

COP 2016

GLOBAL COMPACT

BIG - BJARKE INGELS GROUP

BIG



OUR COMMITMENT

At BIG, architecture is not about building monuments, but about creating possibilities for human life.

We are pleased to reaffirm our unwavering support of the Ten Principles of the United Nations Global Compact in the areas of Human Rights, Labour, Environment, and Anti-Corruption. In this our fifth annual Communication on Progress, we describe our continued actions to integrate the Global Compact and its principles into our business strategy, culture, and daily operations. We hold ourselves to the high standards set by the Global Compact, and remain committed to sharing this information with our stakeholders.

In 2016, we, the Partners of BIG, sign this document to assure the United Nations that we are committed to the continuous respect for the human race and to the integrity of its environment.

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THE COPENHAGEN HARBOR BATH EXTENDS PUBLIC SPACE INTO THE WATERS OF THE CITY

INTRODUCTION

*Architecture
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Historically, the field of architecture has been dominated by two opposing extremes: on one side, the avant-garde of wild ideas, often so detached from reality that they fail to become something other than eccentric curiosities; on the other side, well-organized corporate consultants that build predictable and boring boxes of high standard. Architecture seems entrenched between two equally unfertile fronts: either naively utopian or petrifyingly pragmatic.

Rather than choosing one over the other, BIG operates in the fertile overlap between the two opposites. A pragmatic utopian architecture that takes on the creation of socially, economically and environmentally perfect places as a practical objective. Buildings are never stand-alone entities. Instead, they are part of a larger network, a campus tied together by rich public spaces and the complex urban context. The vast majority of BIG's projects have a large public space component, which has meant that they play a transformative role in the cities where they are located. In the big picture, architecture is the art and science of ensuring that our cities and buildings fit with the way we want to live our lives.



GAMMEL HELLERUP MULTI-USE HALL IN DENMARK

OUR HUMAN RIGHTS POLICY

BIG firmly believes that human rights are indisputable universal truths. We are unwavering in our determination to, as far as we are able, provide all humans the rights and freedoms they wish to enjoy. BIG will never voluntarily be complicit in human rights abuses, and instead always seek to uphold the rights and freedoms of all, contributing where our reach allows.

We have also declined a number of prominent projects in countries and regions that we deemed questionable in terms of their attitude toward human rights. During the initial meeting with a potential client in Saudi Arabia, it became apparent that if BIG were to accept the job, our architects would be required to provide designs severely discriminatory toward women. As a company that is led by a female CEO and strives for equality between our male and female employees, we found this unacceptable and immediately declined this opportunity to work in Riyadh. We will not be involved with any activity that contributes to restricting the freedom of women or hindering the basic human rights of humans for any reason, cultural or religious.

Our ongoing goal has not changed from the previous year – we continue to ensure that human rights are developed and supported in the designs of our projects. BIG also continues to give students from across the globe the opportunity to work as architects on our projects. As part of this teaching process, BIG invites internal and external experts to lecture on a variety of areas. BIG will always seek to uphold the rights and freedoms of all, contributing where our reach allows.



OUR LABOR RIGHTS POLICY

BIG's greatest asset is its employees. At BIG, we take employee satisfaction as seriously as we do architectural design. The larger we grow as a company, the more we strive to create a workplace that encourages input, dialog, interaction, and collaboration across the network of relations of BIG's flat hierarchy. The Global Compact's principles relating to labor rights are interpreted literally and so followed. BIG opposes any form of forced and compulsory labour, condemns child labour, effectively recognizes the right to collective bargaining, and does not practice discrimination of any kind.

Our ongoing goal is to ensure the health, happiness, and satisfaction of our employees, and we also continue to encourage feedback from all employees and aim to better integrate employees into the countries in which they are employed as we branch out from our home base in Copenhagen into the rest of the world.

LABOR LAW IN DENMARK

As a company headquartered in Copenhagen, BIG follows Danish labour laws which are known for its labour-friendly employment terms on salary, working hours, overtime pay, holidays, pension, notice periods, etc. The average working week in Denmark should not exceed 48 hours, with 37.5 hours being the average. Every full-time employee is entitled to 30 days' annual leave on the basis of 2.5 days for each month worked the previous year. A pregnant employee is entitled to absence from work from 4 weeks before the expected birth, and each childbirth gives the parents a legal right to 52 weeks maternity pay from the government. The unions which exist in the Danish architecture industry are extremely strong, and should employees choose to join any of these, this choice is respected. However, it is not actually necessary for employees to become members of any such unions to benefit from collective bargaining. BIG is a member of Danske Arkitekt Virksomheder, the Union of Danish Architect Companies and is therefore bound to implement the benefits negotiated by the architects' unions for architects.



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BIG's philosophy
of hedonistic
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may live happily
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period of time.*

NO FORCED LABOR

There is neither forced nor compulsory labour at BIG, and we do not condone or tolerate this within our own office or in the offices of our collaborators. Should any managing partner be informed that employees are forced to work, the situation will be solved with swiftness and seriousness. We neither seek out companies that employ forced labour, nor do we condone this type of behavior towards our colleagues or collaborators. In countries where this could be an issue, or may even be prevalent, and where we are able to influence the construction process, forced labour of any kind will not be tolerated whether the collaborators are from the private or public sector.

ABOLITION OF CHILD LABOR

BIG is not involved in any projects which make use of child labor, nor will we ever be. The epitome of BIG's philosophy of hedonistic sustainability is the opposite of children forced into a situation of labor. Hedonistic sustainability is about creating tolerable situations in which all peoples may live happily; BIG will never tolerate child labor and will always support all efforts to abolish this practice.

WORKPLACE SAFETY

BIG is an architecture studio, so in addition to the facilities of an average office, BIG also houses workshops fully equipped with the most advanced laser cutters, wood cutters, and tools and materials necessary to produce architectural models. Needless to say, we have strict guidelines for the use of the model workshops and take extreme precautions to ensure the safety of anyone handling said tools and machinery. All employees are given a workshop orientation with the workshop manager, covering basic safety guidelines and proper workshop protocol to ensure the workshop is a safe place to work for all. Good ventilation is provided for the spray painting and foam cutting areas. The office first aid supplies are kept on an easily accessible and clearly visible shelf, and is regularly checked and restocked.



We offer our own in-house lecture series 'BIG Picture' and continuing education program 'BIG School' to ensure we continuously improve.

A GREAT PLACE TO WORK

At BIG, one of our most important goals is to keep our employees happy at all times. BIG maintains an employee benefits program called "Great Place to Work," which includes opportunities for employee development (such as training courses for architects in addition to our ongoing BIG Picture lecture series), a periodically updated book of discounts for gyms, swimming pools and restaurants, etc., and extra budget allocated to team events and activities outside of the workplace, just to name a few.

All BIG employees, regardless of position held or field of expertise, are given a voice – a voice that will be heard and valued. Employees are more aware of their importance to the company by being encouraged to communicate with the management regarding all areas of the growing company, and to contribute ideas and guidance when the company associates itself with unions or standards in countries with which they are themselves familiar. We have also established an intern evaluation system, which allows interns, who are typically at BIG on a short-term basis (6 months), to discover their strengths and weaknesses following the completion of projects as part of their architectural education.

ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION

BIG upholds this principle by choosing to not practice discrimination of any kind. All employees are chosen on their talents and skills alone, as well as the requirements for the project. We follow the employment and labor laws of the countries in which our employees are employed. BIG has a zero-tolerance policy with regard to discrimination in or outside of the workplace.

Beyond discrimination is bullying and harassment of colleagues – this is an issue that is not taken lightly. The BIG personnel handbook states that bullying is a practice which is greatly denounced at, in, or outside of the workplace and will not be tolerated.



*We come from
25+ home
countries to
work in one of
our three offices
and thus enrich
our office culture
with their own.*



AFFIRMATIVE ACTION PROGRAM

BIG's policy of affirmative action insures that applicants are employed without regard to their religion or national origin. We have established an Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) Manager at BIG, whose responsibility is to set and maintain an internal audit and reporting system to allow for effective measurement of BIG's EEO programs. In 2013, BIG developed a written Affirmative Action Program which sets forth the policies, practices, and procedures that BIG is committed to in order to ensure that its policy of non-discrimination and affirmative action for qualified individuals is accomplished. Our Affirmative Action Program is communicated to all employees via employee handbooks and is posted on bulletin boards located throughout our facilities and office work areas.

DISADVANTAGED BUSINESS ENTERPRISES

BIG's philosophy of an inclusive and proactive design process also extends to how we assemble our project teams; BIG regularly works with consultants from various fields, such as civil engineering, landscape, and historic preservation, who are registered as disadvantaged business enterprises. These include Minority- or Woman-Owned Business Enterprises (M/WBE), Local Disadvantaged Business Enterprises (LDBE), Veteran-Owned Small Businesses (VSOB), and other such classifications. BIG supports the goals of Request for Qualifications/Proposals offerors to include disadvantaged enterprises, and, as a respondent to these RFP/Qs, BIG composes teams to meet and even exceed these goals.



AMAGER BAKKE WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT IS CURRENTLY UNDER CONSTRUCTION

BIG takes the industrial architectural typology and transforms it... offering a new breed of waste-to-energy plant.

- MIPIM Future Award Jury

OUR ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY

On March 14, 2013, BIG celebrated the groundbreaking of the Amager Bakke Waste-to-Energy Plant (formerly known as Amagerforbrændingen). Located in an industrial area near the city centre, the new Waste-to-Energy plant will be an exemplary model in the field of waste management and energy production as well as an architectural landmark in the cityscape of Copenhagen when completed in 2017. The project is the single largest environmental initiative in Denmark and replaces the adjacent outdated Amagerforbrænding plant, integrating the latest technologies in waste treatment and environmental performance. Amager Resource Center is the recipient of the 2012 MIPIM AR Future Projects Award.

Thinking beyond the industrial architecture scale, BIG also constructs building to the highest sustainability standards. BIG's approach to sustainability is rooted in the Danish tradition of energy conservation which goes back decades as the country had to provide for many with only limited resources. We are currently building projects seeking certification in LEED, Green Mark, Minergie, German Sustainable Building Council (DGNB), and Passive House Standards. Our designs have received several sustainability awards including the Scandinavian Green Roof Award for our recent 8 House residential development in Copenhagen.

On the smallest of scales and on a daily basis, BIG follows the "reduce, reuse and recycle" principles in the office. When making architecture models, we save material by optimizing the space on a block of foam or wood, and reuse leftover material whenever possible. Leftover material that cannot be reused is systematically recycled according to type—wood, paper, foam, plexi and other plastics.



SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION SOUTH MALL CAMPUS MASTER PLAN IN WASHINGTON, DC

ENVIRONMENTAL GOALS

We have always incorporated sustainable initiatives into our projects by thinking outside the box. The general perception of sustainability is an idea of a moral code: How much of our existing quality of life are we prepared to sacrifice to afford being sustainable? It is the perception that it has to hurt to be good and that a sustainable life means doing less than a normal life. But we are looking at how sustainable cities, or sustainable buildings, can increase the quality of life; we look for ways of designing cities and buildings as double ecosystems that are both ecologically and economically profitable, and where the outcome doesn't force people to alter their lifestyles to have a better conscience. People can live exactly the way they want, or even better, because the world and the city are designed in such a way. Essentially it is to approach the question of sustainability not as a moral dilemma but as a design challenge. We continue to strive for what we call "hedonistic sustainability," which is sustainability that improves quality of life for everyone while minimizing the impact on the surrounding environment.

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

We are also familiar with the various agencies that oversee landmarks and registered buildings, including the National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) and the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA). For our current work on the Smithsonian Institution's South Campus Master Plan, we have been presenting to the National Capital Planning Commission, the U.S. Commission of Fine Arts, and the National Parks Service. For the Danish Maritime Museum, we worked closely with UNESCO and the local governmental agencies throughout the process to ensure that our design met all the different agency expectations. We suggested a flexible and staged construction process in two phases that would be the least disruptive to local traffic patterns and the visitors to the Castle and the surrounding historic area. The Danish Maritime Museum is a testament to incorporating forward looking architecture in a World Heritage context that is to be preserved for future generations.



STUDY TOUR: BIG SWISS TRIP

As a part of BIG's commitment to embracing a global perspective, every three years BIG organizes a study tour to another part of the world: previous trips took the office to China and Japan. In September 2015, 120 BIGsters from BIG CPH and NYC travelled to Switzerland for a 10 day trip around the country. The tour itinerary included both historic and contemporary landmarks, and projects in currently in construction. By expanding the office's worldview, the goal is to become more mindful and knowledgeable of other cultures and to observe international building practices and standards, and in doing so, bring those best-practices to our own working method.

The study tour is sponsored by BIG, wherein BIG covers two-thirds of the cost of the trip and employees cover the remaining one-third. The cost of the trip is further subsidized for Design Assistants. BIG believes in the continuing education and professional development of its employees, and aims to make continuing education and professional development initiatives like the study trip accessible to all employees. Furthermore, by bringing two offices together in one trip, the aim is to foster a culture of inter-office dialogue that underpins the collaborative spirit of our work.



***Our goal is
unwavering:
BIG neither
subscribes to
nor encourages
any form of
corruption.***

ANTI-CORRUPTION

BIG is a company that values transparency and does not tolerate any form of corruption. We are determined to maintain the highest standards of integrity and work ethics among our staff and across all areas of activity. We therefore maintain a zero-tolerance policy towards corruption in all its forms. Internally, we hold a BIG office-wide meeting once a month, during which BIG Partners report the status of the firm to all employees and give answers to any questions raised.

Externally, when submitting to Requests for Qualifications (RFQs) or Requests for Proposals (RFPs), we always inform the client if there is any potential conflict of interest and make sure that the collaborators on our team do so as well. When choosing projects to pursue, BIG also makes sure that our collaborators and clients are not involved in any activities that suggest corruption. We will not give or accept bribery in any form, and we will not use deception, trickery or breach of confidence to gain an unfair or dishonest advantage.

BIG will not participate in corruption; BIG will not contribute to corruption; BIG will not support corruption.

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