

# COPENHAGEN AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

# 10 PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE CITY GOVERNANCE

**1 REDISCOVER THE CITY 2 REDEFINE CITY  
VALUE 3 INVOLVE EVERYDAY EXPERTS  
4 BREAK DOWN SILOS 5 REDISTRIBUTE URBAN  
DECISION MAKING 6 DE-DESIGN URBAN  
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CHAOS, CRISIS AND CHANGE 10 ENCOURAGE  
PASSION IN URBAN LEADERSHIP**

# “CITIES ARE THE CONVENIENT REMEDY TO THE INCONVENIENT TRUTH”

JOHN NORDQUIST, CONGRESS FOR THE NEW URBANISM, CHICAGO

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## COPENHAGEN AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

Global climate change confronts our cities with massive challenges that radically question the way we have planned, governed and used our cities so far. Our cities have become the main driving force in the global economy. Yet the creation of wealth has its price. Almost 80% of all CO<sub>2</sub> emissions are generated from urban activities, which make cities the biggest contributors to global warming.

Today, most cities are the product of a development process that favours effectiveness, production and human consumption over environmental needs. The frightening results of this mind-set are becoming apparent to us today. It is no longer possible to overlook the fact that climate changes are affecting the life of urban dwellers both locally and on a global scale.

Cities everywhere face a common dilemma: how best to respond to environmental challenges through a reduction in emissions while at the same time remaining competitive in a globalised economy.

The answer is to be found in the development of the sustainable city.

### **The Sustainable City**

By nature, cities are environmentally friendly because they concentrate populations, and reduce the amount of energy needed for heating and transport of goods and people. But so far we have not succeeded in creating environmentally sustainable cities, as we have failed to understand the complexity of the urban challenges that we face.

We have become used to thinking and acting fragmentally: rather than consulting health experts, geographers and anthropologists, city officials have focused on the technical design of buildings and urban areas. This has resulted in the construction of cities that fail to meet the most basic needs necessary to secure future liveability.

Current urban development ignores the fact that we need cities to be environmentally, socially and economically sustainable at the same time. Climate change should not only to be seen as an environmental issue, but as much an issue of growing poverty, rising inequity and lack of education.

The need to understand cities from this interrelated perspective is confirmed by the growing number of problems caused by climate change, extensive globalisation and increasing urbanisation happening simultaneously. Besides putting great pressure on the environment and public utilities, this development leads to fewer resources, growing social discrepancy, rising crime rates, lack of affordable housing and a rise in chronic diseases – to mention just some of the challenges facing our cities on a global scale.

These challenges must be met within city borders. As well as the city causing these challenges, we need to look into how the city can solve them. Therefore, we need to optimise and concentrate all our efforts into developing and strengthening the sustainable city.

# 10 PRINCIPLES FOR SUSTAINABLE CITY GOVERNANCE

To secure our urban future, we need quick action. Thus, we have asked 50 of the world's most important urban experts to tell us what it will take to create sustainable cities. Representing all parts of the world and from a wide range of disciplines, they all agree that to make cities sustainable we need a radical change of mindset, new strategies, and – finally, but crucially – new governance models to support development and foster a new generation of urban leadership.

These statements and observations have been distilled into the following 10 principles for future sustainable governance, aimed at existing as well as future urban residents, academics, professionals and leaders – all with the aim of encouraging and strengthening the development of sustainable cities:

**1 REDISCOVER THE CITY.** We need a radical change of mindset: A city is much more than a consumption exhaust. It must become a self-sustaining organism – complementary to nature, rather than hostile opposition.

**2 REDEFINE CITY VALUE.** A sustainable city depends on the attitude and behaviour of each urban individual and user. We must encourage a sense of citizenship and individual responsibility towards sustainable values rather than plain consumerism.

**3 INVOLVE EVERYDAY EXPERTS.** Sustainable cities are participatory cities. We must encourage user-driven self-governance. Through new partnerships between city users, a common understanding of the sustainable city must be developed and initiatives agreed upon.

**4 BREAK DOWN SILOS.** Sustainable city planning is inherently multidisciplinary. Therefore, old administrative structures should be abandoned in favour of innovative, cross-sector cooperation.

**5 REDISTRIBUTE URBAN DECISION-MAKING.** Environmental changes do not respect city borders. Vertical cooperation between local, national and international public institutions is crucial to sustainable city planning.

**6 DE-DESIGN URBAN PLANNING.** City planning should be people centred, rather than design centred. A city is a constantly evolving organism, and city planning must take a broader perspective than the design of individual buildings.

**7 PROMOTE CORPORATE URBAN RESPONSIBILITY.** Sustainable cities and successful commerce are interdependent. Companies must be considered stakeholders and invited to participate in city planning and assume responsibility for urban sustainability.

**8 GO GLOBAL.** Climate change is a global challenge. Global cooperation on the development of environmental technologies is essential, and a joint effort to solve the massive problems of the developing world's cities is urgently required.

**9 EMBRACE CHAOS, CRISIS AND CHANGE.** A sustainable city must be adaptable to unexpected change. The ability to both fight current and future climate change is crucial. Flexible governance and an innovative mindset to overcome crisis is vital.

**10 ENCOURAGE PASSION IN URBAN LEADERSHIP.** More will be expected of urban leaders of the future. They must be able to manage the complex interconnection of new institutions and partnerships. A mix of business management, political leadership and creativity is demanded from the future generation of urban leaders.

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# 1 REDISCOVER THE CITY

WE NEED TO REDISCOVER OUR CITIES and start thinking of them as the solution to the global challenges that we face. As the economic drivers of our societies, our cities concentrate people, production, transport and consumption, and thereby also encapsulate most of the challenges we are facing today. Our cities are the main cause of the current threats to our physical environment, our failing health standards and our economic and social problems. Yet our cities also hold the key to the sustainable solutions we are seeking to respond to these challenges.

**A NEW MINDSET.** To unleash the potential that our cities hold to become drivers of sustainability, we must first rediscover our urban environments. A radical new mindset is needed to replace the paradigms of the industrial age. We must reject the idea of the city as an accommodating outlet for consumption. Instead, we must look at the city as an organism dependent on its surroundings. The city is not an infinite pool of resources. It is an integral part of the environment. We must acknowledge that our behaviour affects our surroundings both locally and globally, and because we live and work in the city, we are part of the problem and the solution. We must learn to cope with these challenges by radically changing the way we understand the city and citizenship, and subsequently change our behaviour to become sustainable city users.

**HOLISTIC APPROACH.** First of all, we must understand that our cities are holistic and organic systems, and that the challenges we are facing are interconnected. Climate change is not only an environmental issue that can be solved through the implementation of new technologies, but as much a challenge of health care, wealth distribution and access to education. If we are to find sustainable solutions to all of these challenges, we must take a holistic approach, address different needs simultaneously and keep in mind the limited economic, social and environmental resources available to us.

**BACK TO NATURE.** An integral part of a holistic approach is to recognise that cities should function in harmony with nature rather than in opposition to it. Cities are potentially environ-

mentally friendly, as they have the capacity to become self-sustaining and energy producing instead of energy consuming. To realise this potential, we must develop the concept of bringing the city back to nature, create awareness of the need for resource reduction and motivate city users to change their behaviour and consumption patterns. Going back to nature is also about recognizing the importance of the city's rural surroundings, making sure that neighbouring areas can support the city with food and other resources necessary for the city to become more self-sufficient.

“We tend to think that nature and cities are antithetical to each other. To create sustainable cities, we have got to overcome that way of thinking.”

*Timothy Beatley, Professor, School of Architecture, University of Virginia*

**SOLUTION APPROACH.** While we are aware of the challenges facing our cities, it can be difficult to understand that the solutions to these challenges lie within the cities themselves. As long as we view our cities as sources of environmental, social and health hazards and continue to see urbanisation as a problem, we block our path to finding solutions. We need to demonstrate how the city can become a driver of sustainability, by encouraging and supporting the development of forward thinking initiatives that can be integrated into the existing city and urban surroundings.

# 2 REDEFINE CITY VALUE

**HIGH QUALITY OF LIFE** and sustainable living are dependent on each other. Urban life must attract residents, tourists, investors, students, companies and cultural events. Yet cities must learn to do this in terms of sustainability, as sustainable city development is also a means to uphold and improve urban quality of life.

**SUSTAINABLE VALUES.** Sustainable city values encompass the quality of recreational, working, housing, shopping and eating environments, as well as the quality of such resources as air and water. Sustainable city values are socially, economically and environmentally inclusive. If a city is to be truly sustainable, all of its citizens must have access to a decent standard of living. Anything less can create social tension and economic instability, thereby threatening the quality of life for all city users.

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**“We need to create cities keeping the citizens and their needs in mind. If we can make the city a place that is attractive and works for local residents then the tourists will also come, attracted by the image of a high quality of life.”**

*Barbara Southworth, Director, City Spatial Development, City of Cape Town*

**GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS WITH A NEW PERSPECTIVE.** Today, a city's value is more often defined quantitatively rather than qualitatively. Economic performance and other quantitative measures are applicable to sustainable city values, but the definition and valuation of quality of life must be approached differently. We must recognise that high quality of life is just as important to a city's global competitiveness as economic performance, and that the two are inter-connected. If cities are attractive to live and work in, they will also become attractive to business life and investors and tourists. Therefore, we

must investigate what makes life worth living in a city. What is the value of the city to its various stakeholders and how can we accommodate this in city planning?

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**“We do not really see or hear or feel the city. We always come up with technical solutions, which don't deal with the emotional landscape of people's minds.”**

*Charles Landry, Director, COMEDIA, United Kingdom*

**HUMAN VALUE.** The sustainable city must be attractive to its users. City planners must recognise that citizens and city users are the city's primary assets. The sustainable city is totally dependent on the behaviour of its users: it is through responsible human behaviour and interaction that a sustainable environment is created. If city users do not take responsibility for consuming, producing and living in a sustainable way, the sustainable city is doomed. Therefore, city planners must encourage and reward sustainable behaviour. It must be made very clear to city users that what they do and how they behave makes a difference.

**SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY.** The incentive structures needed to motivate and support sustainable behaviour should rely on social values, which is at odds with the individualisation of city life so common today. We must begin to think as citizens, and understand that we have a responsibility towards the community. Social communities can act as promoters of sustainable living and motivate a change of behaviour in the individual. The citizens least likely to have the resources to take action towards sustainable living will benefit from the social momentum generated in the inclusive community.

# 3 INVOLVE EVERYDAY EXPERTS

INVOLVING CITY USERS IN CITY PLANNING is crucial to urban sustainable development. We must encourage participatory citizenship, because the city users are the real experts on city life. Nobody knows more about commuter needs than the bus driver. The real expert on the activities taking place in public squares is the street vendor or outdoor performance artist. The day-to-day experience of these ‘city experts’ is critical if we are to gain a better, in-depth understanding of how cities work.

**REDEFINE PARTICIPATORY CITIZENSHIP.** Involving city users in sustainable urban planning is a major organisational challenge. It requires a whole new perspective on who the real experts are. Providing better access to public hearings and ensuring that decision-making processes are more transparent are important for the development of sustainable cities. As is the need to identify and involve specific citizens as knowledge partners according to the way they make use of the city.

**PUBLIC LEGITIMACY.** Public hearings on specific building projects – currently the main feature of ‘citizen participation’ – risk being overrun by ‘the usual suspects’ – activists who do not really represent the majority in all its diversity. Citizen participation must still involve these ‘active citizens’, but also reach out to people who would not normally take part of their own accord. In this sense, citizen participation can also be used as a tool to support democratisation in broader terms, in the effort of ensuring that scarce resources are distributed more equally.

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**“We need to involve real people no matter their social status, so that they are not only inspired, but empowered to do something.”**

*Craig Williams, Founder, Architects without Borders*

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**CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT:** Participatory citizenship also means working to ensure people support overall sustainability objectives. This encourages and motivates them to alter their behaviour and attitudes. If we are to reduce carbon dioxide emissions, we have to provide more public transport, as well as encourage and motivate people to switch from using their cars to taking the tram, train or bus. To help people reduce their energy consumption, we must give them incentives to turn down air conditioners, turn down the heat and turn off unnecessary appliances and lights. New approaches are needed to make this happen. Internet access and new technologies provide new ways for the general public to get more deeply involved in the planning process.

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**“The citizens are just as important as a strong mayor.”**

*Wolfgang Nowak, Director, Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft, Berlin*

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We need to get city users more involved in the future of their cities. Engagement must be strengthened through dialogue and knowledge exchange, facilitated through activities that strengthen the interaction of citizens, together with commissions and community networks, where city users participate as city experts. We must encourage citizens to make use of their democratic rights, thereby acknowledging and supporting social movements that promote this kind of understanding and engagement. A bottom-up, user-driven approach is required if we are to ensure maximum involvement and long-term commitment.

# 4 BREAK DOWN SILOS

THERE IS NO SINGLE SOLUTION to the emerging urban challenges, but a mix of solutions. To solve environmental challenges we need to address the issue of affordable housing in the city centre, thus reducing transport times and CO<sub>2</sub>-emission. And when we plan for new public infrastructure it is not only a question of efficiency, but to make sure that cycling and walking is just as easy as driving, giving city users access to physical activity and thereby reducing the risk of chronic diseases.

Since the urban challenges are often new to us and deeply interrelated, we need to be creative and work together and use our shared wisdom to identify, develop and implement radically new solutions. This kind of joint effort requires a wide range of knowledge experts as well as practitioners from many different and complementary disciplines.

Today, the awareness of the need for cross-disciplinary thinking is growing and we are witnessing interesting policy moves that challenge traditional city administration. More cities are working to include a broader range of disciplines through think tanks and open hearings. Still, more initiatives are needed.

**AN INSTITUTIONAL REFORM.** To create sustainable cities, we need to break down silos and abandon the traditional organisation of city administrations that builds upon isolated fields of knowledge and replace these with new and flexible structures that support joint efforts across administrative sectors and academic disciplines. We have to look at urban development from every possible angle, including health and transport services, environmental units, working environments, recreational services and economics. This requires project-based units and working groups that bring together planners, architects, technical and administrative staff from different sectors to tackle both large-scale projects and narrowly defined tasks. We also need to have incentives and training that encourage such people to work together.

**CITY-PLANNING AS A HOLISTIC PROJECT.** To break down silos is not only a question of re-organization, but also a change of

mindset and the building of a shared understanding. Today, many 'green building'-projects have been initiated by the building sector. But what good is it to build an environmentally friendly house, if it takes you one hour by car to get there from work? The key to designing and building sustainable cities lies in the understanding of fundamental interrelatedness of all the urban challenges we face. This means addressing city planning as a holistic, interdisciplinary project.

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**“By using the existing institutional structure, we will not be able to resolve the climate issues, the local environmental issues or even the economic issues. To solve these problems we need a major institutional reform.”**

*Eric Britton, Founding Director, The Commons, Paris*

**EDUCATION.** Successful cross-disciplinary and cross-sector cooperation requires training city planners in interdisciplinary thinking as early as possible. Universities and schools must be given more possibilities to bring together students from different disciplines to solve concrete problems. We also have to introduce current generations of public servants and city planners to this new school of thought. Finally, it is crucial to convince politicians and decision-makers that the urban challenges that we all face can only be dealt with effectively via extensive institutional reform and well-informed leadership that encourages people to work together.

# 5 REDISTRIBUTE URBAN DECISION MAKING

POLLUTION AND CARBON DIOXIDE EMISSIONS are no respecters of geographical or administrative borders. Anything that takes place in one city, country or region inevitably affects its immediate surroundings – and often a whole continent or the entire world. Consequently, the results of any city's decisions about sustainability very much depend on support from the surrounding areas. To achieve the best results, neighbouring regions also need to reduce pollution and encourage recycling. It is also important to encourage surrounding communities to supply the foods and other resources necessary to sustain the long-term viability of cities.

**NEW DECISION-MAKING PROCESSES.** No city administration can meet the growing urban challenges on its own. The economy, the environment and the social situation are interrelated and interwoven, and any sustainable city therefore needs to employ new processes to make sure that decisions made by institutions and administrative units are carefully coordinated. This in turn requires new administrative frameworks to support urban development at a metropolitan level, covering a wide geographical area.

“The different governmental levels must act as good examples to each other and work together to make the city sustainable. There is no point in one local government reducing its carbon footprint if the rest of the city doesn't follow suit.”

*Peter Newman, Director, Institute for Sustainability and Technology Policy, Murdoch University, Perth*

We must provide better communication between central and local government, as well as ensure broad commitment towards the objectives of sustainable planning. An important

task of any new urban development body is therefore to develop and strengthen a city's relations with the surrounding areas through business partnerships, investments, collaborative planning and joint strategy formulation.

“We need more coordinated action between central government, the cities and the municipality.”

*Omar Maani, Mayor, The City of Amman*

**LOCAL-NATIONAL COORDINATION.** A new metropolitan governance system must bring together local and national decision-making bodies to coordinate activities and safeguard different interests, as well as to ensure the viability of long-term investments and strategies. We must connect governance structures vertically without adding to existing bureaucracy. We should focus on the power to take decisions that provide long-term solutions to sustainable development, with effective implementation of the decisions made.

Strong relations between different levels of government will help the effective distribution of know-how and skills. This is especially crucial for sustainable urban development in the developing world, where the key resources are normally concentrated in the major urban areas and capital cities. In order to bring about sustainable development at all levels, we must make sure that these resources are more evenly distributed.

**A SHARED STRATEGY.** The competitive advantage of cities will rely more and more on a city's organisational capacity and its ability to deal with conflicting interests. Any new metropolitan governance system must therefore build upon a large-scale vision and strategy that also takes the needs of the local regions into account. It must also be fully capable of allocating a limited amount of resources so that they support the well-being of the public in general.

# 6 DE-DESIGN URBAN PLANNING

BUILDINGS AND URBAN LANDSCAPES are fundamental in the creation of liveable and competitive cities and urban environments that attract residents, visitors and investments. Yet architecture and design that focus narrowly on aesthetics and buildings as isolated bodies fall short of the requirements for sustainable city development. Many urban planners, architects, designers and engineers have acknowledged this, and their answer has laid the foundations for the creation of the energy self-sufficient 'green building'.

**FULFILLING POTENTIAL.** Yet fulfilling the full potential of architecture and design in sustainable city development requires even more 'out of the box' thinking. We need to rethink conventional notions about design and architectural practice, making sustainability a basic driver in all future architecture and design development.

'De-designing' city planning is about focusing on the people and the environment, and on processes rather than on the buildings and design itself. Sustainable design is fundamentally 'green', but it should also actively encourage and motivate sustainable behaviour. This makes it crucial to reframe the goals and roles of designers and architects.

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**"It seems we have to reassess our role as designers – the expectations for design solutions need to be broader and include a much more complex vision for urban development."**

*John Peterson, Founder, Public Architecture, San Francisco*

**MOTIVATING SUSTAINABLE LIVING.** The new objectives for designers and city planners are to actively encourage sustainable urban living via the design of buildings and city landscapes. If new apartment blocks were built with an under-

ground parking lot rather than with access to a nearby metro station or bus stop, why would commuters skip the car to work?

When planning a new building site, architects and designers must get together with transport planners, politicians, the business community and experts on health, the environment and other fields to integrate the many aspects of living, working, eating and recreation that motivate a sustainable lifestyle. They must learn to take a much wider perspective, choosing to design entire city landscapes, rather than individual buildings alone. We must remember that the design of a building has a critical impact on its surroundings, with social, environmental and economic implications for its inhabitants and users.

**CITIZEN-CENTRED DESIGN.** To encourage and support sustainable design processes, we need to redefine the role of designers and the criteria we use for evaluating the success of their work. We must avoid 'over-designing', where design takes priority over human needs. Instead, design should contribute to the humanity of cities. We need to put resources into making buildings and city landscapes liveable – also for citizens who are less prosperous.

Involving citizens in the development of sustainable design is crucial to get their direct input about what would motivate them to move from passive to active citizenship. We need design and architecture to be based on the values of city's citizens – it is people who make a city, not the city's buildings.

# PROMOTE CORPORATE URBAN RESPONSIBILITY

CITIES ACCOUNT FOR 80 PER CENT of all carbon dioxide emissions worldwide. In the US, analyses show that the carbon footprint of city dwellers is actually relatively small. It is private industry that owns up to 90 per cent of an entire city's buildings, and heating, cooling and powering office space alone are responsible for almost 40 per cent of all carbon dioxide emissions – a figure that does not include the production and transport of goods and people.

**A KEY STAKEHOLDER.** Industrial activities and business life have a huge impact on the climate and therefore play a critical role in future sustainable city development. A commitment from commerce to a shared vision and action plan is crucial. These fundamental premises challenge traditional dichotomist thinking within both the private and public sectors. We have to ensure that the private sector actively and responsibly takes part in sustainable planning, and that the public sector works with the private sector via partnerships and cooperation, rather than via rules and regulations. Such partnerships must be transparent and accountable to other city stakeholders, and based on a new, shared understanding. We need to focus on the city as a pool of limited resources that must be managed carefully and effectively, with the entire city's long-term sustainable bottom line in mind.

“If you just say: ‘Stop polluting’, nothing will happen. But if you create a market for sustainable behaviour, businesses will see the potential and then take action.”

*Chris Steins, Director, Urban Insight, Los Angeles*

**SELF-INTEREST IN CORPORATE URBAN RESPONSIBILITY.** For most companies and industries, attracting a critical mass in terms of a workforce is crucial to survive global competition. This means the private sector has a natural self-interest in contributing to improved quality of life, and is heavily

dependent on the city's ability to provide affordable housing, accessible infrastructure and good social, recreational and educational services.

“We are experiencing a convergence of public and private interests. The general public is dependent on a thriving private sector and the private sector needs well-organised cities to survive.”

*Leo van den Berg, Director, European Institute for Comparative Urban Research, Rotterdam*

**A WIN-WIN SITUATION.** Bringing together the interests of a city's business life and public interests is a solution to the challenges facing both sectors. In future sustainable city development, the private sector should be involved not as a philanthropic contributor, but as a business partner and key stakeholder at a long-term, strategic level. Private sector commitment to the objective of sustainable development is crucial to the effective implementation of sustainable city planning. Companies in the private sector must feel they are a part of the decision making process concerning future city development, and that they have a shared responsibility for the outcome. The public and private sectors must develop a joint ‘urban code of conduct’ with a sustainable, holistic objective.

**GREEN INCENTIVES.** To motivate corporate urban responsibility, we must build a functional framework of green incentives that reflect market demands and build on market mechanisms. There must be public investment in developing the clean-tech solutions needed to reduce emissions. Urban corporate responsibility must be encouraged by making it profitable for companies to engage in sustainable city development, with rewards such as tax reductions, cheap loans and the fast-track administration of green building initiatives.



# GO GLOBAL FOR REAL

THERE ARE STRIKING SIMILARITIES in the urban challenges being experienced worldwide. Although the degree may vary, the character, urgency and unfamiliarity of these challenges are remarkably consistent. Cities and urban regions – regardless of their size, location, wealth and administrative systems – face common problems and challenges to sustainable city development. The global impact of climate change has made us realise that these challenges are interrelated. Decisions taken in one major city on resource usage, housing and infrastructure affect a larger metropolitan area, and probably also have a social, economic or environmental impact on the rest of the world.

**GLOBAL PARTNERSHIPS.** Given this scenario, the need for creating shared visions and new global networks involving urban areas is obvious. The number of urban networks and international initiatives is increasing rapidly: officials from all over the world have finally acknowledged the importance of global partnerships. However, the majority of these partnerships are founded solely with knowledge-sharing in mind, rather than aiming for radical changes in patterns of action. Few of them commit the participants to specific goals, and even fewer include cities located in the developing world, where the environmental, social and economic challenges are most extensive and pose a threat to us all.

New kinds of global partnerships between cities that face similar challenges are therefore needed. These must focus on developing strategies for concrete action that provide solutions to these challenges, and commit the participants to implementing such solutions on a global scale.

**GLOBAL COMPETITIVENESS.** New partnership structures between cities must build upon trust and commitment, as well as an acceptance that cooperation is more important than promoting individual interests. This contradicts the current competitive mindset. Instead of succeeding at the expense of others, the cities that will succeed in the future will be the cities that are capable of cooperating and coordinating action and efforts with other cities. This strategy will not only prove successful in overcoming urban challenges

associated with environmental threats, it will also provide economic advantages. This is because developing and implementing new technologies products and organisational structures require substantial resources. If the investments needed for these projects can be shared in international partnerships, more cities and urban regions will have access to measures that would otherwise be beyond their financial means.

**GLOBAL SUSTAINABLE RESPONSIBILITY.** Many emerging urban challenges have a global impact, but some places are exposed to particular risks because of their location and/or lack of resources for tackling environmental and social challenges. This is the case for most countries in the developing world, where the demand for finding fundamental new ways for fighting poverty and eradicating of social inequity is more crucial than ever before.

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**“I think much can be done if it is done in coordination between cities.”**

*José Forjaz, Director, Faculty of Architecture and Physical Planning, University Eduardo Mondlane, Maputo*

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Responsibility for helping prevent these areas from being damaged in a wide range of different ways lies with the urban global community as a whole. The global impact of current challenges makes dealing with this situation a question of forward-looking self-interest, rather than traditional philanthropy. Global urban responsibility is not only about allocating the funding needed to ensure the survival of poorer societies – it is also about education, knowledge sharing and assistance in building the democratic structures fundamental to the development of sustainable cities.

# EMBRACE CHAOS, CRISIS AND CHANGE

SUSTAINABLE CITY DEVELOPMENT is not only about the long-term prevention of future threats to our urban way of life, such as natural disasters. It is also about ensuring that our cities can deal with the consequences of such unpredictability. Sudden changes in the world economy or new natural phenomena might happen at any time, and we need to be able to adapt to these changes immediately. Some such crises might even spark off the development of new technologies and products that will help sustain a high quality of life. Tackling this kind of unpredictability requires long-term strategies as well as short-term flexibility and adaptability.

It is, of course, impossible to completely protect our cities against sudden change. However, we can strengthen their renewability to bound back and long-term sustainability by making sure that the mindset and tools available to meet such challenges are at our disposal and capable of doing the job.

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**”Citizens have many different intentions and many different wishes, and you have to try to achieve the best for them all. That’s why we need some more flexible tools and a clear vision for the future.”**

*Joan Busquets, Professor and former Chief Planner, City of Barcelona*

**FLEXIBILITY.** Sustainability strategies need to be flexible in order to deal with the changing needs and demands of city users, as well as unpredictable developments in the world at large. To do this, we need to organise urban structures that enable rapid decisions and immediate action in crisis situations. We also need to continuously adjust and evaluate policies and plans to meet changing needs. An open-minded approach to change means cities have to make room for

experimentation and bottom-up initiatives, supporting and nurturing the innovative ideas that often result from such processes.

**SHORT-TERM GOALS IN LONG-TERM PLANNING.** It is crucial in sustainable city planning that flexibility is not mistaken for chaos or impulsive changes in behaviour. Such planning requires thinking twenty or fifty years ahead rather than five. Long-term visions and master plans are critical, and should be combined with flexibility, so that these plans become easier to implement in the long run. To maintain the energy necessary to carry out these master plans, we need to break them down into short-term goals, creating incentives and making the changes evident to the people involved and the outside world.

**ADAPTABILITY.** We must dispense with the idea that our cities should become ‘climate proof’ and instead channel resources into making them ‘climate adaptive’. Some climate changes, such as rising water levels and temperatures, are unavoidable. We need to adapt to this situation and attempt to prevent further damage. Immediate solutions to these inevitable changes might be as radical as relocating communities and changing construction practices – for example by building in highland areas. On a long-term basis, we need to apply forecasts and risk analyses to city planning so we can understand the challenges our cities will face in 50, 100 or 500 years from now.

**TURNING RISKS INTO OPPORTUNITIES.** Major events like the World Expo or the Olympics have sometimes become drivers for radical development in a country or region. In a similar way, crises can provide cities with new opportunities by challenging existing structures and allowing innovative thinking. We need to turn global risks, such as current climate changes and other environmental and health threats, into opportunities. We can develop solutions by learning from the lessons of the past – not least that these processes of innovation involve cooperation between cities all over the world, with the aim of pooling both past experience and future efforts.

# 10 ENCOURAGE PASSION IN URBAN LEADERSHIP

TO CREATE SUSTAINABLE CITIES, we need to develop a new mindset, institutional frameworks, partnerships and strategies. Yet we also need more highly skilled, courageous and passionate urban leaders to initiate and carry forward this process of development. We need to promote the new class of world leaders. This means politically elected decision makers capable of making sustainability the top priority on the urban agenda. To do this, we must redefine the notion of what it means to be a successful urban leader. These key people must be:

- **PASSIONATE.** People want leaders who care, and whose passion for their city and their job are genuine. Urban leadership must remain political to ensure full accountability. We need leaders willing and able to look twenty-five years ahead instead of just five, because this involves putting the long-term interests of citizens ahead of politics and self-interest. We need to professionalise urban leadership, while at the same time ensuring that passion is the primary driving force.

.....  
**“The city is only as good as the people who lead it. You can have wonderful architects and planners, but if you have lousy leaders, you will not have anything done.”**

*Richard Burdett, Professor, Cities Programme, London School of Economics*

- **CREATIVE AND VISIONARY.** Future urban leaders must be holistic thinkers and capable of grasping how the many different challenges and areas of focus are interconnected. It is important that they can focus on the larger systemic needs, rather than solving problems on a short-term basis. They need to be creative and to appreciate that the emerging urban challenges cannot be solved via traditional administrative practices, but are dependent on the ability to think and act

creatively. Urban leaders need to be visionary to support the development and implementation of innovative solutions. They must take advantage of think tanks and other knowledge-based institutions, as these can provide inspiration and new ideas, enabling urban leaders to become pioneering urban developers.

.....  
**“People want to be led by leaders who care. Even if you do not agree with your mayor, you need to know that he or she wakes up every morning thinking about what can be done for your city.”**

*Carol Coletta, CEO, CEOs for Cities, Chicago*

- **STRONG AND COURAGEOUS.** Although desirable, it is not possible to meet the interests of every single city stakeholder. Some unpopular decisions, such as city car tolls and taxation on waste, can be necessary to reduce carbon dioxide emissions. Some decisions are non-negotiable. In this context, urban leaders must be decisive and able to confront opposing interests. They must have considerable courage and impact to prioritise the long-term interests of the general public.

- **INCLUSIVE.** Resolute leadership must not be confused with big-headedness. Courageous leaders must also listen. They must be committed to participatory leadership and open-source management as a basis for governance. Urban leaders are responsible for developing the institutional structure to support such processes.

- **GOOD ROLE MODELS.** Sustainable cities are highly dependent on the behaviour of their residents. Their leaders must be willing and able to set a good example. They must believe in the cause of sustainability and be good role models, leading a lifestyle that encourages and motivates citizens.

# COPENHAGEN AGENDA FOR SUSTAINABLE CITIES

OUR CITIES ARE THE KEY to a sustainable future. For this reason, the Danish foundation Realdania have asked the Scandinavian think tank Monday Morning to create the Copenhagen Agenda for Sustainable Cities initiative.

The initiative is supported by the Danish Minister of the Environment, Connie Hedegaard, who sees this as a good opportunity for putting cities at the top of the global environmental agenda.

Over half the world's population – more than 3 billion people – now live in urban environments, making our cities the key to a sustainable future. This demands new approaches to how we understand, plan, build and use our cities, so that we can give city users better access to a sustainable lifestyle.

To learn more about what this involves, we have asked 50 of the world's most influential urban experts to share their thoughts about the key challenges facing urban leaders and to suggest a way forward.

Representing all parts of the world and a wide range of disciplines, these experts agree that to make our cities sustain-

able, we need a radical change of mindset, new planning strategies and new methods of governance to support development and foster a new generation of urban leadership.

The 10 principles for sustainable urban governance presented in this publication are the result of their considerations.

## Next step

Copenhagen Agenda for Sustainable Cities was established to lay down an agenda for creating the sustainable city. To do this, the initiators will continue to work together with relevant national and international stakeholders to ensure that the 10 principles are put into action. Physical projects, exhibitions and initiatives that aim to gather and distribute international best practice are among the activities included in this effort.

The results will be presented ahead of the UN Climate Summit to take place in Copenhagen in 2009.

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Mondaymorning



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