

Public Value Festival 2025

Public Value Award for Lifetime Achievement

Laudation for Professor Carlos Moreno

Ladies and gentlemen,

When we seek to change our lives, we must start with ourselves. But that's not enough. We also need to change our environment and stay consistent in doing so. That's the only way deep, lasting change becomes possible. After all, our surroundings shape our behavior, our relationships, and our quality of life.

But we are not powerless in the face of our environment.

This might sound like the advice of a therapist: *"Look inside yourself and around you."* But it's also a powerful instruction for how we might reshape our cities in the age of climate change and demographic transformation.

By 2050, more than 6 billion people will live in urban areas. For the first time in history, more humans will live in cities than in rural regions.

So how do we make urban life sustainable, livable, and fair?

There is no single discipline – or expert – that holds the answer to this complex question. What we need is a vision, a concept that helps us see the connections between climate, community, mobility (including social mobility), housing, health, and more. A concept that makes complexity understandable.

That's why we're here today. To honor a man who has offered just that.

Ladies and gentlemen, it is my great pleasure to recognize **Professor Carlos Moreno**, this year's recipient of the **Public Value Award for Lifetime Achievement**.

Dear Carlos, warm congratulations.

You are, in my eyes, a **modern urban therapist**. Someone who sees cities not just as physical spaces, but as living, breathing systems that deeply affect our lives. And more than that: as systems that can be healed. Like a therapist you help us connect to our needs, articulate our anxieties and realize our human potential.

With your vision of the **15-minute city**, you have redefined how we think about distance, density, and daily life. Your idea is elegant, powerful and global. It goes far beyond conventional urban planning. It brings together the social, economic, ecological, technological and yes, aesthetic-dimensions of a **good city**.

And here's what's truly special: your concept speaks directly to the **common good**. You show how different aspects of well-being, morality, politics, or economics – often in tension –, can come together.

Let me put it clearly:

The 15-minute city is a vision of Public Value.

Carlos, you began your career as a mathematician, computer scientist and robotics pioneer. Based on your subsequent work on new and intelligent services for the community you've have started to think about the **basic idea how proximity, density and distance should relate to each other in urban life**. By doing so you developed your own concept, deeply grounded in the proud legacy of urban thinkers: from the walkable city movement of the 1990s, to Jane Jacobs in the 1960s, and even the garden city concept of the early 20th century.

You've taken these ideas and adapted them for our world today, linking them to the climate movement, to public health, and to the everyday lives of urban citizens.

The 15-minute city questions car dominance. It resists the fragmentation of cities. It helps us move past the outdated idea of separating our cities into single-function zones. It's a response to a very modern truth: what worked yesterday won't work tomorrow.

And yet your concept has not been without controversy. Some critics see it as nostalgic. Others, even more extreme, have likened it to a kind of urban prison. As *The New York Times* reported, you and your family even faced death threats from conspiracy theorists.

But you kept going.

And in doing so, you accomplished something remarkable: you brought together the complexity of systems thinking – with the clarity of common sense. Not **Smart City** – but **Human Smart City**. Not the triumph of technology, but the triumph of humanity. Or, as you might say, the triumph of the **gentle city**.

That's why, today, I'd like to offer you a new title:

Carlos Moreno, Public Value Urbanist.

Because that's what you are.

You remind us: it's not enough to criticize traffic engineers or architects or planners for thinking too narrowly. Each expert must follow rules, codes, and logic. But your 15-minute city offers a shared vision – a framework that brings all disciplines together. It's not about optimizing one part. It's about creating a whole.

You go to the root of what a city *is* and what it *could* be.

The deepest impact of your work may be in what I'd call a new **philosophy of intervention**: organizing for self-organization in a way that puts human needs at the center.

The 15-minute city is a Public Value city, because it's not about maximizing one metric. It's about shaping a system that allows life to flourish. That is fragile. Vulnerable. But also incredibly powerful, because it speaks to what people truly need:

connection, cooperation, and community.

This is also the heart of Public Value theory: to focus not just on efficiency or profit, but on the **conditions for life in common**, conditions that allow us to live together peacefully and see our differences as strengths, not threats.

Carlos, you are a Public Value Urbanist because you connect the Public Value idea – “*to flourish in community*” – with the *right to the city* as Henri Lefebvre put it.

Perhaps that's why your work resonates so deeply. It's human. It's hopeful. And it's already changing the world.

Your concept is part of the **C40 Mayors COVID - 19 Recovery Agenda**. It's been endorsed by the **World Health Organization**. The **IPCC** sees it as a tool to cut urban energy use by up to 25%.

And perhaps most notably, Paris Mayor **Anne Hidalgo** has made the 15-minute city a cornerstone of her policy. Who would have thought that – 150 years after Georges-Eugène Haussmann reshaped Paris – the city would once again be setting the global standard?

And it doesn't stop there. Cities like **Barcelona, Berlin, and Milan** are working with your ideas. You support projects around the world. You travel tirelessly. You inspire.

Like a therapist, you help us reconnect with our needs—and with our cities. You help us see how we live in the city and how the city lives in us.

We are the city. The city is us.

Dear Professor Carlos Moreno,

The organizers of this festival – **the Lisbon borough of Estrela, the Leipzig Graduate School of Management, TIAS School for Business and Society, Guts n Values, and the Forum Gemeinwohl e.V.** – are proud to present you with this award.

Keep going. Keep inspiring.

Congratulations

Herzlichen Glückwunsch

Muito obrigado e parabéns

Lisbon, May 25th 2025

Timo Meynhardt