

My love affair with cities began growing up in London and then living in Mexico City and New York as a volunteer worker when I chose what to do for the first time. Cities intoxicated me.

The Century of Cities: Humans have become an urban species

Over the past half century, the backdrop to our lives is the massive growth in the number and size of our cities. Urbanisation re-shapes our world. People flock to the opportunities that cities provide and navigate the risks they present. The ability of cities to sequence and synchronise human endeavour drives us. The key choice we face is not whether to have urbanisation or not, but how to make that urbanisation good. That means investing effectively in the carrying capacity of cities, accelerating urban innovation, and tackling deep rooted urban problems such as carbon emissions, segregation, pollution, air quality, and resilience.

The Magic of Cities: Why do cities work?

What makes a place a city is people concentration. Proximity between people induces a deep scale of interactions, and intensity of exchanges/feedback loops called 'network effects'. Cities accelerate ideas, foster participation, and drive fusions. The depth of population also provides resources (taxes, revenues, aggregated demand) for shared common services & infrastructures (scale effects), and drives expertise in Medicine, Science, Art, Tech & Business (specialisation). Cities can enhance social mobility, increase productivity, deepen civic capital, and spur creativity and belonging. The magic of cities is that they magnify interactions with this 'concentration super-power'. History shows cities spur innovation and catalyse change.

The Planet of Cities 10 billion people in 10,000 cities.

Cities play a special role in the future of our planet. By 2080 almost 10 billion people will be living in 10,000 cities. As the concentrations of people, jobs, homes, infrastructure, and consumption, cities discharge carbon. At the same time, cities are the obvious victims of rising temperatures and sea levels that make them prone to flooding, extreme heat, freak weather, and natural disasters. These threaten both the fixed assets, and the essential urban ecosystems of air, food, water, land, and biodiversity. Cities are the places where urban innovations, driven by those network effects, really count. They pioneer policies & practices that shape choices, nudge behaviour changes, and foster new models of investment, consumption, and circularity. Cities are the pioneers of climate reform.

The Reinvention of Cities Habitat, Innovation, Experience.

The recent COVID19 pandemic was a shock to cities. It shut down normal urban life to avoid excess contagion resulting in a rapid uptick in digital platforms to perform many activities that were previously done face to face. This led some to question whether we were now beyond peak city and if our cities would recover. For many cities the recovery path is distant because some activities are lost forever. The imperative here should be not to recover but to reinvent. Cities can shift out of mundane forms of work, consumption, production, and services, and play instead to what cities do best: the quality of habitat, innovation, and experience.

A key effect of the rapid digitisation is to change the working spaces of our cities with two key

consequences. Firstly, hybrid working enables cities to be served by larger housing markets, effectively making all cities more regional. Secondly, neighbouring cities and towns are much more connected with each other by a shared labour force, common housing market, and connections. We now have much more interdependent regions, cities, and towns.

The Tools of Cities Inventing new methods and means.

But the pandemic hasn't been the only paradigm-shifting event in our 5th decade of this extraordinary century of cities. The toolbox of city management, public governance, and progressive policy is now joined by three new resources in the quest for good urbanisation.

- The first is a **new suite of enabling technologies** that are driving growth in new urban sectors, improving city systems, and making city management more of a shared endeavour between business, government, and citizens.
- The second is **intentional capital** which has woken up to scale of the urban opportunity and the existential imperative to shape the growth of sustainable, low carbon cities.
- The third is the **new art of place-leadership**, which integrates otherwise separated and fragmented inputs into 'virtual governance' premised on the imperatives of place rather than sectors, institutions, or single assets. It builds new forms of social capital, identity, and belonging, through collaboration and participation.

Taken together these three new tools can augment our urban investment and city leadership, and drive connected places that spur the investment rate, and the level of trust, in our cities.

The DNA of Cities Decoding Urban Identity.

No two cities are the same. Each a unique mix of endowed, inherited, and acquired traits that give it a discernible genetic code which influences how the city evolves, succeeds, responds to shocks, and expresses itself uniquely in creative and scientific discovery. Each city has its own myths and mindsets that become embedded in the infrastructures, buildings, vernacular designs, and lifestyles of its residents. Decoding this DNA is key for resilience. Epigenetics teaches us that our genes have plasticity, and shared experiences, such as traumas or shocks, create collective scars that are observed in traits and behaviours. In the city we share our DNA.

The Business of Cities Cities for Business and Business for Cities.

Cities and business are deeply embedded. Just as Cities host business and commercial activity, many cities were founded by business as entrepôts, ports, or exchanges. In modern times territorial competition to win contested opportunities and resources such as skilled workers, cultural & sporting events, tourists, students, and capital investment have been mediated through market processes rather than military campaigns. This makes cities more inclined to be competitive and entrepreneurial and to learn from business the skills of marketing, benchmarking, branding, tactical investment, and asset management. Cities learn from business. As global urbanisation progresses businesses encounter cities as key markets, and must align with them, creating partnerships and finding the right cities with whom to venture and innovate together.