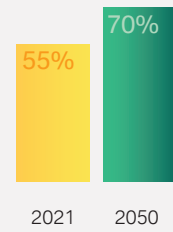


**BMW Foundation**  
Herbert Quandt

R · I · S · E CITIES

# Rethinking urban mobility

Responsible Leaders Lab



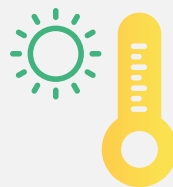
Share of **global population** living in urban communities<sup>1</sup>



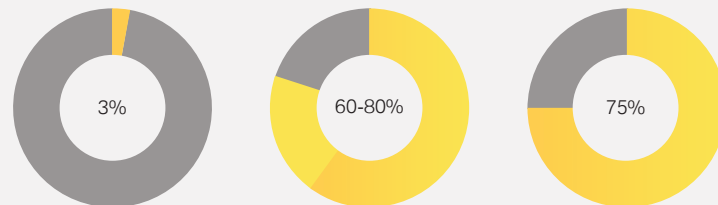
**Damage** caused when Hurricane Sandy hit New York in 2012<sup>1</sup>



A **quarter** of the world's urban population lived in slums in 2018<sup>3</sup>



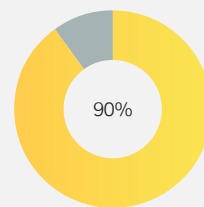
By **2100**, up to **1.2 billion** people could be regularly affected by heat stress<sup>1</sup>



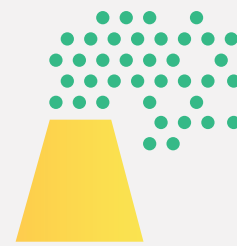
The world's cities occupy just **3%** of the Earth's land, but account for **60-80%** of energy consumption and **75%** of carbon emissions<sup>2</sup>



**Only half** of the world's urban population had convenient access to public transport in 2019<sup>3</sup>



Over **90%** of worldwide COVID-19 cases are in urban areas<sup>3</sup>



**4.2 m** premature deaths caused by air pollution in 2016<sup>1</sup>

# Advancing the United Nations 2030 Agenda

In 2015, the United Nations agreed on the 2030 Agenda to address the challenges and inequalities of our day and age. It is an action plan for people, planet and prosperity, a plan to promote peace, eradicate poverty, realize human rights, achieve gender equality, empower women and girls, and tackle climate change. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the UN 2030 Agenda are a concrete and detailed expression of this action plan. The virtual Responsible Leaders Lab staged by the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt in April 2021 invited participants from Europe and North America to rethink urban mobility so that urbanites' needs can be better met in the context of these SDG goals.

The mission of the BMW Foundation is to advance the 2030 Agenda by promoting responsible leadership and inspiring leaders across communities, cultures, and countries to work towards a peaceful, just and sustainable future. The BMW Foundation uses and promotes impact investing and venture philanthropy as effective tools for social change. Through its global Responsible Leadership Network, impact investments and programs such as RISE Cities the BMW Foundation is tackling the challenges and inequalities the 2030 Agenda addresses.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://population.un.org/wup/>

<sup>2</sup> [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/cities)

<sup>3</sup> <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal11>



# Reshaping mobility to serve citizens' needs

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed so much in our lives, cities and societies. What lessons can we learn to build back better?

Whether we wanted it or not, the COVID-19 pandemic has taught us all how dramatic changes in urban mobility can improve the quality of life in a city. From Milan to New York and Berlin to Toronto, roads have been turned into bike paths. The needs of urbanites changed due to a mixture of fear of getting infected in the various means of public transport and because many more people were working from home. And cities reacted fast.

A city's mobility concepts have an impact not only on the well-being and health of its inhabitants, but also on the space available for green areas, cultural establishments, restaurants and bars, shopping or living quarters – and not least on a city's climate and environmental footprint.

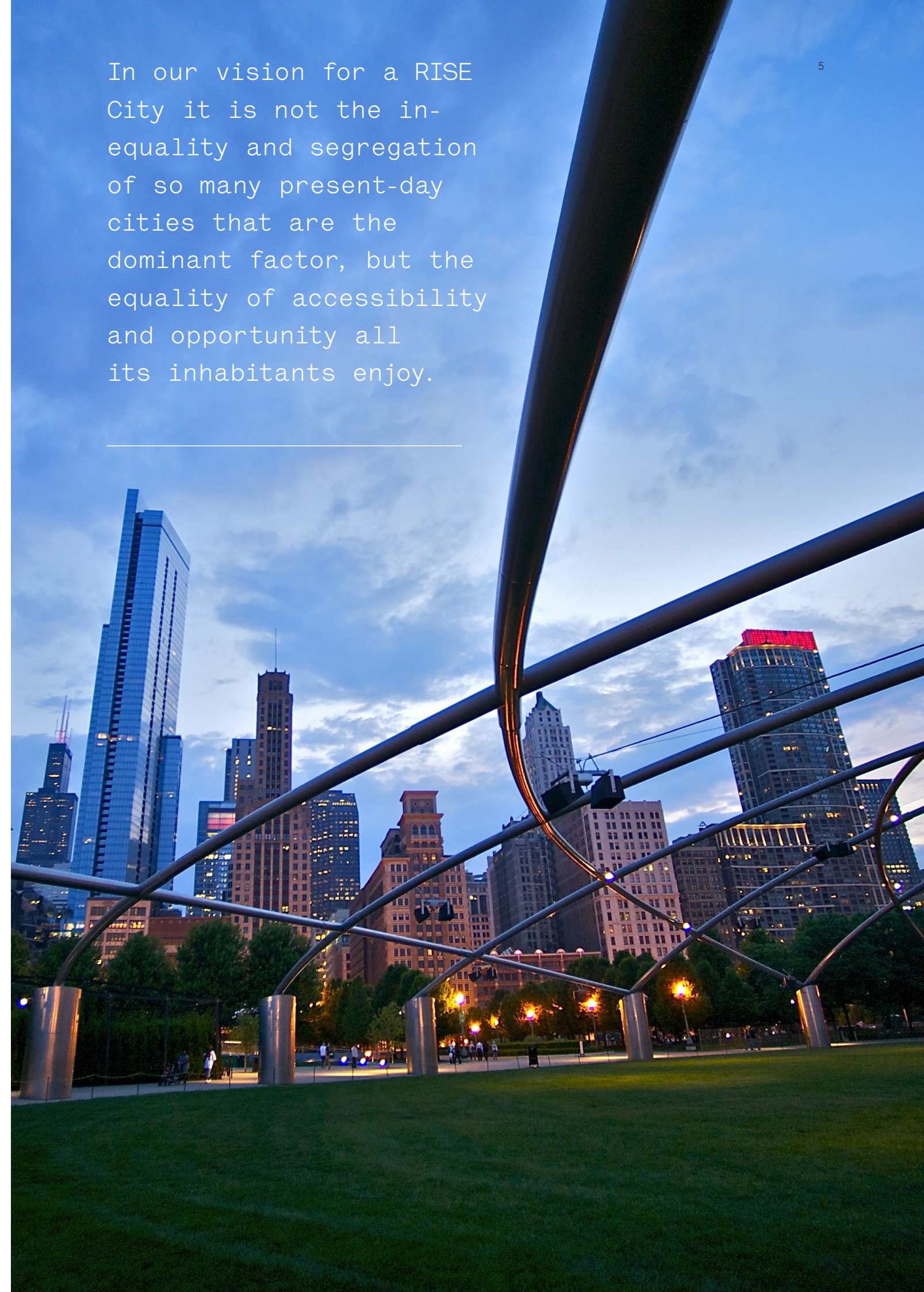
In other words, mobility is an important lever to transform cities into RISE Cities – cities that are resilient, intelligent, sustainable and equitable as the metrics as defined by the metrics on pp.9-10. That is why the BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt invited participants from Europe and North America to a virtual Responsible Leaders Lab in April 2021 to discover how to rethink urban mobility so that it meets its inhabitants' needs.

Mobility in this context has to be seen in a much broader sense. Here, we are not primarily talking about parking spaces, the public transport infrastructure or innovative transport concepts, but rather about societal mobility – permeability, upward mobility, equal opportunities. In our vision for a RISE City it is not the inequality and segregation of so many present-day cities that are the dominant factor, but the equality of accessibility and opportunity all its inhabitants enjoy.

In three workshops and interdisciplinary, regionally mixed groups, experts drew up and discussed concrete ideas as well as future scenarios and narratives that may well contribute to the realization of RISE Cities. The focus here was on the use of digital technologies and the different concepts for cities of short distances.

In our vision for a RISE City it is not the inequality and segregation of so many present-day cities that are the dominant factor, but the equality of accessibility and opportunity all its inhabitants enjoy.

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# When is a city a RISE City?

Can urban citizens contribute to creating a RISE City?

There must be a clear answer to this question; if not, its public authorities, companies and politicians cannot be effectively made responsible. And that's why metrics are needed – and technologies to determine them.

## THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS OF THE UN 2030 AGENDA AS AN EXAMPLE

In order to make successes and setbacks in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) tangible and utilizable, various organizations have translated them into measurable metrics. For example, the Sustainable Development Report published by the Sustainable Development Solutions Network and the Bertelsmann Foundation supplies progress- or regress-based indicators showing how far individual countries have got in attaining these goals as well as an international ranking. As the relevant interactive map shows, only very few countries are on course to fulfilling SDG 11 – sustainable cities and communities – by 2030.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, checking digital dashboards has become part and parcel of people's daily routine. How many new infections have there been? How many have been vaccinated? How does my own city compare with others? Within weeks or months, metrics were created to give people a quick overview of how the pandemic was developing.

If data are systematically and transparently collected and then published in an intelligible and understandable way, failures will be hard to cover up. In other words, figures, indices and statistics can put pressure on political decision-makers – and thus make a real difference. This, too, is one of the lessons learned from the pandemic.

One concrete proposal worked out by the experts attending the Responsible Leaders Lab North America & Europe was therefore a definition of RISE City metrics that will enable measurement of how resilient, intelligent, sustainable and equitable a city is. Written objectives offering clear room for interpretation led, in a first step, to the definition of more specific subgoals and indicators that can be unequivocally expressed in numbers.

### **Metrics only definable in dialog**

Such RISE City metrics could contribute to faster progress in various ways: on the one hand, through the political pressure a publicly accessible RISE City dashboard would generate; on the other hand, since collecting effective metrics would identify areas where the greatest need for action exists – and where targeted investments could have the greatest effect and previously marginalized groups in society particularly benefit.



RISE City metrics enable the effectiveness of measures to be quantified and better decisions taken.

Another positive effect should not be underestimated. Just as the Sustainable Development Goals have become points of reference for civil-society initiatives, foundations and companies that have wanted to make a contribution, such RISE City metrics could take on a mobilizing function.

The biggest obstacle to be overcome in realizing this proposal is likely to be agreeing on the right RISE City metrics. Which subgoals can be measured through which indicators? Who will collect and interpret the necessary data? And is an international standard even a sensible solution?

The difficult negotiations on the indicators for measuring the Sustainable Development Goals and their attainment showed how much political dynamite there is in such questions. Yet it is only through the involvement of all stakeholders and development of a solution that everyone accepts

that RISE City metrics can prove fully effective.

### **Role of digital technologies**

RISE City metrics that offer a genuine basis for action and are, at the same time, easily accessible will not be implementable without the deployment of digital technologies. This was another realization at the Responsible Leaders Lab. This relates to the way the data are presented as an interactive digital dashboard or app, and in particular to the way they are collected.

The condition of a city can be measured by means of metrics such as the quality of its air, public transport utilization, electricity consumption or the numbers of trees, and through deploying sensors, IoT solutions, artificial intelligence or even satellite data.

The involvement of a city's inhabitants, for example through the use of their individual mobility data, which allow conclusions to be drawn about urban mobility, is again only possible by deploying digital tools. If a city wants to regularly poll its inhabitants to acquire these metrics, it cannot avoid using digital participation platforms. This is also true of companies that want to involve their employees.

### **Trust a basic precondition too**

If people are going to participate and supply their data, they have to be sure that the data will be stay secure and not be misused – and that their participation really will contribute to improving their quality of life. That is why cities need to give very specific consideration to the question of whether and to what extent they are willing to collaborate with big tech corporations, which people view critically in Europe and, increasingly, in North America as well.

The specific measures that will have to be taken in a city to transform it into a RISE City cannot be directly derived from these metrics, which can only be the building blocks of a successful strategy. Yet these RISE City metrics would enable the effectiveness of those measures to be quantified, and better decisions to be taken about which solutions should be scaled up and which not. Besides,



**WHEN IS A CITY A RISE CITY?**

How do we define RISE Cities and what specific characteristics do they have? These four metrics are a useful starting point.




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**RESILIENT**

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The city, its systems and services, have enough resilience to cope with current and upcoming challenges such as population growth, climate change, pandemics, or financial crises. City residents **have access** to work, education, health care, and services such as food supply, energy, waste management and transportation as well as a vibrant cultural life.




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**INTELLIGENT**

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An intelligent city uses high-end technology such as digitalization to enhance livability for its residents – for example, by improving city services. The **intelligent city also drives science and innovation** to serve the common good and promote a positive future for the next generations. The city's stakeholders feel empowered to act as responsible leaders.





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**SUSTAINABLE**

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A sustainable city implements successful solutions to **create systems with a neutral to positive environmental impact**. Urban energy systems are based on renewable sources and sustainable concepts, such as natural cooling models or circular economy concepts. Mobility systems are transformed to focus on shared, healthy, and green transportation. Food systems are redesigned to feed the city from within and its immediate surroundings.




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**EQUITABLE**

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In an equitable city, **all citizens are equal, regardless of their gender, origin, status, ethnicity or religion**. This includes an awareness of and fight against systemic problems such as structural racism. An equitable city strives for fair distribution of resources and provides universal access to basic needs such as security, affordable mobility, and housing.



# Digital technologies should be more like electricity

Digital technologies will not solve our problems by themselves. But they can enable solutions, and thus the creation of RISE Cities. Two experts, one from the U.S. and one from Europe, explain why this requires trust and new incentives.

**It was many people's dream that the World Wide Web would bring people together. Instead, digital platforms have further accelerated the polarization of society. Did we overestimate the positive impact of digital technologies, especially with regard to civic participation processes?**

CORAL: Yes, I think so. But only in the sense that we forgot that technology is an enabler and won't solve anything that's outside its control. So while I do agree with all the reports about the way technology has polarized us, I think it's capitalizing on a sense of distrust in government and public institutions that's been growing for decades. Most digital platforms aren't designed to engender dialog, but to keep you hooked. Psychologists tells us that we stay engaged through messages that resonate with the way we already think and see the world. So these platforms are enabling a further sense of distrust.

MEIER: I totally agree. Perhaps our misconception comes from the fact that, as far as I know, the Internet was meant to be a communication and exchange platform for experts and scientists – not the advertising machine it is today. Nowadays, it's all about profit. That's why people distrust not only governments and institutions, but also digital technologies themselves. Without this trust, however, people won't use digital participation platforms and won't be able to generate a positive impact.

“Most digital platforms aren't designed to engender dialog, but to keep you hooked.”

– LILIAN CORAL



**LILIAN CORAL**, South Pasadena (USA). The Knight Foundation's director of national strategy and technology innovation, manages the national portfolio and focuses on the development of the Foundation's citizen-centered Smart Cities strategy. The portfolio's investments include a focus on data accessibility and trust, urban mobility, and technology in public spaces.



**JUTTA JULIANE MEIER**, Munich (Germany). She is CEO of the charitable organization IDENTITY Valley, which she founded to establish a European “answer and evolution” with regard to Silicon Valley and bring the focus back onto our identity. In line with her aim of enabling a value-based digital economy, she is currently developing a set of Digital Responsibility Goals to complement the UN SDGs.

**What do we have to change to make digital technologies contribute to the benefit of society and, more specifically, to more equitable cities?**

MEIER: Change begins with a change in mindset. In my view, this is the most important factor. Instead of just focusing on profit, we should be focusing on finding real solutions to real problems – and on using digital technologies to do so. We need responsible leadership.

CORAL: We're still living in a world where delivering a high return on investor investment is a key driver. One of the main challenges is that if we've got a solution that's creating a broad public benefit, there's usually no clear clientele who'll pay for it. So if we really want more digital solutions to societal problems, we need new mechanisms to pay for them and/or investor-supported incentives – because the current system isn't designed to deliver these solutions.

**Sensors and IoT devices that collect data to improve traffic management, energy consumption, and a city's administration are obvious examples of a smart city. What examples of digital technologies for a RISE city could there be?**

MEIER: The central question in all digital solutions will be who owns the data. Because our personal data, e.g. about our mobility, is valuable both for data-hungry companies that have long been collecting such data, and for our communities and cities. In my view, data belongs to the latter – and we need a fair and transparent process so citizens know who's doing what with their data and when, and how they're benefiting from it. Only then will they be able to trust and be willing to provide their data voluntarily. Such a digital framework should be provided in a RISE City – just as cities provide roads and other infrastructure.

CORAL: The vision of a smart city also requires the creation of the data intermediary or trust Jutta mentioned – where private sector data also gets co-mingled. If you want all the infrastructure elements in a city to communicate with each other, all the data must meet in the middle, so to speak. The difference between a RISE City and a smart city is the element of equity and trust, which is also the



“Perhaps the best scenario would be that in 2050 we will no longer have to worry about technology at all, because we will own our data and decide what should be done with it.”

— JUTTA JULIANE MEIER

greatest opportunity for a RISE City. Its citizens can have a say in what their data is used for. And governments can hopefully use this data to make the city better. Once individuals see that, they will be more motivated to participate in this data exchange.

**Big tech corporations like Google, Amazon, Facebook or Microsoft not only have in-depth knowledge about digital technologies but have also collected an enormous amount of user data. Should cities partner with these revenue-driven giants or look for more purpose-driven, independent solutions?**

CORAL: I think we have to do both, because these companies won't go away. My feeling is that you've got to think about how to engage them in a way that aligns their profit motives and our public benefit goals. At the same time, we have to foster more purpose-driven solutions.

MEIER: Those big companies are making so much money with our data and their lack of transparency – why should they switch direction? I doubt whether it really makes sense to work with them. But I hope that by providing purpose-driven solutions we can push the big ones a bit in the right direction.

**Let's look to the future: What would be the ideal 2050 scenario for a RISE City where digital technologies contribute to greater equity?**

CORAL: If we're successful, in 2050 we'll have a clear vision of what a RISE City should be like. If this city exists, the data and the digital solutions will all be working on its behalf, and it will have a digital pulse that measures how close it is to our goal – whether it's making progress or falling behind. And every citizen would be aware of that, not just the city's bureaucrats. The hardest part in getting there isn't the digital solutions, because I think we can architect them, it's having a shared vision. That's where the work needs to be done now.

MEIER: Perhaps the best scenario would be that in 2050 we will no longer have to worry about technology at all, because we will own our data and decide what can and should be done with it. In such a year 2050, digital technologies would be like electricity today. It's there, but it's not something we need to be afraid of.

**Are there any existing projects and initiatives that show these scenarios are achievable?**

CORAL: There's one example I love because I think all the pieces of what you want to see are in there: community engagement, empowerment of people and getting action going, all through the use of tech. It's a digital platform from an organization we fund called ISeeChange, which started in New Orleans and is now operating in Miami, too. The platform is designed to get residents to document coastal and stormwater flooding. In U.S. cities the areas most often affected by flooding are low-lying areas where many African American or Latino communities live. But those cities' planning predictions about potential flooding tend to significantly un-

derestimate risk in these neighborhoods, while additional infrastructure investment often occurs in more privileged neighborhoods due to a cost-benefit analysis – wealthier homes are deemed more valuable to protect. Though in the case of New Orleans, all the data from the affected communities was actually used by the engineering firms and the city to reallocate a lot of their infrastructure investments into low-income neighborhoods.

MEIER: I'd like to share what our nonprofit IDENTITY Valley is working on right now. We want to contribute to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, but they are missing one important element: digital goals. That's why we developed the Digital Responsibility Goals, which aim to complement and ultimately boost the SDGs through the responsible use of technology. Our seven DRGs generate awareness for topics like cybersecurity, privacy, data fairness (which fits the discussion above), digital literacy or transparency. We believe the digital revolution urgently needs those Digital Responsibility Goals, and we are thrilled to be presenting them in the European Parliament on June 23.





# 2050: A day in the life of a citizen

It is 2050 and Marta lives in a European city that has successfully transformed itself into a polycentric RISE City. This is what her life looks like – in a scenario drawn up by participants at the Responsible Leaders Lab.

## LIVING

Marta lives with her family, other families, singles, children and older people in a diverse co-living facility. Every morning, Marta harvests herbs, salads, vegetables or fruit from their collectively cultivated garden.

## PARTICIPATION

Marta can co-decide how her neighborhood will develop by using a simple voting app.

## MOBILITY

When the weather's nice, Marta hires a family bike from a sharing station around the corner and takes her children to school in the neighborhood. If the weather's bad, she calls an autonomous shuttle that drives her children to school safely and reliably. As she can get everything she wants in the neighborhood and the city has a multimodal mobility network, Marta does not own a car.

## RELATIONSHIPS

Marta feels attached to her neighborhood. Whether it's in her co-living facility, co-working space, parks, galleries or shops, she's always meeting friends and acquaintances. Her life feels like she's living in an urban village. But at the same time, her district is well connected to the rest of the city.

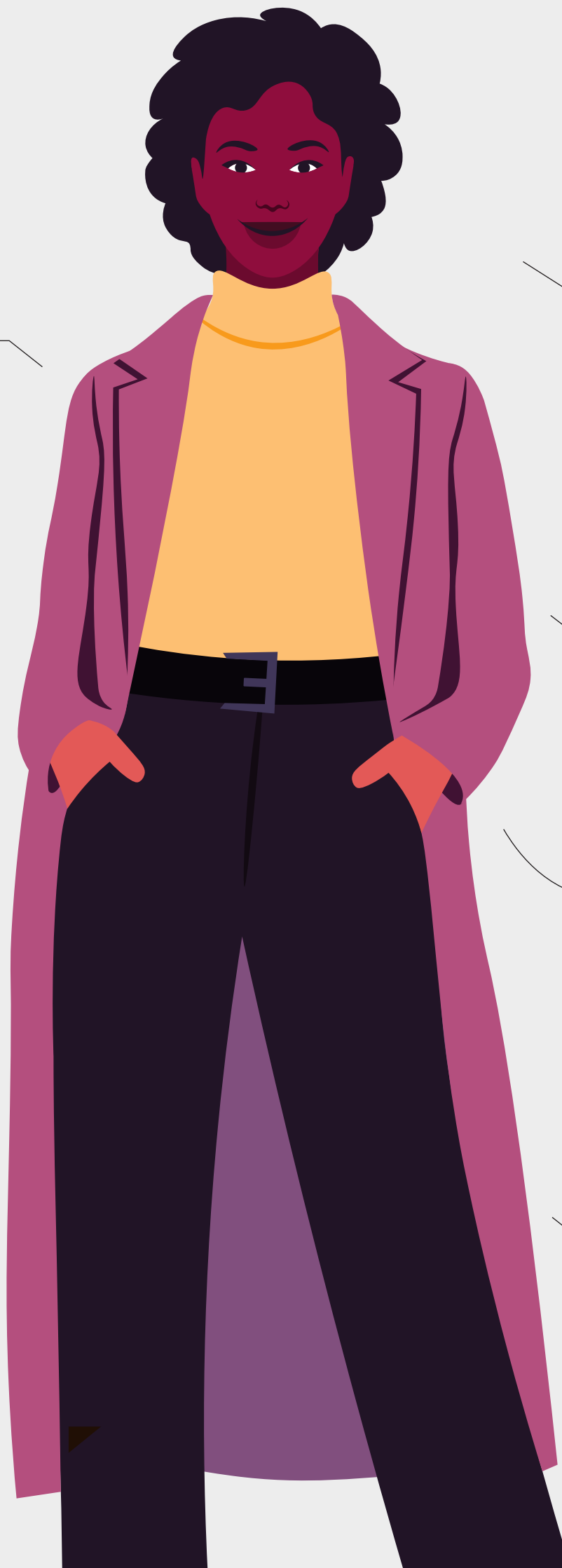
## PARTICIPATION

Marta can choose between working from home, working in a conventional co-working space or even working in an open-air co-working space. After all, there are plenty of green areas in her district. On fine days, her children's lessons also take place in the open air.

**This is  
Marta**

## RESTRICTIONS

Just like every other citizen in this RISE City, Marta has a maximum carbon footprint she's not allowed to exceed; otherwise, it gets expensive for her. But mostly, she finds it easy to keep within these limits because the city has a good, climate-friendly mobility network and the shops in her district mainly sell regional products. Only if she wants to eat real meat that hasn't been cultivated in a lab does she have to look round for a black-market burger.





# Cities of short distances: Inequalities revealed, problems concealed



Detroit is a decentralized city designed for cars, while Stockholm is getting close to the ideal of the 15-minute city. The conditions for realizing a “city of short distances” could not be more different. That’s why we spoke with urban development experts from both cities.

## What city do you live in, and what do you love most about it?

**GOSS:** I live in Detroit, Michigan, and what I love most about Detroit is that its history is so visual in every neighborhood because there are still remnants of the 1800s and 1900s everywhere. What I also love about Detroit is its resilience. It’s not a city for sensitive people. You have to be pretty tough to live here.

**GRANKVIST:** I live in Stockholm and the thing I love most about Stockholm is the proximity to nature. The proximity to the archipelago where I am right now as we’re speaking is just fantastic.

## Can you reach everything you need, both personally and workwise, within 15 minutes?

**GOSS:** No, I cannot. It takes me about 20 minutes by car to get to work. There’s a small grocery store across the street, but it’s just for bread, milk and things like that. If I have to do major grocery shopping, that’s probably another 20 minutes by car. And it took 35 minutes every day to get my children to school.

**GRANKVIST:** Absolutely! I prefer walking, so I walk everywhere within 15 minutes. Because of the pandemic the whole world got a bit closer, and you can reach everyone with Zoom calls.



**ANIKA GOSS**, Detroit (USA). She is the CEO of Detroit Future City, a think-and-do tank focused on land use and economic development in Detroit. She is a leading force and visionary in Detroit’s revitalization, playing a crucial role in Detroit as an advocate for an equitable and sustainable future for the city.



**PER GRANKVIST**, Stockholm (Sweden). He is a Swedish journalist specializing in sustainable lifestyles. He is an author of several books on human behavior and sustainability. As the “chief story-teller” for Sweden’s Viable Cities program whose goal is to create climate-neutral cities, his job is to inspire people for their future life in a carbon-neutral world.

## Is the concept of the 15-minute city applicable for other/most people in your hometown? If not, what needs to change?

**GOSS:** Unfortunately, the commute for Detroiters is extraordinarily long. Detroit is the “Motor City”, and today’s city is designed for automobile traffic. But unlike in the past, when the factories were located right in the middle of residential neighborhoods and there were stores and schools and hospitals around them – because, historically, Detroit was a 15-minute city – the city is very decentralized now. The jobs, commercial centers and better schools are much further out. It’s the antithesis of a 15-minute city. They tried to turn some parts of Detroit into 20-minute neighborhoods. But that only made cafes or galleries more accessible. To achieve the kind of walkable or bikeable short distance neighborhood that would meet the European standard, entire systems would have to shift.

**GRANKVIST:** Stockholm, in comparison, already is a 15-minute-city. But there are still inequalities in the city – especially in income. When you travel along the red line, which is one of the major subway lines, the life expectancy differs by ten years between the richest and the poorest station, so to speak. In order to make Stockholm a city for everyone, this economic inequality has to change.





**There is a lot of hype about concepts such as “cities of short distances”. Does this distract from deeper structural problems, or could it be a key factor in creating more resilient, intelligent, sustainable, and equitable (RISE) cities?**

GRANKVIST: The 15-minute city concept is good because it takes away the dominant idea that everything should be centralized. In a 15-minute city you have to be able to have a high quality of life where you are and enough amenities around you. So, the concept could actually help to realize that there are not equal services everywhere and make inequalities more visible – and thus be a chance for more equality in the future. Although I don’t think it’ll change these inequalities in the short term.

GOSS: Right now, short distances are a luxury not everyone can afford. It’s a privilege. If the concept is to really make a difference, you’d have to make sure that every single neighborhood in your city has the same level of quality and amenity. At the same time, the focus on concepts like the 15-minute city risks overshadowing the real needs of a community. Maybe people in one neighborhood really want bike lanes and a slowdown in car traffic. But perhaps more bus stops and better street lighting would better serve the immediate needs of other communities. What I believe is that there

can’t be a single strategy for every neighborhood because people are just not that homogenous, even if you are of the same race or ethnicity. To find out, you have to ask the people themselves.

**Beyond the creation of short distances, what are the most important steps to build back better after the coronavirus pandemic – in your city and in your country?**

GOSS: For me, building back better also means recognizing that prior to the pandemic, not everyone was doing well and there were significant inequities in the economy, healthcare and education. If people weren’t thriving before the pandemic, you can assume that they were hit even harder. So, we should look at the data prior to the pandemic and focus our investments on closing the gaps.

GRANKVIST: I think the great lesson from the pandemic was that it was not a global pandemic, but a local one. Everyone cared about their own locality, their own hospital, their own supermarket to get their own toilet paper, and not about if there was enough emergency hospital capacity elsewhere. I think it brought back the sense of how important local is. So now it shouldn’t just be about more public investment in local parks or infrastructure, but about all of us recognizing the importance of buying locally, eating locally, and so on.

**In terms of inclusion, safety, (social) mobility, and pollution, what examples of positive change do you know first-hand? What made this change possible?**

GOSS: One of the best examples here in Detroit proves that with coordinated public and private efforts you can see significant results. Until 2018, Detroit’s infant mortality rate was double that of the United States with 16.7 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. So the City of Detroit, the public health department, private hospital systems, and community health systems created a coordinated initiative just to focus on infant mortality and access to healthcare. A year later, in 2019, infant mortality was down to 11 infant deaths per 1,000 live births. That’s still too high, but we saw that in a single year they were able to save many children just by working together in a coordinated effort.

GRANKVIST: One of the initiatives I feel will tackle one of the central challenges, the issue of integration, has been undertaken in Sweden by Amelie Silfverstolpe at the Axfoundation (who is also a BMW Foundation Responsible Leader). It’s called ÖppnaDörren ([www.oppnadorren.se](http://www.oppnadorren.se)), which means “open the door”, and it’s helping people who are new to Sweden to get in touch with people who have been here for a long time. The idea is that you meet with a stranger for an hour over lunch to share your experiences and talk about how to get a job, as you usually meet someone from the same industry. Although or because it’s so simple and the threshold is so low, it’s proved tremendously successful in providing more integration than most other methods. We have to realize that we are citizens of our cities, and we can make our contribution. We’re not just consumers of some local government services.

**Let’s fast-forward to the year 2050 and assume that your city is a RISE City with short distances. What has improved for today’s marginalized communities?**

GOSS: I think what would have been improved by 2050 is that parents would have a choice of good neighborhood schools so they’d be able to walk their kids to school – or the kids could ride their bikes – and then the parents would hop on a fast bus or transit to get to their job within 15 minutes. Apart from that, the neighborhoods would be safe and have community policing and policing partnerships to make sure that nothing terrible happens if your teenage son gets pulled over. That would be my vision for 2050.

GRANKVIST: When we talk about a city in Europe, we usually talk about city that has this one identity, whereas everyone loves New York for being multifaceted with a fabric of stories and cultures. I hope that by 2050 we’ll have a more differentiated understanding of cities being complex organisms with lots of local cultures that are all a part of it. We have to understand that a good, resilient, viable city is something that is composed of diverse inhabitants and is as multifaceted as people are. Only then can everyone truly feel part of one city.

“For me, building back better also means recognizing that prior to the pandemic, not everyone was doing well and there were significant inequities.”

– ANIKA GOSS

# A 15-minute city isn't necessarily a RISE City

Since 2020, concepts such as the 15-minute city have been gaining ground, particularly in Europe. But investing in infrastructural measures will not be enough to fill these cities of short distances with life.

Children's laughter instead of traffic noise, parks instead of parking spaces, nice walks instead of traffic jams. Concepts such as the 15-minute city, the one-minute city or superblocks focus no longer on cars but on people. Space currently reserved for cars is being converted into bike paths, green areas or new places for personal encounters.

Depending on the concept in question, the idea is to shorten the distances urbanites have to travel. They should not be dependent on a car but be able to reach everything they need for a good life on foot or by bike – whether it be their workplace, school, healthcare facility, green spaces, cultural facilities, shops or pubs and restaurants. Everything should be just a few minutes away. For longer distances such a city would offer its inhabitants a sustainable multimodal, public transport network.

## EUROPEAN PIONEERS:

PARIS, BARCELONA, GOTHENBURG

The concept of the 15-minute city ("La ville du quart d'heure") comes from Carlos Moreno, who does research work at the Sorbonne in Paris. Anne Hidalgo, the Parti socialiste mayor of Paris who was re-elected in 2020, based her political platform on this concept. In Barcelona there is a growing number of superblocks where several blocks of houses are consolidated and the parking spaces and multi-lane roads between them converted into parks, playgrounds or street cafés. Several other cities, including Munich, now want to create their own superblocks as well. In 2020, Gothenburg and several other Swedish cities declared the hyper-local one-minute city to be their goal. Its realization begins by replacing parking spaces with wooden street furniture, e.g. picnic tables, charging stations for e-scooters or flower troughs.



## PIONEERS IN NORTH AMERICA:

PORTLAND, OTTAWA, DETROIT

By 2030, Portland, Oregon, aims to set up 80 neighborhoods where 80% of the inhabitants will need no car for their everyday lives, as they will be able to manage everything on foot or by bike. Ottawa is confronted by a huge increase in its population, which will possibly double within 25 years. In spite of this, Ottawa approved a plan to create 15-minute neighborhoods. In Detroit, several 20-minute neighborhoods should have been created five years ago through investing in better bike and foot paths, signposting and street lighting. The results of this ambitious project, however, have been mixed.

In this way, these growing cities are not just aiming to offer these inhabitants more quality of life and free time, but also getting ready for rising temperatures and extreme weather. But the prime goal is to reduce their carbon footprint. Currently, slightly over half the world's population live in urban communities. Yet they are responsible for 70% of greenhouse gas emissions, of which a significant proportion is due to the increasing volume of combustion engine-powered traffic.

### Differing preconditions in Europe and the USA

The participants at the Responsible Leaders Lab North America & Europe agreed that cities of short distances, sustainable mobility and more green spaces were basically a desirable future vision. Nevertheless, it also became clear that the challenges facing European and North American cities are very different. The Paris model of the 15-minute city is not easily transferrable to Detroit or Los Angeles. Whereas some European metropolises have been focusing on public transport and bike-based mobility for decades, many North American cities were designed for automotive mobility.

### More participation, more safety, less inequality

Long distances are not the biggest concern of urban inhabitants in many cities. There, people are concerned about unsafe environments. This was another outcome of the discussions. If you're scared of walking somewhere, you won't use a new footpath. Short distances are not a universal remedy.

# 70%

of global greenhouse gas emissions are caused by urban communities

If neighborhoods like those are not included from the start in the concrete planning of "cities of short distances", the measures taken may well fail to meet their true needs. Evidence of this comes from Detroit or Barcelona where the renovation of certain districts was either refuted or actually opposed by their inhabitants. That is why low-threshold forms of participation are required, e.g. digital platforms, to make citizen-centric planning possible. Nevertheless, it has to be said that such platforms will only be accepted if the people in question actually trust the urban developers.

Besides investment in infrastructure measures, there also has to be action to fight structural racism, discrimination and poverty, because today's cities are characterized by inequality and segregation. Whether or not people can live in a district offering access to high-quality education and healthcare facilities, workplaces or shops often depends on their income, ethnicity or origins.

Metropolises like Paris or Milan have recognized this and are investing not just in sustainable mobility, trees, parks and playgrounds but also in the social transformation of their city. They are creating affordable accommodation, opposing projects that could lead to more gentrification, and also furthering the generation of new jobs.

The 15-minute city is not automatically a RISE City. But a RISE City will most probably be a 15-minute city for most of its inhabitants.



# RISE Cities: What lies ahead

In 2021 and 2022, the BMW Foundation is extending its RISE Cities program to advance global knowledge of resilient, intelligent, sustainable, and equitable cities. It is doing this by strengthening local ecosystems and fostering citizen participation to create citizen-centered solutions.

The new website [RISEcities.org](https://RISEcities.org) visualizes the platform we want to establish to engage and connect politicians, bureaucrats, scientists, urbanists, architects, the business community, and civil society to identify and help implement new strategies and innovation for sustainable urban development.

New partners like GEHL and EIT Urban Mobility Hub have joined RISE Cities and are especially important for the RISE City Lab that was launched as a pilot in March in Munich and will continue until October 2021. With Munich's Deputy Mayor, Kathrin Habenschaden, as its patron, the RISE City Lab Munich is creating a catalyzing process for its portfolio project Initiative FreiRaum, which aims to enhance the impact of RISE in the district to the south of Munich's main train station.

After one year of implementing the RISE program, we want to exchange first inputs, insights and hypotheses that have emerged from our network sessions, leadership program, workshops, sounding board and international thought leader knowledge. In the second half of 2021, we will discuss different stakeholder perspectives on our RISE Cities 2050 – future visions in the upcoming Creative City Talks in the Munich Pavilion and at the international Creative Bureaucracy Festival. Further steps will include the concept for the RISE leadership program and the physical re-start in Singapore in April 2022 along with our co-creation partner Nanyang Technological University.



Scan this QR code to visit the RISE website and find out more.





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