BUILDING[S] FOR CHANGE

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In 2016, I had the privilege to present the Roelof S. Uytenbogaardt Memorial Lecture. This lecture offered seven key lessons taken from 20 years of my experience, and also raised questions about sustainable development and the future of our cities.

HOW DO WE BUILD CHANGE?

LESSON 1: EDUCATING FOR REAL – REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

Cities form a platform for creativity and innovation. We must learn from examples, noting what's relevant and what's not. In the 1960s, Jane Jacobs (1992: 6) argued, 'Cities are an immense laboratory of trial and error, failure and success, in city building and city design. This is the city laboratory in which city planning should have been learning and forming and testing its theories.' Friedmann (2006) argues that the strength of a region is its people, their ways of life and 'engaging local citizens in a common effort by giving them a stake in society of which they are a part'. *Identity*, *belonging*, *love*, *respect*, *home*, *job* … These are words used by people. But we urbanists use such words such as *spatial plan*, *development node*, *urban corridor*, *economic opportunity* and so on. Can such spaces be designed to reflect a human approach to the building of cities?

LESSON 2: REINVENTING URBAN PLANNING – A CITY THAT PLANS VS THE PLANNED CITY

We live in an urban era, where cities experience enormous pressure. It's 20 years since the United Nations Habitat II was set in Istanbul 1996 to address the universal goals of ensuring 'adequate shelter for all, and making human settlements safer, healthier and more liveable, equitable, sustainable and productive' (UN, 1996). These are solid, meaningful words. But what has really changed in 20 years? Cities are complex and ambiguous – informal urbanisation even more so, being so closely linked to everyday reality. Cities are laden with questions of rights, desires, needs and aspirations. They're loaded with deficiencies; struggling against the pressures of expansion and climate change.

In South Africa, the authoritarian emphasis on housing has focused on the quantity of houses delivered as opposed to the quality of urban environments created – sprawling, vulnerable cities lacking identity. Differences between theory, policy and practice are still disparate. The random interaction of these three spheres regularly determines the unjust, unsustainable urban form of our cities.

In 2016, a New Urban Agenda was set at Habitat III. 'The New Urban Agenda should promote sustainable cities and human settlements that are environmentally sustainable and resilient, socially inclusive, safe and violence-free, economically productive; and better connected to and contributing towards sustained rural transformation. This is in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, especially Goal 11: to make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable' (UN-Habitat, 2016). We are moving from 'the planned city' to a 'city that plans'; a city of integrated, multisectoral approaches to sustainable development. The aim is to embrace views of citizens, government, local leaders, investors and intermediaries. The objective is to integrate infrastructure, land use, culture, natural resources and education. I call this the *inclusive city*.

LESSON 3: INTEGRATED, MULTISECTORAL APPROACHES

Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (VPUU) is a comprehensive, area-based community development programme that aims towards safe and integrated sustainable communities, citizenship, pride and the improvement of quality of life for residents in low-income neighbourhoods. The project is based on the understanding that environmental design can affect people's choices. It influences their perception of safety, whether perceived or real. The VPUU Programme in the Western Cape aims to nurture integrated communities by addressing these issues and perceptions. This is achieved through multiple partnerships, working both with communities and government using a bottom-up and top-down approach. The vision is to overcome forms of exclusion (economic, cultural, social, institutional and spatial) in low-income areas to prevent crime.

GREAT CITIES DON'T JUST HAPPEN. THEY EVOLVE FROM COMMUNITIES WITH A STRONG SENSE OF IDENTITY, TRUST AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION.

The VPUU Non-Profit Company (VPUU NPC) is the Project Executing Authority (PEA) for the VPUU Programme, in partnership with the Western Cape Government (WCG), cofunded by the German Development Bank with engagement from various municipalities. The CEO, Michael Krause, an urban designer, strategically leads and guides the VPUU multidisciplinary team, which operates within six work-streams: situational (built ›