

Resilient Cities and Regenerative Regions

A manifesto of consciousness, commitment and action.

We hereby now accept that human beings are an urban species and that cities are now our true home. And as such, we will embrace our cities and focus our attention to change them however necessary to not only provide us all with a good quality of life, but to deliver that life within the carrying capacity of our planet – we will create one-planet cities.

While we acknowledge that we are an urban species, we acknowledge likewise that we are a fully integrated part of the natural systems of our planet and that we are entirely dependent on the health of the world's ecosystems for all our needs.

We acknowledge that we have undertaken two centuries of industrial and population expansion following a flawed model of our world and we now acknowledge the realities of the 21st century that we have created including:

- That our actions are causing climate change emissions to increase at rates never before seen or modeled and this will cause our climate to change significantly this century even with radical action, and catastrophically without it;
- That the inexpensive energy supplies that we have used to build our current society and economy will end in this century and thereby force change in every aspect of our cities;
- That our world's potable water supplies are decreasing at unprecedented rates in urban and agricultural watersheds thereby changing forever our cities and food-baskets;
- That we have disrupted our planet's ecosystems to a such a point that they are in a rapid state of change and collapse in a manner that is serious and unpredictable;
- That we have been exhausting the non-renewable resources of the planet and depositing waste and toxins at unprecedented rates due to our past outdated economic models of materials management;
- That our global food supply is in significant threat from the impending peaks of fossil fuels, water supply and soil degradation;
- That the impending global migration from countries heavier hit from these disruptions will change our entire concept of cities as billions more become urbanized in a steadily decreasing number of metropolitan regions;
- That the significant shift in demographics in our countries will force change in our cities physically, socially and economically and in particular, ruling many of our models of how we take care of each other obsolete;

- That our political systems are currently inadequate and under-resourced to respond to the primary areas of market and government failure and compromised in their ability to effectively lead the envisioning, coordination, mobilization and decision-making processes required to deliver a culture of stewardship and become sustainable;
- That the health of individuals and families in our communities are suffering from an inestimable and growing array of stresses that exceed our social infrastructure's ability to respond;
- That our education systems in their current forms are entirely inadequate to empower us collectively with the knowledge and ingenuity that we need to grapple with the challenges we face;
- That our media and information industry is inadequate in its current form to support a rapid and effective dissemination of information that will trigger emotions, understandings and motivation to make significant change;
- That our current economy and its corporate members are built on principles that are blind to the constraints of the planet and our communities; and
- That the belief that the economy will be relatively stable and reliable in its current state over the next century is erroneous.

In acknowledgement of this reality as the new context for our cities, we commit in all our actions from here on, to envisioning, communicating, and creating resilient cities that will deliver a great quality of life for all generations within the constraints of the planet that we are borrowing from our grandchildren.

Which brings us to the principles and perspectives we need to forge a path forward:

Inherent in this commitment is the recognition of the following principles that underpin our thinking around resilient cities including:

- That the future is not inevitable, but rather that it is created by us day by day – that we are the authors of our future;
- That no one is in charge, and therefore that we all are in charge;
- That we are not moving from a past state to a future one, we are moving from a past state to one of continuous unfolding and unstoppable change – and therefore, our concept of cities, communities, economy, and ourselves must be reframed as a dance of relentless and rapid evolution – that change is the new normal;
- That at the heart of resilience lies the capacity to regenerate and as such, we must preserve the integrity of our earth's ecosystems and utilize them as blueprints for our cities;

- That because cities change slowly, our decisions today define not only tomorrow but the day after tomorrow, and the day after that.
- That in the face of the inability to know the future, we must adopt a deep ethic of planning, education and engagement to ensure we are aware, thoughtful and agile to meet the future we are both consciously and unconsciously creating;
- That the roots of the transformation that we need lie in our deepest places because emotions lead to thoughts, which lead to stories, which lead to motivations, which lead to actions, which build cities;
- That everything is connected and that the dispassionate karma of the earth offers a reaction for every one of our actions;
- That we must transform our cities from a parasitic to a symbiotic relationship with our all other species in the world;
- That we can never truly understand all implications of our actions and that as such, we must adopt an ethic of “learning cities” – of living laboratories in which we hope to succeed, but plan to fail, and then to try again;
- That we must pause in our work to build our Towers of Babel, and return to the ground and learn to speak each other’s language – or we must certainly fragment and disperse and divided we will fall;
- That the scale of change we need can only be realized when we work together to coauthor a future that fits us all;
- That we must strive for ‘firsts’ in everything as the only mandate possible to deliver the learning and change at the scale we need to meet the challenges that call our names; and
- That in fact, we aren’t building cities, we are building communities and as such, our cities do not exist for themselves, they are emergent outcomes of decisions we make to provide homes and lives for ourselves, our families and each other. In this context, we must never forget that we must design cities to be positive and healing places for our children. And furthermore, because there is no “social out there” any more than there is an ecological “out there”, we must confront our fears and work to heal those who have been hurt or have hurt us - for pain is a virus that is passed on until it is confronted and healed – and while in action, it hurts all species.

Which brings us to the need for a new blueprint for a resilient city:

In the context of the 21st century reality and these principles, we now embrace a new blueprint for our cities:

- Our neighbourhoods will hereby be complete, offering us choice in where we work, live, play, learn, shop and pray;
- Our transportation systems will maximize exchange and minimize travel, they will deliver access for all of us at all stages of our lives with a complete absence of carbon and will be built first and foremost around us - people - walking, meeting each other, experiencing beauty and engaging the other species with whom we share our landscapes. We will travel under our own power, under the sun's power and we will travel together;
- Our buildings will be plants, generating their own sustenance and giving back to our city, providing light, life and sunshine to us all, for our buildings are our civilization's collective skin;
- The land within our cities will be a profound cacophony of the celebration and cosmic dance of the lives of other species by our design, they will make us physically and spiritually healthy, they will provide us with food, and they will be a stage on which we come to know each other's power and creativity;
- The pumps, pipes and wires of our cities that supply us with energy and water and deal with our waste will be designed to be like the earth herself where everything is regenerated and there is no such thing as waste;
- Our cities will provide food, clothing, a home, education, health care and a good quality life for every person, no matter what gifts, gaps or wounds they have;
- Our cities will inspire us with art and the expressions of who are and will answer implicitly the question – what in fact we are trying to sustain?; and
- Our economy will be built on the shoulders of inspired corporate citizens, creative entrepreneurs and a vision that draws all self-interested individuals and organizations to not only compete, but cooperate for the benefit of us – one and all. To create wealth within the natural income of our planet, and to increase our social, natural and economic capital accounts.

In order to implement this blueprint, everyone has roles and responsibilities:

While we innately know we are a “we” – we also accept that we do nothing as a “we”. It is an “I” who acts or at most, a small “us”. And even then, all “us's” are animated, organized and lead by an “I”.

In this context, we all have responsibilities individually, in our roles, in creating our collective resilient future. In our roles, there is no one else to pass the responsibility on to.

- As elected city leaders:
 - We will accept our responsibility to be students, decision makers, arbitrators, gatekeepers, motivators, teachers, and risk takers, on behalf of all our citizens. We will be fearless but careful, bold but honest.
- As those who work in our city governments:
 - We will honour our responsibility to not let the aging ink of dog-eared and faded regulations constrain our souls, but will use our skills and the letters of our laws to make real the dream of a regenerative society; We will not hide from the expressions of both ignorance and wisdom from our neighbours, but will engage in dialogue to teach and be taught . We will not let the failures of courage of those who must make hard decisions, define what our minds and souls believe is possible. We will expose who we are in the public discussion to build a common ground of humanity with those whom we serve, and at the same time we will protect who we are from those who would project anger that they received those who may have abused authority in the past – so we may serve tomorrow without yesterday’s pain.
- For those of us who create wealth in our businesses:
 - We will embrace our responsibility to not only create wealth for ourselves and our shareholders, but to also infuse the tasks and lives of our employees and colleagues with meaning. We will relentlessly add value and provide goods and services that meet both the physical and spiritual needs of our customers. We will lead our suppliers and competitors forward – inspiring and asking of them increasing levels of sustainability. We will commit to create lasting wealth and make the planet and our communities healthier and more resilient as we do so.
- For those of us in the academy:
 - We will honour the significant investment our society makes in us and commit to relentlessly leading the research and reframing of our world views to empower the minds and hearts of all to understand and reach for true sustainability. We will not only speak to those who pay us, but will actively engage the minds of all citizens in our communities and economy. And we will commit to being the sensors who report on our planet and to being the strategists of symbiosis.
- For those of us in the world of organizations:
 - We will be both insiders and outsiders at the same time – working “with” our communities, and leading them forward simultaneously. For every place we call

others out, we will discipline ourselves to provide a viable alternative. We will honour the significant responsibility and risk those in our governments and businesses face and with compassion and discipline, we will tell the truth in a story that all can understand and remember – and be inspired by. And often, we won't wait. We'll just do it because we can.

And finally, as we bring our “we” and all things down to ourselves as individuals we find that all things begin within ourselves. And therefore, with a sobering but exciting knowing that I do not truly know how to proceed, I will begin with commitments to try.

As a resident and co-author of a resilient city and regenerative region, I commit to the following:

- I will embrace my responsibility as an author of the future and of my city;
- I will confront my comforting illusions – but will not believe all those who would feed me news that might prey on my anxieties;
- I will accept my disillusionment with all institutions and leaders, but will not take leave my responsibility and become embittered;
- I will learn from whomever I can - but will never devolve my responsibility to be the author of my city to any teacher, no matter how gracious their words or beautiful their pictures;
- I will engage my peers and declare our generation's responsibility - but I will share my successes and failures equally;
- I will accept that I must live in this world, but will commit to slowing to look beyond the fog of overwork, lack of sleep, gridlock, shopping, and the apparent race with others in everything to nowhere in particular – to find my quality of life within my earth's allowance;
- And I will be grateful;
- I will breathe deep, I will smile at the rain, I will soak in the sun, and I will teach my children the songs of the birds who live in our neighbourhood;
- I will eat and drink the abundance of my region, and will share my abundance with those who work to maintain that land's capacity;
- In addition, I will share my abundance with many others in a manner that empowers them to create more of their own;
- I will ask of myself the courage to see the challenges that give me fear through the eyes of those whose job it is to deal with them and I will be a compassionate, engaged and disciplined citizen;

- And I will be grateful;
- I will open to the pain that I cause in the world through my ignorance and fear and the distance I seem to have from my internal dignity and nobility, and I will feel the pain, shock and injustice of participating in the death of so many, if only by accident – and then I will move past that grief to the restless serenity of my responsibility – to my planet, to my community, to my family, and to myself;
- And in that spontaneous map that comes from that honesty, I will find my “well”, the source of my regeneration and I will personally become resilient;
- And I will be grateful.

And finally, I will acknowledge that I do not understand the universe enough to yet proclaim that “its over” and as a resident of a resilient city and regenerative region I will have faith in you and I will have faith in myself that we can do this – that we can change.

Mark Holland

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