



The AfterCovid.City Global Charter

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0. The mission

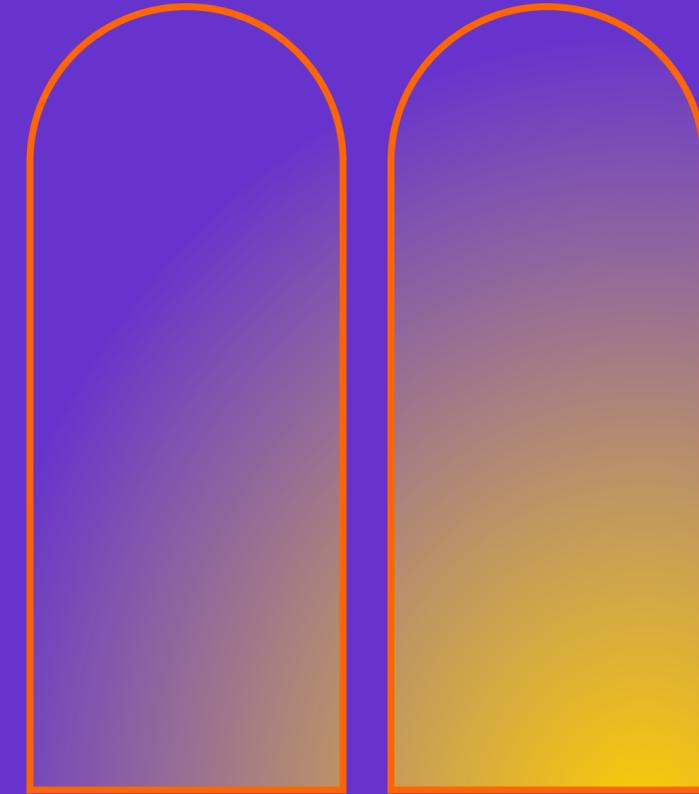
The goal of this Global Charter, a collective work, is to commit to shape this emergent future for the role of public space for recovery in a collective way.

We, the urban thinkers and doers, must use this momentum to make sure our cities emerge from the crisis as more inclusive, empowering, healthy, equitable and sustainable. Associations, citizens and all stakeholders with whom we interact must come together to achieve quality and necessary improvements.

Urban public space helped foster social connection when physical distance was mandatory.

Now is the time for
reflection...
and bold action.

1. The Charter



We call on city leaders - policymakers, placemakers, activists and advocates - to champion these solutions and apply them around the world:¹

¹ In the appendix you will find case studies on how to implement these commitments

Innovative public space

1 Leverage public space for innovation.

Create space and opportunities in each neighbourhood for partnerships with the community, businesses, markets or start-ups in the form of knowledge sharing and framework agreements.

This will enrich public life through continuous innovation and contribute to the success of the place through local economic activity.

2 Pop-up, test and hack public space.

Develop an active referral system to align stakeholders and partnerships, providing investment and open calls for placemaking projects.

This will support urban experimentation and innovation through pilot projects, pop-ups, community hackathons and test beds for new ideas that optimise public space for recovery.

3 Make room for everyone to innovate.

Set up an active mediation system in the city that provides more people with the tools and spaces they need to engage in urban innovation processes by activating vacant commercial units, semi-private and public spaces.

This will improve social inclusion and the equity of innovation on the streets and in adjacent public spaces.

4 Reduce loneliness.

Set aside a percentage of funding to promote, coordinate and support intergenerational and inclusive interactions in public spaces in collaboration with social and community groups.

This will address increasing loneliness and people's need to socialise by creating safe spaces for people of all ages to meet their socialising needs.

5 Meet at the park.

Ensure that a member of the design and planning team considers the experiences and needs of underrepresented groups and neighbourhoods when allocating green infrastructure in the city.

This will optimise and increase the use of parks as healthy gathering places in each neighbourhood where community-building activities such as physical activity, gardening and play can take place.

6 Lead with community design.

Set aside a percentage of the budget for each neighbourhood plan and public space intervention project to develop durable systems, tools and educational resources that enable citizens of all ages to participate in urban design.

This will create a financial basis for more equitable and experimental urban governance by testing and scaling community-based models.

7 Champion placemaking from the inside.

Address the importance of a “Director of Public Space”, whose goal is to use and optimise public space for recovery, as an official function in City Hall.

This allows officials and city leaders to expand and strengthen local urban innovation networks by having a person who advocates and applies the benefits of placemaking in and around an area.

8 Increase bureaucratic agility and responsiveness.

Use inter-agency working groups and creative bureaucrats to revise city ordinances and laws and simplify processes, rules and regulations to design and effectively implement public space projects.

This will support citizen participation and overcome bureaucratic barriers from practitioners and the community.

9 Have one voice with many arms.

Create a more transparent, cross-sectoral and balanced decision-making structure in public administration that builds bridges between disciplines in relation to public space.

This will provide the basis for effective collaboration between local governments, local stakeholders and the community in activating public space for recovery.

10 Return to and recognise indigenous & endogenous knowledge.

Empower your communities to place Indigenous Peoples and endogenous knowledge at the centre of the design of public space to bring appreciation for their ways of thinking, their cultures and their stories into community design, research, urban policy and urban communication plans.

This will create a more inclusive society by recognising the restoration of their knowledge systems by (and for) themselves as first peoples.

11 Create more space for culture.

Develop and promote cultural programmes and activities together with cultural practitioners and urban planners to incorporate culture, creativity and community into placemaking and tactical urbanism.

This will reinvent public space as a living destination, strengthen the connection between people and place and stimulate the cultural economy.

12 Hold spaces for free fun.

Improve public infrastructure for diverse, non-commercial recreation in all neighbourhoods, such as play elements integrated into streets, inclusive playgrounds, public gardens, outdoor gyms, libraries, amphitheatres and walking trails.

This will promote the enjoyment of cultural rights for all, regardless of population group, income or housing situation.

13 Champion and stand for SDGs.

Embed in city policy that every development project includes measures that balance social, economic and environmental sustainability and are guided by the Sustainable Development Goals.

This will activate and optimise synergies between public space for recovery, climate emergency and meeting the SDGs.

14 Reclaim spaces for nature.

Reinterpret unused and obsolete infrastructure by bringing nature-based solutions to the urban environment through blue and green innovations.

This will empower citizens to take better care of public green space and transform the city in an ecologically and economically efficient way.

15 Embrace experimentation and regenerative systems.

Integrate regenerative thinking into all actions and strategies to enable sustainable urban planning that overcomes the opposition between humans and nature.

This will give all urban actors access to knowledge, spaces and tools to experiment, learn, change and replicate the development of regenerative systems in public spaces.

16 Move away from the private car.

Make public space and public transport more fun through cultural programmes, communication campaigns and place-based activities that invite more people to leave their cars behind.

This will make active mobility and sustainable transport more attractive to change the dominance of the car in public space and create healthier cities.

17 Integrate new ways to move.

Use rapid, inclusive and cost-effective urban planning tools such as tactical interventions to test parking policy changes and invest in alternatives to driving.

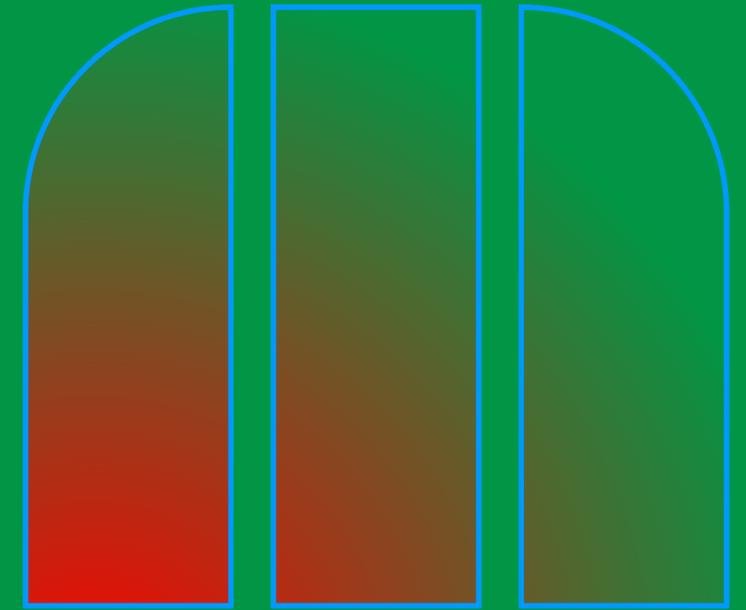
This will meet critical sustainable living needs by reclaiming car space for slow modes of transport.

18 Revive disused infrastructure.

Advocate for the activation of disused infrastructure by leasing land for testing green and blue sustainable innovation projects.

This will increase opportunities for active transport, promote physical activity and improve community life and green spaces.

3. Our findings



The Covid-19 crisis has challenged the fundamental qualities that make up urban life: Diversity, density, social proximity and human interaction. Yet despite the many hardships and social distancing measures the pandemic brought, there has been a palpable rediscovery of the value of public space in cities around the world - as the heart of our communities.

Our double research has shown:

1. The Covid-19 crisis was the worst time in the history of many cities, but also a time for unprecedented social action. The survey results show that 3 out of 4 cities describe the pandemic as the biggest and most severe disaster they have ever experienced, and the same percentage report that forced evictions have been stopped.

2. Access to public space and equality is key to the functioning of our society. Public space and services became less and less available in cities and often even closed at the height of the pandemic. Most cities experienced strict lockdowns (as in 85%) and demonstrations during the closures, with 1 in 8 cities experiencing violent demonstrations.

3. Satisfaction with public space has increased significantly from before Covid-19 to today. The survey results show that public space was perceived more positively in most cities than before, probably because it was valued more when private gathering spaces were severely restricted.

4. Culture helps combat loneliness. Maintaining a publicly accessible cultural programme has been shown to reduce isolation and strengthen the sense of belonging between people of different backgrounds and ages, which was particularly visible in hard and soft restrictions on assembly. Nevertheless, arts and culture were the last investment priority of the government in the cities studied.

5. Inclusive, shared place management creates sustainable cities. Bottom-up activities in public spaces before and during the pandemic have been shown to create community wealth, empower people and improve safety and accessibility for typically excluded groups (children, youth, elderly, disabled, minorities, women, indigenous peoples) among the sample.

6. A plea for responsive bureaucracy in the design of public space. The pandemic has shown that it is indeed possible to create flexible regulations that allow for more experimentation in public space by testing and replicating placemaking solutions such as pop-up bike lanes, pedestrian zones, parklets, pop-up shops, extended pavements and curbs in the participating cities.

7. Where there is space to cycle, walk, play and exercise outdoors, people will use it. Less car traffic and the use of urban green spaces and playgrounds have increased social and environmental well-being. Despite their positive effects, the environmental policies of the cities in the sample studied have generally not changed.

8. Prioritise your local community. The value of nearby services has increased exponentially, whether it is 1-minute access to basic services, supporting small businesses through grants or promoting local markets that are accessible by foot, public transport or bicycle. As the budget for tourism-oriented promotion has not decreased in the sample, cities must first and foremost meet the needs of their permanent residents to be sustainable in the long run.

Methodology

Placemaking Europe and Placemaking X have launched a dual research effort as part of the AfterCovid.City initiative to better understand the conversations and experiences of city leaders with actions taken in different cities as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic.

An online survey:

104 experts participated



66 cities from 35 countries represented

Two virtual interactive workshops:

80 placemaking leaders participated



+30 countries represented



Based on the 4C's Framework by Jonathan Courtney (Collect, Choose, Create, Commit) and democratic exercises

While the co-creation of the AfterCovid.City Global Charter brought together diverse minds from around the world, we critically recognise that this is inherently biased and does not truly represent all identities and experiences. We ask the audience to take note of this. We hope that our intention to mix perspectives, disciplines and cultures can compensate for this shortcoming and we will strive to improve this in our future work.

Contributors

Placemaking Europe & PlacemakingX would like to thank the following for their support in creating the AfterCovid. City Global Charter:

Alexander Ståhle, Amina Daschil, Anna Bradley, Annabel Nyole, Anne Declerck, Asma Sofla, Azbah Ansari, Bahanur Nasya, Bhavya Mistry, Brooke Williams, C.J. Opperthausen, Carlos Verdu Chico de Guzman, Carmen Mays, Carolina Carrasco, Cecilia Martinez, Charles Landry, Charlot Schans, Christian Grauvogel, Daniel Hogendoorn, Daniel Rádai, Daniel Sousa Noble Teixeira, David Brito, Dean Cracknell, Ellen Blake, Eloise Telford, Emilie Röell, Ethan Kent, Federico Camerin, Francois Duchastel, Fredrik Lindstål, Frith Walker, Gina Kafedzhian, Giselle Sebag, Giulia Gualtieri, Giulia Sicignano, Gooitske Zijlstra, Greg Scarpella, Hanna Harris, Hans Karssenbergh, Harriet McKindlay, Ian Livingstone, Isabella Longo, Jackson Chabot, Jeroen de Leeuw, Jeroen Sebrechts, Jim Ross, Johanna Musch, Johannes Riegler, Jose Antonio Gras, Khadija Konate, Kristie Daniel, Laura Martinez Izquierdo, Lauren Schiff, Leonardo Brawl Márquez, Liam Korn, Lizzie Salter, Lobna A. Mostafa, Luca Ballarini, Mairéad Doyle, Maja Simoneti, Marc Basany, Marjorie Van der Windt-Veit, Marta Popiolek, Michael Stott, Michelle Chia, Mike Lydon, Mirette Khorshed, Monica Williams, Muhammad Rahman, Mustafa Sherif, Nadia Cortes Quenguan, Natalie Raben, Nate Storrington, Nazakat Azimli, Nel-la Saborit Esteve, Niharika Mathema, Nora Gailer, Olga Sowa, Päivi Raivio, Paloma Medina, Paola Caiuby Santiago, Patrizia Marani, Paula Salina Salinas, Ragnar Lund, Ramon Marrades, Raquel Teixeira dos Santos, Rashiq Fataar, Robin Abad Ocubillo, Romain Loubiere, Ronika Postaria, Roos Gerritsma, Roya Shokoohi, Rozina Spinnoy, Ryan Smolar, Salla Ahokas, Sally Kneeshaw, Sherryl Muriente, Shimona Malaihollo, Shin-pei Tsay, Skye Sturm, Sonia Sorbona, Stefania Campioli, Stefanie Raab, Stephen Davies, Swapna Natesh Babu, Sylvia Kostenzer, Tharaa Kirresh, Thiladhavathy M S, Thomas Ermacora, Tomer Ben hamou, Valli Morphett, Vera Neshataeva, Veronica Zalapa, Vineeta Shetty, Vivian Doumpa, Vivian Arroyo, Viviana Cordero Vinueza, Wouter-Jan Verheul, Yanling Lin, Yugo Phurbojoyo, Yulia Pak, Zulfikar Sepyan.

About

Placemaking Europe and Placemaking X have invited the world's leading urbanists to collaborate on the **AfterCovid.City Global Charter**. This document articulates the direction and clear steps our cities must take to shape a prosperous future after the Covid-19 pandemic and leverage the power of public space for recovery. It is aimed at urban leaders, global decision-makers and organisations working to improve our environment - socially, environmentally, economically and physically.

Placemaking is a co-creative and locally oriented process of building communities around a place [...]. It builds on the human need for prosperity, sociability and security and follows a journey to include an evaluation of the place and its challenges, inclusive participation of the locals, interventions with bottom-up co-creation meeting institutional resources or amenities, short term plans to test out ideas, considerations for long-term place stewardship, and work to make the place function for accessibility, sociability, activities, and comfort" (Excerpt from Bradley, Reich & Curtis, 2021).

Placemaking Europe

A network of 500+ professionals - from mayors to developers and activists across a diversity of European countries promoting place-led development at the human scale, inspired by the interaction between buildings, streets and citizens.



Placemaking X

A global cooperative network of 100+ leaders and 1,300+ advocates from 80+ countries around the world who together accelerate placemaking as a way to create healthy, inclusive, and beloved communities.



World's leading urban practitioners

The AfterCovid.City Global Charter

placemaking
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**Use the hashtags #aftercovidcity
#placemaking #publicspace4recovery**

Or Email us at hey@aftercovid.city We can't wait to connect.