

HOW TO BUILD A BETTER CITY IN 2021

a city
made by
people



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We'd like to thank all those who contributed to this list: our fellow citizens and friends, the people who make our cities great.

Enjoy the read.

From our team,
A City Made By People

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Cities need to flip the equation and stop shaping themselves solely around technology and economic growth. In the previous century, we reshaped our cities to accommodate car traffic to 'solve' mobility issues. In recent years, we see this trend accelerating. But even worse, we bet all our chips on the next technological development to 'solve' our cities. Let it be the smart city, self-driving cars, or shared e-scooters, we keep discussing the tech rather than our vision.

The corona crisis led to many tragedies, some of which are yet to be known. But in one way, it also allowed us to observe our cities, and realize that they are not built to foster happiness. Smart City has nothing to do with artificial intelligence or sensors. A city is smart when it's fair, inclusive, safe, and inviting to people of all ages and abilities. Technology is only a bonus.

Pakhuis de Zwijger, Amsterdam

Culture & Creativity

Dymphie Braun

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Humankind, Rotterdam

Urbanism & Mobility

Lior Steinberg

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What we need is a more intersectional feminist vision on creating cities. There's a growing dichotomy in our global, national, and local societies. The call for change is mainly heard in urban areas, which are or are increasingly becoming super diverse.

What we're seeing are no longer isolated manifestations of resistance: minorities join forces. Women, people of colour, queer people, young people; together we are focusing on dismantling interacting and often mutually reinforcing expressions of sexism, racism, homophobia, transphobia, and other systems of discrimination, oppression, and privilege.

How can we as designers and creatives contribute to the creation of not only sustainable, just, and inclusive cities, and products, services, places, and systems in which everyone feels represented?

Let's create a world where everyone - including future generations - regardless of capacities, ethnicity, gender (identity), age, and cultural background, can participate in social, economic, cultural, and leisure activities with equal opportunities.



Urban Detective, Leiden

Connection & Relationships

Vince de Jong

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The way we work is drastically changing. Already before Covid-19, we started to work more and more in our own environment. Also lots of economic activity has become eco-friendly and therefore more 'mixable'.

What cities in 2021 need is to benefit from the increased attention for 'the way we work' and the unavoidable 'office real estate surplus'. We have a good chance to regain and insure affordable workspace in the city and facilitate and create more balanced and mixed neighbourhoods.

Streetfilms, New York

Urbanism & Mobility

Clarence Eckerson Jr.

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Cities need leaders with innovative minds ready to experiment, implement, and take chances with our streets to make cities safer and more attractive.

The one thing we must do is open a grid of streets in every city neighborhood to facilitate living by residents, whether that is a Barcelona Superblocks model, a daily open street initiative or a weekend/Ciclovía greenway program - we are finding due to 2020's pandemic that it is imperative to move away from cars dominating the spaces outside our homes.



Give to Profit, North Berwick

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Alisoun Mackenzie

alisoun.com/givetoprofit

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Cities need business owners and leaders who care about more than simply making money.

To me business is an opportunity to be kind – to be compassionate towards people, communities and have a positive impact in the world.





Not Just Bikes, Amsterdam

Urbanism & Mobility

Jason Slaughter

patreon.com/notjustbikes

[Not Just Bikes](#)

The 21st-century city needs to focus on walkability, because when a city is walkable, every other element of good urbanism is easy.

The 15-minute city is a good rule to follow: everything that a person needs should be accessible in 15 minutes, by walking, cycling, or public transit.

Modacity, Delft

Urbanism & Mobility

Melissa Bruntlett

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The most vibrant cities are ones that prioritize the one element that gives them their character - its people.

If more places reduce the space for cars and give it back to people, then any city can become a more social, healthy, and happy place for everyone!



Madrid, Spain

Culture & Creativity

Marta Aguilar

ACMBP City Captain

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To make cities more sustainable and resilient, one basic improvement should be working towards a greener urban space through urbanism development. De-paving some areas and implementing more parks, nature, and soil grounds. Turning unused parking and abandoned lots into community gardens and parks. This could allow water to naturally percolate into the ground and will not only alleviate flooding on the street, it will filter and clean the water on its way back underground. Increasingly nature-based solutions are considered in urban climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

Also, and working towards greener and healthier environments, it should be necessary to implement more sustainable urban transport that can include giving priority to bicycles over cars. Redesign the space to become more bike friendly, with more bike lanes and additional bike parking.



Project Fearless, Amsterdam

Health & Well-being

Mérida Miller

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I'd love to see more events where strangers can come together to create and share new experiences as a team. I love when "adults" (whatever that word really means) let their inner fearless child out and connect through play and curiosity.

Spaces where people can try new things without the fear of "Am I'm doing this right?" and the embarrassment that comes with that fear and instead, are met with encouragement and laughter from their new teammate, because "we are all learning/growing together!"

Moments, where you are getting out of your comfort zone together, immediately create a community full of empathy and support, which let's be honest, the whole world could use more of.

Farmed Today, Amsterdam

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Demba Lehrer

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More and more sustainable food initiatives have been rising in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020. These initiatives have been received well by the local communities.

"Support your locals" was the highlight slogan of the pandemic, motivating thousands of people to support their local food producers by changing their grocery habits away from big supermarket chains to small, local initiatives.

This marks the beginning of the local food era. What I believe every city needs in 2021, is a service which allows the community to get in direct contact with their local food producer to exchange products and knowledge. With Farmed Today, we provide this service to cities throughout the whole Netherlands.



Zece La Rece, Bucharest

Luka Rene Tomislav

zeclarece.ro

Culture & Creativity

[@lifeisjovial](https://www.instagram.com/lifeisjovial)



It's hard to be objective, as each city has different needs according to their size, wealth, and cultural background.

For you to know, Bucharest is one of the most congested cities in Europe (drivers lose 27 days/year in traffic on average), and one of the most polluted. Romania is also among the “bad students” when it turns to health and especially obesity.

However, Bucharest is a flat city, designed with large avenues built during the communist period, and most people live at less than a 10km radius from the city center. Do you see it coming? Covid-19 does not give people much appeal for public transportation, and this is a perfect opportunity for the newly elected mayor, Nicusor Dan, to push for this city to become one of the most bike-friendly cities in Europe. My bike and I really hope this will happen someday.

De Gezonde Stad, Amsterdam

Annick Mantoua

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Health & Well-being

[@degezondestad](https://www.instagram.com/degezondestad)

The one thing cities need in 2021 are more pocketparks or community gardens to boost climate adaptation, biodiversity, and social well-being.

Thereby, we must use the positive energy of citizens and leverage different perspectives. That's why we work on more edible community pocketparks!



TGTG Warrior Community

Too Good To Go Waste Warriors

toogoodtogo.com

[@toogoodtogo](https://www.instagram.com/toogoodtogo)

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

A tangible, easy way to fight food waste and help build a greener planet. Check and see if the Too Good To Go app is in your city - we're already in 15 countries around the world!

BYCS, Amsterdam

Urbanism & Mobility

Maud de Vries & Lucas Snaije

bycs.org

[@bycs_org](https://twitter.com/bycs_org)



If I can only choose one thing, I would want city governments to focus on CO₂ emissions and be fully accountable for it! Whenever we reduce CO₂ emissions chances are big that we are making our city more sustainable and that we are helping our environment.

To cut emissions requires a clear vision: where do we wanna be in 5 years down the road? It also requires a strategy: how are we gonna achieve that? What are the challenges that we need to tackle in order to achieve it?

Take a look at Oslo and its climate budget: the idea behind it was to create a pragmatic “efficient, measurable, and transparent” system and “to count emissions the way we count money.” In my opinion, this is exactly what cities should focus on! And since pretty much anything within tackling climate change is also an opportunity to create jobs, I think city governments should give a very reliable perspective to its citizens where we are heading.



Our cities in 2021 need a radical rethinking of mobility habits, shedding the primacy of the private vehicle and embracing walking and cycling for all.

To ensure this shift can be inclusive and widespread, we must accelerate the reallocation of street space for active transportation in an equitable manner and facilitate a culture of bicycling for daily trips that takes into account the specific needs of different demographics such as children, caregivers, women, the elderly, people with disabilities, and more socio-economically vulnerable groups.

Urban Future, Graz

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Gerald Babel-Sutter

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Friends of Friends, Berlin

Culture & Creativity

Frederik Frede

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It is pretty simple. Less cars and trucks. More bikes and public transport.

Cities in 2021 need to build resilient communities in order to withstand the perils of the future. As we saw over the course of the pandemic, it was neighbours and communities that came to each other's help.

The greatest investment that can be made by a city is in developing a sense of belonging amongst its citizens. Even in non-pandemic times, communities can get together to build gardens, re-green their neighbourhoods and setup spaces for children to engage with urban farming.

When we think of health, we have to think of long-term, overall health that is derived from living in green cities full of nature. In order to secure this, our community is our most valuable resource.

Slow Food, Worldwide

Health & Well-being

Elena Sandrone

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The Sunshine Journey, Amsterdam

Eva Bouwer

Connection & Relationships

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Cities and its citizens need kindness, they need the magic and energy of a connection.

Find your way to show kindness to those around you, find magic in the little things and make a difference for your city every day, bringing your positive energy to life.

Gemtrack, Amsterdam & Bali

Health & Well-being

Rosa Hudepohl

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For 2021, given the problems generated (or merely exposed) by the pandemic, the hope is that cities will take concrete steps to establish their own food policies. There is a lot of talk about this, but actually not many administrations have thought about or implemented an integrated food policy.

It is essential that, first and foremost, food be given a new central role: the role it can play in human and environmental health, in strengthening our communities, in facilitating social inclusion and in providing food and environmental education.



Swapfiets, Amsterdam

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Richard Burger

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In 2021, the one thing cities need to make them better will be to invest in a bicycle culture and infrastructure to tackle the problems of environmental pollution through traffic congestion and density. I believe bicycle subscriptions are the answer to achieve greener, healthier, and friendlier urban environments.



Bucharest, Romania

Culture & Creativity

Adriana Spulber

ACMBP City Captain

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I think that cities need more respect for their past. At least that's what I want for my beloved city, Bucharest. A city is not what we see with the naked eye. A city is its stories. The stories from everyone that lived there.

Everyone puts their mark on their city, so each and everyone of us can help preserve its history and integrity. Think of this next time you think an old building should make room for something new.

I hope we will learn to appreciate more the places with stories behind them. And love our city just like it is.

Cities need more B Corporations like Zoku that act and think holistically about their impact on their local environment, economy, and communities where we all strive for a more personal and sustainable relationship with everyone and everything that is related to or impacted by the company.

Policies work on the prevention of homelessness and society is sensitized to this reality. We need a city in which there are no homeless people, because they are included in society.

Inspire to do good, share knowledge, dream big, and act local!

Zoku, Amsterdam

Connection & Relationships

Hidde van Gelder

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Author of *The Blue Economy*

Gunter Pauli

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Local Business & Entrepreneurship

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Tell every day a grand and positive story that will inspire young people, and do this for the rest of your life!



Bokata, Madrid

Esperanza Vera Ortiz

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Health & Well-being

[@asociacion_bokatas](https://twitter.com/asociacion_bokatas)

A city in which there are no homeless people, because they are included in society.

Policies work on the prevention of homelessness and society is sensitized to this reality.



Metabolic, Amsterdam

Eva Gladek

metabolic.nl

Urbanism & Mobility

[@metabolichq](https://twitter.com/metabolichq)

We all need to become ‘city-makers’ to the extent of our abilities – take on the responsibility of crafting our habitats in a more sustainable vision, actively shaping our homes, jobs, neighborhoods, and communities.



unu Motors, Berlin

Oscar Galvin

unumotors.com

Urbanism & Mobility

[@unu](https://twitter.com/unu)

Cities need to introduce subsidies for electric two wheelers. Car owners have been privileged with comfort for too long and it is time to do something about it.

The Collection One, Amsterdam

Connection & Relationships

Lisa Schotman

thecollectionone.com

[@thecollectionone](https://twitter.com/thecollectionone)

Connection. Connection on different levels: have a little chat with your neighbor, a chat with your boss, or with a shop owner.

In these times of a pandemic, I think it is important to see how we can help each other. As an entrepreneur, it really helped me to talk to other local business owners and see how we can survive together.

We are in this together.



Melbourne, Australia

Culture & Creativity

Netta Justice

ACMBP City Captain

nettajustice.com

Melbourne and its citizens are craving the return of live music and theatre.

It's the beat to its heart, and sadly in 2020 it mostly went silent on the arts front.

We have a city full of talent who want to perform, and plenty of people keen to listen and watch again. The buzz of live performance makes the city thrive and its needed for 2021.

Doughnut Economics Action Lab

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Kate Raworth

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[@doughnuteconomics](https://twitter.com/doughnuteconomics)

The one thing that cities need in 2021 is to start a deep exploration of this question: How can your city be a home to thriving people in a thriving natural habitat, while respecting the well-being of all people and the health of the whole planet?

Answering that question will begin the journey of your city moving into the Doughnut of social and planetary boundaries.





Commons Network, Europe

Local Business & Entrepreneurship

Jens Kimmel

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What cities need is a paradigm shift.

Cities are not the playground of hedge funds and real estate developers, but they are ours to steward, define the rules of and own.

We, citizens and neighbours, have the Right to the City.

Space & Matter, Amsterdam

Connection & Relationships

Tjeerd Haccou

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[@spaceandmatter](https://twitter.com/spaceandmatter)

What cities need is more ownership by the communities living in them; new models for self-governing and self-determination that depend on webs of shared responsibility, rather than top-down.

When residents become stewards of their own neighbourhoods, they make long-term decisions based on diverse values; not only economic but also social and ecological.



Coronahelpers, Amsterdam

Connection & Relationships

Hendrik-Jan Overmeer

coronahelpers.nl

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The city of 2021 should learn from all the events of 2020.

Let us be there for each other, help each other, live sustainable lives and travel less unnecessarily.

Enjoy your beautiful city!



Reframe Theatre, Hong Kong

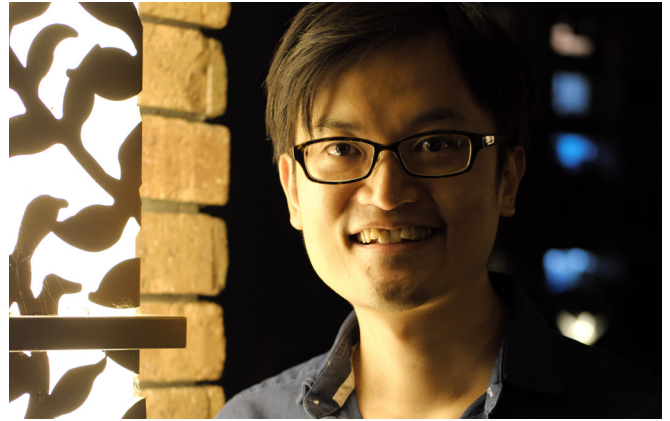
Yan Pat To

reframetheatre.com

[@reframetheatre](https://twitter.com/reframetheatre)

Freedom from fear.

The city is now in continuous panic; therefore, we need the freedom from indiscriminate arrest, injustice trial, and freedom of expression.



Zeist, the Netherlands

Connection & Relationships

Sarah Picolet

ACMBP Contributor

piquette.com

Cities need more ways of connecting its people to each other, no matter our differences. It shouldn't be dubbed a lonely place when all we really need is more kindness and understanding towards one another.

Metalab, Ivano-Frankivsk

Culture & Creativity

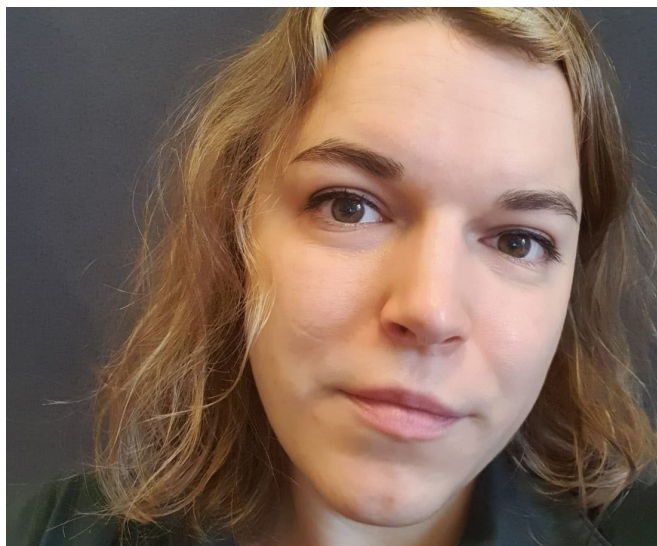
Anna Dobrova

metalab.space

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I believe that in 2021 our cities need more quality public spaces with access to nature more than ever before.

Spaces that allow recovering from isolation, uncertainty and distancing this year. Spaces that help us find inner peace and re-establish our sense of urban community.



Geht-doch Wien, Vienna

Urbanism & Mobility

Sophie Thiel

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Our cities need to give space to people in order to create many opportunities to walk, meet, play, linger, and exercise outside.

Streets in every district need to transform into tree-lined boulevards with consumption-free seats, street music, and loads of car-free space for the safety of our youngest and elderly people. Like that the quality of living would be skyrocketing in every city!

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@acitymadebypeople