

# FRAME the next space

WHITE PAPER



THE  
RESILIENT  
CITY

# LAYING THE GROUNDWORK FOR THE RESILIENT CITY

Drawing from our inaugural think tank The Next Space, this white paper outlines the roles spatial design plays in advancing self-sustainment, sharing economies and circular networks. What lessons can we learn for developing the resilient city – and what changes can the design industry make right now?

Words Lauren Grace Morris

The doors of Eindhoven's DomusDela swung open bright and early on the morning of 21 October 2021 for The Next Space, a partnership with IBA, IMM and Dutch Design Week. We anticipated the day to be full of ideation and action planning surrounding the future, resilient city. Little could we know how far the audience would take that mission. Aligned with four talks about spatial design's role in environmental responsibility, distributed healthcare, urban agricultural and methods of shared living, the one-day make-a-thon brought together a range of industry stakeholders, from designers and architects to real estate developers and retailers. The motive? To form a framework for spatial design in which people and the planet can thrive.

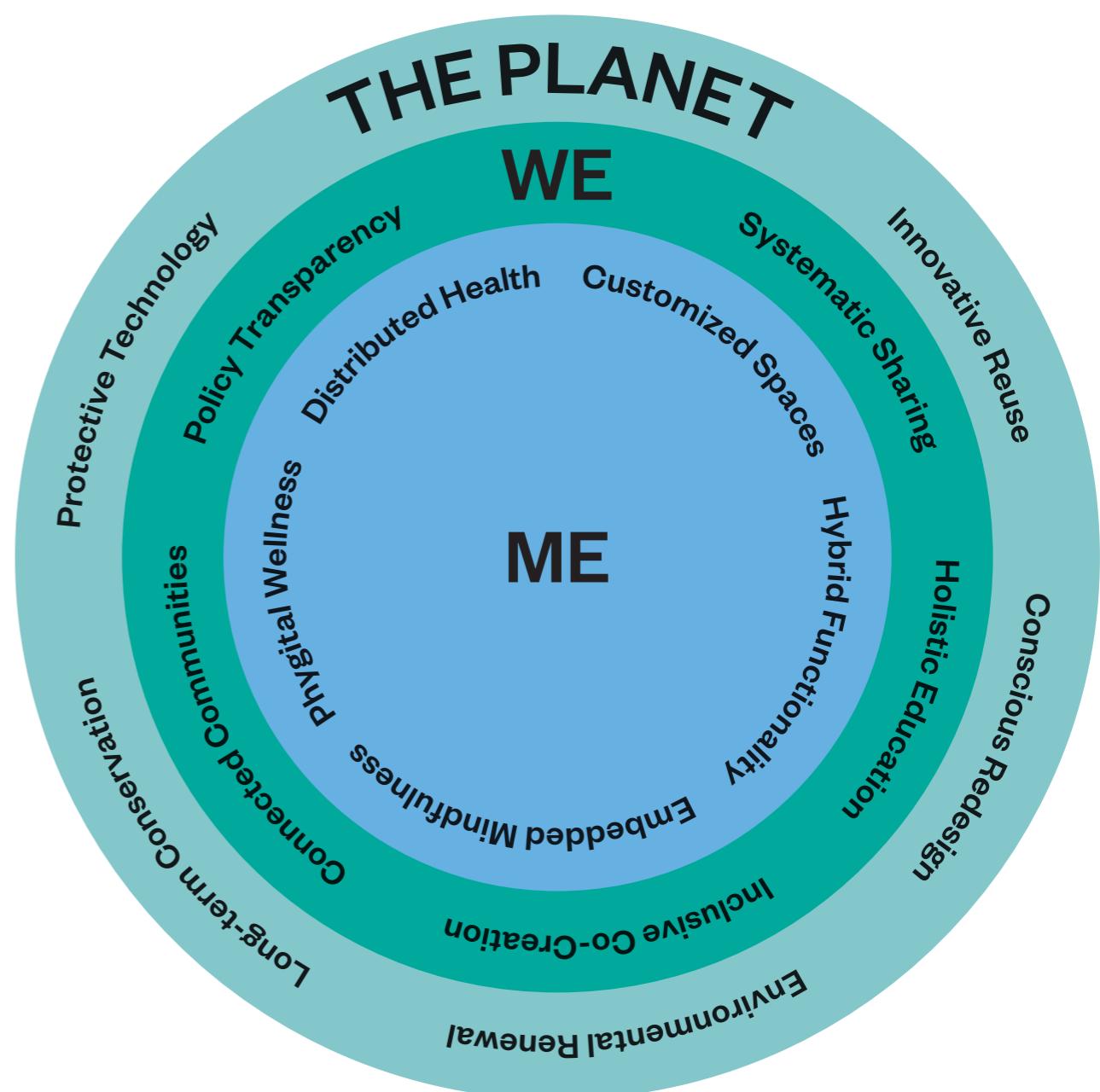
First on stage – while remotely tuned in – was Patrick Frick, lead facilita-

tor of the Global Commons Alliance. The team works to create a powerful network of organizations, helping to scale the science-based actions necessary to protect our commons, the cultural and natural resources available to all people. Philips Healthcare senior design director Kurt Ward captured our attention next, discussing how distributed healthcare will impact the way we live, play and work. He envisions adaptive areas in the city with specialized, immediate care, the result being a 'more empowered community'.

Health brought us to another pillar of the programme: food. Eveline van Leeuwen, scientific director at AMS Institute, addressed the question: What will urban agriculture mean for urban planning? To consider food systems in all their complexity and all of the spaces they concern, designers, she explains,

must think about 'where food is offered and how it impacts the way people make choices'. Carbon Studio founder Pieter Kool wrapped up the day's talks with insight into what it really means to live in a connected, shared community. A designer and inhabitant of Schoonschip – a 'floating neighbourhood' of 30 house-boats in Amsterdam – Kool has first-hand experience navigating life in a socially and ecologically sustainable setting.

The make-a-thon sessions that occurred throughout the day wove parallels between each of the speaker's subjects. It was a time to identify the trends that currently shape spatial design, analyse their role in the future city and scribe tangible steps to achieve the resilient city.»



**SPACE. COMMUNITY. CITY. REGION. STATE. NATION. GLOBE.** It all starts with a space. Resilient cities strengthen the chain that connects us. Developing them is an iterative process that requires the collaboration of designers, makers and users – the ultimate exercise in co-creation. Me. We. The planet.

# SELF-SUSTAINMENT EMPOWERING BEHAVIOURAL CHANGE



Courtesy of Philips Healthcare

Philips Healthcare senior design director Kurt Ward envisions adaptive areas within the city to have specialized, immediate care, the result being a 'more empowered community'. These resilient, safe hubs will have an increasingly important role as our cities bear the brunt of the climate crisis.

How can the spatial design industry inspire sustainable living at the individual level? Our ecosystems greatly influence the habits and rituals that define our lives, which gives designers the power to facilitate more environmentally and socially proactive behaviour among users.

Human-centric design requires that designers have more empathy for and connection to people that they create *with* – not *for*. Responsive technology, customization options and accessibility features are all strategies that accommodate the needs and wishes of the individual. Providing access to green space, protective systems and guidelines and neurodiverse solutions are a few of the many ways health and wellness can come to the forefront of the city. The efficacy of these urban improvements relies on the understanding and participation of each user in a community.

One of the most echoed notions during the make-a-thons was

Kool's quote: 'If you build a community, everybody should have skin in the game.' 'If people are only financially involved, you say: "Okay, you can join, you pay and then we'll do it." Basically, you're just giving them an argument to complain,' he explains. 'But if you demand that people also put personal time in the project, they go from complainers to ambassadors.' Tapping into personal responsibility ultimately forges deeper relationships with one's own space and the other's part of it.

Actively involving people in the design process to develop intuitive, hybrid-use microcosms is one important step towards the resilient city. Current

users aren't the only people to focus on, however; urban solutions should also look farther ahead, predicting the needs of generations to come and embodying the flexibility needed for future adaptation. Van Leeuwen helps us see this in the context of agriculture: 'Having food inside the city helps people learn – and care more about – food. Can we collaborate in these spaces to incentivize behavioural change? We can't have big solutions anymore – it's not one-size-fits-all. There need to be tailor-made approaches at the spatial, city and regional level.' And this is true in designing systems across the board, not just when it comes to food or healthcare.»

— **THE RESILIENT CITY** requires empathetic, flexible design solutions for present *and* future inhabitants.

— **INDIVIDUALS** need to have personal and financial involvement to be fully invested in developing communities.

— **TRANSPARENCY** of city systems – like urban farming – is a fundamental driver of positive reform.

**Co- is a prefix popping up everywhere for city dwellers, but what does it *really* mean to share systematically? A healthy balance of give and take can revolutionize the cityscape and transform our relationships with fellow residents. Sharing is caring, and it's caring that will enable the future city to prosper.**

As outlined previously, designers have a responsibility to redesign ‘norms’ and evolve values in developing wellbeing-oriented cities. In practice, this entails promoting communication between involved parties and providing open-source information. It also asks that creators adhere to science-based sustainability targets. Each of these objectives has sharing – and a shift away from personal ownership – at its core. New transportation infrastructures, food-exchange platforms and public space typologies are a few ways in which sharing economies are currently being redefined. The overarching motive behind each of these initiatives should be to decentralize give and take between designers, makers and users, creating transparent cities that prioritize residents over commerce.

It’s a trajectory that, despite all the apps you can download, requires shared *physical* space. The village square is in dire need of reinvention with third spaces becoming increasingly important – housing prices are rising, loneliness is rampant and our connection with nature dwindling. Co-living and co-working facilities needn’t be the only focus areas for a shared future; neighbourhood events

hubs, reimagined community centres and multipurpose outdoor spaces will be the beating hearts of resilient cities. ‘We are challenged to design spaces that break down the boundaries that exist between us human beings, communities and tribes, but also institutions, companies and countries,’ Frick says. Such projects also widen the potential of reusing and revitalizing underused properties and locations in cities.

A sharing society also means being willing to care for one another, and cities must be equipped with the various tools for people to do so. This is especially pertinent when it comes to healthcare. ‘A healing city isn’t designed around organizations and hospitals,’ Ward says. ‘Instead, healthcare is distributed across the home, streets and city.’ Why? ‘Prevention is the number one way to keep healthy and reduce impact on our planet: the moment you go into the hospital, you’re going to start to use resources – the earlier we can intervene, the better it is for you and the planet. We need to design *around* people – everybody is different, and every health situation is different, but they need to be thought about holistically.’ »

# SHARING SOCIETY CO-CREATING A CARING COMMUNITY



Schoonschip, a new ecologically and socially sustainable neighbourhood of 30 houseboats in the rapidly evolving area of North Amsterdam, is dubbed ‘the most sustainable floating district’. Pieter Kool, founder of Carbon Studio, co-developed the project.

— **SHARED URBAN SPACES** are vital for social connection and idea exchange, the main ingredients of co-creation.

— **PLATFORMS FOR SHARING** energy, products, clothing, furniture and more should feed into spatial design concepts.

— **HEALTHCARE SERVICES** must be distributed, accessible and prevention-oriented, to encourage a communal culture of wellbeing.

# THE CIRCULAR NETWORK MAKING PLANETARY CHANGE

We're resource zappers, ozone-layer destroyers and altogether ecologically irresponsible. Can spatial design help remedy this? Rethinking industry operations and setting standards will have a big domino effect on other sectors.

A pivotal question is how to challenge the status quo and make social design incentivizing for clients. The goal at the start of any design process should be to encourage companies to examine their role in their communities – is it beneficial or detrimental? And how are the spaces they establish perpetuating that impact? ‘The human population on this planet – and specifically decisionmakers – has to understand our critical dependence on the health of the global commons,’ asserts Frick. Policies geared towards more socially and environmentally conscious design practices can be seen as a hindrance. On the contrary, it is only through these standards that our societies – and consequently the need for design – will continue to exist.

Fortunately, the design industry has no shortage of ingenuity and creative resources. This surplus can be hugely transformative for other sectors, and collaborations among individuals, groups and entities are key to the large-scale awakening Frick advocates. Changes to the physical world are great fodder for introspection; as we see our ecosystems deteriorate, built spaces should remind us of our duties, rather than detract from them. ‘Reduce, reuse, recycle’ isn’t optional. Instead of consistently producing new innovations, industries can be encouraged to *redesign* their systems and spaces. Obsolescence itself needs to become obsolete.

‘There’s not one view on sustainability,’ Kool points out. And empow-

ering actors is what keeps the momentum of change going. ‘It’s much more important that you design a process for how to tackle problems when they arise, rather than designing rules,’ he explains. It’s why education – whether the pupil is five or 50 – really matters. Spreading awareness about the functionality and intentions of sustainable urban systems and spaces is critical to set long-term thinking in motion. In other words: knowledge-sharing is ultimately how design – and the resilient city – democratizes. ●

- **CROSS-SECTOR COLLABORATION** among individuals, groups and entities is necessary in the resilient city. Critical design thinking is an asset for all involved.
- **THE LIFECYCLES** of products and spaces must be increased to meet the longest timelines possible.
- **EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMMES** and policy legibility surrounding sustainability can encourage greater problem-solving among communities.



Completed in 2021 to a design by Avoid Obvious, K-farm in Hong Kong is run by an NGO and features an aquaponic pool, vertical farm installation, organic farm and greenhouse. Although its agricultural output is relatively small, K-farm’s value is in providing inspiration for the urban farmers to come.

**THE NEXT SPACE** white paper results from the namesake event that took place on 21 October, 2021, in Eindhoven. We thank all speakers, participants and partners for their input.

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