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Inspiring a revolution in urban innovation

Launching of the Proposed Manifesto:

A Revolution in Urban Innovation

Concluding Remarks

14 March, Bilbao

Prof. Greg Clark CBE FAcSS

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Launch of the Proposed Manifesto:
A Revolution in Urban Innovation.

Concluding Remarks. March 14th Bilbao. Prof Greg Clark CBE FAcSS

It has been a very productive day and I want to invite us to thank Ainara Basurko, Asier Abaunza, Idoia Postigo, Charles Landry, Chris Fair, André Sobczak, David del Campo, Cristina Oyón, Henk Bouwman, Xavier Tiana, Nayibe Flórez, Eider Inunciaga, Rainer Kern, Gonzalo Saénz de Miera, Ángel Giménez, Chiara Podbielski, Estibaliz Luengo, Hugh Lim, Emilia Saiz, Gerald Babel-Sutter, David Miller, Larry Ng, Farah Naz, Geci Karuri-Sebina, Carmen Santana, Carlos Moreno, Christian Bason, Gabriella Gómez-Mont, Sophie Howe, and Bruce Katz.

And also to thank all of you. Let's appreciate everyone. It's impossible to summarise this discussion perfectly without omitting something important, so I am going to give you a personal reflection on what we have heard. I can observe 10 key points.

1. **The global Urban Acceleration**. The time we live in now is critical. The data we reviewed this morning means that this century of the city (1980 to 2080) where we shift from 2.3 to 9.3 bn people living in cities leads us to 10 bn people living in 10,000 cities in our world by 2100. When you think that humankind has been building and rebuilding cities for 10,000 years, this massive urban acceleration within a single century is without precedent. We are a rapidly urbanising species, building a planet of cities. We don't know how to do it. We have to invent it.

   Because we are urbanising towards a 90% threshold over the next 76 years, there are clear implications we must note.

   First, **all global imperatives are now becoming urban and metropolitan challenges**. We must re-equip cities and metropolitan areas for much larger roles in our lives. We cannot live with underpowered cities.

   Second, **the choice is not between whether we get urbanisation or not, but whether that urbanisation is good or bad**. Good urbanisation is planned, resourced, led, connected, and shaped. It respects planetary boundaries and the carrying capacity of our eco-systems. Bad urbanisation is unplanned, un-resourced, accidental, and hap hazard. It destroys our eco-systems and limits our future. Good urbanisation is liveable, safe, productive, and inclusive. Cities magnify and multiple the co-benefits of shared systems and spaces. Bad urbanisation is unhealthy, carbon intensive, congested, segregated, dangerous, and volatile. It makes all our challenges worse.

   Third, the speed of the urban acceleration when coupled with the nature of the challenges we face **creates a profound urgency** that we cannot ignore. Urbanisation is the model

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of settlement our species now employs everywhere. We are accelerating it just at the same time as we recognise the climate and biodiversity emergencies, the challenge of entrenched poverty, and the growth of territorial and resource based conflicts. The mandate for change is massive. We've spoken a lot today of the need to think in the long term, be 'good ancestors', and adopt 'cathedral thinking', in the ways we foster our cities and our planet. We have no real choice but to address this head on.

We discussed the many initiatives and ideas that have been proposed about the future of our cities from National Urban Policies, to the New Urban Agenda, and the work of many multi-national bodies. We live in the century of the cities, but we do not find the policies and agendas are translated into meaningful action fast enough or at the right scale to have a meaningful impact. So we need to ignite a different approach; an urban revolution.

2. **People Centred.** We spoke about the need for this revolution to be people focussed. We see people as the agents of change, not the recipients of it. We need all of the people together, and it needs to be shaped by the lives we can lead to be healthy, fulfilled, and productive.

   We want to work with everyone and to empower large groups of people to take innovative action together. We've highlighted three groups in particular; Women, Children, and Older People. If they lead and shape our cities it will be good for everyone.

3. **Spaces and Places.** There has been much talk about the places and spaces that matter. Starting with individuals, and the space they can enjoy, we also spoken about streets and districts, neighbourhoods and communities, municipalities and whole cities, metropolitan areas, and vast regions of networked cities. We know that urban networks cross national borders and connect people in different continents.

   We follow the real dynamics of places, not the political or administrative maps. We note that this century of the city is leading to new shapes and sizes in where we settle, and how we interact, and where those spaces of flows between people and ideas, capital and experiences, creativity, and culture, take physical form. Almost all of the places that really matter are either smaller or larger than the governance systems that we have. So part of invention agenda is new ways to coordinate and organise the spaces that matter most.

4. **The Basque Country, Biscay, Bilbao.** This meeting could not happen just anywhere, and not all places could convene such a gathering as this. We discussed this morning how the Basque Country, Biscay, and Bilbao provide the essential inspirational setting for our statement of intent. This is the place that has reinvented itself from a backdrop of 1960/70/80s industrial decline, population loss, urban degradation, sustained attack, and political violence. The reinvention process has been hard won. It is a success and is widely recognised. It is credible and creditable.

   But more than that, this is a part of the world that has cherished and fostered its distinctive traditions and ways, its unique language, values, culture, and identity. The Basques are ancient as well as modern.

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They offer a model for multiple communities in many other lands who wish to pursue a form of progressive and generous indigeneity, contained within a commitment to participatory and enriching democracy, fuelled by creativity, pride, and dignity. This is no small contribution. It speaks to deep human yearnings for diversity, recognition, and individualisation; for respect, and for self-determination. It is agency and autonomy. It is enriching for all.

5. **Orientation.** Our focus today has not just been about buildings, infrastructures, utilities, and planning. Important though these are, we have not solely focussed on the pragmatics of cities. Our focus has been much more on the big fabrics of change that underpin and inspire what we need to do. Three ideas appear to me to have shaped our discussion:

- **Nature, Climate, and Bio-Diversity Crisis.** More than any other imperative we are ignited by the need to reverse our path of self-destruction, planetary and eco-system collapse.
- **The Social Contract**. We recognise that people are troubled and anxious about the world they face, and are not satisfied with current leadership, democracy, governments, or capitalism. They are withdrawing their consent to a contract that is broken. It needs to be remade with them.
- **The DNA of Cities**. We know that our century of cities must avoid homogeneity, and enable a diversity of cities to evolve and succeed, based on their unique endowed, inherited, and acquired traits. We also see that the epigenetics of our cities are evolving fast as people who live in the same synchronising cities experience shared shocks and shifts that shape who they are together. We shape our cities and then they shape us.

6. **New Mantras.** The pandemic was a health crisis and financial & economic shock. But it was also an agent of change. In many cities there was a strange combination of both a massive acceleration of digitisation coupled with a new desire to reinvent places for public health and safety. One effect of this was to unleash a set of changes in how our cities work and are organised. Another effect was to reveal hidden depths of social capital that underpins capacity for trust and change.

As we have discussed today, the pandemic can be viewed as the trigger and a catalyst for urban reinvention that we need. It revealed the crises in our cities, and it also offered a moment to start to reinvent them. This involves grasping the opportunities that come from increased agility and hybridity that the pandemic forged and using them to reshape, re-sequence, and resize our cities for a future that is flexible and elastic. Underpinning this agility is social capital, that we must continually refuel.

7. **Repositioning the urban.** Precisely because the pandemic laid bare some of the inadequacies of how our cities have worked heretofore, and because it triggered some behaviour changes in the ways we live, work, travel, and consume, it also gave rise to opportunities to reinvent aspects of urban life. The pandemic and the rise of new behaviours has, to some degree, had a sorting effect.

It has enabled more citizen choice in how we use our cities. One way to summarise this might be to say that our cities are shifting away from narrow conceptions of efficiency because more things can be done effectively on line. This allows cities to embrace important qualities that can't be done in the digital space.

We might summarise these as Habitat, Innovation, & Experience. Habitat is about how we can live more in cities when housing is available, and how we can live with nature in our cities. Innovation is about the forms of value creation that are possible when large numbers of people work together on creative endeavours, and it is about how we experiment with the fabric of the city itself. Experience is about the unique interactions that arise in face to face and face to place domains, under conditions of mass participation. These three lenses begin to address the new ways that can be reinvented for enrichment post pandemic.

8. New tools. We've also noted today that new tools are at our disposal if we are willing to pursue this revolution in urban innovation. There are many new tools associated with how city leaders and citizens are working together on local reinvention projects as we have heard. But there are also three new larger sources of tools that come from beyond City Hall or National Governments.

    The first is the **exponential technologies** we have been discussing today. The role of AI, Digital Twins, Augmented Reality, Facial Recognition, Drones, Cameras, Sensors, and big data, as well the contribution of convergence and climate technologies to our new energy, water, waste, food, and construction systems. These new technologies allow us to do more with less, to optimise the city, and to reduce its unwanted side-effects.

    The second source of new tooling is **intentional capital**. This includes the new modes of money from Sustainable Finance to Climate Finance, Impact Investing, and Green Bonds. The effect of these is to use the costs and shape of money as a deliberate tool to foster social and climate transition. These can be seen to be combine with new forms of responsible capitalism that use corporate and business models to address planetary imperatives, and frequently now include new shared ownership models.

    The third new area of tooling we might call **place leadership** platforms. Increasingly, we see citizens, institutions like universities, hospitals, faith groups, or sports clubs, and the private sector, (especially infrastructure, utilities, and real estate providers) being willing to create new platforms to combine and share the leadership of a place with local and metropolitan governments. This might include a business district in transition, a cultural quarter, an innovation hub, or a health precinct. But it could also easily be civic leadership for a whole city or town, a metropolitan area, or a wider region.

    The critical ingredients are that the sharing of risks and costs, combined with the different assets and skills that each provide, and the forms of capital involved (financial, social, political, territorial, physical) creates a more potent mix that if these sectors act alone. Place leadership involves all actors recognising that the place they address can add or

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subtract value according to its performance, and therefore that all parties who rely on that place should invest together in its success.

9. New Model of Change. Underlying all we have discussed today is a new or different model of change. Although our established models of public governance are important to us, and they enshrine how democratic systems work in the 21st century, these systems are slow to adapt to urgent imperatives, are incremental in their nature, and do not easily transfer power to the citizens or to the local sphere. These systems involve petitioning and lobbying for change and investment, within a governmental system that is not designed for either urgency, innovation, or integrated action across sectors and domains.

    Our model of change is different. It involves creating the space for multiple experiments, led by citizens and their partners, to be mounted. The intention is to pioneer and innovate with new ways of doing things in an environment where critical thinking, risk taking, and radical change is embraced. This approach can work at multiple scales, and it finds its full force when successful initiatives are rapidly expanded, adapted, adopted, or replicated across a city or between multiple cities. This model of change is not a policy model, it is an innovation model that requires initiation with ideas and creativity, where policy can then follow and enhance.

10. Intentionality. For all of these reasons today has been a good day. One reason it has been good is because we have had a clear focus, and we are working together on three inter-connected intentional initiatives.

    Today we have launched a **proposed manifesto for the revolution in urban innovation**. This document outlines many of the ideas we have discussed together and the examples that have been cited.

    This sits alongside the announcement of **The Bay Awards for Urban Vision** that will bring us back together in October to highlight, spotlight, and floodlight the many examples of urban innovation that we want to ignite and scale.

    Alongside this we seek to build a community of communities, and a network of networks, so that we can together to form an active fabric or **connected partners**, to grow this revolution street by street, and city by city.