

# MASSIVE SMALL DECLARATION\*

## The urban antidote to bigness

[\*Beta Version: April 2015]

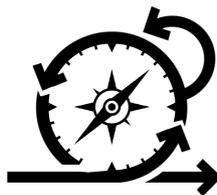
**These declarations define and govern the Massive Small Project. They outline the thinking, principles and behaviours needed to meet the future challenges of urban society. They are mutually reinforcing: each point should not be considered in isolation to the others. They will evolve as new challenges arise.**



### **A NEW COLLABORATION**

**Putting democracy back into urbanism**

Governments alone cannot effectively tackle the increasingly complex problems of rapid urbanisation. We must mobilise people's latent creativity, harnessing the collective power of many small ideas and actions to make a big difference. To release this potential, we must trust people to do the right thing. By adapting their environments to their needs, people form the building blocks of urban society – our neighbourhoods, districts and quarters. Using simple rules, essential conditions and enabling leadership, governments can show the way. We need to renegotiate the social contract between government and its citizens – between top-down and bottom-up systems, developing more democratic processes that will foster an open and collaborative relationship.



### **RADICAL INCREMENTALISM**

**Managing in the present**

In an uncertain future, we must stop fixating on the visual form of the city and specific imposed end states. Rather, we need a clear vision of our goals. We will achieve these by focusing on catalysts and small beginnings, intervening in a precisely targeted way that will stimulate growth and change. Our approach to urban governance should involve rapid and continuous feedback loops. This feedback will inform, alter and accelerate our next actions. This is iterative and adaptive learning – one gains knowledge along the way that affects future decisions.



## **FREEDOM WITHIN CONSTRAINTS**

**Limiting choice to create infinite possibilities**

We must define clear and simple boundaries within which people are free to organise and improvise. This means providing the enabling conditions within which endless potentials emerge. Structured choices enable the growth of highly responsive environments and provide a place's inhabitants with a full progression in life. Our top-down urban planning, design and delivery systems must evolve to offer a common platform with an equitable framework of choices - design options, procurement routes and entry levels to the system - for the individual, collective or institutional builder. We advocate a range of defaults and catalysts for urban change to help this process.



## **EVOLUTION NOT REVOLUTION**

**Small changes make a big difference**

We must rediscover the art and process of urban evolution, harnessing the collective power of people and unleashing the potential of billions of bottom-up actions. We do not need to start again – we just need to begin balancing the roles and responsibilities of all people, building on their strengths. In some instances this means a far greater involvement by governments. In others cases, it means some simplification and streamlining to allow people to take greater responsibility in the system. Above all this must never justify unbridled laissez-faire approaches and unprincipled deregulation.



## **COLLECTIVE WISDOM**

**Smart citizens make smart cities**

Data and technology should augment human intelligence, not seek to replace it. We must trust intuitive wisdom, avoiding the twin traps of reductionism and determinism. We must see the urban system as a network of interrelated spectrums, not polarities. We must recognise the city as a constantly changing organism, not a mechanistic model capable of highly processed control. Rather than seeking reassuring ideologies and absolutes, we should rely on collective intelligence to find our 'timeless way of building'.



## **ENABLING LEADERSHIP**

**From command-and-control to facilitation**

We must challenge and reform the rigid command-and-control systems that inhibit people's ability to adapt their place to their needs. This depends on new forms of leadership that can work in the interface between top-down and bottom-up systems. A new generation of civic leaders and professionals must see their responsibility as agents of urban change, building social capital and promoting self-organisation at every opportunity. In the public sphere, responsibility and accountability must be devolved to the lowest levels - fundamentally changing the scope and purpose of practice from being reactive to becoming strategic enablers.



## **A CODE OF ETHICS**

**Responsibility to your charge**

True professionalism and civic leadership must be built on trust and commitment to do the right thing. Like any calling that fundamentally affects the lives of others, any member of the urban professions, any elected official and anyone in a position of authority in the city must be bound by commonly accepted behaviours. In time this should be defined by the collective creation of code of ethics equivalent to the medical profession's Hippocratic Oath or its Declaration of Geneva. In signing up to these principles, they accept their duty and responsibility to the present and future well-being of the inhabitants of the city they have charge over.



## **A COMMON PLATFORM**

**Rational discourse based on shared understanding**

We advocate a common language for collaborative knowledge sharing and joint action by all people in the system. This provides a basis for cross-sectoral collaboration between all the urban professions and academia; between civic leaders and their agencies; and between active citizens and interest groups. Using this shared language, we must promote openness, shared working and joint ownership of ideas and solutions across the sectors.



## **A WHOLE-WORLD VIEW**

### **Towards urban viability and resilience**

We understand that the total human habitat exists as a dependent sub-system of the environment. It cannot be isolated from the natural habitat. Accordingly we must build the foundations for viable urban life and a responsible urban society that takes us to a point where we are no longer destabilising this encompassing system. In doing so, we must not be caught up in a narrow, prohibitive top-down view of the problem but rather we must see the relationship between urban interventions and the global system. Enabling people to control their own habitat is an essential part of building the resilience that will be needed as we enter a period where global issues are increasingly felt locally.



## **OPEN TO CHALLENGE**

### **Operating in the sweet spot of creativity**

We must never allow our thinking to freeze into a static doctrine. No segmented group or individual can possess the complete view needed for working with complexity. Accordingly our thinking is structured to avoid the danger of group-think and the myth of the single hero. Our theory is compatible with and fosters diversity, complexity and change, makes use of conflict and paradox constructively, and embeds self-analysis and correction at its very core by always being open to challenge. It freely treads the fine line between chaos and order – the place where innovation flourishes and we leverage the power of complex systems. Our theory embraces feedback from different sources, integrating new perspectives, enhancing itself over time. It never parts from the reality of the city and people's experience of it. The focus is always praxis: where theory meets practice.

**This declaration is endorsed by: (to be confirmed)**

Rob Adams, Monica Albonico, Christopher Alexander, Mike Batty, Alan Baxter, Kees Christiaanse, Kelvin Campbell, Julio D'Avila, Toni Griffin, John Habraken, Rod Hackney, Nabeel Hamdi, Inderpaul Johar, Tia Kansara, Julia King, Michael Mehaffy, Amira Osman, Allesandra Orofino, Klaus Overmeyer, Jennifer Pahlka, Laura Petrella, Edgar Pieterse, Himanshu Parikh, Alan Penn, Karl-Henrik Robert, Kristien Ring, Jason Roberts, Judith Rodin, Ananya Roy, Vicky Richardson, Saskia Sassen, Matthew Taylor, Jeremy Till, John Turner, Vanessa Watson, Remko Zuidema

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#### NOTES\*

1. This constitution is the beta version. It is offered for challenge, comment and commitment.
2. The constitution will be published online to galvanise support from the widest possible group. The names of all those who further endorse the principles will be listed on the Massive Small website [www.massivesmall.com](http://www.massivesmall.com)