UNLOCKING SUSTAINABLE CITIES: A BRIEF MANIFESTO FOR REAL CHANGE

*The Car-free City*

1. The first pillar of this manifesto, car free cities, requires committing to significantly moving away from private motorised vehicles, and dedicating less space to them.
2. To ensure a smooth transition, workable, extensive and affordable alternatives have to be powered up before a broad power down of car infrastructure occurs.
3. The immediate mass roll out of small steps towards car free cities will be crucial; city wide very low emission zones, prioritising road safety, shifts to zero-emission vehicles and car-lite urban design that prioritise walking, cycling and the many forms of zero emission rapid transit such as trolley buses, trams, light rail, subways and street cars.
4. Brave decisions to reallocate infrastructure dedicated to private vehicles including highways, car parks and retail malls are urgently required on a mass scale.
5. Lock in to future options around driverless cars need to be avoided as they do not shift cities away from car culture.
6. Radical rezoning will need to be undertaken through a reorientation of the planning system as well as primary legislation, and a new approach to weaving together work, food, leisure and home environments in ways that directly eliminates the need for cars.
7. Subsidies and research grants locked up in supporting fossil fuel based private vehicles need to be rapidly withdrawn and redirected at unlocking car free urban mobility options.
8. Coalitions of citizens and innovators need to take the lead and push the agenda to show what is possible to reduce car dependency through changes in daily mobility practices.
9. Municipalities will still play a central role especially in terms of starting city owned transit systems that can avoid lock in to high value, socially uneven corporate led options.
10. There needs to be a focus on the wider issue of urban mobility, connectivity and sharing between multiple mobility options rather than backing single likely future winners.
11. Creating socially just patterns of urban mobility is essential, especially in terms of locking down historic patterns of transport injustices and creating very broad participation in the design of mobility systems.
12. Shifts in advertising and marketing are required to create new values and social stimuli that downplay car culture and celebrate sustainable mobility.
13. Given the increasingly deadly consequences of lock-in to urban car use, citizen organising of, for example, car free events, billboard subvertising or impromptu road closures will be crucial in highlighting priorities for change.

*The Post-carbon City*

1. The second pillar, the post-carbon city, requires holistic and interconnected action and ideas across a broad range of areas: infrastructure, work, governance, culture, education leisure, mobility, health.
2. Municipalities will play a key role in setting ambitious net zero carbon and renewable energy plans, and they will require significant new powers to prohibit polluting and climate unsafe activities.
3. City owned entities need to lead the way in creating and distributing affordable, locally generated green energy.
4. All new neighbourhood planning needs to reorienting around zero carbon living arrangements, designing out energy use and designing in low impact travel, work and leisure options.
5. Primary legislation will be required to break up the brown fuel sector.
6. A huge subsidy transfer is required away from centralised and corporate energy providers to a constellation of civic energy ones.
7. Difficult choices need to be pursued to curtail and reduce energy demand, especially around hyper-consumerism and poor city zoning.
8. The potential of civic energy needs unleashing through regulatory changes and stimulating innovation so that every building becomes a power station.
9. Citizen groups are best placed to design, implement and manage local energy systems. Their power needs unleashing through enabling finance and regulations so they can lead the civic energy revolution.
10. Given the scale of the task and the sluggishness of the response in the face of mounting climate breakdown, coalitions of groups taking direct action will play a role in the lock down unsustainable and dangerous activities.

*The Bio City*

1. The third pillar, the bio city, requires a fundamentally new relationship between humans and nature, and a changing understanding of ourselves as humans.
2. This is a generational task and will require a fundamental redesign of how we approach education.
3. Restoring and regenerating urban nature needs to become central drivers of all urban development decisions, especially in the context of promoting climate safe and resilient cities.
4. Biophilic and biomimetic design are key to help us reconnect with, learn from and emulate natural processes in cities in ways that can underpin human flourishing.
5. Natural features ranging from linear parks and vertical walls to rain gardens and breathing buildings offer a whole basket of benefits and need to be built in and retrofitted to all urban developments.
6. Due to their proximity and daily experiences, local residents are best placed to steward and regenerate nature in their communities.
7. Connecting and enhancing blue and green urban infrastructures can unlock the significant potential of urban nature, and embed water sensitive design that can tackle extreme weather changes.
8. All options and potentials for food growing within urban spaces need to be unlocked, especially in ways that foster significant changes in urban forms and functions.
9. Given the rapid annihilation of animal species globally, spaces for urban wildlife require urgently protecting and enhancing.

*The Common City*

1. The fourth pillar, the common city, requires shifting as many urban resources and assets as possible into common ownership.
2. Municipalities need to recover full control over city planning, and implement a pro-citizen, socially just approach to all urban development.
3. Mechanisms are required to facilitate broad and meaningful citizen input into, scrutiny over, and management of, major city decisions especially around the allocation of resources and land.
4. Vacant and derelict land, especially in corporate land banks, needs reallocating to community owned organisations.
5. Shifts in taxation from income to land is required to break up historically high levels of unequal land ownership.
6. The role of the local state becomes enabler and facilitator of community and citizen led initiatives that can unlock inclusion, ecological restoration and local wealth building.
7. Commonly owned institutions, worker owned co-operatives and complementary money systems are required to capture and recirculate value and build community wealth.
8. The mass release and use of data is required to empower communities to engage with, and steer, local development.
9. New measures and metrics based on happiness, wellbeing and sustainability are required that can shift priorities away from business as usual economic growth.
10. Learning and research programmes and paid work release will facilitate broad engagement with community based activities.
11. Citizen movements that undertake civil disobedience and direct action will play a vital role in highlighting shortcomings of established legal and democratic processes and priority areas for action.

*Cross cutting issues*

1. Direct national and international legislation is required to enhance and empower city based actions.
2. City authorities can play an enabling role at the centre of these changes, working alongside citizen groups, private entrepreneurs and academic researchers.
3. Cities have to start from where they are and what they have. From tower blocks and car parks to highways and green spaces, repurposing and retrofitting what already exists will be a crucial aspect of the future sustainable city.
4. Rethinking both the form and function of city systems will be the key to unlocking real potential. This will involve slow, difficult and unpopular decisions especially around rezoning and the reallocation of resources and activities.
5. Socially just methods and outcomes and a broad commitment to participation need to be central to whatever changes occur.
6. Techniques including community organising, coproduction, learning by doing, action research, restorative practices and facilitation support will be central to build broad support and minimise conflict.
7. Meaningful urban sustainability relies on us as a species becoming aware of our co-dependency on other species, as well as our own role, individually and collectively, in creating an unsustainable world.