

00:04

For too long, those of us who live in cities big and small have accepted the unacceptable. We accept that in cities our sense of time is warped, because we have to waste so much of it just adapting to the absurd organization and long distances of most of today's cities. Why is it we who have to adapt and to degrade our potential quality of life? Why is it not the city that responds to our needs? Why have we left cities to develop on the wrong path for so long?

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I would like to offer a concept of cities that goes in the opposite direction to modern urbanism, an attempt at converging life into a human-sized space rather than fracturing it into inhuman bigness and then forcing us to adapt. I call it "the 15-minute city." And in a nutshell, the idea is that cities should be designed or redesigned so that within the distance of a 15-minute walk or bike ride, people should be able to live the essence of what constitutes the urban experience: to access work, housing, food, health, education, culture and leisure.

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Have you ever stopped to ask yourself: Why does a noisy and polluted street need to be a noisy and polluted street? Just because it is? Why can't it be a garden street lined with trees, where people can actually meet and walk to the baker and kids can walk to school? Our acceptance of the dysfunctions and indignities of modern cities has reached a peak. We need to change that. We need to change it for the sake of justice, of our well-being and of the climate.

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What do we need to create 15-minute cities? First, we need to start asking questions that we have forgotten. For instance, we need to look hard at how we use our square meters. What is that space for? Who's using it and how? We need to understand what resources we have and how they are used. Then we need to ask what services are available in the vicinity -- not only in the city center, in every vicinity. Health providers, shops, artisans, markets, sports, cultural life, schools, parks. Are there green areas? Are there water fountains placed to cool off during the frequent heat waves? We also have to ask ourselves: How do we work? Why is the place I live here, and work is far away?

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We need to rethink cities around the four guiding principles that are the key building blocks of the 15-minute city. First, ecology: for a green and sustainable city. Second, proximity: to live with reduced distance to other activities. Third, solidarity: to create links between people.

Finally, participation should actively involve citizens in the transformation of their neighborhood.

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Don't get me wrong -- I'm not angling for cities to become rural hamlets. Urban life is vibrant and creative. Cities are places of economic dynamism and innovation. But we need to make urban life more pleasant, agile, healthy and flexible. To do so, we need to make sure everyone -- and I mean everyone, those living downtown and those living at the fringes -- has access to all key services within proximity.

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How do we get this done? The first city to adopt the 15-minute city idea is Paris, France. Mayor Anne Hidalgo has suggested a big bang of proximity, which includes, for instance, a massive decentralization, developing new services for each of the districts --

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(City sounds)

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a reduction of traffic by increasing bike lanes into spaces of leisure; new economic models to encourage local shops; building more green spaces; transform existing infrastructure, for instance, fabrication labs in sports centers or turning schools into neighborhood centers in the evenings. That's actually a golden rule of the 15-minute city: every square meter that's already built should be used for different things. The 15-minute city is an attempt to reconcile the city with the humans that live in it.

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The 15-minute city should have three key features. First, the rhythm of the city should follow humans, not cars. Second, each square meter should serve many different purposes. Finally, neighborhoods should be designed so that we can live, work and thrive in them without having to constantly commute elsewhere.

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It's funny if you think of it: the way many modern cities are designed is often determined by the imperative to save time, and yet so much time is lost to commuting, sitting in traffic jams, driving to a mall, in a bubble of illusory acceleration. The 15-minute city idea answers the question of saving time by turning it on its head, by suggesting a different pace of life. A 15-minute pace.

07:40

Thank you.