

Cities in a post-COVID world

Urban life to combat climate and biodiversity emergencies

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Urban life to combat climate and biodiversity emergencies

May 2020

Photos Pedro Armestre

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Introduction

Only a few months ago, the climate emergency was the biggest challenge facing humanity. We needed to stop climate change before we reached a point of no return while adapting to the unavoidable impacts. **Today the urgency is the same; however, we must also contend with a pandemic that has exposed the vulnerability of our cities, countries, planet, and consequently of those who inhabit them.**

Cities have developed around growing financialization, this being their principal growth sector (housing, tourism, etc.). As a result, the concentration of wealth has increased as opposed to wealth distribution. Consequently, there are greater social inequalities and divides between cities, districts, and neighborhoods. Also, essential but underappreciated and valued productive sectors for the life of a community have become invisible.

The social revolution of the XX century brought many changes to our society, including densely populated cities, close interaction between people, high mobility, high passenger occupancy in transportation, and the export and import of products. COVID-19 has evidenced how all these factors have made our cities the source of outbreaks and the doorway for diseases. During these months, we witnessed from our homes how human activity directly impacts the quality of our environment. We have seen urban automobile pollution decrease significantly, cleaner water in our oceans, nature conquering urban spaces with total disregard for architectural limits, and deafening metropolises were silent for the first time.

Quarantine has changed our values. As a result, so have our consumption patterns, and sales for non-essential items have decreased. **At the same time, we have become aware of other needs, such as enjoying open spaces that allow us to move while social distancing or having access to essential products, such as food, emphasizing the inherent relation between rural and urban worlds.**

The COVID-19 pandemic once again sparked the social debate on the importance of having quality and well-equipped public services. During this crisis, the health system was and continues to be the center of attention and control, as it has conditioned the population's vulnerability to the virus. Only by guaranteeing a free universal health care system will society's resilience to future pandemics be ensured. Also, this situation has shown how political leaders, when confronted with an emergency, do not hesitate to implement extreme measures if deemed necessary. Could we apply this logic to other major present problems such as air pollution and the climate and biodiversity crisis, which together cause millions of premature deaths each year and may lead to greater social and economic disasters? Could prevention and the precautionary principle be at the center of our approaches instead of just prescribing remedies?

The 2008 crisis prompted numerous support and care initiatives in neighborhoods. These movements exerted political pressure and drove legislative changes, improving value and social innovation.

During the current health crisis, neighborhood networks were essential in aiding vulnerable individuals; in some cases, citizens' initiatives were too much. In emergencies, people's solidarity helped build a network to support the most defenseless persons showing, one way or another, urban alternative civility.

We never wanted it to be this way, but the coronavirus crisis has forced us to hit the brakes and **given us the chance to reimagine and redesign the cities and the future for the people who inhabit them.**

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The city of the future: strategies for lockdown ease



e and a post-COVID future



After the pandemic is over, cities will have been quarantining and social distancing for months. Greenpeace believes the situation offers a unique opportunity to rethink both urban consumption and the relationship between cities and the rural world (rural versus urban dichotomy).

First of all, this emergency must prompt us to rethink how our welfare state works and what responsibility citizens have. Although presently, the priority is solving the health emergency, the environmental and social crises still exist. Therefore, it is essential to remember the interdependence and ecocodependence of human beings. Now is the time to transform our cities and live more safely and sustainably.

Quarantine time has allowed us to value the basics on a small scale - in our neighborhood community, for example - and at the national level, valuing public services and goods. We must keep alive the spirit of mutual support, collaboration, and support between people who share the same space. **Now is the time to turn solidarity into specific public policies and forms of social organization that will allow us to face future crises, such as the climate emergency.**

We need to change our model. We need a local, sustainable, and proximity production scheme where neighborhoods and districts in large cities have more representation, and public spaces are safer.

We must guarantee a way to feed ourselves, to take care of ourselves, and to provide for our basic needs during the crises we are already experiencing and in the ones to come. We must take responsibility for meeting our needs, from the base, and in alliance with social movements, entities, and relevant individuals. At the same time, cities must use their districts to establish policies to support this social and environmental change.

Greenpeace believes it is crucial to **increase the resilience of cities** and of the people inhabiting them, as it has become apparent how vulnerable we are. We must redesign our spaces to adapt efficiently, socially, and sustainably to changes, and to prevent even worse crises, such as the climatic.

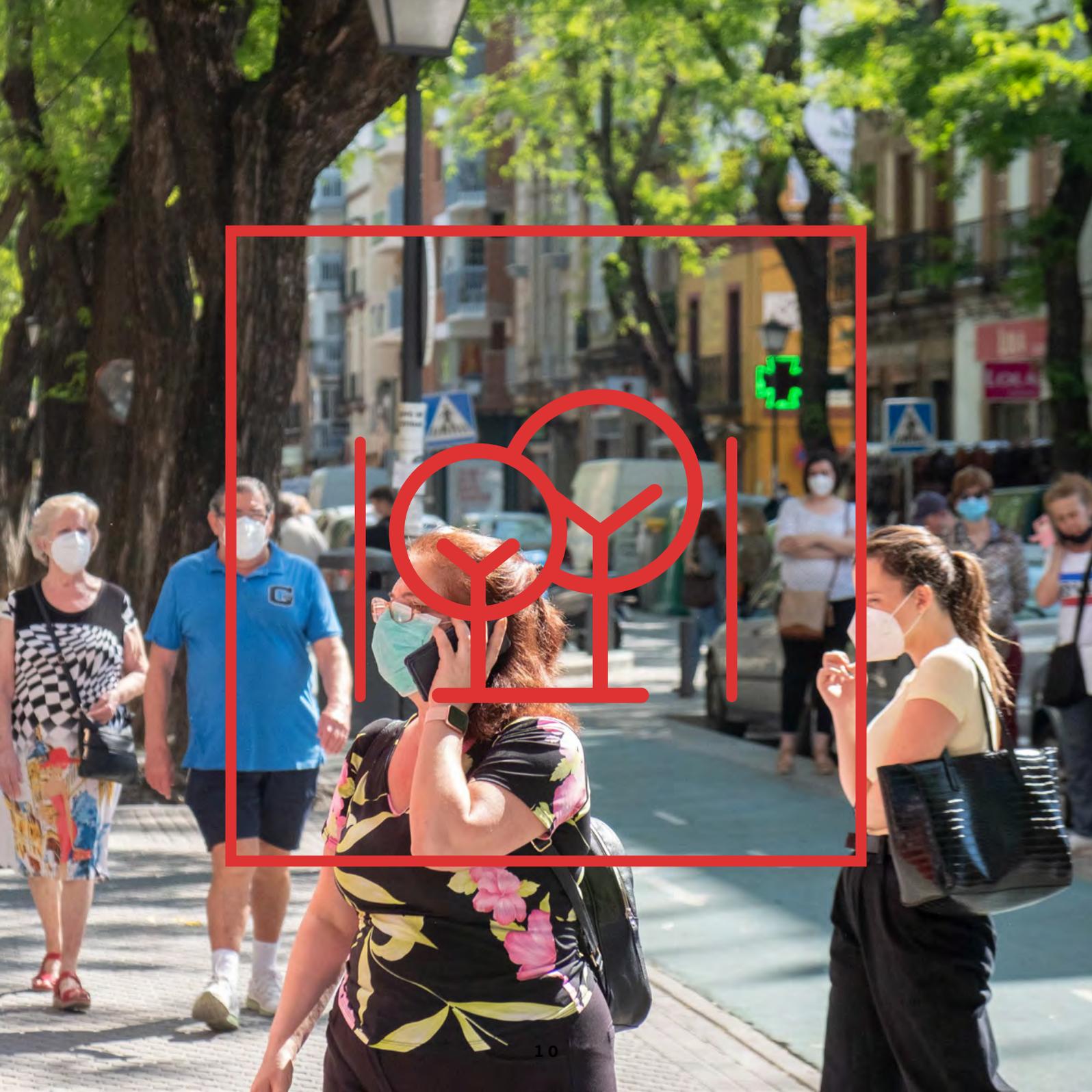
To improve resilience, it is vital to support a “safer, less, and better” type of consumption, and localize production to make essential products (including food, consumer goods, and renewable energy) affordable, sustainable, and available to everyone. Reclaiming our cities for people also means safer and more sustainable consumption.

Sustainable mobility must also be promoted, following examples like Paris (1) 15-minute city where essential services (medical care, school, market, station, etc.) are all within walking distance or promoting schemes like superblocks. These are grid-like structures within the city. The exterior of a superblock is about 400 or 500 meters on each side and is where motorized vehicles are allowed. Only authorized vehicles (ambulances, delivery, etc.) can use the interior area, the speed limit is 10km/h, and is designed for children to play and pedestrians to walk freely. Superblocks would free-up 70% of the space vehicles occupy today for people, as the example of Barcelona shows (2). Superblocks and the 15-minute city are different solutions to a common goal: to transform the city and focus on the people, public services, and local consumption, thus making cities more sustainable.

To reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions associated with cities and their activities, we must redesign mobility and consumption, and in doing so, support different types of cities in the short term. This will bring emissions to net-zero as soon as possible, which is essential to limit climate change (3).

Only by creating more resilient cities will we be able to prevent the worst effects of climate change or possible pandemics, such as the one we are experiencing now. We must advance local initiatives and connect them with global efforts in a way that impacts regional, national, and global agendas.

It is necessary to change society's mentality and lifestyle by implementing the appropriate municipal regulations and policies, thus creating a domino effect at regional and national levels. Cities must evolve to show the path towards prosperity is neither evident nor constant. It is essential to show the present advantages while strengthening local capacities and real knowledge in each city.



The 15-minute city: improve safety and promote proximity in cities, neighborhoods, and districts

If you take a fifteen-minute walk from home, can you get to work, to a grocery store, school, or medical center? Neighborhoods and districts in large cities, or a small-size city, could use this model to transition to **a closer, safer, more sustainable city.**

In our current situation, we can implement this model while lockdown ease. The **essential services** in any city, neighborhood, or district should be **within a 15-minute walk**. Other measures include banning motorized vehicles from main roads (except during delivery hours) and bringing nature to the streets (green areas, urban orchards, and playgrounds). All these measures would require a redesign and reconfiguration of the whole space, mainly eliminating parking areas. This city model must have public services (health centers, daycare centers, schools, etc.), local shops (grocery stores, clothing stores, etc.), and shared open spaces to facilitate participation, exchange, and culture. It is reinventing proximity, that is, limiting the time citizens have to rush from one place, so only those movements strictly necessary take place and are more fluid. It is combating the securitization of public space and understanding that when we feel safe in public, we naturally watch over and take care of each other: protection is a perception that inspires security and not the other way around. It is to recover the fundamental symbiotic relationship between humans and nature.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- Increase citizen participation in the implementation of innovative projects to manage public services and solve new problems, and promote the creation of public value.
- Develop an urban resilience plan to detect the essential services needed to protect the entire population, especially the most vulnerable people.
- Use a consultation process to work with neighborhoods and establish the above measures.
- Provide neighborhoods with essential social public services: health centers, social centers, daycare centers, public schools for every academic year, and nursery schools.
- Redesign pedestrian routes to increase their width, quantity, and kilometers.
- Allocate financial aid to promote and incentivize the opening or permanence of small local establishments in the neighborhoods.
- Expand existing green spaces in neighborhoods and/or create new quality green spaces in line with sustainable urban planning principles.
- Provide neighborhoods with quality culture centers to promote citizen and neighborhood relations in a safe and enriching manner.
- Support the creation of small shops and local markets.





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Consumption beyond the circular economy

Consumption must decrease and be more sustainable. In 2050 the world population is projected to reach 9.6 billion people; three planets would then be necessary to satisfy our current rate of consumption. It is simply not possible to support this level of production and consumption. Now is the time to hit the brakes. We now know we can live with less if we want to. We need to continue consuming but sustainably and locally. To this end, it is essential to redesign cities so we can buy products such as food, technology, fashion, or basic goods without the need to travel long distances. Also, we must modify consumption patterns, encourage second-hand buys, reuse, or repairing. This can take the shape of a business model or a co-creation model, which promotes the exchange and loan of goods and services, or non-profit collaborative and cooperative production.

Cities can house specialized industrial structures; a model abandoned over time due to the extremely polluting combustion processes. By the electrification of processes and the transition to clean production systems, cities could again house many industries, ensuring they do not contribute to pollution; this would also alleviate mobility problems resulting from industries being far from city centers. A post-COVID world should allocate local public investments for improving specialization and developing new products and services the world has yet to see. It is necessary to prioritize investments in developing skills, technology, and R&D for technology that is in high-demand, and businesses that redefine the concept of circular economy to go beyond it.

Quarantine has caused the digital divide to decrease in some sectors while the use of new technologies has increased, including e-commerce. This model could promote local services and products and facilitate the delivery of proximity products from local and/or sustainable shops. Use sustainable transport for delivery and design routes using excellent efficiency principles. Another option is to provide pickup locations to decrease the distance between people and services. Also, replace excessive and single-use packaging with returnable or reusable packaging.

Waste generation, especially plastic, kills millions of marine animals each year, and the pandemic has proven they are a threat to the planet. Single-use products, whether plastic or paper, have increased considerably during this crisis. Cities, companies, and the industry have weakened their advances, commitments, and regulatory policies towards a waste-free economy. The use of plastic, especially for sanitary purposes, was vital in the pandemic (4). Nonetheless, it is also essential to evaluate the situation when the crisis is over and return to the systems that decrease waste generation. The plastic industry must not use the need for certain disposable plastics as an argument to continue with mass production in the future.

It is not possible yet to know the magnitude of the problem; first, because it is too early to collect data and, second and most important, due to the ineffectiveness of the management system and its lack of transparency. In general, waste generation decreased due to economic inactivity, but packaging consumption and sales increased at least 15% (5). This lack of information shows some deficiencies in the waste management system that should be more transparent. So far, the pandemic has changed how waste is managed. For example, triage plants no longer do manual separation; thus, the chances of recovering materials for recycling are lower.

As cities have the largest populations, they generate more waste and single-use products. **Cities must implement policies that prioritize a more sustainable and ambitious model to achieve a true circular economy as soon as possible (6). A system based on reducing, reuse, and real separation of materials.**



Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- Investments to promote sustainable, second-hand, reusable, and repairable consumption.
- Support public policies to reduce goods consumption, especially single-use products or packaging (regardless of material).
- Provide financial support to local companies or platforms to create spaces that promote sustainable or second-hand consumption, or reusing and repairing products, such as antique and flea markets.
- Increase local public investments to improve specialization and innovate in new products and services.
- Implement waste sorting by fractions in municipalities to prevent organic matter from reaching landfills or incinerators.
- Implement pay-as-you-throw policies for waste generation, whoever generates the most, pays the most.
- Implement local policies to ban single-use packaging regardless of material, support spaces that promote reusable or refillable packaging.
- Encourage repair and exchange spaces to fight planned obsolescence.
- Invest in developing skills, technology, and R&D for technology that is in high demand, and in businesses that redefine the concept of circular economy to expand it.
- Invest in digital platforms for local, eco-friendly, and sustainable trade.
- Invest in sustainable delivery for local businesses.
- Restructure urban space to establish sustainable and proximity industrial and commercial activities; they must integrate with the residential areas.
- Provide self-managed spaces to promote co-creation, collaboration, and cooperativism.



Sustainable and healthy food, sustainable and healthy cities

On the first days of quarantine, many cities had to ensure their population there would be no food shortage. Fear for the lack of necessities made customers rush to supermarkets, despite being closed. Supermarkets could not keep up with demand, which allowed local shops, neighborhood shops, and district markets to modernize quickly and implement online shopping, which boosted local consumption. Initially, municipal markets were closed, but after protests from local producers and extensive social mobilization, they reopen in some municipalities. Another example of solidarity was how urban and rural movements came together **to put in place schemes to encourage buying from small producers as a way to mutually support and protect one another, and collaborate.**

In the future, **cities and suburbs must be able to produce a percentage of their food**; they must embrace the land and break the rural-urban dichotomy. To this end, rural settings near cities must be awarded the appropriate incentives to produce quality food. Nearby towns and cities should prioritize selling local foods, promoting direct sales through open local markets or farmers' markets to facilitate social distancing. Municipalities must also humanize their streets, and promote and support food stores, shops, or pick-up points within a 15-minute walk radius. Taxes for local production must decrease to promote proximity consumption. As roofed municipal markets must continue with social distancing measures already in place, authorities must fit out more spaces or public buildings to increase the number of neighborhood markets in cities.

Cities must develop sustainable food policies as a fundamental tool to promote healthy and sustainable urban food internationally. Adhering to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact (7) as well as to the Network of Cities for Agroecology (8) is an excellent vehicle for cities to show their commitment to healthy and sustainable eating and to launch applicable initiatives to become safer and healthier areas.

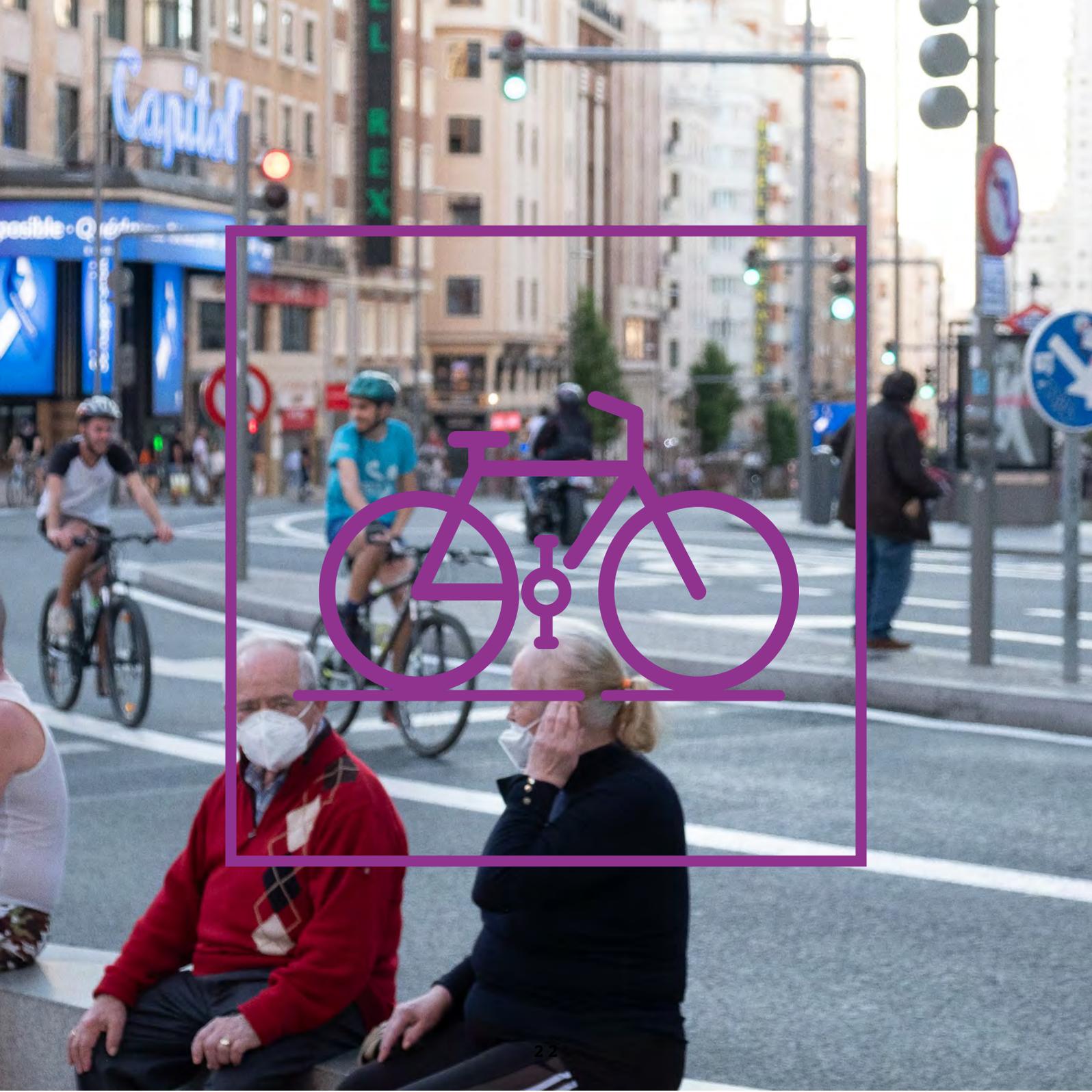
A network of urban community gardens will allow households, neighborhoods, and districts to **produce certain foods**. In many countries, they are considered essential services, and in times of crisis, they have proven useful to guarantee food security for certain population groups (9).

Cities can provide organic, local, and seasonal foods for everyone, especially for the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals for whom food significantly determines their development, such as minors. To this end, cities can develop programs to implement new distribution channels for these types of foods and allocate a budget for their distribution in canteens (schools, residences, kindergartens, etc.), soup kitchens, and to the underprivileged.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- Promote urban and suburban local, sustainable, organic, and seasonal agriculture and establish distribution channels.
- Adhere to the Milan Urban Food Policy Pact.
- Provide organic, local, seasonal, and plant-based foods at public events.
- Make organic, local, and seasonal food available to everyone.
- Invest municipal resources to change the use of parks and gardens, encourage communication and education to promote growing one's food, and urban gardens in gardens, roofs, etc.
- Convert vacant public spaces or disused green areas (vacant lots) into **agricultural spaces run by citizens**.
- Encourage **investments in urban agriculture**, support creating more resilient communities, and existing local food sovereignty projects.
- Create a support and **promotion plan for municipal markets**, not only its products but also services such as online sales and home delivery.

- **Apply the criteria** in the Guía de la Alimentación Saludable (healthy eating guidelines) of the Spanish Society of Community Nutrition in all food areas.
- Guarantee **food public procurement encourages** the consumption of organic, local, and seasonal products in public buildings. Offer at least 50% of organic, local, and seasonal food at public events, city services, and in all municipally owned canteens.
- Administrations' procurement specifications must include **rural supply companies** to serve canteens and public events (school canteens, public organizations canteens, etc.), and specially promote rural businesses led by rural women.
- In emergencies, **guarantee a healthy and eco-friendly menu to every vulnerable person, in particular to children** with a school meal grant.
- Create and deliver a **basic food basket** with organic, local, and seasonal products to vulnerable families (recipients of Guaranteed minimum income).
- Guarantee **food waste reduction** throughout the food chain.
- **Provide spaces** for cooperative supermarkets or central distribution facilities for agro-ecological products.
- Encourage restaurants and hotels to follow the **Guía de la Alimentación Saludable** (healthy eating guidelines).
- Expand the **non-permanent markets network** for local and organic producers (each district should have one).



Getting around the city: on foot, bike or public transport

During the pandemic, cities raised the issue of mobility, both regarding lockdown ease conditions and the future. In quarantine, we witnessed the impact of road traffic on air pollution levels. **Since the government decreed the state of alarm, air quality levels rose to an all-time high.** However, for fear of new infections citizens may decide to drive their cars more frequently, and traffic congestion will increase in cities that can no longer bear more traffic.

Limiting essential movements within neighborhoods has made evident the need for local services to be at a walkable distance. This crisis was also a test for the distribution of goods in cities, both with regards to supplying stores and to home deliveries. Another important aspect was the explosion of the work from home situation; although it limits certain types of jobs, it is crucial to eliminate peak hours.

Another common problem for cities during the lockdown ease and in their near future is the need to social distance in public transport. It is during rush hour when subways, trains, and buses carry the most passengers; it would be impossible to channel this demand to private vehicles. Now more than ever, it is necessary **to increase the number of public transport vehicles to decrease their passenger capacity.** Buses are the alternative with the biggest potential for improvement given their adaptability. Bus frequency can increase by adding 'bus-only' lanes and special services for those stretches with the highest demand.

This solution requires **modifying the streets' layout and rethinking the current road lane distribution,** mostly designated for cars, even though it is the least efficient mode of transportation. In addition to fitting bus platforms during lockdown ease, it is also necessary to widen sidewalks and make them safe for people to walk without fear of contagion, as well as promoting cycling on urban routes for everyone.

Several local governments support these urban plan measures, as they cost little and are easy to implement using fences, signs, and paint with no need for construction work. Other measures can complement these initiatives, such as modifying traffic lights programming to lower the number of pedestrians waiting to cross. These actions will allow for better social distancing and help to evaluate and establish a new permanent mobility structure to combat the effects of pollution and face the climate crisis.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- **Expand pedestrian areas** temporarily to guarantee a safe distance between individuals, either by pedestrianizing whole streets or using fences to expand sidewalks into roads or parking spaces.
 - Take advantage of the reduced traffic to allow **bike lanes** in main city roads and connect existing sections of the bike path.
 - Promote **open-air spaces in all neighborhoods**, especially in those densely populated which lack safe pedestrian spaces, either establish complete pedestrian routes or pedestrian priority areas without through-traffic (similar to superblocks).
 - The temporary reduction of persons allowed in public transport makes it necessary to introduce **new bus lanes** to maintain the capacity of an essential service.
 - Promote **intelligent transport systems**, supporting greater flexibility to adapt to demand.
 - Use capacity and accessibility indicators to evaluate provisional measures and assess their operation and consolidate new urban schemes in the future.
- The mobility study should include a **gender impact analysis** and provide a deeper understanding of sustainable transport and mobility.

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Energy and cities

Although urban areas represent only 3% of the territory, is where **55% of the world population lives (10)**. It is estimated cities are responsible for 75% of global CO2 emissions, the main contributors being transportation and energy use in buildings (11). Therefore, to have more livable and healthy cities, in line with the environmental goal to limit global warming below 1.5°C, it is essential to tackle and understand how cities consume energy and emit greenhouse gases to transition to a cleaner (renewable), efficient and intelligent system.

According to IDEA (12), Spanish households, on average, consume 36% of final energy. However, during the health crisis, their energy consumption increased considerably, except transportation, as homes became the center of our daily routines (work, school, lunch, gym, etc.). Energy poverty increased significantly; before the pandemic, 23% of the population suffered energy poverty due to low income, energy deficiencies in their homes, or high bills.

It is noteworthy that in this pandemic or in any situation, the most **resilient and empowered households are the most energy efficiency** or those with self-produced renewable energy - directly or indirectly through photovoltaic self-consumption and other citizen initiatives-. Surpluses generated from renewable energy can officially be shared and can help the most vulnerable groups.

For 2030, the European objective is a 32.5% improvement in energy efficiency and at least 32% share renewables; for Spain, those numbers go up to 39.5% for energy efficiency and 42% for renewables. As cities consume energy the most (and responsible for the associated gas emissions), they should be the driving force to achieve these objectives.

It is a **crucial moment for cities to speed up their commitment to energy efficiency**, and local sustainable energy to prompt a change in social mentality, and thus, attain massive citizen participation.

Public buildings should set an example by implementing measures including improving energy efficiency, increasing the use of renewable energies, reducing energy dependence, and favoring distributed generation. The current renewable citizen alternatives are wide-ranging and affordable, and the coming years will bring new solutions thanks to new technologies and collective creativity.

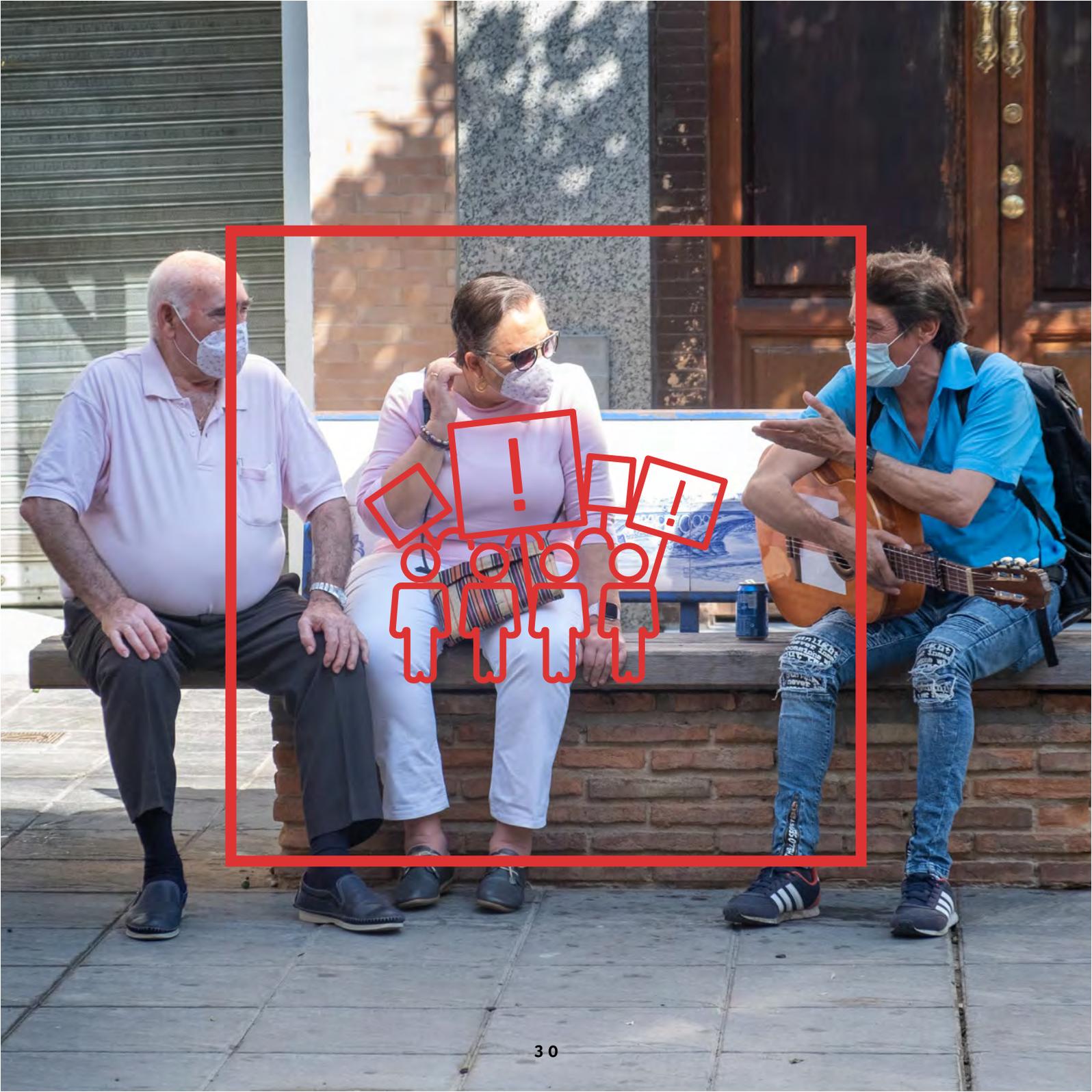
European legislation has led the way and placed citizens at the heart of the energy system. **Now is the turn for cities to demand and support the right to democratize renewable clean energy and demand the necessary tools to increase their penetration in the energy system**, a fundamental step in the needed energy transition to limit a global warming with undesirable consequences.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- Inject public investment and support to improve energy efficiency, such as sustainable energy renovation for homes, government buildings, and public facilities.
- Special **consideration for at-risk groups:** financial support for energy renovation of homes in the most vulnerable areas.
- Support and promote **buildings with near-zero consumption.**
- Install **renewable energies in municipal buildings and public facilities** for a more distributed, efficient, and flexible energy system with self-consumption or other renewables (depending on the resource in the area).
- Allow **citizens to participate** in financing and ownership of municipal renewable generation facilities, thus enabling society to co-lead and participate in changing the energy model.
- Supply **municipal electricity** with bilateral contracts or other schemes that fully guarantee hourly coverage with 100% green electricity from renewable sources.
- Promote and develop **individual and collective self-consumption**, taking full advantage of the potential of the renewable European directive:
 - » **Eliminate municipal government barriers** to facilitate and simplify processes. Eliminate bureaucracy to make it simpler and faster to hand in the required documentation.
 - » **Apply tax credits** stipulated for local taxes: LVT, ICIO (tax on construction, installations, and building works), and IAE (tax on commercial and professional activities).
 - » **Award subsidies** to install renewable energy and energy efficiency, primarily to groups with less capacity to access required funding.
- Boost and develop **local energy communities.**
- Promote and develop **communication, information, and awareness campaigns; these actions are particularly appropriate** to bring renewable energies closer to citizens and have an informed society that wants to participate in the needed social change.

- **Promote socio-economic initiatives** to generate spaces to inform, debate, and create with citizens: business directories, business incubators, idea labs, fairs, conferences, training courses, etc.
- The local administration should **have a specific information area** (web) on the procedures, initiatives, and benefits of installing renewables. The information should be transparent, and easy to read and understand by everyone.
- Municipalities should actively participate in the different institutional **cooperation forums**, including the Covenant of Mayors, C40 Cities, the Carbon Disclosure Project (CDP), the Spanish Network of Cities for the Climate, and share information on initiatives, energy efficiency, renewable energy, or climate change prevention.





More participatory cities: promoting citizen participation mechanisms

Municipalities have the optimal size for participatory democracy. Citizen participation initiatives put people at the heart of urban policies to **guarantee every resident's right to the city**. The methods to channel public participation are diverse and of different significance. Urban democratic governance must improve to allow citizens to actively participate in decision-making; thus, the **future of cities will be the result of dialogue and of giving voice to all actors**, and not the result of interests that push for decisions to prioritize capital accrual over people's wellbeing.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- Recover **spaces for debate and citizen council** (such as local meetings).
- Promote **participatory budgeting** in neighborhoods.
- Increase **citizen consultations** in decision-making processes that may have an impact on the health of the population or the environment.

BAR RESTAURANTE LA ESPERANZA



More social cities: cities that meet everyone's needs

Today's cities were not designed at a human scale; that is, people are not meant to move on foot, and for the most part, their design does not take into consideration the most vulnerable sectors of the population. To change this situation, we need to modify production models, our lifestyle, how we consume, and especially the way wealth is distributed. We must redistribute wealth, time, and the jobs needed to maintain our species, so people who are in extremely vulnerable, impoverished, and precarious situations can meet their needs.

Cities are designed for adults, not for children (13). Plus, urban spaces increasingly depart from the specifications that guarantee balance, well-being, and coexistence. Although access to education and health is increasing, there are still not enough green spaces to play and rest. Two of the most disadvantaged groups in cities are children and the elderly. Cities need to contain more public spaces (parks and green spaces) without motor traffic near educational centers and residential homes for older people to provide safe and pollution-free play and recreational areas that favor activity and coming together.

In many countries, **women** choose to leave the workforce due to structural barriers, social norms, and parenting responsibilities; in Spain, despite the progress made, this happens too. When women work, they often choose flexible part-time jobs to be able to continue with their unpaid care responsibilities. These positions tend to be less qualified and lower-paid, even within the same age group, educational level, and sector. These differences in economic opportunities persist, and during the pandemic became visible who was behind the care structure. During this period, urban life was mainly supported and ensured by women.

The imposition of quarantines, the closure of public spaces, and measures such as social distancing were essential to tackle the coronavirus pandemic but, they were also the breeding ground for the loneliness epidemic that is been going on for years. Moreover, the collapse of human relationships has a bigger impact on vulnerable populations: older adults and people with previous health problems or disabilities.

Therefore, Greenpeace demands:

- To redesign the city, **listen to all the necessary groups**, not just to interest groups with the power to lobby.
- **Strengthen the capacities of the community to collectively care** for people at the end of their lives, relatives, caregivers, and close friends.
- Promote policies and programs for the elderly to promote accompanying those in vulnerable situations and/or at the end of their life process.
- Extend the responsibility for the care of life to all areas and all the actors in society, with collective actions to promote solidarity and reciprocity.







Lively and dynamic cities with culture centers

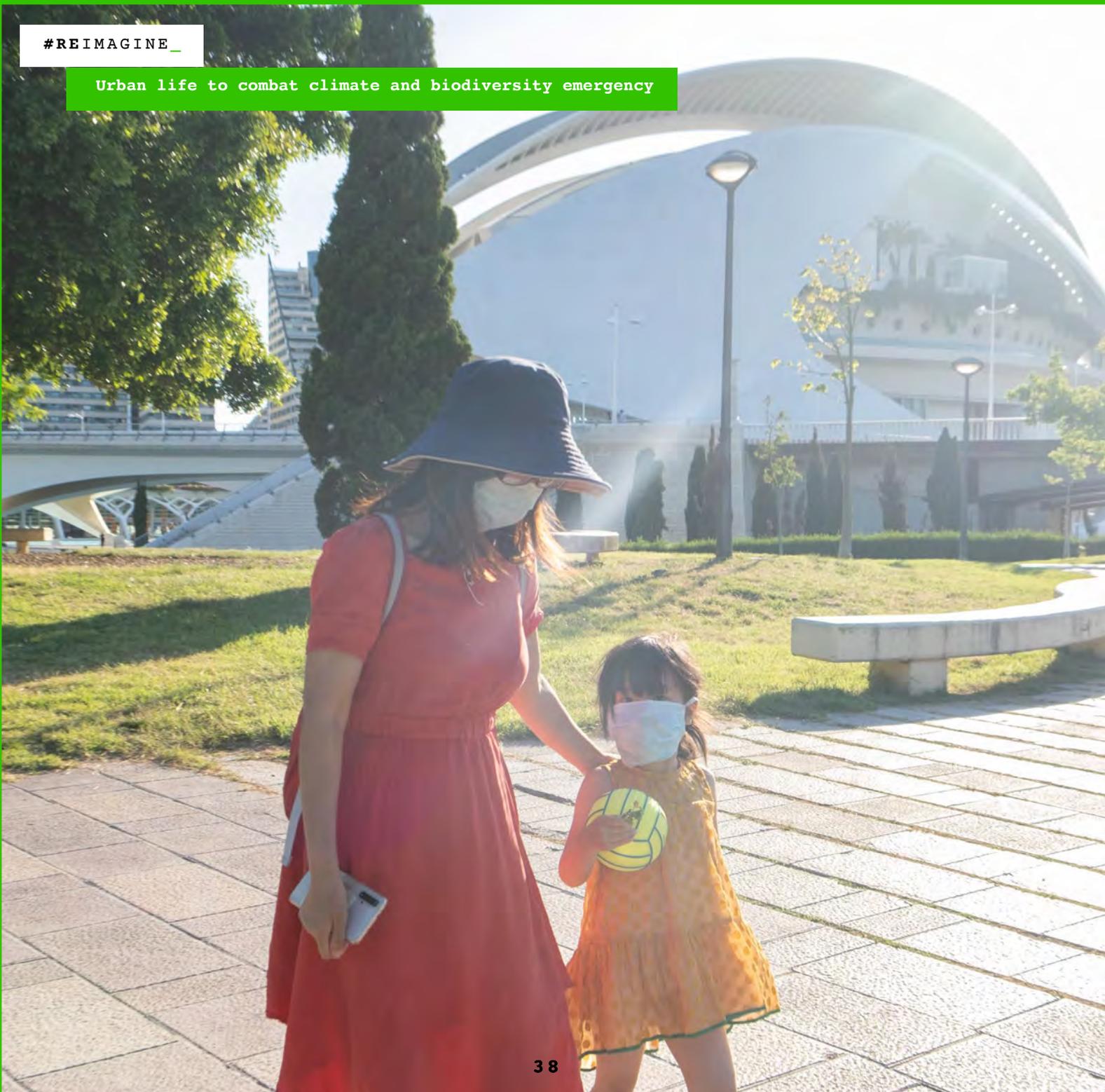
Culture needs room to flourish. Culture helps us grow as a society and turns our cities into ecosystems, places, spaces, and landscapes alive, rich, diverse, and unique. **Culture is good for our health and contributes to social equality**; therefore, it should not be limited to the provided spaces but should extend beyond and infuse life into every neighborhood.

Our heritage - visual and performing arts, film, music, literature, and fashion design - is present in our everyday life. We must seize every opportunity, however small, for people to participate, from permanent public art exhibitions to temporary installations in underused buildings or local festivals. In the 2008 crisis, numerous artistic expressions aware of the social context of the moment made a comeback, art must enjoy the necessary freedom to build the post-COVID cities society needs.

To glimpse the future, we must understand the past. Knowing our history makes us aware of the mistakes we do not want to repeat. To change the long-standing interaction between the population and the urban habitat we need culture and memory; the current crisis cannot worsen the culture crisis.

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Urban life to combat climate and biodiversity emergency



Conclusions

The great metropolises are the interconnection nodes of a hyper-connected world. We must make cities more sustainable, supportive, respectful, and safe. In doing so, we will reduce the pressure on the resources of the rest of the planet, and we will turn cities into a welcoming space full of opportunities for everyone.

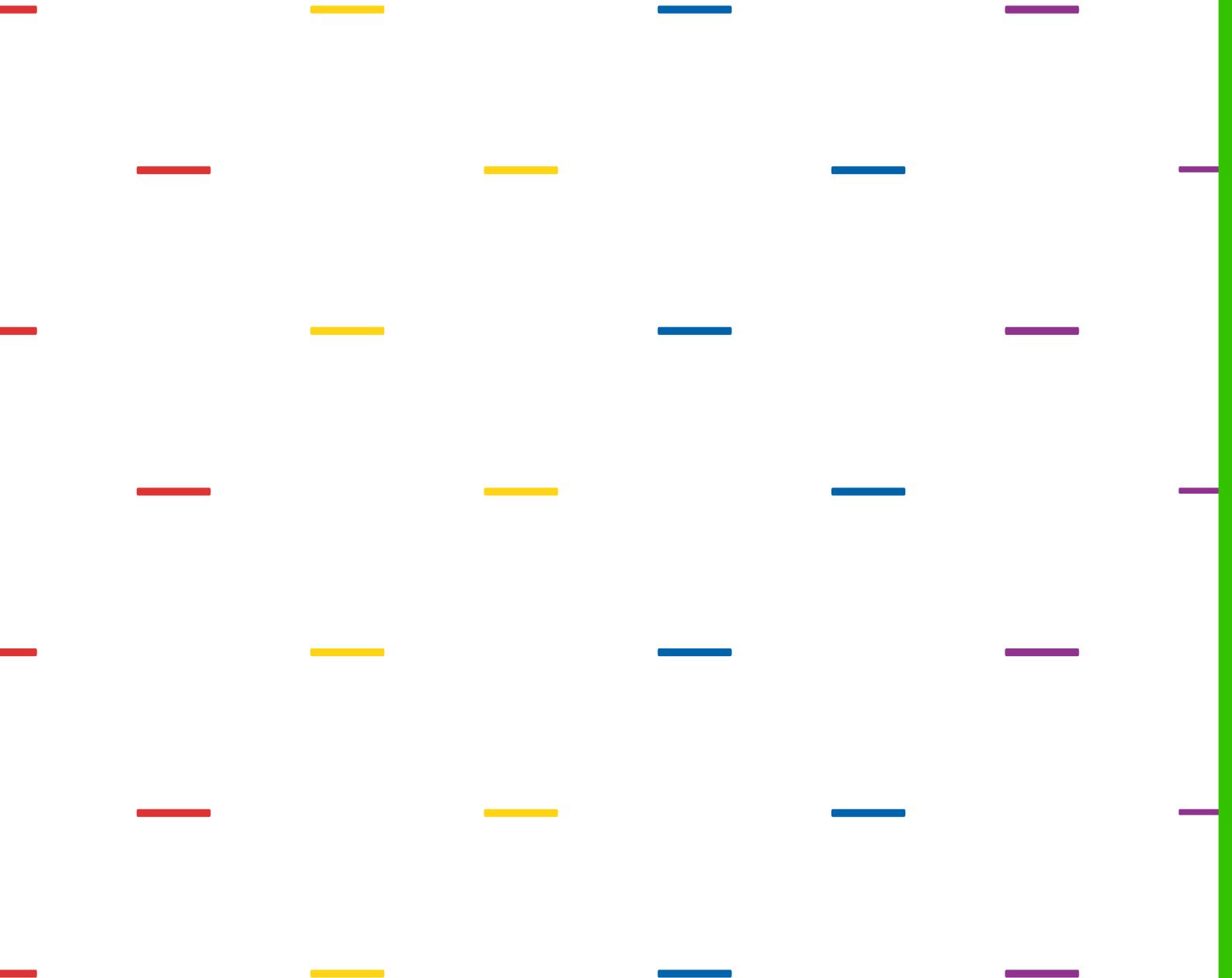
Given the population growth projections for 2050, local governments must commit to sustainability. In just three decades, the world population – presently at 7.7 billion inhabitants (14)– will increase 2 billion, exerting enormous additional pressure on the planet. According to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), soon, 70 out of every 100 individuals in the world will live in a megacity (15), which is why **Greenpeace believes transforming cities and making them safer and more sustainable is a priority**. Cities account for a relatively small area of the planet but are home to over half of the world population, they consume most of the planet's resources, and the battle between different lifestyle models was and will be fought here.

If this is to become a reality, the support of the main stakeholders is essential, such as urban movements and the different communities that inhabit the city. This mobilization will help create local pressure groups and a noticeable city transformation; urban movements will promote policies on public goods and global commons based on the latest science and support people's well-being, instead of efficiency and profitability.

People, policies, and urban movements must change cities to make them more resilient and sustainable. This is essential if we want to curb climate change and biodiversity loss and to transform the economic model, the origin of inequality and the environmental crisis. The time is now.

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