Healthy and creative cities:
Creating the conditions for a better urban life

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Summary

'Healthy & Creative Cities' describes why the two movements concerned with 'health and 'creativity' are deeply connected as they share common concerns. What cities look and feel like and how they are put together determines how healthy and creative we are and can be.

Both movements, which have developed over the last two decades, challenge the urban planning orthodoxy. They put the human being at the centre and are concerned about the whole person: Their physical, mental and psychological condition. It is only then that people can function at their full potential.

Lack of beauty and ugliness, low quality, insensitive design and planning that does not enable people to move around seamlessly or exercise are all determinants that contribute to an unhealthy and uncreative life. The polluting consequences of focusing on the private car and the use of unhealthy building materials equally add to an unsustainable life. The dramatic changes brought about by mass food production and the dominance of retail chains has led to a decline in variety in food choices in the high street. In this process local sources of supply dry up often leading to a decline in quality. These factors play a role in the loss of local distinctiveness and identity. This rise in food miles leads too to an unhealthy planet as it is unsustainable.

These are the physical conditions people are confronted with in cities and people feel they can do nothing about them – they are disempowered. Feeling empowered and in control is a core condition to make and shape a satisfying life.

The Healthy Cities Movement has pushed forward its agenda by continually broadening the scope of its concerns as awareness has grown that prevention is better than cure and that medical advances are not curtailing the sense of feeling unhealthy physically or mentally. The rise in depression rates is one indicator that living in the city can make you feel ill.

The Creative City idea comes from a different place but meets the health agenda in the middle. We now know that to be creative and to develop our talents we need mental alertness, good diet, exercise, stimulation. This generates the energy, motivation and will to perform consistently. In addition all cities are seeking to keep their talented people and attract talent from outside – and these can be

young or old. These groups who are mobile and have relatively wide choices are precisely those who are demanding that urban environments are distinctive, varied and stimulating with the right balance between excitement and the capacity to be reflective.

Walkable, connected cities with park networks, trails and diversity and uniqueness fit the bill.

The challenge is then to create satisfactory places where noise is abated, the air is clean, congestion is minimal, violence and fear of crime is low, access to opportunity is high and exclusion is reduced and poverty declining, All of this encourages a lifestyle where drugs, smoking and alcohol abuse seem less important than a life fulfilled through expressing your imagination.

The repertoire of the Healthy City movement can be reassessed in this new context. Its city health profiles and plans can be rethought and enriched and new urgency is given to the link between sustainability and urban development. Healthy urban planning as a central concept of city development moves centre-stage and establishes a firm link between health and a more vibrant economy.

The same is true is for those fostering the urban creativity agenda. Their repertoire of tools includes a 'creativity audit', whose scope includes how distinctive, attractive, walkable environments provide the pre-conditions for people to think, plan and act with imagination. The healthy cities agenda helps those concerned with creativity achieve their goals better.

Empowerment is key for both movements and a participatory democracy and matching governance arrangements provide the conditions for people to fulfil their potential.

The task ahead is for health and creativity advocates to connect. So far they have led parallel lives. They do not meet. By coming together they can make 1+1 = 3 and the proposed action plan at the end proposes how this might begin. The first step might be to create an event where both groups come together to discuss this document, to make it better and to highlight examples where the cross- fertilization has been positive and to develop a more detailed plan of action to take the combined agenda forward.

Setting the stage

The Healthy Cities and Creative Cities movements have both made significant impacts on how city development is seen globally over the last decade.

The 'healthy cities' and creative city' approaches on how to think about cities, to plan for them and to set priorities are likely to become increasingly significant in the decades to come.

What is the connection between creativity and health? What is the link between a creative city and a healthy city?

There is a strong correlation. The movements have some shared starting points. They recognise that the urban landscape and its dynamics is shifting. They see this as a potential opportunity. The world of cities has changed dramatically over the last 20 years. Cities of every size face periods of deep transition largely brought about by the vigour of renewed globalization. This means cities have to change their physical fabric to adjust to new circumstances and the demands of the new economy. This potential creates special reasons for thinking about the challenges of cities in terms of how they should develop, what the priorities should be and what their urban assets —or lack of them, are.

Both movements are critical of how cities have developed and have concluded that the cities we have mostly disappoint and do not encourage us to lead healthy and creative lives appropriate to the demands that life makes upon us. We are moving from an urban engineering paradigm as to how cities are developed to a creative city making one.

There are three dimensions where the two movements align, they are:

- The healthy and creative city movements discuss the physical, social, emotional, cultural and atmospheric ambience of cities as vital to achieving their aims in essentially the same way.

- Being creative is part of being healthy and you need to be healthy to foster optimum creativity.

- Both movements challenge the urban planning and development orthodoxy. They seek to enrich the possibilities of cities and are aware this can only happen if a shift in mindset about how you plan and manage cities occurs.

Practically the two movements have a joint agenda both in terms of content and challenges for policy and its implementation. In addition both are concerned with two important issues:

- **_Future proofing:_** _Planning with foresight 30 years ahead and ensuring things are being planned for future needs and aspirations_

At any one moment schools, hospitals, roads, entertainment centres, housing complexes, retail emporia are being built. Usually cities build for the past and not for the future responding to demands that seem urgent now. For instance, too many schools are still being built that look like factories for drilling in knowledge. What would they feel like conceived as centres of curiosity, imagination and communities of enquiry? Take hospitals. We need to shift to preventative care. What would a hospital look and feel like that is defined as a 'centre for well-being', surely very different from a factory to deal with the sick. What about police stations or law courts? What if they were seen as centres for community engagement, there would be less of a fortress feel. Seen in this way people are likely to feel a greater sense of well-being and possibility.

- **_Resilience:_** _To generate the capacity to maintain an acceptable level of functioning and structure when exposed to uncertainties_

Urban resilience will become a significant issue in the years ahead. Leaders need to assess every dimension of their city as to whether it can cope with crisis, overload or turbulence. This ranges from the obvious like emergency services to new infrastructure demands. This helps develop strategic robustness and tactical flexibility.

The two movements have a similar set of challenges to overcome to get their ideas implemented as both:

- ……movements need to cut across existing silos to be effective in achieving their aims. For example the problems of health cannot be solved exclusively by the health sector or health professionals. Equally fostering creativity is not the exclusive domain of the education sector.

- …..are increasingly concerned with intangible or softer issues such as emotions, feelings, atmosphere, perceptions or psychology. Their importance is difficult to prove in simple quantifiable terms.

- …….struggle to shake off an image of being concerned with vague and woolly issues.

- …..need to convince other sectors of the importance of their concerns. This particularly applies to the planning professions, the property development community, the finance and economic development groupings.

- ...as a consequence still have to provide consistent evidence as to the importance of their concerns in order to get into the mainstream of thinking.

- .....are seeking to persuade the city making community that it is necessary to relearn the inks between health and creativity and urban planning.

- ....challenge current norms and understandings about what constitutes a rounded person. We now know that a fulfilled, happy person is simultaneously healthy physically, mentally and emotionally as well as can fulfil their inventiveness, curiosity and use their imagination.

- ......have a wish to enable people to exert control over their life and to be able to shape, make and co-create their environment. This is why there is a strong link to fostering democratic citizenship

- ....have a holistic view of the city and the built environment and how to make cities better places to live in. They know what the city feels and looks like moulds our minds, emotions and psychological outlook and thus our present and our future and if cities are badly put together we become reduced as people.

- ......require dramatic shifts in mindset by policymakers to achieve their aims.

In spite of having so much in common and to share the two movements - 'health' and 'creativity' - have led parallel lives and not touched each other. The experts concerned with health in cities and those interested in creativity have rarely if ever crossed over and fertilised their ideas. At first sight they appear to have different concerns. In the one you might find epidemiologists, public health officials, doctors, social workers and in the other economic regeneration specialists, innovation experts and a raft of so-called .creatives'. In both you might find urban planners or designers, yet their focus is likely to be physically oriented and concerned with 'hardware' questions rather than 'softer' issues, such as the feeling of a place.

When we ask what kind of things encourage people to be 'creative' or more 'talented' and that encourage the economy as a whole to be more 'creative' there is an alignment with the aims of the healthy city movement. The physical settings cherished, the

facilities wanted or atmosphere desired discussed within the 'creative city' movement are exactly the same as those discussed in explorations of the 'healthy city'. Creatives are attracted to places that from a health perspective would be called emotionally and psychologically satisfying. They are connected walkable places with a rich networks of pocket parks and urban trails.

Part of being healthy and emotionally fulfilled, it is now recognized, is the ability to express oneself, to allow the imagination to flourish and to be creative. So health specialists should also concern themselves with establishing the conditions for creativity in cities. Part of the ability of being creative is being healthy. So creativity experts should concern themselves with how urban planning fosters health and how lack of health constrains creativity potential. Together health and creativity help a city to be successful.

At last, public health and urban planning are coming together again. For a hundred years we separated health and urban planning. They went their own ways, following combined efforts to improve living conditions in the overcrowded and disease ridden cities of the 19th century. We need now to intentionally build cities that encourage us to be healthy as well as cities that encourage us to be creative.

The creative city agenda
The notion of 'creativity' has moved centre-stage given the dramatic shifts in global terms of trade towards the East, the operating dynamics of the economy, the rise of the talent agenda and 'war for talent' in cities and the repositioning of cities world-wide. It is seen as the central driver of the economy as the hallmarks of the 21st century economy are: imagination, innovation, openness to intense knowledge exchange and technology transfer, an adaptable skilled global workforce. Knowledge rivals labour efficiency or natural resources as the source of economic growth and wealth creation.

The central idea of the creative city is cities need to provide the conditions within which people and organizations can think, plan and act imaginatively in harnessing opportunities or addressing seemingly intractable urban problems. These might range from addressing homelessness, to creating wealth in new ways or enhancing the visual environment or even getting artists to unsettle conventional attitudes. It is a positive concept, its assumption is that ordinary people can make the extra-ordinary happen if given the chance and that if everyone were just 5% more imaginative and open about what they do the impact would be dramatic.

For creativity to happen at its best and most effectively there needs to be an environment of trust so people feel emotionally at ease

and psychologically settled and an overall sense of safety and security.

It is a clarion call to encourage open-mindedness and imagination. Its intent is to have a dramatic impact on organizational culture. The philosophy is that there is always more potential in any place than any of us would think at first sight, even though very few cities are comprehensively creative. In the 'Creative City' it is not only artists and those involved in the creative economy that are creative, although they play an increasingly, important and specific role. You need the creativity of intellectuals and scientists and others from any source including anyone who addresses issues in an inventive way be it a social worker, a business person, an engineer or public servant. The research shows that combined teams with different insights generate the most interesting ideas and projects, although they difficult to manage.

Seen in this way the creative city is an integrated system of multiple organizations and amalgam of cultures in the public, private and community sectors. It claims that in a period of dramatic change that feels like a paradigm shift the disparate individuals, organizations and bodies in a city need to each become more inventive and also work together to address their challenges otherwise they will go backwards. They need to develop a creative milieu.

This is an environment where in a virtuous cycle people and organizations inspire each other to create ideas, to explore jointly and to undertake projects. It is the 'right' combination of the built environment and natural environment that provides the proper setting for the pursuit of creative lives. To give stimulation diverse kinds of people should live there who are interacting and providing cues that anyone can plug into so as to make a life in that community. And finally it needs lots going on, such as the vibrancy of street life, café culture, arts, music and people engaging in outdoor activities—in sum a plethora of active, exciting, creative endeavours.

It requires a physical setting that is open, encourages interaction, is aesthetically attractive, walkable, accessible, intimate yet cosmopolitan and that allows 'third spaces' like cafes to exist where people can interact, share projects as well as enough stimulation, perhaps unusual restaurants or cultural centres, to satisfy those who are there and to attract newcomers. This fosters a clustering of talent, skill and support infrastructures which is both central to the development of the 'creative economy' and the creative milieu. Importantly it gives sustenance to those who are part of the milieu.

It sustains them, gives them emotional support, opportunities, a sense of community as well as anchoring them. This is because a spatial cluster of activities provides mutual financial, technical and psychological support, it increases the efficiency of markets so helps economic survival, brings together buyers and sellers and so creates social networks beyond work, it keeps people in touch with trends, it creates overlaps between adjacent disciplines and stimulates competition and so generates multiplier' effects, synergy complementary interchanges and swapping of resources. With real and virtual worlds coalescing the spatial geography of creativity and clustering is changing, but crucially face to face contact remains key.

The Creative City notion advocates the need for a culture of creativity to be embedded into how the urban stakeholders operate. By encouraging widespread creativity and legitimising the use of imagination within the public, private and community spheres the ideas bank of possibilities and potential solutions to any urban problem will be broadened. This reminds of the need for healthy people to be able to explore and feel in control of their lives.

The healthy city agenda
We now turn the lens on 'healthy cities' and will see that the conditions that provide for health are similar to those that provide for creativity.

We know a healthy person when we see one: No or few physical problems, emotionally balanced, psychologically strong, resilient, adaptable, generous of spirit. This is a person who seems able to use their imagination and who is able to shape the order of things around them. This allows them to be creative. This sense of control in being able to self-express fosters the motivation to give something back as it induces often a feeling of being at ease which leads to well-being and even happiness.

We have a feeling equally of a healthy organization – one that enables individuals to give of their best and to combine their disparate talents with those of others. These are places where people do not feel that their personalities are being reduced, constrained or thwarted.

What is a healthy city? It is not only a place with many hospitals. That is just part of the story. It is a place where people feel an emotional, psychological, mental, physical and aesthetic sense of well-being; where doing things that make us healthy happen incidentally, as a matter of course and not because you have to make a big effort. A healthy place throws generosity of spirit back

at you. This makes us feel open and trusting. It encourages us to communicate across divides of wealth, class and ethnicity. It makes for conviviality. Having trust is the pre-condition for learning, creativity and innovation. Crucially innovation means stretching or jumping a boundary from the known to the unknown. You only make that leap if you feel secure.

We know too that we must find a way of overcoming the 'health and hospitals' agenda as the desire for care is insatiable and the current medical model cannot work. There is a global shortfall in nurses and doctors and many problems end up with people coming to hospitals; problems which should have been avoided or solved elsewhere. For instance, an urban fabric that provides few opportunities for the ageing population and the young to connect leads to isolation and depression. Equally urban sprawl without activity-centres causes frustration for the young which can lead to vandalism, crime and more. Yet we never calculate those costs - if we did, great design and investment in the quality of public space or public transport would seem extraordinarily cheap.

What is healthy urban planning or a 'healthy city? To start with it implies a definition of health that moves beyond the medical to a social model. This means moving away from a focus on the individual and the treatment of illness to an understanding that health is a result of a series of economic, social, cultural and physical conditions or lifestyle choices such as housing conditions, whether there is a sense of community, how good the economic situation is or how someone leads their life. This implies a re-focus away from dealing the symptoms to addressing the causes that create bad health in the first place. Heredity aside it notes that illness is a reflection of the failure to deal with a problem elsewhere. Indeed many areas where action is needed to enhance health or well-being lie outside of the health sector. It means creating the conditions so that people do not need to go into a hospital in the first place.

Parallel concerns: Psychology
An emerging shift is the recognition that the mental state of mind of people is equally as important as the physical. This is as important to those concerned fostering creativity as well as health. The emotional, feelings and the psychological move to the fore and questions are being asked of urban planners such as 'does my city make me feel emotionally good' or 'does it help develop a rich socially networked, community life'. And furthermore words like beauty and ugliness are re-entering the urban vocabulary as people begin to understand the tangible of effects of environmental psychology. This measures the effect of the physical and social

environment on the health and wellbeing of individuals and communities. The discipline has a rich history stretching back over 50 years. The vast evidence it has gathered includes:

- The harmful effects of ugliness. This could be a building, cheap materials, bad urban design or townscape planning.

- The restorative effects of beauty. The above acknowledge that both beauty and ugliness are relative terms yet there is a surprising coalescence in agreeing their scope.

- The impact on people of a clutter of signs.

- The disorienting effects of urban confusion in terms of feeling safe.

- The influence of height on the senses, feeling overwhelmed by the townscape, especially when the sidewalks are too narrow.

- The impact of heaviness or clunkiness of buildings.

- The consequences of seas of endless asphalt, wide roads and turning circles or sprawl.

- How mental geography determines a sense of wellbeing. Thus the effect of people feeling cut off by roads, barriers and obstacles.

- The effect of motorway gateways such as 'spaghetti junction' in Birmingham or looming overpasses.

- Feelings about dirt and rubbish and the subsequent lack of care people have for their environment.

- The repercussions of noise and car dominance.

These questions that effect how we feel about a city and our sense of wellbeing are insufficiently considered by those who shape cities. Environmental psychology is important because it draws attention to personal feelings, emotions and the subjective. It shifts thinking away from looking at physical planning, urban design solutions or road building as merely value free technical exercises that have no impact. It asks instead what do they feel like.

The impact of this kind of thinking has affected the language we use with words like 'quality of life', 'well being', which is entering a

contented state of being happy, healthy and prosperous, entering the urban lexicon. And now 'happiness'. Indeed the demand to pay attention to developing happiness is the latest popular theme. These clearly reflect the Zeitgeist and emerging things that matter to people. Even though the importance of 'being happy' was merely a hunch evolving insights from science confirm, as it so often does, what was felt instinctively and perhaps then seen as vague, woolly and incoherent. Indeed there is even a 'new science of happiness'.

Notions such as a 'healthy city', a focus on well being or happiness shift priorities and our notions of success, failure and performance, because there is little if no link between economic performance, wealth and achieving greater well being or happiness. The paradox is that as Western societies have got richer they have not got happier, indeed for most types of people happiness has not increased since 1950. In the US people are no happier, although living conditions have more than doubled. In Europe where data has only been collected since 1975 the overall change in happiness is small relative to the huge increases in incomes. This is largely explained by the huge rise in depression and mental ailments of all kinds, which is accounted for by issues such as the speed of change and lack of power in affecting its direction, fear of the unknown, by the breakdown of social bonds and resulting uncertainties and lack of security.

What this shows is that whilst the economic framework has solid virtues in that it starts with the individual and their wants and desires and it then assumes the market sorts this out equitably.

Where it goes wrong is that it has an impoverished theory of human nature, interaction and what makes people flourish. Individuals do not always profit maximize, they have a rich set of aims, which mostly thrive in cities, that cannot be reduced to an economic calculus. Finance is but one of several key factors. What is important to people are their relationships especially those of the extended family, the nature of their work, the place they live in and surrounding community and social networks, the level of trust they can have in individuals and institutions, their physical and emotional health, their personal freedom and ability to effect their environment and the ability to live out their personal values. In fact happiness depends as much on the inner life as outer circumstances.

However the cities we have built have largely been based on profit maximizing and in an attempt to provide economic efficiency and convenience we build down to a price or a tender rather than up to a standard. But what if this approach is not the most important thing?

Parallel concerns: The human being at the centre
The new approach to healthy city making puts the human being and their well-being centre-stage and the same is true of the creative city movement. It acknowledges the power of beauty, aesthetics, sensitivity and quality even though we can argue what this means. It sees city making, ideally, as an act of seduction so we can fall in love with where we live and we as citizens emit good feeling and intentions. This sets us up to have civic pride, to aspire, be ambitious and to want the best for our city. We then suddenly ask of our city: Does our hard infrastructure, urban design and the atmosphere make me feel good?

Let us remind ourselves of what constitutes uncreative and unhealthy urban planning and creates uninspiring places to ram home the point.   . Rigid 'land use zoning', which separates functions and gets rid of mixed-uses such as blending living, working, retail and fun; 'comprehensive development' that can cover multiple initiatives in one hit but often leaves out fine grain, diversity and variety; 'economies of scale' thinking, which presumes that only big is efficient or produces things as if they were on a conveyor belt; and lastly, the 'inevitability of the car' which can lead us to plan as if the car were king and people a mere nuisance.

These unhealthy places discourage walking and exercise and so we don't incidentally become fitter by just getting on with the day to day chores of life. They lead to less interaction and therefore and do not simply 'bump into the buzz'. Such places are planned to give priority to the car rather than forms of public transport. This determines our movement patterns, it shapes the visual landscape dramatically bringing on often the dulling ennui caused by endless asphalt and metal. It thus affects our sensory environment, it causes pollution, it influences urban design as at every step the car needs to be accommodated, it can isolate us in metal boxes and discourage social interaction.

All in the name of convenience and speed we persist in planning this way. This makes us lazy, reduces our will and motivation as irritations build up and this gets us into bad habits in a self-reinforcing way that can become a vicious cycle. Without exercise or stimulation we lack the energy to focus and think clearly. We eat badly and get more obese. We make bad decisions. It blinds us to the possibilities that cities in principle can provide.

We know too what else makes us feel bad, even ill: bland, ugly places with little stimulation, often built at speed without attention

to detail or unhealthy, overly air-conditioned buildings with little attention to building materials or places with little identity, distinctiveness and style.

Parallel concerns: Ugliness

The pinpricks of ugliness are with us for a long time – sometimes a life time or more and as you are experiencing it, it feels like forever. Any built structure, be it a building or a road, has a responsibility to its environment. But most of the property development community or their clients do not see it this way. It is not OK to try to get away bad quality design and cheap materials. It does a disservice to any city and has seriously negative downstream effects. They are never calculated by the insurance industry, who are so eager to assess every conceivable safety aspect so ending up with over-engineered lifeless streets and overblown roads. An ugly building, external space, road crossing or junction drains energy and leads ultimately to lack of care. Environments where lack of care is evident cause social distress, crime and worse. Rather than those concerned with aesthetics having to argue for the 'value of design' it is time to assess 'the cost of bad design'. Beauty and quality even though we can argue about definitions is restorative.

Travel around your city with your senses and especially the eyes and on foot as the car shields us from experiencing the city viscerally. What do you see and feel? Sadly it is so much easier to think of all the things we hate than those we love. And the latter need not only be old ones. This is not a question of nostalgia, but of quality. You feel almost at once that most cities are cities of flow – car flow. Everything makes way to keep the movement going and it always seems to have priority. This can neutralize any life abutting it or nearby. Furthermore we are in danger of losing the art of creating streets – the core element of great cities. Streets too often are segmented into big blocks, with huge setbacks, with forecourts embellished by public sculptures in their ubiquitous red and their abstract form; these are buildings that pronounce themselves, they shine in glass and marble yet feel as if they are warding you off and keeping you at bay. They are buildings that say 'no', and which pretend to say 'yes'. Often too there are gloomy, blank, thuddingly inelegant buildings surrounded by undistinguished corporate structures. Move along the typical urban blocks there can be a symphony of blandness that at times can make you sleepily relaxed as they throw their deadness back at you. Alternatively you still see the 'clunky heavy', 'blob' buildings style weighing down without grace into the ground. And the glassy stuff too often just reflects back at you when you want the airy feel. A useful exercise is to undertake a blank wall or lifelessness analysis of your city. How healthy or creative does this make you feel?

A simple way to assess whether decisions about our were right is to ask some questions: Does this building or structure say 'yes' or 'no'? Does it feel right emotionally? Is it good enough for my city? Once standards are raised in these kinds of ways, it is possible to bring in a language of city-making long lost. Beauty can be demanded from a shed, a mall or an industrial estate, let alone a residential apartment block.

The language which we use to describe cities remains dominated by the physical without descriptions of movement, rhythm or people. This visual language comes largely from architecture and urban design. Its principles derive from key texts such as that of Vitruvius with notions of symmetry or harmony at its core.[1] Descriptions of the visual city come from habits of portraying classic architecture where building components are illustrated: Pedestals, columns, capitals, pediments and architraves. The language has broadened yet still somewhat with a focus on static elements rather than dynamic wholes like space, structure, technology, materials, colour, light, function, efficiency, the expression and presence of a building. Urban design, meanwhile, sees and describes cities more as dynamic totalities: Place, connections, movement, mixed uses, blocks, neighbourhoods, zones, densities, centres, peripheries, landscapes, vistas, focal points, and realms. But both frequently exclude the atmospherics of cities, the feeling of the look. Does it make you shrink into yourself, make you calmly reflect or fill you with passion? Does it close you in or open you out? Does the physical fabric make you respond with a sense of 'yes' or 'no'?

This 'Yes or No analysis' quite quickly clarifies what people are after. Within the instinctive 'yes' and 'no', deep knowledge is embedded which is often implicit. This might be about how the city fosters relationships, engenders fear or provides inspiration. Some can describe these emotional triggers precisely. This leads to the central question for both 'healthy and creative cities': What are the actions required to get into yes? The great urbanists and the general public agree on the main urban qualities which are seemingly contradictory as they pull in differing directions. Yet the great city is a container where extremes can coexist, where the calm moment can be as enjoyable as the wild. The lovable, liveable, lively, joyful, dynamic, vital, edgy, easy, accessible, walkable, tranquil, peaceful city. These are places where you can explore, discover, create and be entrepreneurial; places that are memorable, distinctive, unique, iconic, well-designed; safe, secure, fearless, resilient.

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[1] Vitruvius etc....

We shift the lens by asking questions of planning like: 'What urban environments encourage people to be inquisitive and want to learn?', 'what urban form encourages us to become civically engaged?', 'does your physical infrastructure help you to be healthy, contribute to developing trust between people, assist us to learn and become more clever?, 'are you physically putting yourselves together so we are less likely to feel lonely?', 'are we planning so I bump into people and interact?, 'do my new schools feel like communities of enquiry?, 'do the new hospitals feel soothing and exude wellness?, 'are new developments restorative? Or in reverse 'Is my unhealthy urban planning affecting depression or crime rates and our well-being and happiness indicators?'

By asking these questions we provide a reinvigorated purpose for why we plan. Instead of looking at road building, street formats, housing, hospitals and schools in isolation and merely as technical problems that need to be solved, this new purpose connects to a broader theme: unleashing potential and wellness.

Parallel concerns: Emotions
Emotions drive our life. They shape our possibilities, determine our reactions to situations and our outlook on the future. Yet have you ever read a city plan that starts with the emotions or even refers to them? 'Our aim is to make citizens happy.' 'We want to create a sense of joy and passion in our city, to engender a feeling of love for your place.' 'We want to encourage a feeling of inspiration and beauty', 'we want to develop a passionate participatory culture', 'we want to harness the talents of our people'. It is rare to find such sentiments in the context of urban discourse. Yet it is odd that emotions which are a defining feature of human existence are absent in discussions of city-making. Instead the prevalent, interchangeable words and concepts proliferating involve a barren, unemotional language that is performance-driven – strategy, development, policy, outcomes, framework, targets. This feels hollow and makes us feel as if we have no control and can have no impact because we are not technical experts. A challenge for city leaders is to describe the aims for their city without using any of those words.

How does this connect to city-making? Just as we can test a person's feelings system, any place-making project should start with 'How does it feel?' rather than 'Does it meet a particular specification?' The latter is not about the human condition. If one can tap into emotions, places can become more sustaining and sustainable. For example, darkness engenders fear, but stark sodium lights which seek to solve fear makes us fearful as it sharpens the contours between dark and light. It feels cold and

external. Soft light that feels welcoming is a better solution. High-rise blocks can make people feel diminished as overwhelming structures can feel outside a person's control, thus engendering fear and again a cold and external feeling. It makes a person feel less powerful. It takes away the sense of identity with which we manage the world. Thus a high-rise block that works would tend to balance the excitement of a view or a sense of awe with comforting features. These might, for example, be soft textures created through greening or planting. The theme park seeks to balance the emotions by triggering excitement but in a controlled way by diminishing fear.

Contrast a theme park with a cathedral. Even for the non-religious, a medieval cathedral can uplift as the experience of a sense of awe and dignity balances the possible overwhelming feeling with a feeling of order and structure. On the other hand, a modern church can feel like a social workers' gathering place as it does not lift the person into a different state of being, belonging and wanting to feel attached. Attachment is a fundamental human cue. The brain, it appears, is hardwired to need a dimension we can call the spiritual – some high-order symmetry. Yet we do not have the same level of evidence as to where to locate it. It is a common cross-cultural response which triggers a sense of possibility and wholeness. Much of this knowledge is intuitive. Intuition, although decried as unscientific, in fact requires a highly developed sensibility, which comes from reflecting on a range of experiences. Intuitively, people seem to know what kind of places work and they vote with their feet as these become popular. They might not be able to explain why, as their intuition is insufficiently self-conscious and thus untutored. Again, intuition has zero status in city-making, so people have to school themselves in accepting physical environments that conflict with their own instincts rather than trusting their own judgements. By neglecting the capacity for people fundamentally to trust their own judgements we infantilise them. We need to trust our intuition more if our cities are to be more healthy and foster creativity.

Parallel concerns: Beauty
Depending on age, class, life position and income, concepts of aesthetics and good design vary, whilst what is deemed ugly tends to cut across divisions. Unsurprisingly, the net effect of beautiful, well-designed, high quality physical environments is that they feel restorative, more care is taken of them, feelings of stress and fear of crime is reduced, and social mixing increases as does hope, motivation and confidence in the future and thus wellbeing. 'Natural' environments have similar restorative effects. By contrast, ugly environments increase crime and fear of crime, lead to stress, vandalism, untidiness, feelings of depression, isolation, loneliness,

worthlessness, a lack of aspiration and a drained will. The consequence is a self-reinforcing negative cycle, the likelihood of less employment, reduced social capital, less social bonding, less creativity, although community spirit can occasionally be intensely strong in places of such disadvantage.

Similar evidence exists for other phenomena such as how levels of noise cause people to shut off and become uncommunicative, how a lack of quality space makes people feel impoverished, how too many cars overwhelm, or how wide open asphalt or concrete can lead to depression.

Parallel concerns: Sustaining and sustainable
At the highest level there is a deep yearning to connect our individual behaviours to what is good for us and the planet simultaneously. This means leading lives that do not damage the planet as harming the planet harms our individual lives. The sustainability agenda has been with us for a long time and now has a new urgency with climate change moving apace. The implications of unsustainable development in the city are immediate and direct. Car focused development, as the most obvious measure, leads to rises in pollution and associated disease from asthma to heart problems. It leads to an urban form that is fragmented, cut up and discourages exercise with all the obesity consequences that entails. It is difficult in these conditions to foster healthy, creative lifestyles.

Yet there is more to sustainability than its central environmental dimensions. Social and cultural sustainability are key to making a thriving place where opportunity abounds and choices are possible and people feel their identity is anchored. The more we are mobile the more place is important. Places to feel at home, to have a sense of continuity and stability as change and mobility is easier to cope with when identity is strong.

This especially so with increased immigration as cities are absorbing new population groups at speed with different cultures transforming the socio-demographics of most places. Healthy and creative places are those where people of different backgrounds can meet and exchange ideas and where social tension is reduced. For people to feel comfortable with these shifts it is crucial to create places to meet interculturally where the focus is on what we share rather than what separates us. This is where cultural institutions like libraries, museums and galleries come into play especially when they have good outreach programmes. Indeed institutions like libraries marry the concerns of health and creativity as they help empower people to be informed, to be able to explore and to know more.

The challenge and the action plan

The challenge for *all* professions concerned with the city, from the social worker to the architect, is to look at the city through the prism of health and creativity. The topic is too important to be left only to health or creativity specialists. This could involve outcome swaps. This means a planner, health worker, regeneration expert or economic development professional should ask: 'How do my ideas and plans help citizens and my city become healthy or to be more curious?'

A possible action plan can begin with the following steps:

- To rethink audit tools to combine both the aims of health and creativity. This involves incorporating insights and knowledge from one domain to the next. For example, the tried and tested urban creativity audits should blend health related issues in its appraisals. Equally health profiles and plans should include issues like the strength of cultural institutions, an assessment of the creative potential of a place and the effect of the urban environment for people to interact and exchange.

- A new form of assessment – the sensory audit - should be explored in a set of pilot cities. This will appraise a city from the perspective of the senses and how that affects the mental, emotional and psychological life of a city. This will ask the kind of questions highlighted in the section above called Parallel Concerns: Psychology.

- As part of the advocacy role of the Healthy Cities network the organization should promote a redefinition of the scope of capital to include health as a form of capital. There is a movement to move the notion of capital away from sole financial concerns to include in the assessment of a city whether there is a balanced scorecard as between developing:

  - *human capital* – the skills, talents and special knowledge of people;
  - *social capital* – the complex web of relationships between organisations, communities and interest groups which make up civil society;
  - *cultural capital* – the sense of belonging in and understanding of the unique identity of a place expressed in tangible and intangible form, such as heritage, memories, creative activities, dreams and aspirations of a place;
  - *intellectual capital* – the ideas and innovative potential of a community;

- *creativity capital* – the capacity to stand back, to connect the seemingly disconnected, relax into ambiguity, be original and inventive;
- *leadership capital* – the motivation, will, energy and capacity to take responsibility and lead
- and *environmental capital* – the built and natural landscape and ecological diversity of an area.

- Priority action. An initial step is to create an event where health and creativity professionals come together to discuss this document, to make it better and to highlight examples where the cross- fertilization has been positive and to develop a more detailed plan of action to take the combined agenda forward.

- To promote this document to the Healthy Cities constituency asking for examples of where the concerns of health and creativity have come together. On the basis of that feedback to create a simple four to six page leaflet that summarizes and simplifies this document and embellishes it with examples from within the network.

By Charles Landry winter 2008