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Steps to a City of People

12

CITY OF PEOPLE !
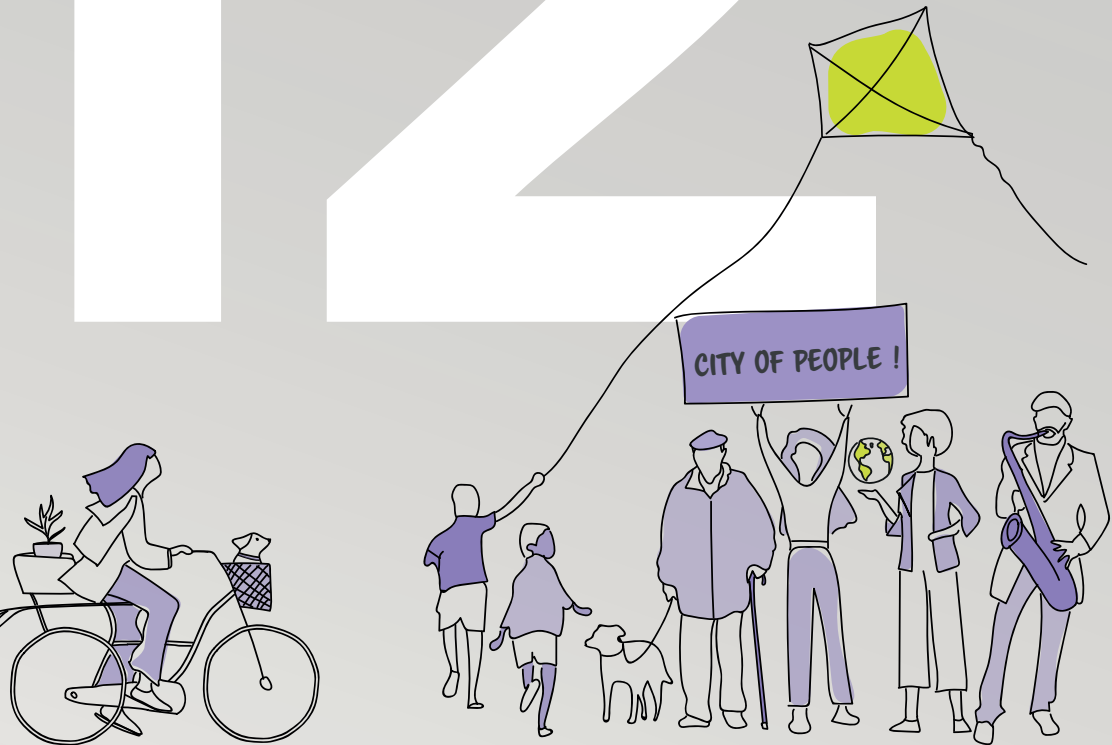
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sa_partners agency for urban design and planning

Never before has there been such a time of change as in the 21st century. This is especially true for cities and villages. They need to be resilient and adaptable. On the way to a healthy and liveable future, they should focus on what makes cities and villages so vibrant and vital: people.

Granted: Considering people in all their social diversity is challenging. But by working together, we can succeed.

Our latest publication, «12 Steps to a City of People», is also a collaborative effort. It was produced in our Spacelab in exchange with experienced experts from politics, economy, society, research and administration. We would like to thank all the contributors for their inspiring and generous support.

What makes a city liveable? And above all: How do we make cities liveable? Let yourself be inspired, dear readers, by the ideas in this booklet and develop your own vision of a healthy and vibrant city of the future.

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«Let us commit to more action, that we can face as individuals, partners, communities, cities and countries to ensure a better future is possible. The time for action is now.»

Maimunah Mohd Sharif, Executive Director UN-Habitat
World Urban Forum 11, Opening Speech 2022

We will need to create liveable neighbour-hoods for the future and the question of identity will play a central role here. Dreaming of the countryside, will not lead one to build a good city, much less one that is suitable for agglomeration.

Prof. Dr. Daniel Kübler, Directing Member at the Centre for Democracy

Urban quality of life means diversity in small areas. This requires multifunctional spaces suited for flexible use.

Martin Flügel, Director of the National Association of Swiss Cities

A vision is needed. But who is responsible for this? Politics? Economics? The people or science?

Sonja Wollkopf Walt, Managing Director Greater Zurich Area AG

Planning for people is at the centre of our work. We live in a society that is highly differentiated, mobile and multi-local. When we plan, we have to deal with a wide variety of living and working models and different spatial references.

Dr. Maria Lezzi, Director of the Federal Office for Spatial Development

In the future, there will be a demand for solutions that are flexible in terms of both space and time. This also applies to the use of streetscapes.

Simone Rangosch, Director of the Civil Engineering Office City of Zurich

Spatial development is a cross-sectional task that must also be able to anticipate the future. This is a challenging assignment. Experimental spaces play a key role in the development of innovative solutions. They allow new strategies to be tested and a culture of innovation to be developed across the board.

Damian Jerjen, Director EspaceSuisse

For the City of People of tomorrow, we need the courage and political will of today. This requires a change of perspective and mindset.

Monika Suter, Cantonal Planner Bern

12

Steps
to a City
of People

Liveable cities and villages are rich in diversity and tension. And they are the result of a continuous process. In a world increasingly characterised by change and uncertainty, creativity and the will to shape the city are just as essential as a new attitude to failure.

The transformation into the liveable city or village of tomorrow is a step-by-step process. Not every step is equally important. It's the specific mix that makes the difference.

1 DiverCity

With the shift from biography to «multigraphy», a concept that encompasses a broader understanding of different pathways and personal stories, we are dealing with highly differentiated lifestyles and models that are becoming increasingly important. Both are increasingly defined by the needs and values of current life situations and phases, as well as backgrounds and opportunities. Whether Digital Creative, Modern Nomad or Forever Youngster, whether in the city or in the village: Embrace diversity and make inclusiveness a key part of the development!
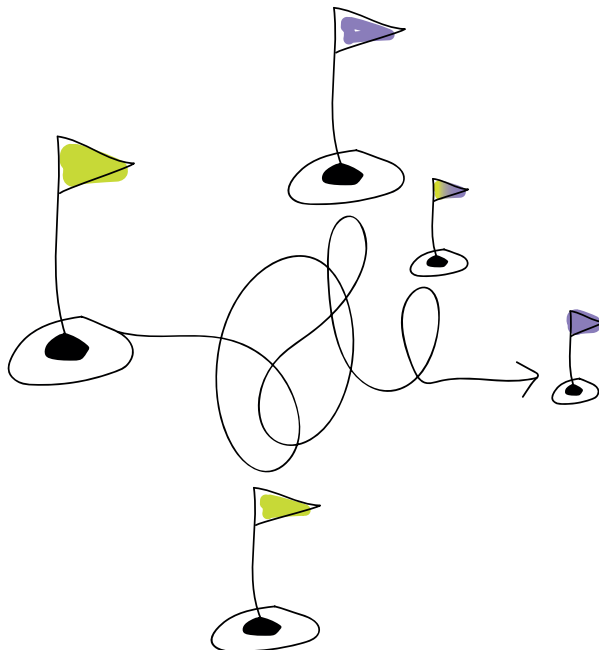
2 15-Minute City
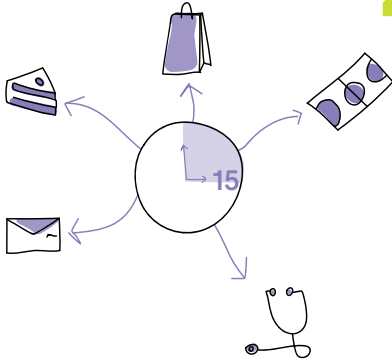
The 15-Minute City is the basic framework for healthy communities and stands for a sustainable and resilient development. With everyday services, goods and public spaces within walking distance, it provides liveable, safe and inclusive neighbourhoods that ensure independence for all ages and backgrounds. Encourage small-scale initiatives, inclusiveness and interaction!

3 Flexible City

In times of profound change, cities need to be able to adapt and evolve. Flexible solutions take on a new meaning. Public infrastructure in particular offers great potential for spatially and temporally flexible solutions. Promote flexibility especially in public spaces and streetscapes!
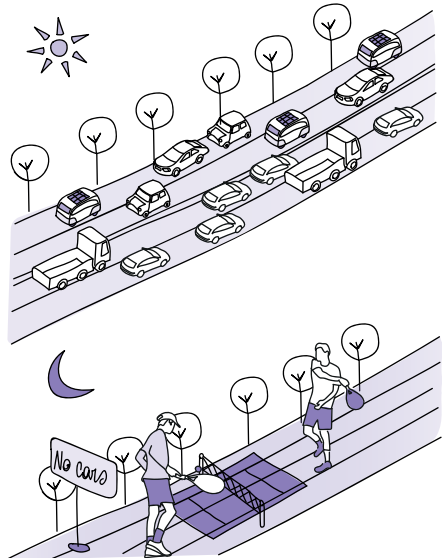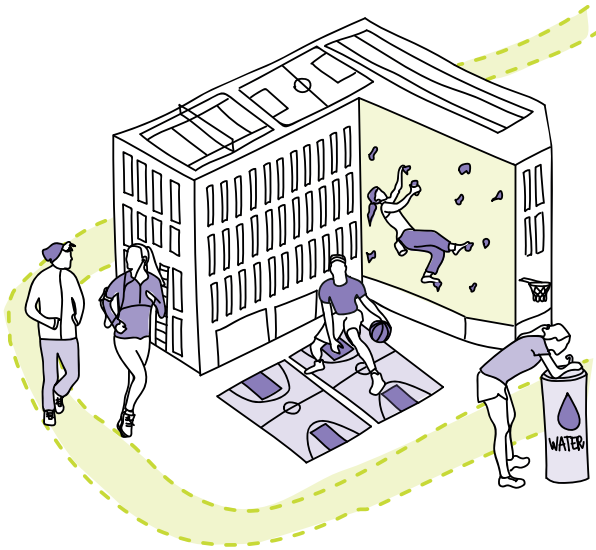
4 Fitness City

The pandemic has shown how important community and health are for us all. Fitness City reinterprets the city as a gym, turning exercise into a creative community experience in the spirit of exercise culture. From chic bike lanes and urban walking trails to lighted basketball courts: Encourage healthy movement by investing in a Fitness City!

5 Digital Boost

Smart solutions pave the way for new urban design solutions and innovative ways to reclaim the city. Set an example as an «Urban Living Lab» and act as a collaborative partner to promote smart innovations! This does not only apply to the city. Villages are particularly well placed to test new urban solutions and become trend setters for urban innovation.
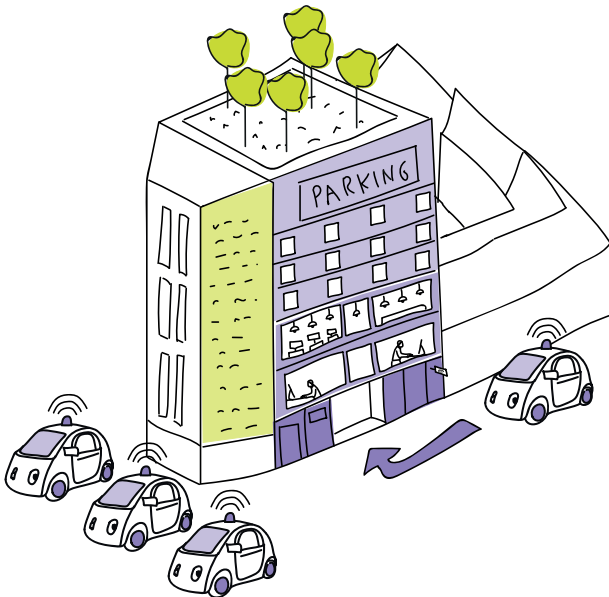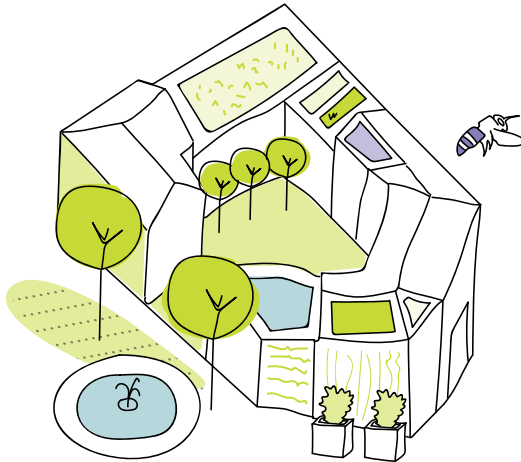
6 Blue-green comfort

Blue-green networks are the infrastructure of the future: they ensure a good urban climate and a high quality of life. They contribute to climate adaptation and biodiversity and are key to any net-zero strategy. When treated as a cross-sectional task, even small interventions can deliver visible and sustainable quick wins. Promote and implement these blue-green networks successfully!

7 Superblocks

When selected neighbourhood streets become meeting places and apartment blocks become living islands, it creates quality of life and space for a vibrant neighbourhood and new local businesses. Away from traffic and welcome generous public spaces! Calmer yet vibrant neighbourhoods that meet the needs of all residents will be assured! And for those who don't believe the hype: Superblocks may just as well be applied on limited hours. The win will not go unnoticed.
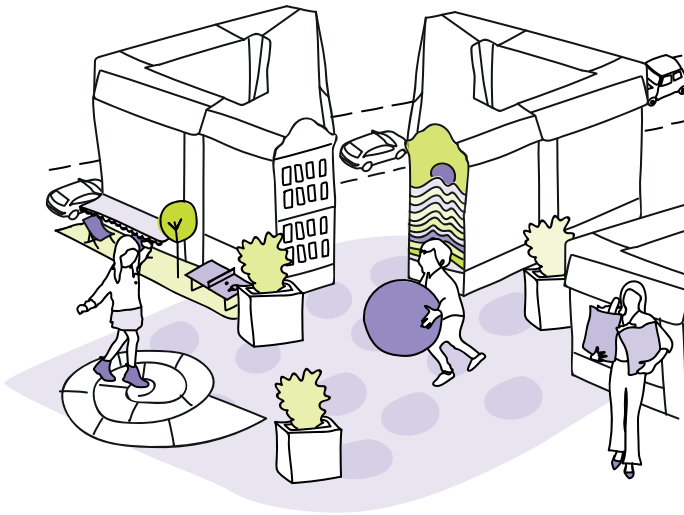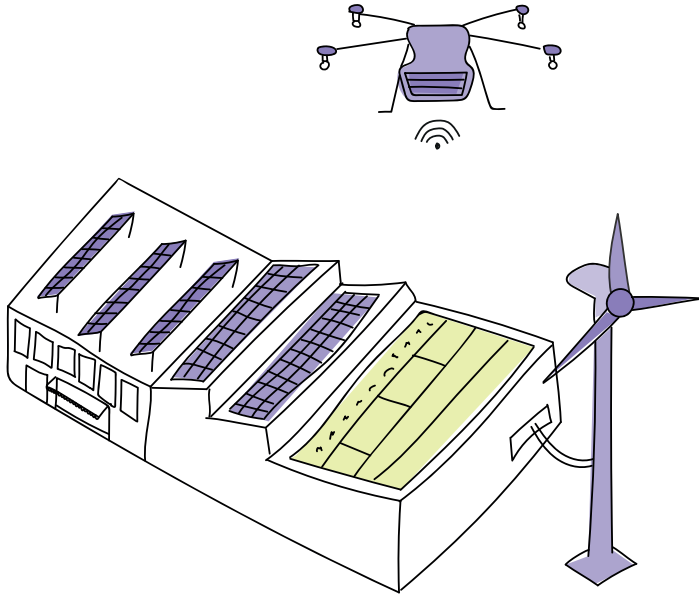
8 Circular Economy

The circular economy plays a central role on the path to net-zero. It encompasses innovative and resource-efficient technologies and strategies as part of a regenerative system. The principle of sharing takes on a new meaning: whether it is a washing machine or a car, a guest room or an office, sharing is the new owning. Promote new service models as part of the circular economy!
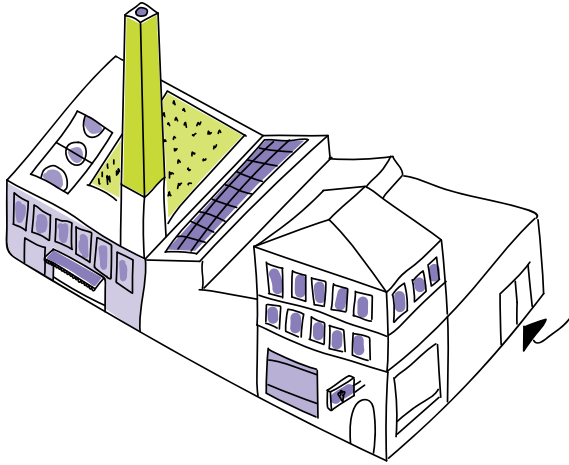
9 Spacelabs

Digitalisation is increasingly dissolving the boundaries between home, work and leisure. The boundaries between private and public, digital and analogue are becoming blurred. The emerging new ways of working and living require a flexible and responsive environment and space for experimentation. Lay the foundations for urban innovation that promotes affordable housing and small-scale, mixed-use areas.

10 Innovation zones

Ideas are born where «idea generators» meet «idea implementers». Attractive public spaces on a human scale enable interactions and spontaneous encounters and act as a stimulus for business and society. Designing public spaces to be a quality experience and an inviting place to be actively encourages and creates spaces for innovation.

11 Local Heroes

Social and technological change has a strong impact on collaboration. Networks and collaborations determine the future. Local heroes are particularly powerful and effective. They come from business, society, culture or politics, have local connections and are ready to use the combined power of their network as a driver for development and innovation. Make the most of them.
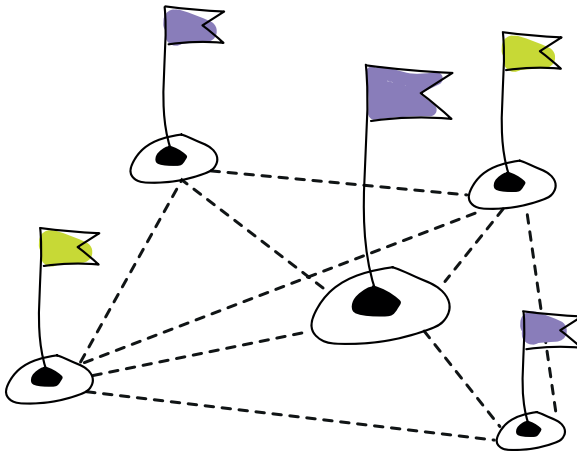
12 We-Culture

The concept of community is a counter-trend to individualisation and globalisation and a new expression of local attachment. Provide spaces for co-creation! They strengthen the sense of belonging and release social energy: «Anywheres» become «Somewheres», with a strong sense of community and responsibility.

5

Stories
of why
it matters

Who are the people living, working and spending time in our towns and villages? What are their needs and habits? It is the rich diversity made up of different backgrounds, lifestyles, work models and leisure patterns that makes up the City of People.

The liveable and inclusive city is both a place of community and private retreat, serving as a habitat and breeding ground for personal stories. Here are five of them:
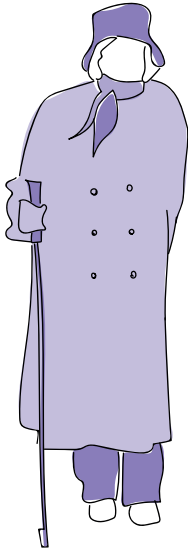
Hedi, 93 –
the independent

Hedi represents one of the most vulnerable groups in our society. It is important to her to be able to live independently as she gets older. For this reason, Hedi relies on a rich social network and a well-functioning neighbourhood. The fact that everything is within walking distance not only affects her independence, but also has great benefits for her fitness and our health system.

Leo, 8 –
the adventurer

Leo loves his «Hood». Being an eight-year-old in the city is an adventure, and he loves to roam freely and play in all possible corners of his neighbourhood. His parents support this and see it as a healthy lifestyle. But we need to create a safe environment with low-traffic streets, diverse outdoor spaces and opportunities to play. Turning the city into a safe playground would be a game changer!
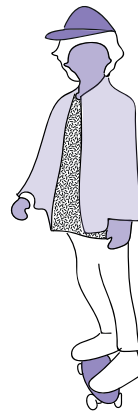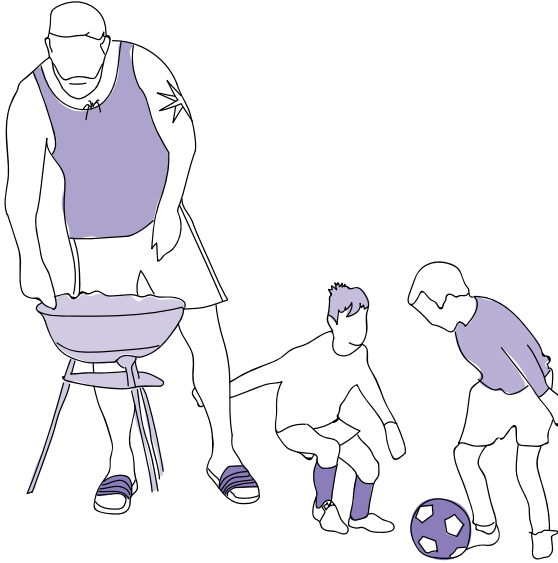
Momo, 39 –
the neighbour

Momo represents a growing group of people who love and enrich the life of the city, but who are finding it increasingly difficult to afford to live there. The city is home to Momo and his family. But it will only remain so if affordable housing and inclusive living are provided.

Pete, 64 –
the mentor

Once a successful global citizen, 64-year-old physicist Pete is now deeply rooted in his neighbourhood. He brings all his experience to his network and community, mentoring young local businesses and initiating community participation projects.
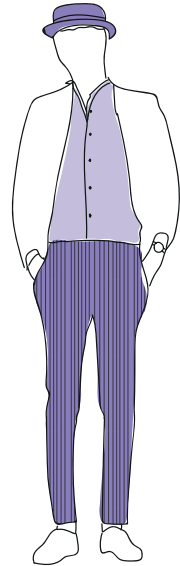
Victoria, 45 –
the networker

A successful entrepreneur, Victoria taps into the city's networks and innovation. The emerging green economy offers her the best opportunities for promising investments and an agile working environment. With a high quality of life, she benefits from a highly skilled workforce and can meet partners, clients and employees locally.

Text visible within the illustration:

COP

WATER

WATER

WATER

INNOVATION ZONE

OUR CITY !

COMMUNITY CENTRE

PARKING

CITY OF TOMORROW

10 KM LOOP

WATER

Roads also need to be built in a more humane and climate-friendly way. Even underground, where the roots of trees and plants need enough space and water. People walking or cycling should have more space and opportunities to linger. This means making surfaces more permeable and planting more trees. It should be a pleasure to move around and shop in one's own neighbourhood.

Simone Brander, City Council Zurich

We owe it to future generations to make our cities and agglomerations climate resilient. By targeting and supporting green and blue infrastructure, we can meet this responsibility.

Dr. Norbert Kräuchi, Head of Landscape and Waters Department Canton Aargau

It is the diversity and combination of public, semi-public and private spaces that make a city exciting. Ground floors and forecourts play a central role as transit spaces. They form a «transition» between the private and the public that can be appropriated and also reinterpreted again and again.

Ariane Widmer Pham, Cantonal Planner Geneva

We live in a highly individualistic society with a strong need for community. The city must offer both: Spaces for retreat and spaces for encounter.

Prof. Gunnar Heipp, Institute Director IRAP
Universities of Applied Sciences of Eastern Switzerland

To be fit for the future and able to develop sustainably, cities must increasingly reinterpret themselves as urban living labs and cooperation partners for urban innovation.

Vicente Carabias, Head of Smart City, City of Winterthur

Dynamic but isolated neighbourhoods do not make a vibrant city. The city's lifelines, connections and intersections are just as important. This is where the «big plan» comes in.

Balz Halter, Owner and Chairman of the Board Halter AG

Designing the city to be playful has significant benefits. It promotes the healthy development of children and young people and strengthens their relationship with the built environment. However, an open public space that can be used in a variety of ways serves not only young people, but all generations.

Marco Mettler, Vice Director Pro Juventute Switzerland

10

Actions:
What you
can do now!

→ **Anticipate social and environmental change and be open to new solutions. Don't be afraid to fail. You will even more so by not doing anything.**

→ **Create your own vision for the future. Realisation may come in small steps. But when it comes to the vision of a liveable city of tomorrow: Think big.**

→ **Design the city around the needs of its users. Focus on the diversity of lifestyles and strengthen the sense of community.**

→ **Promote places for spontaneous exchange and interaction. Social energy is created where people come together.**

→ **Networks are the future! Embrace the power of shared knowledge. Promote project alliances and collaborative thinking and bring together «idea generators» and «idea implementers».**

→ **Ensure resilience in small neighbour-hoods. Encourage mixed-use and vibrant neighbourhoods. They are breeding grounds for innovation, shared responsibility and social inclusion.**

→ **Be creative and harness the potential of spatially and temporally flexible solutions. Don't limit yourself to buildings and facilities. Include open spaces and streets.**

→ **Dare to be imperfect! Offer your city or village as an Urban Living Lab. Promote a suitable environment for experimentation and urban innovation.**

→ **Smart solutions open up new ways of designing and using the city. Understand digitalisation as a means to an end with one goal: to improve the quality of life for everyone!**

→ **Invest in the all-rounder nature and benefit from quick wins. This will help you to achieve a good urban climate, a high quality of life and a sustainable economy.**

What does this mean for planning?

In times of change, cities and villages face increasing complexity and uncertainty. A new understanding of planning, based on a balance between robustness and flexibility, provides guidance and effectiveness.

When designing the future, it is not enough to stick to conventional existing models. Holistic planning, creative solutions and collaboration in agile networks will be essential for successful implementation.
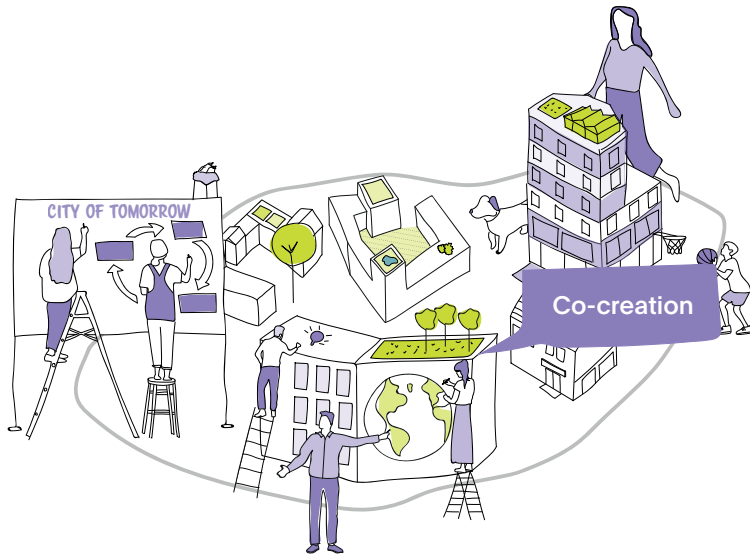
Alliances for success

The challenges we face are increasingly complex. Leverage your network and build alliances to realise your vision. Don't limit alliances to borders or bubbles. You will create great benefits.

Networks are becoming more important due to increasing complexity and interconnectedness. Seek partnerships to realise your vision and work on a new understanding of governance and cooperation between politics, economics, science and society. The city is the result of all the actions of its stakeholders. Make the most of it.

Culture of Curiosity

Curiosity is the foundation of all creativity. And creativity is indispensable for cities and villages on their way through the 21st century. Make curiosity part of your culture. Create an environment that is stimulating and generates creative ideas. Allow the status quo to be challenged and encourage new approaches and innovative solutions.

Even small changes foster a culture of curiosity. Hire curious people who have deep expertise and are willing to think outside the box and work across disciplines. Encourage experimentation by providing time and space for projects and thoughts beyond the daily routine. Support a change of perspective through job swapping and role reversals. Be prepared to challenge assumptions and step out of your comfort zone. In the future, this new way of thinking is not an option, but a necessity.

Customer centricity

In a rapidly changing world, «customer centricity» is becoming increasingly relevant to cities and villages. Tomorrow's needs will be different from today's. When planning and developing towns and villages, focus on the users and ensure sufficient flexibility.

Enquire, listen, and learn to understand the behaviours, preferences, wishes and needs of your «customers». What does it take for people to feel comfortable in their town or village? What makes them want to live, work, learn and spend their leisure time there?

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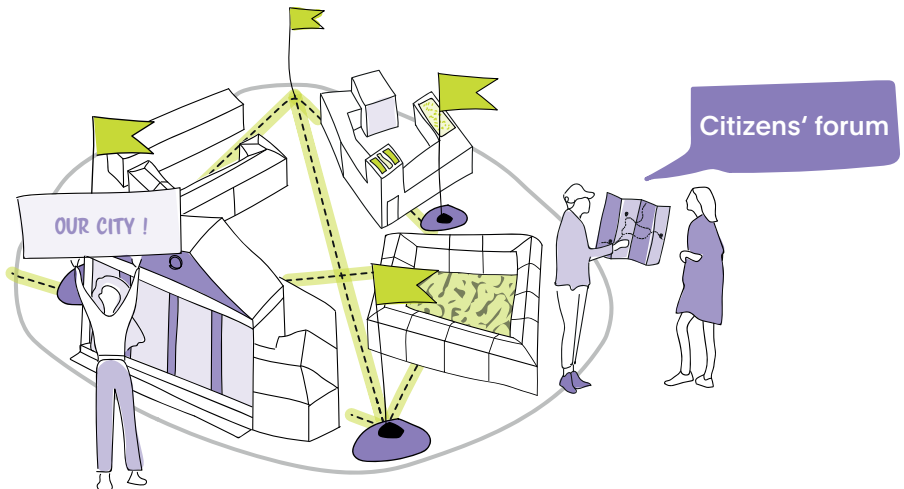
From control to empowerment

Harness the power of shared knowledge and build new skills and competencies. Work and act in an interdisciplinary way, focusing on interfaces and process optimisation. It will pay off and guarantee quick wins.

Illustrate and communicate your vision to your partners and support them by achieving a holistic understanding of planning. The transformation into the liveable city of tomorrow is a cross-cutting task. Identify the potential for synergies and fill in the gaps. Raise your team's awareness of the opportunities that come with change and use design thinking to develop new and innovative solutions together.
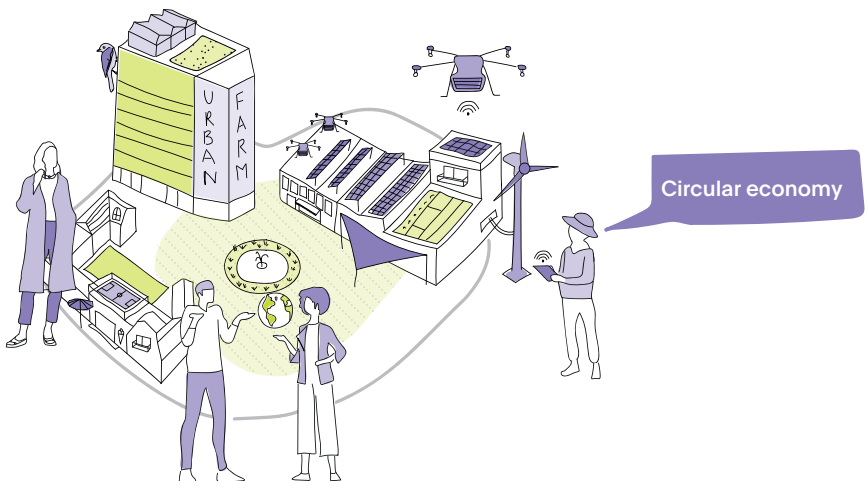
Smart for People

Smart solutions offer enormous opportunities for a resilient and sustainable city. Understand digitalisation as a means to an end. Always put people and liveable cities at the centre of what you do and how you do it.

With the availability of new technologies come new opportunities to take ownership and shape the city. It takes courage to put these possibilities at the service of a high quality of life for all. Find the right mix of robustness and flexibility against a backdrop of economic disruption, ecological challenges and social transformation. Secure room for manoeuvre, but do not shy away from regulation. Above all, invest now!

On our way to the future

The 21st century is a time of change and disruption. More than ever, action is needed, and with it the courage to challenge the status quo and pave the way for novel, and sometimes very simple, solutions for a healthy and liveable city.

The transformation of space and society opens up entirely new perspectives. It is a unique opportunity to use this momentum for a human-centred and sustainable development of cities and villages. The future is coming anyway. It's up to us to decide the direction. Here is a possible future that we strongly believe in:
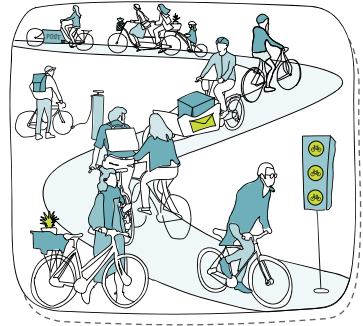
Thanks to creative and flexible solutions, urban space regained its importance as a place for innovation and community. Human-scale and significantly less congested, cities and villages offer remarkable space for nature and for new and vibrant developments in the heart of the city. This is what it takes:

Sharing is the new owning. A fleet of vehicles owned by the city. It replaces the private car. Intelligent and self-driving, it reduces the total vehicle fleet to 1/8 of the original private fleet. This reduction in cars frees up space for new development and creates plenty of room for blue and green.

Smart-Parking-Hubs. Strategically located and equipped with smart systems, these hubs provide clustered parking, enabling efficient use of central urban space. Due to their location and frequent use, these smart parking facilities are also ideal as community hubs, workplace satellites or for neighbourhood-based services. They are therefore an essential part of the 15-minute city.
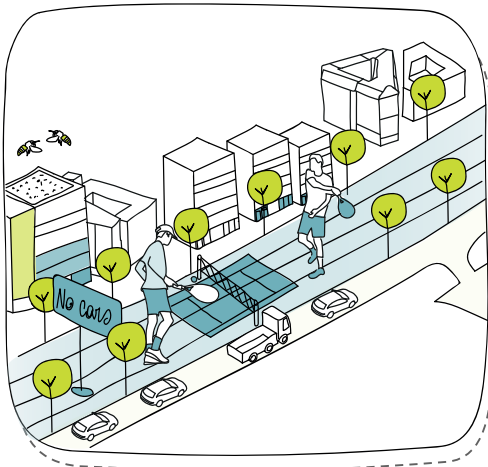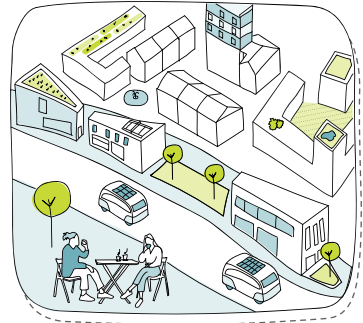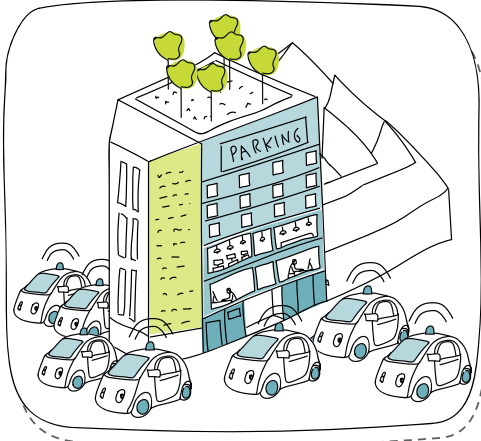
Flexible urban spaces. In times of growth and change, spatially and temporally flexible solutions are essential for adaptive and vibrant develop-ment. Streetscape and open spaces in particular offer great potential for flexible solutions to ensure efficient land use management and sustainable and liveable densification.

The 10'000-steps movement. With smart cycle lanes and curated walking routes, exercise becomes a social experience and the journey a destination. Tailor-made infrastructure and attractively designed exercise spaces encourage people to walk or cycle, ensuring sustainable mobility as part of the Fitness City.

Mixed-Use. Spaces that encourage encounter and interaction are breeding grounds for new ideas. Small-scale and mixed-use qualities are the foundation for such urban places.

The e-bike city is a promising approach. However, implementation requires radical change, which in turn requires widespread acceptance. So far, this has been lacking. As a result, innovative solutions tend to be implemented at a very late stage.

Prof. Dr. Kay W. Axhausen, Head of Institute ETH Zurich

A vibrant city is also a working city. It is therefore essential to be attractive to businesses. The shortage of skilled workers is a growing challenge for the economy. A vibrant city can make an important contribution.

Anna Schindler, Director of Urban Development for the City of Zurich

Planning has good instruments at its disposal. For successful transformation, however, these tools must be further developed and, in part, reinterpreted.

Lukas Ott, Head of Cantonal and Urban Development Basel-Stadt

Liveliness is decisively shaped by the use of the space. This has to be considered together with the design, especially in urban public spaces. Classical spatial planning alone has its limits.

Beatrice Aebi, Head of Urban Planning City of Wil

City means diversity and a dose of wildness. It requires the right mix of robustness and flexibility.

René Hutter, Cantonal Planner Zug

It is important to develop a culture of transformation and to cultivate openness. This includes new forms of cooperation between politics, economics and science.

Simone Gianini, Vice Mayor of Bellinzona

Together we shape the future

Our latest publication shows what the power of networks, shared knowledge and a change of perspective can achieve. It is a clear affirmation that, as a collaborative effort, the vibrant city of the future will succeed.

sa_partners would like to thank everyone for their participation and for the thought-provoking, enriching interviews and statements. It is great that your thoughts support our work on the City of People!

Beatrice Aebi, Head of Urban Planning City of Wil | **Prof. Dr. Kay W. Axhausen**, Head of Institute ETH Zurich | **Simone Brander**, City Council Zurich | **Vicente Carabias**, Head of Smart City, City of Winterthur | **Martin Flügel**, Director of the National Association of Swiss Cities | **Simone Gianini**, Vice Mayor of Bellinzona | **Balz Halter**, Owner and Chairman of the Board Halter AG | **Prof. Gunnar Heipp**, Institute Director IRAP Universities of Applied Sciences of Eastern Switzerland | **René Hutter**, Cantonal Planner Zug | **Damian Jerjen**, Director EspaceSuisse | **Dr. Daniel Kolb**, Head of Spatial Development Department Canton Aargau | **Dr. Norbert Kräuchi**, Head of Landscape and Waters Department Canton Aargau | **Prof. Dr. Daniel Kübler**, Directing Member at the Centre for Democracy | **Dr. Maria Lezzi**, Director of the Federal Office for Spatial Development | **Marco Mettler**, Vice Director Pro Juventute Switzerland | **Lukas Ott**, Head of Cantonal and Urban Development Basel-Stadt | **Simone Rangosch**, Director of the Civil Engineering Office City of Zurich | **Anna Schindler**, Director of Urban Development for the City of Zurich | **Monika Suter**, Canton Planner Bern | **Ariane Widmer Pham**, Canton Planner Geneva | **Sonja Wollkopf Walt**, Managing Director Greater Zurich Area AG

Future City

Ideas change the way we think about and respond to the issues that shape the future. In our Spacelab, we work to push the boundaries of urban design, landscape and spatial planning, focusing on designing holistic solutions for the city of the future.

We work with renowned institutions from research and innovation and engage in international collaborations with only one goal: To improve people's everyday lives.