, inviting city spaces, and friendly neighborhoods, and of course there was no concern for walking and bicycling (bicycling began to be considered a friendly cousin to walking—a sort of fast walking).

In the background of these dramatic changes to cities and quality of life, which was applied to cities across the world, counter movements started to take form. These counter movements have been around for some 60 years and have grown stronger and stronger. Our “15-minute cities” can be seen in this context as one of the strongest contemporary anti-Modernists movements.

Among the first was the strong voice of Jane Jacobs from Greenwich Village in New York, whose message was that if the Modernists and the Motorists are to plan the future cities, they will be dead cities, not great cities. Another voice, expressed through different media but no less powerful, was Jacques Tati, who commented on the modern city as opposed to the 15-minute humane city in his thought-provoking movie *Mon Oncle*.

Christopher Alexander and other distinguished academics from the University of California in Berkeley have taken up the challenge of addressing the shortcomings of Modernist city planning. William H. Whyte in New York and the “placemaking” teams have also addressed these issues. Extensive studies of public life undertaken in Copenhagen have had a profound influence on Copenhagen’s level of excellence, and these studies have, in turn, influenced quite a few other cities. Copenhagen became the first city to announce in 2009 the official city policy of “We will be the best city for people in the world.” In fact, Copenhagen is repeatedly named the “most livable city in the world” in various magazines that publish this type of listing. To top it all off, the European city planners found it necessary to meet up again in Athens in 1998 to sign the second *Athens Charter of City Planning*, stating firmly that the people and functions of the city should no longer

be separated. It was a firm goodbye to Modernism—after 65 years. Unfortunately, there are still many regions and many professionals who have not yet gotten this message. And still more unfortunately, the Modernists and the mobility lobbyists have, in the 65 years since 1933, made an endless number of city districts inhuman and unsustainable that are still stagnantly stewing in all their shortcomings.

This is the context in which the fresh ideas about the “15-minute city” have been developed. This is a set of ideas and tools easy to envision and simple to apply. At last the focus has moved to the neighborhoods, the places where we live and work, as opposed to the many years where all the focus was on moving from point A to point B, without much attention given to the quality of either A or B. The 15-minute city is a new, yet well-tried concept. In the “good old days,” all the cities, big and small, were 15-minute cities. When taking a closer look, one can observe that most city centers in all parts of the world tend to be about one square kilometer in size (1,000 by 1,000 meters).¹ This is as far as the general population can walk on a daily commute, and if you look at your watch while walking this square kilometer, you will find the magic: it’d doable in about 15 minutes.

Enjoy your walks, your bicycle trips, and the vitality of the “15-minute city.”

Jan Gehl, Copenhagen, September 2023

¹ Approximately .386 square miles.

Acknowledgments

THIS BOOK CHRONICLES the unfolding of the proximity revolution.

I sincerely thank Anne Hidalgo, the visionary mayor of Paris, for being the first to defend my vision. Anne, you will find all my deepest gratitude in these lines.

Thank you for the impetus given to C40 Cities, in particular to its director Mark Watts and the indefatigable H  l  ne Chartier, as well as to United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG), led by the brilliant Emilia Saiz.

My sincere thanks go to UN-Habitat, headed by Maimunah Mohd Sharif.

To all the mayors and local governments involved in this transformation. Many thanks to them!

Thanks for the support of the Henrik F. Obel Foundation, which awarded me the significant honor of the Obel Award in 2021.

My heartfelt gratitude goes to Nicholas Boys-Smith and Adrian Singleton.

I'd also like to utmost thank Sebastian Houssieux and Katherine Robertson. Well done to the amazing Shoshana Denning Bechier (Den-Macker).

Thank you to the talented Juliette Henquinbrant.

My genuine and profound recognition also goes to Wiley Publishing for their trust and efficiency. This includes Deborah Schindlar, managing editor; Leah Zarra, acquisitions editor; Gus A. Miklos, development editor; and Kim Wimpsett, copy editor. A truly magnificent team!

I cannot emphasize enough the central role played by Christine Devillepoix in my life, my rock in this enterprise.

Thanks to my colleagues at the Sorbonne and IAE-Paris, especially Catherine Gall, Eric Lamarque, Didier Chabaud, and everyone else—your support has been the backbone of this work. Thanks to the IAE-Paris Sorbonne Endowment Fund and its president, my dear friend Guy Lacroix. Thanks to the president of Paris1 Panthéon Sorbonne, Christine Neau-Leduc, and the vice president, my dear friend Florent Pratlong, for their continuing support always.

Sandra Molnar, my loyal assistant, deserves special recognition, and I give a nod to young Milo, who will one day read this.

This journey would not have been possible without everyone's commitment. Thanks to all the champions of proximity and to all those who are committed and who work day after day to change our cities; I don't have the space to name them all, but I offer my wholehearted thanks.

Introduction

WRITING THIS BOOK has been a long process. After describing in the summer of 2020 what the proximity revolution would look like, I have seen this idea spread around the world. All over the world, I have met local governors, policy makers, and politicians who have implemented it, researchers who have explored it in greater depth, and citizens who have become involved with it. A vast movement has been created. I would like to thank all of them for encouraging me not to give up. It is to them that I owe my thanks for bringing this idea to life, embodying it, making it a reality, and also for defending it when there have been dishonest attacks.

It's to them that I say thank you in so many different languages, because the 15-minute city is now universal. So, here I describe how it emerged, its roots, my sources of inspiration, its journey, and then how, on every continent, in every context, it became a reality.

In the post-war 1950s, expressways took over cities, cutting through them like long wounds, and the car became the center of our (masculine) desires and the very essence of urban life. The goal was to go further and faster. As a result, the streets have become dangerous for pedestrians, the car has become king, gas and oil are primordial and all-powerful ingredients, and our lives have been turned upside down. New centaurs have populated our cities: half-human half-car. Freeways are disfiguring our cities. Fast lanes are everywhere, and we are traveling full speed ahead. Farewell to proximity, the local market, shopping on foot, strolling, and a sense of well-being in the shade of a tree.

This book invites you on a different journey, for which I'll be your guide, to the kind of city that no longer wants long distances with an inhuman transportation system; that refuses to damage its health by the pollution that is becoming almost permanent; that wants to rediscover its humanity. It's a journey to places where it's good to take one's time and where, like in Europe, Asia, Latin America, North America, or Africa, people want to live differently, closing the chapter on two-hour commutes. We'll visit pedestrianized streets, schools with playgrounds instead of busy roads, and spaces that are now used for a wide range of activities when they used to have a single purpose. Under different skies, we'll see how we can change the here and now for a better quality of life. Let there be no fatality and no street that is eternally just a place through which vehicles pass, robbing it of its soul.

Navigating the intricate tapestry of urbanism, this book starts with a deep dive into the foundational tenets that shape modern cities. The first seven chapters elucidate the historic evolution of urban planning, anchored primarily around Le Corbusier's groundbreaking functionalism. These chapters act as both a chronicle and a critique, mapping out the transformative journey of urban landscapes.

Specifically, Chapter 1 includes a resounding call to action, establishing the urgency of reimagining urban ecosystems in light of contemporary challenges. It beckons readers to not just witness but partake in the ensuing urban revolution.

Chapters 2–4 explore the city's fragmentation over time, dissecting the intertwined histories and geographies of the world. These chapters offer readers a panoramic view of the urban landscape, one that is fragmented by time zones, chronologies, and evolving sociopolitical dynamics. The narrative bridges the past with the present, underscoring how historical benchmarks have set the stage for current urban realities.

By the time we reach Chapter 5, the discourse pivots from retrospective analyses to proactive envisioning, urging us to harness lessons from yesteryears to sculpt a more inclusive urban future.

Chapters 6 and 7 delve into the very anatomy of cities, probing the intricate relationship between a city's physical form, its inherent rhythm, and the temporal realities governing it. The culmination of

these early chapters paint a picture of urban metamorphosis, from the oil crisis of 1973 to the challenges and realizations of 2020.

As we transition to Chapters 8–11, the narrative shifts its gaze to Paris, the crucible where the radical concept of the “15-minute city” was forged. This transformative idea promises a departure from sprawling urban expanses to more compact, accessible, and sustainable city designs, positioning proximity as the cornerstone of urban renaissance.

From this point, the book blossoms into a global odyssey, sharing tales of cities around the world as they grapple, adapt, and evolve in their unique quests for urban equilibrium. Each subsequent chapter, from Milan to Melbourne and from Cleveland to Busan, offers a vignette of urban challenges, innovations, and triumphs, showcasing the embrace of proximity principles across five continents.

Chapter 12 introduces us to Milan, where “living in proximity” reflects the city’s integration of urban closeness. Moving to North America, Chapter 13 delves into Portland’s unique character, and Chapter 14 juxtaposes Cleveland’s industrial past with its proximity-driven aspirations.

Chapter 15 highlights Buenos Aires’ vision of a sustainable, proximate future. North Africa’s Sousse in Chapter 16 envisions a metropolis centered on proximity. The Pacific’s Melbourne emerges in Chapter 17 as a “20-minute city,” balancing work and leisure.

Asia’s vibrant Busan transitions from a technological hub to a “happy proximity” model in Chapter 18. Chapter 19 salutes the proximity aspirations of small towns globally. Chapter 20 ties together the ambitions of Scotland and the Ile de France region, both championing a 20-minute territory ideal.

We conclude this journey with Chapter 21, delving into the nexus of technology and urban dwellers’ tendencies.

Collectively, these chapters spotlight cities and territories striving for a unified goal: crafting urban environments where life’s essentials are mere moments away. In this journey, I illuminate a hopeful horizon, where cities—rich with historical essence yet infused with contemporary aspirations—provide their denizens with a powerful synthesis of proximity, interconnectedness, and fulfillment.

Our journey through these cities is also an exploration of ourselves. By offering an urban setting that is conducive to conviviality and proximity, we can rediscover the value of community, mutual cooperation, and sharing. We are nourished by authentic interaction and the solidarity of a reinvented urban life.

So, dear travelers of the world in cities in need of repair, are you ready to re-create life in our cities so that they are much more than anonymous skyscrapers and congested arteries? Are you ready to take part in this new narrative, this new urban life story? If so, then *The 15-Minute City* is for you.

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Here and Now: We Must Change

REPORTS ON URBAN growth worldwide converge in a unified direction, as was reflected by the “2018 Revision of World Urbanization Prospects” from the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UN DESA). According to UN DESA, from 1950 to 2050, the global urban population will experience remarkable growth, soaring from 1.5 billion to nearly 10 billion individuals. Between 2000 and 2050, around three billion people will reside in the world’s cities. This rapid transition will reshape our once predominantly rural world into one that is 68% urbanized (<https://www.un.org/en/desa/2018-revision-world-urbanization-prospects/>).

These urban areas contribute substantially to greenhouse gas emissions, as is strongly highlighted by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC). In its 2022 report, “Climate Change 2022: Mitigating Climate Change,” the IPCC’s Working Group III elucidated the diverse mechanisms through which urban activities account for approximately 70% of global greenhouse gas emissions (<https://www.ipcc.ch/report/sixth-assessment-report-working-group-3/>).

In addition, in its 2021 report titled “Empowering Cities for a Net Zero Future,” the International Energy Agency (IEA) emphasized that urban areas are responsible for more than two-thirds of motorized mobility and at least 75% of housing and commercial buildings. These factors have been identified as the primary sources of carbon dioxide (CO₂) emissions and the subsequent decline in air quality (<https://www.iea.org/reports/empowering-cities-for-a-net-zero-future/>).

To meet these challenges, it is imperative to rethink urban planning, mobility, and lifestyle in cities. Measures to promote sustainable transportation, such as efficient public transportation, cycling infrastructure, and pedestrian zones, can help reduce mobility-related emissions. Additionally, greater energy efficiency in residential and public buildings and the adoption of renewable energy sources are essential to meet the challenges of urbanization.

The Urbanization Challenge and Environmental Impact

Climate change, day after day, month after month, year after year, continues unabated, fueled by the habits of our urban lives that we refuse to change. In the name of what? Our happiness? Our prosperity? None of these things. This is what we've always known, and we want nothing to change. Other human civilizations have disappeared because of famine and war, unable to adapt to new situations. And what about us, today, in this twenty-first century of city, technology, and modernity? Where are we heading? Are we all aware of the situation's severity for our children and grandchildren, to whom we are leaving such a mess? Yes, urban life is the heart of the problem, but it is also the solution, if we enable it to be. Never in the history of humanity has survival been so compromised by lifestyle.

To understand, there is a history to establish: I was born in 1959 with 316 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere, and 64 years later, in April 2023, the threshold of 425 ppm of CO₂ in the atmosphere was exceeded, seriously threatening our future (as shown in Figure 1.1). This goes hand in hand with the constant rise in temperature and natural disasters.

IPCC – Cities Alliance

Over the same period, the average temperature rose from 26.44°C (79.6°F) to 27.28°C (81.1°F). Why is this 0.84°C (1.5°F) increase too much? Although this rise may seem minimal at first glance, it is an average increase on a global scale, affecting vast and complex climate systems. Historically, temperature variations of this magnitude have taken thousands of years to manifest themselves, so such a pronounced change in less than a century is unprecedented and alarming.