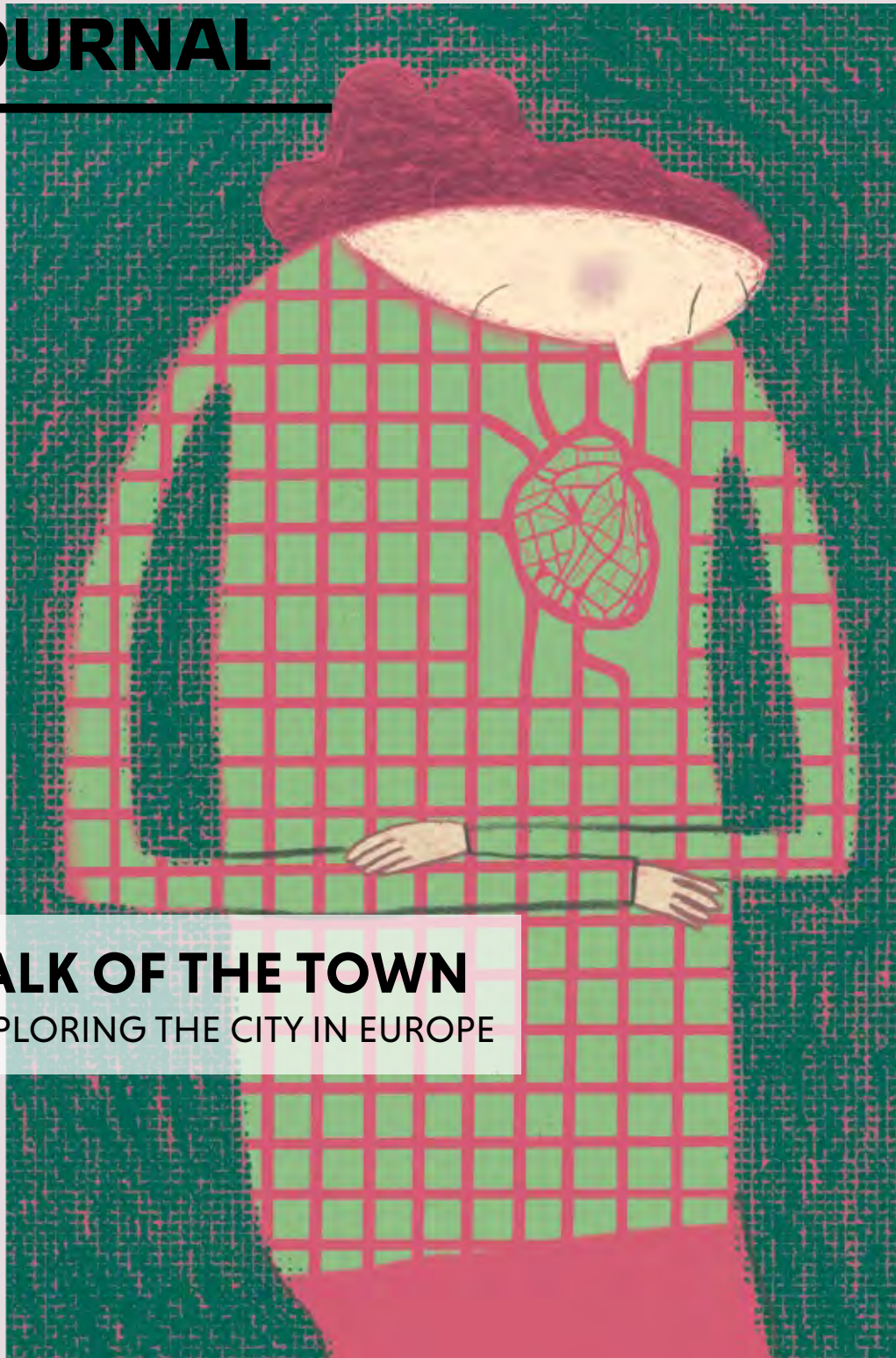
GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

VOLUME 16
WINTER 2017



TALK OF THE TOWN

EXPLORING THE CITY IN EUROPE

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

LAURENT STANDAERT

was trained as an engineer and then as an anthropologist. He worked in national and international organisations on development and foreign policy as well as European affairs. His daughter, Lena, is always a source of inspiration for the Journal and his work.

GRAPHIC DESIGNER

CLAIRE ALLARD

is a graphic designer from Brussels with a passion for travel and photography. At age 19, she was the youngest elected alderman in the Brussels Region, representing the Ecolo party. Although no longer actively involved in politics, she remains a convinced green supporter. As a freelance graphic designer, Claire aims to have clients sharing her own social and ecological values.
www.klar.graphics

ILLUSTRATOR

KLAAS VERPLANCKE

is an internationally acclaimed multi award-winning Belgian author and illustrator. His books have been translated into more than 25 languages, and his illustrations have been published in leading magazines and newspapers, including *The New York Times* and *The New Yorker*.
www.klaas.be

EDITO

THE CALL OF THE CITY

LAURENT STANDAERT FOR THE EDITORIAL BOARD

The political and societal importance of cities today speaks for itself. The 100 richest cities in the world produce almost half of the world's GDP, and by 2050 three quarters of the global population will be living in urban areas. Whether 'smart', 'resilient' or 'connected' – if we are to believe think tanks and other foresight studies – it is in cities where the future of humanity will be shaped. As social and democratic laboratories, economic incubators, testing grounds of participation and local politics, it is to cities that people all over the world turn, to demand greater control and power over their own political destiny.

From fossil fuel divestment pioneers such as Berlin, driven by its citizen movements, to innovative partnerships on issues of transport or energy, many cities in Europe are spearheading the fight against climate change, shaping policies for the future. Other cities, far more than the Member States in Europe and beyond, constitute the vanguard of new forms of solidarity, and are organising to welcome refugees. But for all the 'best' of cities, there is also the 'worst': financialisation, extreme inequality, consumerism, disruptive gentrification, rent-seeking and platform economic schemes, rural exodus, and so on. The development of the city, which has often come at the expense of our relationship with nature, is also a reflection of our own modernity.

In the history of Europe, the city has always been the scene of grand utopias and dystopias. Over the past few centuries, it has been the meeting point between dehumanised mechanisation – capitalist or socialist – and citizens' aspirations towards freedom and new kinds of solidarity, beyond traditional forms. Urban dynamics such as 'Reclaim the Streets' or 'Right to the City' at the end of the 20th century, or more recent movements of 'outraged' citizens occupying the streets and squares in Madrid, Paris, or elsewhere, also have at their core a vision of deep and structural transformation. Confronted with the modern city, where political, economic, cultural, and social capital is concentrated, residents and citizen movements demand a redistribution of power. The city is thus no longer simply the scene of social struggles, but is itself at stake, having become the very foundation of our socio-economic models.

From Barcelona to Amsterdam, from the interview which opens this issue to the one which concludes it, the city is designated as both the 'new political centre' and the 'battleground' of our times. From Paris's ban on diesel vehicles to public transport in Prague or San Francisco, from green practices in Vienna and Ghent to the wave of 're-municipalisation' across Europe, this edition explores both the city and city policies that will – and already are – forging the future of our societies. Other authors analyse the failure of the politics of 'trickle-down' from mega-cities to small towns and rural areas in Poland, or the gulf between rural and urban life in Finland. Brussels, London, and Bilbao offer more perspectives on current urban planning processes and the commodification of public spaces and housing, as well as de-industrialisation and competition between towns. Finally, Saskia Sassen analyses the city in the era of globalisation, and two young researchers from Portugal and France consider the prospects for a 'Europe of cities', and possible future scenarios for our cities through the prism of the climate, respectively.

In the 1970s, André Gorz – one of the greatest thinkers in political ecology, whom we lost 10 years ago now – emphasised the importance of transforming the city as a springboard for transforming society. His writings, and those of other thinkers, helped to spark the budding awareness amongst the educated urban upper classes of fundamental issues around

the social environment and quality of life. Founded during the following decade, the first Green Parties emerged from this awakening, and would retain the electoral character of their urban origins. But even if the presence of Greens and their impact on city politics are clear for all to see, they cannot and should not shy away from casting a critical eye towards the city as a political entity – at the risk of seeing other forces move in on that ground, and of allowing the gulf separating cities from small towns and the countryside to widen. For if the voting patterns seen in the latest elections across Europe and beyond illustrate starkly that the progressive and liberal vote is greater in cities than elsewhere, the many electoral defeats suggest that any political hegemony cities may have is relative. These developments highlight the role of the city as a laboratory for change, and also the necessity of reconnecting with the Europe that lives beyond the city limits.

The progressive struggles for the city will be as much about a more just, ecological, joyful, and sustainable society, as about supporting the 'multipli-city' of urban patterns at a European level. Our fate depends on the outcomes of these struggles, as much for the Greens as a political force as for tackling social and environmental challenges, and ensuring democratic control by citizens. It is thus essential for Greens to drive the reflection on the role of cities in Europe. It is not a matter of promoting a pro-city bias – with all the economic and environmental alienation that urbanisation can bring – but to go beyond the fixation on city politics to the detriment of the political city, and to think of the city as a living space for its residents. It is in cities – in all cities – that the wheels of change are set in motion. Our thinking about the city, and our capacity to imagine the city and its place in our world, will determine the extent to which we can influence, participate in, and steer the course of this change.

This edition is dedicated to Erica Meijers, one of the founders of the Green European Journal and a member of its editorial board, and to Beatrice White, its deputy editor-in-chief, both of whom are moving on in 2017. The Journal thanks them for their endless support and wishes them all the best in their new life adventures.

CONT

Articles with a language code tag were originally written in that language and then translated to English.
To read these and other articles in their original languages, visit the Green European Journal website.

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

ENTS

THE CITY AS THE NEW POLITICAL CENTRE

AN INTERVIEW WITH
JOAN SUBIRATS
BY LORENZO MARSILI

A radical change is taking place. Cities around Europe – through platforms, movements and international networks – are creating paths for citizens to participate in and influence politics directly. Joan Subirats, one of the founders of Barcelona's municipalist platform Barcelona en Comú, discusses how cities can deal with uncertainty and provide a new type of protection, reverse the trend of tech giants owning all our data, and even defy their nation-states on issues such as refugees.

LORENZO MARSILI: A spectre seems to be haunting Europe: the spectre of the cities. Why do you think there is such symbolic power in what you are doing in Barcelona?

JOAN SUBIRATS: There are certainly various factors. One general factor is the transformation to a more platform-based capitalism – a monopolistic, digital capitalism – in which states have lost the ability to respond because the big players are the investment funds, Google, Apple, Facebook, and Microsoft. States are then trapped in the logic of debt and austerity policy. At the same time, the population faces increasing difficulties and there is a sense of uncertainty and fear, a feeling of not knowing what will happen in the future; what will happen to my standard of living, what will happen to my country, and what will happen to us? Many years ago, the philosopher Karl Polanyi talked about the movement towards commodification and the counter-movement of protection. Where do you turn today for protection?

Many would still argue to the state.

JOAN SUBIRATS: Yes, the state is the classic place to turn to demand protection. Following a more conservative, closed, and xenophobic

logic, the state is still a space where you can claim protection, in many cases by closing borders and closing societies. However, cities are different in nature because they were born to be open. "The city air makes us feel free"[1], as the adage goes. Cities are spaces that gather opportunities and possibilities. The proximity of city authorities and political actors offers another kind of protection, much closer and tangible to citizens, albeit admittedly with fewer policy competences and powers than the nation-state. This means that cities seem to be a space where some things – but not everything – can change and change for the better.

Speaking of Polanyi, the philosophy professor Nancy Fraser claims that the second movement, the movement of protection, is one that historically defended primarily the male, white, Western breadwinner against women, minorities, and the Global South. And so she introduces the need for a third movement: one of autonomy and emancipation. To what extent can the 'protection' of the city differ from traditional state protection?

JOAN SUBIRATS: It's a very good question, because it links in with the Ada Colau factor, the Barcelona factor, the PAH factor [Platform of People Affected by Mortgages], and the anti-eviction movement. There is a specific type of change happening in relation to the PAH, which I think is highly significant. When someone goes to the PAH saying they are having problems and cannot pay the mortgage, and that they will be evicted, they meet others facing the same problems who tell them: "We are not going to solve your problem. You have to become an activist, so we can solve our problems together." This means that you are not a client of the PAH – you must become a PAH activist, so that you can change things together. And this is a process of emancipation, not a process of service provision, and it does not follow the outsourcing logic of unions or political parties: "Come and delegate your issues to us, then we will defend your ideas in your name." This delegating approach does not exist in the PAH. The PAH involves making people more active.

How does this become institutionalised? To what extent do these processes of politicisation, of activation – which are also at the basis of the discourse on the commons in the end, with co-ownership and co-management – end up in the policies of the administration?

JOAN SUBIRATS: This is the big initiative that started in May 2015. There were four basic points in the Barcelona en Comú manifesto in the elections, and these could be adopted by other similar platforms elsewhere in Spain. The first was to give control of institutions back to the people, institutions have been captured,

1 After '*Stadtluft macht frei*', a German medieval dictum describing a principle of law that offered freedom and land to settlers who took up urban residence for more than "a year and a day."

and they are not serving our interests. Secondly, people are being put in an increasingly precarious situation, financially and socially. Inequality is increasing, basic social protection mechanisms are being destroyed. We still need to recover the capacity to provide protection, so there is a social emergency that demands a response. Thirdly, we have to build up a more participative democracy that does not delegate. It is not easy, but we must make people more involved in the decisions that affect them. That is where you get onto co-production of policy, co-creation of decisions, etc. The fourth point is that we have to end corruption and cronyism in politics, which people perceive as privilege. Salaries need to be reduced, things have to be done transparently, mandates must be limited – in short, there needs to be more morality in politics.

AT THE LOCAL LEVEL, YOU ARE ABLE TO INTERVENE MORE THAN YOUR POWERS MAY SUGGEST. MY POLITICAL MOBILISATION CAN REACH FURTHER THAN MY POWERS

And how is it going?

JOAN SUBIRATS: To start with, I would say that the most significant progress has certainly been made on the second point: making better thought-out policies to respond to the social emergency. This has in some ways restored legitimacy on the first point: recovering institutions for a different type of politics. Secondly, there are no corruption scandals anywhere in the 'cities of change'. The rather difficult point that I think still poses difficulties is making institutions more participative, and developing co-production of policy. This is because the traditions, routines, and working methods of the institutions are a long way from this approach. Our institutions have a very 19th and 20th century approach, they are very pre-digital, and discussing 'co-production' involves talking about methods for including collective intelligence in such processes – it's not easy.

There is a very interesting international debate on technological sovereignty, moving beyond a system where all data and all social interactions are monetised by the giants of Silicon Valley. What exactly are you are doing on the digital commons?

JOAN SUBIRATS: We have begun changing the base of proprietary software used by the municipal council, and ensuring that contracts made between the council and software providers do not cede the data used for those services to the companies. This also means ensuring that, in a city that is home to Smart Cities and the Mobile World Congress, technological innovation alters the city's approach, whilst at the same time changing

the thinking behind these forums, although this is no easy task. This is why we appointed a commissioner for innovation and technological sovereignty. For instance, we are working on a new contract for a joint transport card to cover trains, buses, and the underground. This card will be manufactured by a provider, and the contract should specify that the local public transport data of all the residents of Barcelona will be controlled by the public authorities. It is a debate about sovereignty – not state sovereignty, but energy, water, food, and digital sovereignty. Those are the public priorities and the needs that are being debated.

I like the concept of 'sovereignty of proximity' or 'sovereignties', as too often sovereignty is equated simply with national sovereignty. But many constitutions, such as the Italian one, state that "sovereignty belongs to the people", not to the nation-state! Yet, in constitutional arrangements the role of cities is still very limited; their actual competences are narrow. Wouldn't any attempt to place the city at the centre of a renewed governance require a national-level political fight to change the allocation of competences between the different levels?

JOAN SUBIRATS: I like talking about the question of the 'level of responsibility' of municipalities, which is high because they have very broad agendas, in terms of responding to the demands of citizens. However their 'level of powers' – what they are able to do – is much lower. Not everything can be solved locally, it is obvious. And surely, that is why Barcelona en Comú is trying to build a movement across Catalonia. It is called Catalunya en Comú and it works within a logic of federal alliances with Podemos. This is because if you are unable to have influence at the level of Catalonia itself – where education and healthcare policies are decided – or at the state level, you are not able to act. But at the same time, it is true that at the local level, you are able to intervene more than your powers may suggest. My political mobilisation can reach further than my powers. In other words, the conflict is not only legal, but also political. For example, you may not have powers regarding housing in Catalonia. In Barcelona, these powers are in the hands of the autonomous Generalitat or the state. But you can also take it to the streets with political mobilisations to solve housing problems, and there you can make alliances against Airbnb – with Berlin, with Amsterdam, and with New York. That dynamic will force Airbnb to respond, even though the Spanish, U.S., and Dutch states are unable to solve the problem. So I think we should not be limited by the idea that there are no legal powers.

The opposition between city and state is interesting here. We have a paradoxical situation, as you know, where many cities across Europe – Barcelona is one of them – would like to welcome refugees and yet their nation-states

often block this. The Spanish government is no exception. Could we envision a disobedient act, where a city would unilaterally welcome a certain number of refugees? Interestingly, you would be disobeying the national government but paradoxically you would be obeying the European scheme on refugee relocation that the national government is itself disobeying in the first place.

JOAN SUBIRATS: Yes, that is a good example and I think it could be implemented. It would certainly have more political effect than real effect, as you would not solve the big problem of refugees. However you would be sending a very clear message that it is possible to do things at city level and that people are prepared to do things, and it would not just be rhetoric. Certainly, in other cases similar things could be done. In fact, action has been taken here, for example on the ability of property investment funds to buy buildings. The municipal council of Barcelona cannot legally break the law, but it has made it more difficult in many ways for investment funds to make those deals. In some cases it has even foiled these purchases by buying a building itself to prevent it becoming a target for speculation.

German politician Gesine Schwan is bringing forward a proposal to directly connect the European-level relocation of refugees with municipalities, by essentially bypassing the nation-state. Do you think that we need to review the institutional levels that currently govern the European Union, which are mostly organised according to a 'nation-state to European Union' structure, thinking instead of a 'municipality to European Union' structure?

JOAN SUBIRATS: Yes, I think that this is an area where we can connect existing experiences. There are organisations like EuroCities that have been created for benchmarking and learning between cities. There are working groups dealing with mobility, social policy, and so on. I think that we should follow up more on this approach of coordinating at local level, and we should look for opportunities to have a direct dialogue with the European Union, skipping the state level. I think it will not be at all easy because nation-states have captured the European decision-making structure. So even if cities had an ally in the European Union, it would not be easy, but it could be done. I believe that the European Union would be rather reluctant to take that step. I think the way would be to create a European forum of local authorities, which would grow in strength, and would be able to make the leap in this area.

Can you imagine a European network of cities of change that acts a bit as a counter-power, as much to the European Union as to nation-states?

JOAN SUBIRATS: I think it is not only possible but desirable. I think that the Barcelona

municipal authority is already moving in that direction. Many years ago, Barcelona made Sarajevo its eleventh district, and there is also a strong collaboration between Barcelona and the Gaza Strip in Palestine, including a very close relationship with municipal technical officials working in Gaza. The municipality of Barcelona's tradition of international cooperation is well-established, so building on this would be nothing new.

There seems to be a particularity about Europe, namely the existence of a transnational political structure that governs the spaces that we happen to inhabit. The political theorist Benjamin Barber proposed a global parliament of mayors – which clearly is a very interesting intellectual proposal at the global level because there is no global government. But in Europe we do have at least a simulacrum of a European government. Do you think one could envisage creating an institutionally recognised space for cities, like a European parliament of cities?

JOAN SUBIRATS: It could be done but for it to be really constructive and powerful and for it to make progress, it should not be shaped initially by institutions, bureaucrats, or organisations. It should rather work on the basis of encounters from below and building the legitimacy of mayors that have made an impact (in Naples, Madrid, Barcelona, etc.). It should be seen to be a process working from the bottom up, without any desire to make quick political capital from above. This would be much more resilient and it would ultimately be powerful.

Building a European and international role for cities is a very demanding task. Often when I go and advocate for these ideas with city administrations I notice that municipalities very often lack the staff and the offices to deal with this more political or diplomatic work. If we posit a new global or European role for cities then cities need to invest in an institutional machinery that can actually perform this work.

JOAN SUBIRATS: This is certainly true. The shortcomings that you mention could certainly be addressed if we worked with a more metropolitan approach. The term municipality does not always refer to the same thing: Madrid covers 600 km^2 and Barcelona 100 km^2. Paris is divided into the City of Paris and Greater Paris. If we worked to build the concept of a Greater Barcelona rather than the City of Barcelona, this would mean moving from 1.5 million inhabitants to 3.5 million. The 25 town councils that make up the metropolitan area would certainly agree to invest resources to foster international processes. Paris may already be working on this, and it has a metropolitan dimension that could be strengthened. It is certainly true that there is a lack of staff and tradition.

People think in global terms without stopping to think that cities always have to go through the state to work internationally. This situation would be eased by focusing on the metropolis.

Let's close with the global dimension proper. More than half the world's population lives in urban areas, while the top 100 cities produce just under half the world's GDP. In June 2017, Barcelona hosted a global summit, Fearless Cities, bringing together mayors from across the world to commit to joint initiatives to tackle precisely the global challenges that national leadership seems increasingly unable to address. How do you see this developing further? What concrete actions could be put in place?

JOAN SUBIRATS: In my opinion the best way would be to work with a concrete agenda, and to find the issues that can most easily draw cities in and connect with them. For example, the issue of redistribution, the question of the minimum wage – which has sparked debate in London, Seattle, and New York – and issues of housing, primary education, energy, and water. We could start with issues like these, that are clearly cross-cutting and global, affecting everywhere in the world, and start linking agendas across Europe in a more specific way. This would facilitate the political and institutional side, and we could make the leap more quickly. When people see the shortcomings in the area of policies, this will highlight the shortcomings in the area of polity. ■

LORENZO MARSILI
is a writer, political activist and the founder of international network European Alternatives. He is currently on the coordinating committee of the pan-European movement DiEM25. He has previously worked in journalism and was founding editor of *Naked Punch Review*. His latest book is *Citizens of Nowhere: How to Save Europe from Itself* (Zed Books, forthcoming Spring 2018).

JOAN SUBIRATS
is the founder, director, and now researcher of the Institute for Government and Public Policy at the Autonomous University of Barcelona. He has been a visiting professor at various American and European universities and specialises in questions of public policy and democratic innovation. His most recent books are *El Poder de la Proximidad* (Catarata Libros 2016) and *Social Innovation and Democratic Leadership* (E. Elgar 2017). He also writes regularly in *El País*, *El Periódico*, *ElDiario.es,* amongst others.

GATHERING STORMS
FORECASTING THE FUTURE OF CITIES

ARTICLE BY
PABLO SERVIGNE

The prognosis for our planet, now widely accepted, is shattering our vision of a bright future for our cities, characterised by abundance and technological expansion. As a result, we urgently need to envision and confront the scenarios that are likely to become our reality, in the hope that this work of imagination can help us to adapt effectively and perhaps steer a different course.

Cities around the world today face a whole host of grave threats: from pollution to climate change, resource scarcity to overpopulation, and many more. Growing awareness of this has led to a proliferation of 'solutions' such as 'green', 'sustainable', 'smart', 'resilient', 'zero-carbon' projects, as well as 'eco-neighbourhoods'. But how effective can these initiatives hope to be, in light of the scale of the problems faced? Our vision of the future is in dire need of being injected with a good dose of realism. The vision of a 'linear' urban future is in effect fed by the imagery of abundance forged during post-war reconstruction. Yet the conditions of such prosperity are no longer in place.

A closer look at the principal threats facing cities can serve as a base from which to devise potential future scenarios. By stimulating our imagination, it is hoped that this conceptual framework will help us design urban policies which are more credible and less unsustainable than those we have witnessed so far.

FR

This article is an abridged version of the first part of the essay *Imaginer l'Avenir des Villes*, published by Barricade (Liège) in 2016 and available at www.barricade.be

IMAGINER L'AVENIR DES VILLES

Une étude prospective présente quatre scénarios sur le futur des villes à travers le prisme du climat et des énergies fossiles.

CITIES UNDER THREAT

The risks of global warming are well known. According to the UN, more than 60 per cent of cities with populations of over 750,000 are exposed to at least one major risk. One of the latest reports from the IPCC describes one

major risk, amongst others – of climate and environmental shocks breaking down the industrial food systems that feed most European towns.[1]

Resource shortages (metals, water, wood, energy, etc) also fall within these major threats. In fact, there is nothing simpler than seriously disrupting a city: it's merely a matter of blocking its food and energy supplies. These are amongst the worst threats a city can face, because the social, economic and then political effects are felt almost immediately (within a matter of days). Hence the prioritisation of food security by all governments over the centuries.

Serious threats are also posed by certain types of pollution. As well as the heavy metals and organic compounds polluting the soil, and aerosols *already* rendering certain towns unliveable, there is the risk of major industrial accidents forcing entire urban populations to be evacuated.

Cities must learn to anticipate all this, to absorb the shocks, to recover, and to learn from these events, most of which are *already* happening in certain parts of the world. Simply to achieve this, they need resources, energy and a degree of social order, which are increasingly hard to guarantee.

In fact, all these threats can be considered to come from outside the city (external threats). But there is another equally serious, and less well known, type of threat: internal threats. These arise mainly from vulnerable infrastructure and social conflict.

It is well-known to historians and archaeologists that a town's capacity to grow and thrive depends on its capacity to safeguard good communication, transport, and distribution networks. Today, much of the transport, electricity, and water infrastructure in OECD countries is over 50 years old (over 100 years old, in some cases), and is already operating well beyond maximum capacity.[2] The extent of its interconnection, complexity, and homogeneity, and the speed of movement of the components of city life, have also increased the vulnerability of this infrastructure. It is thus also easily destabilised by one-off events such as floods, hurricanes, and terrorist attacks.

When, following the rise in the price of diesel in the year 2000, 150 striking lorry drivers blocked major fuel depots in the UK, the consequences rapidly made themselves felt: "Just four days after the start of the strike, most of the country's refineries had ceased operation, forcing the government to take steps to protect the remaining reserves. The following day, people rushed into shops and supermarkets to stock up on food. One day later, 90% of filling stations had stopped serving, and the NHS [National Health Service] started to cancel

1 P. Servigne (2017). *Nourrir l'Europe en temps de crise. Vers de systèmes alimentaires résilients,* Babel.
2 I. Goldin & M. Mariathasan, (2014). *The butterfly defect: How globalization creates systemic risks, and what to do about it.* Princeton University Press, p.101.

elective surgery. Royal Mail deliveries stopped, and schools in many towns and villages closed their doors. Major supermarkets such as Tesco and Sainsbury's introduced rationing, and the government called in the army to escort convoys of vital goods. In the end, public pressure led the strikers to end their action".[3]

The social order of a city can falter rapidly, even when networks don't break down. All it takes is an economic or political crisis, leading to a collapse of industrial activity, massive job losses, housing crises, the bursting of a speculation bubble, riots, community or class conflicts, terrorist acts, and so on. These events have become frequent because of the significant increase in economic and social inequality within countries[4], and even within cities.[5] This is nothing new, but seems to have been forgotten; archaeology shows us that the economic and political elites of great civilisations have often caused the inexorable degradation of their environment, due to the pressure they put on people and natural ecosystems.[6]

Last, but not least, all these threats are *interdependent*, and nowadays operate at a globalised level. Large, homogeneous, fast-moving, deeply interconnected international networks have – paradoxically – become more resistant to small disturbances, but more vulnerable to major disruptions, which, when they occur, can trigger a domino effect throughout the system, leading to collapse.[7] Scientists speak of a new kind of risk: the 'systemic global risk' inherent in these extensive complex networks, and, as major nodes in these global networks, cities are very exposed to these risks.

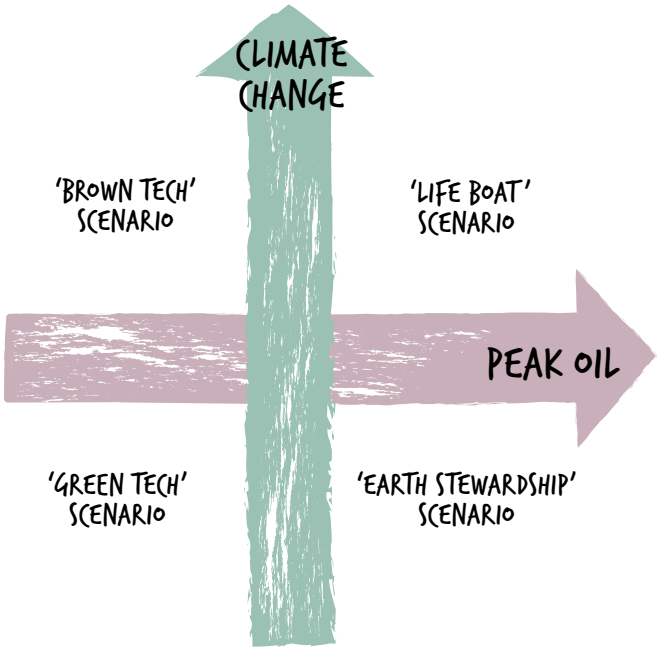
SCENARIOS FOR THE FUTURE: FOREWARNED IS FOREARMED

With that in mind, four scenarios can be envisaged. The aim is not to alarm, nor to predict the future, but to stimulate the imagination and test the effects of these threats against possible futures. These scenarios are to be taken as signposts, pathways or stages, like the points of a compass. They are archetypes for the future, to help illustrate trends and provide insight into what might lie ahead.

The division into four scenarios arises from two forward-looking works: *Future Scenarios* by David Holmgren[8], and *Resilient Cities,* by architects and planners Newman, Beatley and Boyer.[9] The first work describes the possible trajectories in relation to peak oil and climate change.

3 P. Servigne & R. Stevens (2015), *Comment tout peut s'effondrer. Petit manuel de collapsologie à l'usage des générations présentes*, Seuil, p. 116.
4 R. Wilkinson, & K. Pickett (2009). *The Spirit Level: Why Equality is Better for Everyone*, Allen Lane.
5 O. Razemon (2016) *Comment la France a tué ses villes,* Rue de l'échiquier.
6 For example, the salinisation of land during the third millennium BCE in Mesapotamia, or, today, the living stands of rich Europeans destroying tropical forests. See N. B. Grimm, et al. (2008). *Global change and the ecology of cities*, Science, n°319, pp. 756-760.
7 P. Servigne & R. Stevens (2015), op. cit.
8 D. Holmgren (2009), *Future scenarios, How communities can adapt to peak oil and climate change*, Green Books.
9 P. Newman et al. (2009) *Resilient cities. Responding to peak oil and climate change*, Island Press.


DONT
WALK
SWIM



If climate change has a gradual effect (providing enough room for manoeuvre to transform society), there are two possible scenarios: a 'green tech' transition, which, if resources decline slowly, could be relatively comfortable, or a radical and rapid change, known as 'earth stewardship', in the case of a brutally rapid decline in energy resources. By contrast, if climate change has rapid and violent effects, society will tip into a 'brown tech' future, where the powers that be would muster all their force to maintain 'business as usual'. Or, even worse, society could completely collapse – the 'lifeboat' scenario – if these catastrophes coincided with a rapid loss of resources.

The second publication focuses exclusively on the end of oil, and analysing its effects on cities. It explores the following question: knowing that cities are completely dependent on oil, and have a massive carbon footprint, what would be the consequences for modern industrial cities of the end of the oil age? Two areas in particular are explored: transport and food security. The authors describe four scenarios, similar to those of Holmgren: the resilient city (corresponding to the 'green tech' scenario), the divided city ('brown tech' scenario), the ruralised city ('earth stewardship' scenario), and the collapsed city ('lifeboat' scenario).

However, both of these forward-looking publications only consider scenarios based on external threats (climate and oil), without taking account of internal threats. The latter have been explicitely included in the following proposed synthesis.[10]

10 Here, armed conflict is not included in external threats, and civil war not included in internal threats.
11 In the context of a post-peak oil transition, this refers to the shift away from an increasing use of energy to a reduction. https://www.transitionculture.org/essential-info/what-is-energy-descent/

IN THE CITIES OF INDUSTRIALISED COUNTRIES, IT IS HIGHLY LIKELY THAT WE WILL REACH 'PEAK URBANISATION' OVER THE NEXT DECADE

THE ECOTECHNICAL CITY

If the impact of global warming turns out to be gradual, and an 'energy descent'[11] can be managed, society can adopt 'green' technologies, ensure a successful transition, and work towards distributed renewable energy systems, without conflict or disasters. This would lead to a resurgence in regional, rural economies, more sustainable agriculture, more horizontal political systems, and more compact cities that prioritise public transport and the local economy. A balance would be found between reducing consumption and slowing economic growth, thanks to energy efficiency technology and a relocalisation of the economy. However, it is only possible for a city to take this route if it already has a resilient, well-maintained infrastructure, and if it avoids major political, economic and social upheavals. This is clearly the most desirable scenario in terms of maintaining the living standards and security that our democratic societies rely on. To sum up, in the absence of significant obstacles, even in the context of an energy descent, an efficient transition is still possible. *The city can prepare, slowly but surely, for the 'storms' ahead.*

THE ECOVILLAGE CITY

A rapid decline in resources, including oil and natural gas, could trigger a crisis that would bring the world economy to its knees. This global collapse could create political instability, which would in turn lead to serious social problems, but also, paradoxically, to an end of greenhouse gas emissions. Local resilient communities would then emerge in some rural areas (following a massive rural exodus). This would be achieved through agro-ecology and permaculture techniques, and above all by sustaining their capacity for local democracy. It is possible that the major megalopolises would still contain rich, private, gated neighbourhoods, by developing urban agriculture within suburban gardens. In this scenario, no-one believes civilisation can be preserved as it stands; people will have moved on, to work for something radically different. Cities would return to being semi-rural, meeting many of their food

and energy needs very locally, along the lines of self-sufficient medieval towns. Peri-urban belts would be made up of ecovillages, supplying the town and recycling waste, much like the Parisian market gardeners of the 19th century. However, this 'radical resilience' policy will only be practicable if massive disasters (hurricanes, uprisings, revolutions, etc.), that could destabilise the political and social order are neither too intense nor too frequent. If they do occur, the organisation of the city could change radically, whilst retaining a chance of avoiding breakdown and chaos, and maintaining a semblance of democracy, albeit at increasingly local levels. *In this scenario, the city is instantly transformed, yet without being wiped out by the 'storms'.*

THE ENCLAVE CITY

A slow decline in energy supply could leave influential power structures in place, thus thwarting any chance of real transformation. The combination of an authoritarian state and greedy private business would foster an extraction industry rush for non-renewable resources, with predictably catastrophic consequences. But then the climate and environmental crises would be so overwhelming that all of society's energy and resources would be needed to keep the ship afloat, due to policies that are centralised, securitised, militarised and inegalitarian. The city would splinter; the rich, cocooned in their safe neighbourhoods, would maintain access to increasingly expensive supplies, protecting themselves from climatic variations with new technology. The poorest in society would be left to their own devices in semi-rural areas (with survival vegetable plots providing resilience), or even shanty towns, with less and less reliable access to resources. In this scenario, the economic elite (the rich) and political elite (the government), in their opulent enclaves, would use violence and fear to maintain their privilege. These elites would have no choice than to bring in ever more oppressive laws. Those in the most precarious situations would gradually lose the means to protect themselves from environmental and social disasters, and certain districts (crowded with arriving migrants) would become shanty towns, and police no-go areas. Political cohesion, and thus democracy, would be the first victims, leaving the field open for the expansion of the private sector and its irresistible machine for generating ever more privilege and social division – in other words, social chaos. *The city crumbles, the rich 'manage' the crisis, everyone else endures it, and the former control the latter by increasingly undemocratic means.*

THE COLLAPSED CITY

If rapid economic and political collapse (the Ecovillage scenario) is compounded by severe environmental and climate crises, it is too late to take the resilience route; collapse is inevitable. History shows that a lack of preparation

EXTERNAL THREATS		CLIMATE AND ENVIRONMENTAL SHOCKS	
		⊖	⊕
Supply Chain Disruption (including oil)	⊖	Ecotech	Enclaves
	⊕	Ecovillages	Collapse

⊖ = Delayed and/or rare and/or weak
⊕ = Imminent and/or frequent and/or strong

INTERNAL THREATS		ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL SHOCKS	
		⊖	⊕
State of structures and networks	Robust / resilient	Ecotech	Enclaves
	Fragile / vulnerable	Ecovillages	Collapse

combined with a succession of various disasters will end up getting the better of any city. There is no lack of examples of dead cities, such as Ephesus, the port and second largest town in the Roman Empire, abandoned in around the year 1,000 when the river dried up after all the trees on the surrounding hills had been felled. War, illness, and famine have always cleared cities of their inhabitants, and this can still happen. In Syria and Libya, armed conflict has devastated entire towns, which have still not recovered. When the shock is too brutal, some of the urban population flee, and those who cannot, stay, prey to shortages and chaos. Epidemics and/or conflict can reduce social life to clans controlled by local warlords. Some small population clusters would survive in exceptionally favourable conditions (such as a healthy river, stable damn, fertile fields, or an isolated monastery). These small islands (Holmgren's 'lifeboats') would be humanity's only chance to find a way through a dark period and retain the hope of renaissance in a few decades, or centuries. *In this scenario, unpredictable and irreversible domino effects lead to the rapid breakdown of the city.*

A RUPTURE IN OUR IMAGINATION

This four-scenario compass provides us with a new way of looking at the future. It enables us to see more clearly what is at stake: from a hardening of class relations, de-industrialisation of towns, urban exodus, and infrastructure collapse to the development of green technologies. Even if the details of these trajectories are not specified, global trends are clear: towards catastrophes, or what some might term collapse.

These narratives differ from the more common forecasts, based on myths around technological progress, and luring us with a future ever more connected to the virtual, and thus in the

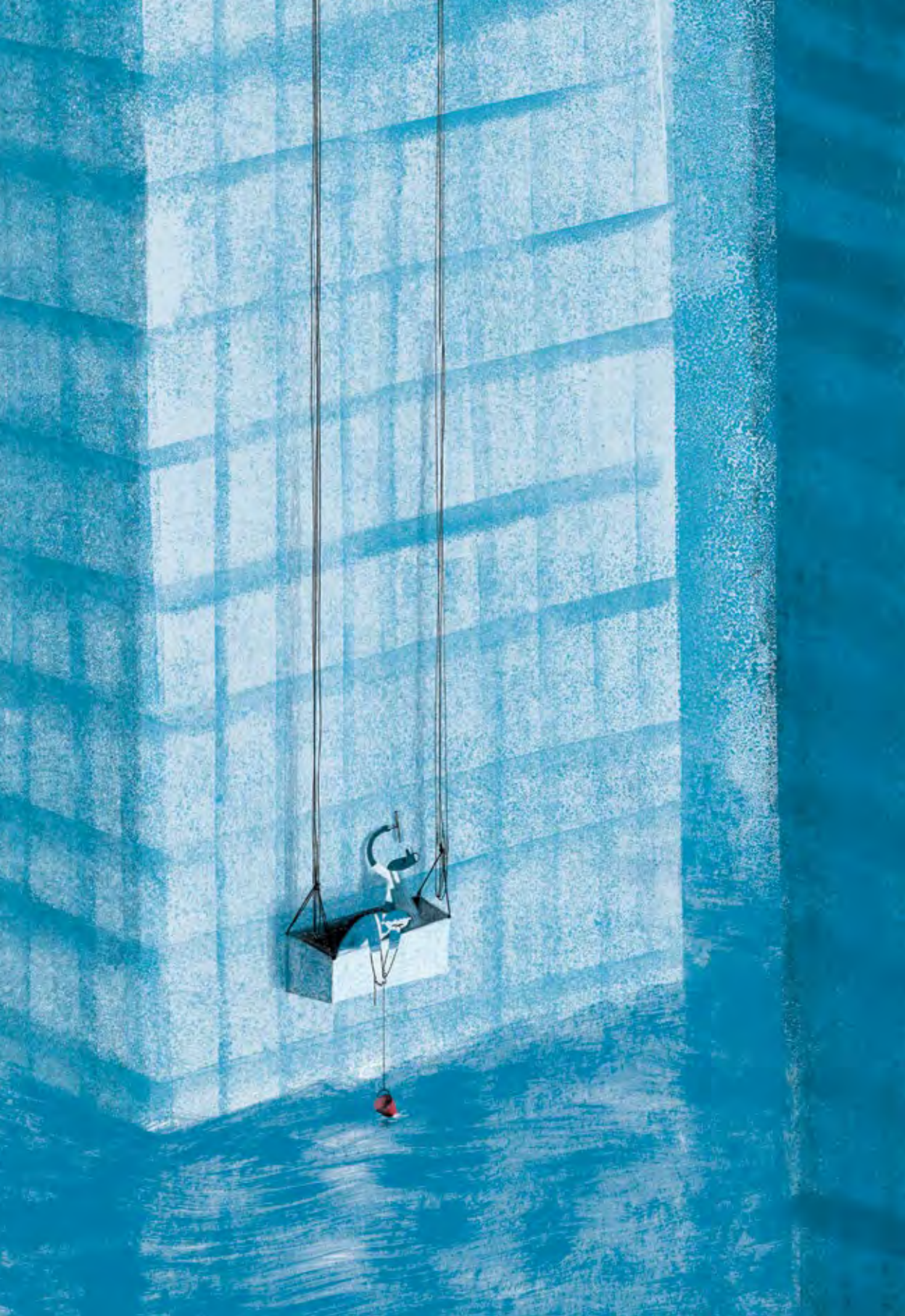
end disconnected from the natural. But we have clearly run up against the limits of this approach (and of earth-system science), and now we must prepare for a future of rupture and interruption.

In the cities of industrialised countries – including, need we add, Europe – it is highly likely that we will reach 'peak urbanisation' over the next decade. In other words, we cannot carry on in this ultra-urban direction. The future of industrial towns will more likely be one of depopulation, reconnection with green belts and the countryside, an overdue reduction in social inequality, and the re-localisation of the economy. It is up to us to tip the balance in favour of a particular scenario.

Even if the precise nature of these scenarios is not clear, we can be sure that the urban future has to be resilient.[12] Cities will have to weather various kinds of 'storms', some with more ease than others, and this will radically transform how Europeans design and inhabit their cities. Anticipating these 'storms' today, feeling and imagining them, equips us to be prepared, and thus avert disaster.

12 A. Sinaï et al. *Petit traité de résilience locale*, 2015, Éditions Charles Léopold Mayer.

PABLO SERVIGNE
trained as a tropical agronomist, and has a doctorate in biology. He left the academic world in 2008 to become an *'in-terre-dépendant'* researcher. He is the author of *Nourrir l'Europe en temps de crise. Vers de systèmes alimentaires résilients* (re-edition Babel 2017) and of the acclaimed *Comment tout peut s'effondrer,* Seuil 2015, amongst other publications.



SPEAKING TO BOTH SIDES

CAN A GREEN MESSAGE RESONATE IN TOWN AND COUNTRY?

AN INTERVIEW WITH
SILVIA NOSSEK
BY **GEORG MAIβER**

Vienna's district of Währing offers idyllic countryside to the west and the vibrancy of the city to the east. Its chairperson, Green politician Silvia Nossek, won her seat with the promise to reduce traffic and introduce parking fees, an agenda which appealed to urban parts of her constituency but was fiercely opposed in the more remote parts. Such tensions are emblematic of the immense challenge facing Greens – of putting forward an agenda for both town and country.

DE

This interview is available in its original language (German) on the Green European Journal website.

DIE GRÜNEN HABEN KEIN LEBENSMODELL FÜR DEN LÄNDLICHEN RAUM

Als grüne Bezirksvorsteherin von Währing, dem 18. Wiener Gemeindebezirk, ist Silvia Nossek ebenso für urbanen StadtbewohnerInnen zuständig wie für jene Menschen, die bereits „wie am Land" leben, inklusive Einfamilienhaus und Auto vor der Tür.

GEORG MAIβER: What makes the Green approach to local politics distinctive?

SILVIA NOSSEK: The Green approach to politics consists above all in articulating something which is clear to most people already, yet which remains an uncomfortable truth: that carrying on as we have done up to now is not an option. And the necessary transformation in the way we live, the way we produce things, and the way we consume cannot be carried out – or cannot only be carried out – at the national and international level, but also has to occur at the level of local politics.

In my day-to-day activities, I find it helpful to hold on to the clear objective of making our society ecologically and socially sustainable – so that a good life is possible for everyone, now and in the future.

I am continually astounded in my everyday work by the passions aroused by issues connected with cars and parking spaces, and how deeply every bit of public space clawed back – for environmentally-friendly transport, for tree-planting, or as shared space for everyone –

is resented by many people as a restriction on their personal freedom and an interference in their right to live how they want. It's only possible to make the right decisions in such cases with an appreciation of sustainability and of the right of all people, including children and older people, to mobility.

Why is it that even in your district the Greens are more successful in the urban parts than in the rural parts? Why do Greens seem to have such difficulty appealing to the inhabitants of rural areas?

SILVIA NOSSEK: There are of course striking structural differences. The city centre part of Währing has a better local supply system, and much better public transport facilities – it is easy to live without a car there. At the same time, the density of development produces a demand for public spaces and an acute awareness of how these are threatened by the car.

Conversely, the people at the periphery of the district are much more dependent on their cars – and because of the patterns of development and settlement, and because of the many private gardens, they are far less interested in public spaces.

The green lifestyle we propose meets the needs of the inner city, but we have not yet developed an attractive Green story for the countryside. To take only one example: the overall energy consumption for an average Vienna apartment with only standard energy-saving technology is considerably lower than that of any family *Passivhaus* [low-energy 'passive house'] in the country. In rural areas, the way buildings are currently constructed, the way retail infrastructure is designed, the way mobility is organised – none of this is compatible with a sustainable lifestyle. And it is hardly possible to deal with this at the individual level; instead, fundamental structural changes are needed.

So far we have not focused enough on this, and have failed to bring out the full implications in the public debate. One of the rare exceptions to this general rule is the new land use planning law drawn up by the Green Vice-Governor Astrid Rössler in Salzburg, which I see as a milestone indicating the path ahead. People in the countryside are starting to be worried about more and more land vanishing under concrete and roads. They see how their inner cities are being abandoned because the car-centred lifestyle is not compatible with these settlement patterns, often hundreds of years old. We are the party that says that change is necessary and for many people this is painful. But we have to show that the solutions we propose lead the way to something better.

Still, it seems as if the urban 'Bobos' (Bourgeois-bohemians) of Vienna, Madrid, London, Paris, and other large European capitals have more

in common with one another than with their compatriots who live in the countryside. Will the difference between town and country lead to a split in society?

SILVIA NOSSEK: What is important here – and what Greens have to lead the way on – is developing a new sense of solidarity, less upward aspiration, notwithstanding the desire for autonomy and emancipation, and instead an alliance between the middle and lower classes. In other words, a society with a collective sense of belonging, where responsibility is shared, decisions are taken together, and ultimately an understanding that our collective and individual well-being is interdependent.

And we should debate the question of an up-to-date and sustainable division of labour between the city and country: what are the different strengths of urban and rural economies, in what ways are they dependent on each other, what can they learn from each other, and so on. For example, the country can re-learn things from the city about a sharing culture: public transport, green spaces, swimming pools – all these things are used communally in the city, whereas the countryside idyll is based on having your own garden, your own swimming pool, your own car. Conversely, the country can teach the city about the importance of identity and belonging, especially in periods of change.

Are city dwellers more aware of the consequences of their own actions because living in permanent proximity to other people makes the dependence of the individual on society more evident? Or are there other explanations for the striking difference in voting patterns?

SILVIA NOSSEK: Rural areas have always had more conservative underlying structures – any kind of change there is resented as an imposition. And many people move to the country because they don't want to be in such close proximity to others – because there they can have their own house, their own garden, their own swimming pool. And of course their own car – at the cost of being dependent on it.

Another difficulty is that some policies or developments that are considered successful in rural areas are highly suspect from an ecological perspective – but of course still count as successes: automobility and road building, sprawling development on a regional scale, shopping centres and business parks on greenfield sites, increasing concentration in the agricultural economy, winter tourism.

I think we Greens ought to be thinking about those structural elements and values of rural life to which we could make a positive connection – and there are a few that spring to mind: cooperatives, organic farming, civic volunteering and civic clubs and associations, etc.

How do you view the opposition between 'nature' and 'city'? Is it not peculiar that the Greens' dream is to bring 'nature' into the city? Why not simply live in the country in the first place, and let the city be a city, with all its negative attributes (such as noise, crowds and traffic)?

SILVIA NOSSEK: Well, I think it is a common error to automatically equate rural living with nature, peace and quiet, a more authentic way of life, and small-scale development. In the country you often get more traffic noise than in a courtyard garden in Vienna; honey from urban bees has far fewer pesticides than that of their rural cousins; there is greater biodiversity in the city; and it is much easier to get by without a car there.

I THINK IT IS A COMMON ERROR TO AUTOMATICALLY EQUATE RURAL LIVING WITH NATURE, PEACE AND QUIET, A MORE AUTHENTIC WAY OF LIFE

From an ecological perspective, it would not be possible for the majority of people to live in the country given present economic structures; so it is the job of politics to safeguard the quality of life in the city – that everyone has a green space within easy reach, policies that take proper account of children and old people, areas of peace and tranquillity, and being able to sleep with the window open.

Do you have the impression that as district chairperson you have altered your earlier position on some things? Do some Green notions turn out to be naïve and unrealistic when they come up against the reality of how 'other people' live?

SILVIA NOSSEK: It is naïve and unrealistic to assume that we can simply carry on as before and that somehow our lives and those of our children and grandchildren will remain essentially unchanged. A fundamental change is going to take place – the question is only whether it is one that we actively manage or one that is inflicted on us. And climate change means that we don't have much time.

But at the same time, this transformation requires time and commitment: for some people, decisions that limit car mobility represent a massive intervention in their daily lives and in their life plans, and even in Vienna there are residential districts where it's hard to get by without your own car. The changeover will require innovation and investment in public infrastructure, and an expansion of the public transport system and of car-sharing schemes. And the transformation requires broad acceptance of the need for fundamental change. Firstly because at the moment food is

IT'S EASIER TO CREATE A COMMUNALLY-BASED AND SUSTAINABLE LIFESTYLE FOR EVERYONE IN THE CITY THAN IT IS IN THE COUNTRY

being produced too cheaply to be healthy; secondly because housing can't be run as a free market if it is to be affordable for all; thirdly because mobility such as we have now costs the individual, and all of us, too much – and not only in financial terms; and finally because the way we produce, consume, and throw things away is destroying the foundations on which we live – and at some point there really will no longer be enough for everyone.

Knowing how urgently the change is needed, and at the same time knowing that it all requires time – that is the emotional tightrope that every Green politician has to walk.

Does the Green way of thinking have a particular affinity with local politics, as opposed to a regional or national orientation? Or, is it possible that the direct impact of local politics in people's lives demonstrates more readily the necessity of Green policies than at the other political levels, where the connections are often more abstract? To put it another way: Is the transformation of Mariahilfer Straße to a pedestrian area and the 365 euros annual season ticket for all public transport in Vienna more helpful for the Greens' electoral prospects than a new renewable energy law or Green policies on women? Or do you not see any real difference?

SILVIA NOSSEK: I don't see any real difference. What is important is to make the connections between policies at the different levels – we do far too little of that! For example: what is the connection between current legislation on rents and construction activity in Währing? National laws, regional laws, and the executive power on a district level all have to come together to make a real change, to invest more in social housing, and to lower rents. What duties and commitments do Vienna and Währing have under the Paris Climate Accord? How would the introduction of a European standard for reusable fruit and veg boxes reduce the amount of waste left behind at our street markets – and how much money would this save the district?

There is an intellectual trend at the moment of seeing cities as centres of resistance against globalisation, exploitative neoliberalism, and rising nationalism. To what extent do you think that is justified? Are cities a testbed of resistance where progressive politics can be developed and in which a post-national cosmopolitan identity could perhaps emerge? Or is that wishful thinking?

SILVIA NOSSEK: I can't see it. Frankfurt and Paris are currently fighting over who will inherit London's role as a financial centre, Wall Street is the epitome of unfettered capitalism, and the global competition between cities adds to that between countries. And yes, there is such a thing as a 'post-national cosmopolitan identity' – I was a management consultant for long enough to know that you can find it in every Master's course at the *Wirtschaftsuniversität* (Vienna University of Economics and Business) or in every international course of studies in all the cities of the world. However, I fail to see how it will result in resistance to the right-wing liberal mainstream.

So you don't believe in the city as a kind of laboratory where solutions for the whole country can be found? But wasn't the success of Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen in the cities a sign of the possibilities of a progressive majority there? Let us not forget Barcelona or Paris, the 'sanctuary cities' in the United States, or the resilient cities fighting against climate change when national governments won't.

SILVIA NOSSEK: Yes, maybe. It's true that it's easier to create a communally-based and sustainable lifestyle for everyone in the city than it is in the country. Because sharing and communal use are intrinsic to the city. And because it is easier to create a living environment of short distances, local supply, and environmentally-friendly transport where the population and building density is higher. But even if it does prove possible to achieve a socio-ecological transition in the cities, they are still located within a wider environment that is right-wing and neoliberal. This was Vienna's experience already in 1930s Austria – and if there is a right-wing government in Austria after the elections to the National Council in October, one of its priorities will be the fight against a Vienna governed by a Red-Green coalition.

The political achievements of Red Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century are still legendary today. This time of socialist rule with a very transformative agenda on housing, education, and mobility has shaped the city right up to the present day. Would you say that what they were doing then was already 'Green' politics?

SILVIA NOSSEK: Of course, the politics of Red Vienna, seen from today's perspective, was in essence Green politics: the overarching goal for Red Vienna, too, was a good life for all.

A municipal infrastructure was created for the benefit of all in a comprehensive and consistent manner, from public transport and swimming pools and parks through to libraries, and such a vision of a participatory city remains a model for social and ecological policy. And the parallels can be taken further: equal educational opportunities for everyone; secularism as a policy principle; affordable, healthy housing for everyone; enlightenment and modernity as the foundations of society.

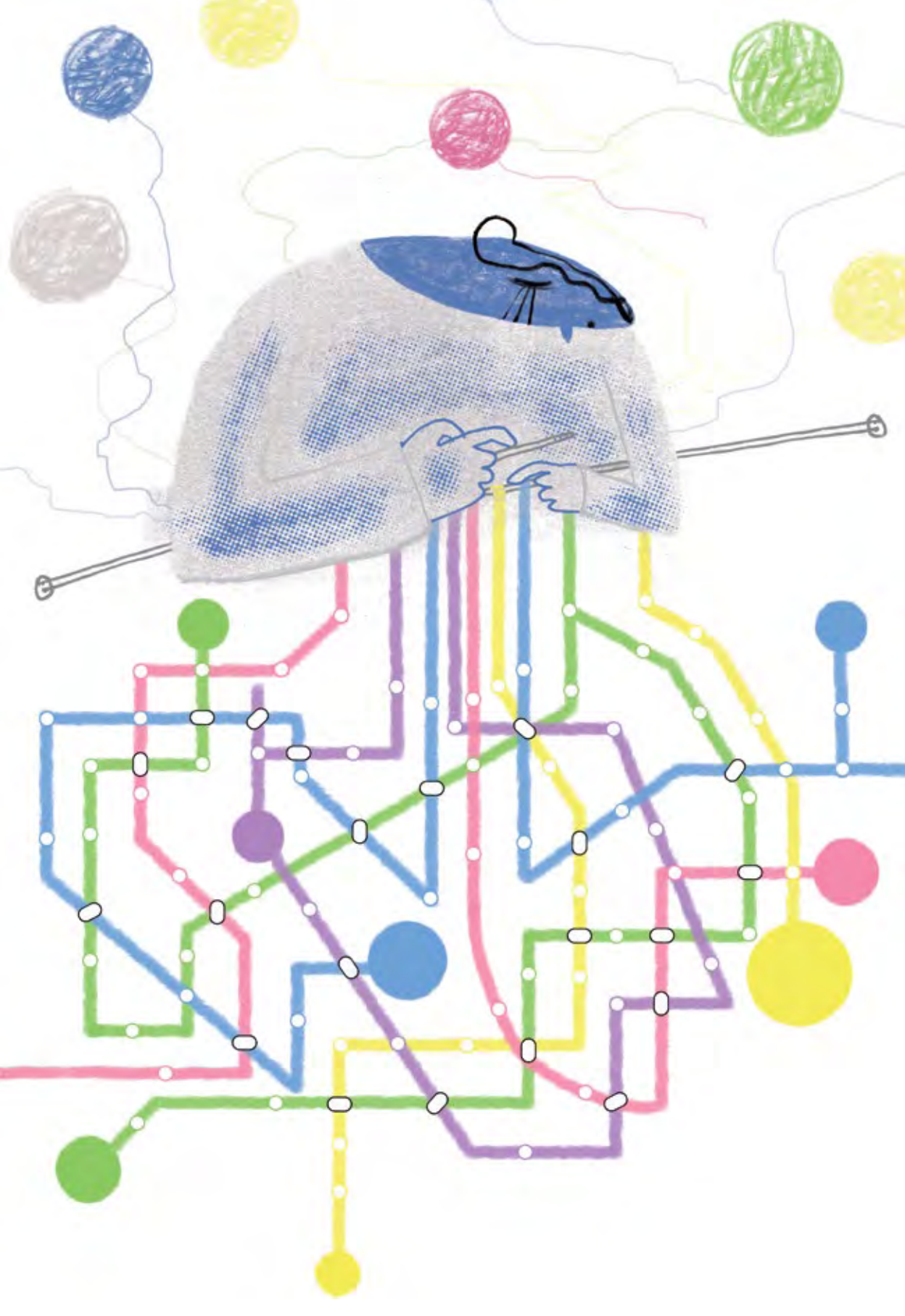
In a sense, Green politics is bringing the ideas of Red Vienna into the 21st century – and this means above all taking the ecological challenges seriously, as well as developing a concept of participation and of innovation more in keeping with the times.

If Greens had an absolute majority in Vienna's City Hall, what would they do differently?

SILVIA NOSSEK: We would use the city's status as the biggest housing owner in Europe to instigate an ecological offensive: thermal insulation for all municipal buildings, solar power plants on the roofs, green wall systems, rainwater harvesting, etc. The third runway for Vienna airport and the Lobau motorway would be binned as projects that are not fit for the challenges of the future. There would be substantially more innovation and investment in public transport and a policy push in favour of local shops, artisans, and the repair economy, as well as innovations in commercial transport. We would have a far bolder education policy and take substantially more radical steps towards decarbonisation.

SILVIA NOSSEK
was born in the rural village of Schönborn. She studied Mathematics and History in Vienna, where she started her political work with the Austrian Green Party in the district of Währing. From 2009 until 2012, she was spokesperson of the Green Party in Vienna. In 2015, she led the Green Party to victory in the communal elections and subsequently became district chairperson.

GEORG MAIβER
is the media manager for the Austrian Green foundation Grüne Bildungswerkstatt. He is a member of the editorial board of the *Green European Journal*.



A TALE OF TWO FINLANDS

ARE URBAN GREENS OUT OF TOUCH WITH RURAL REALITIES?

ARTICLE BY
SILJA KUDEL

The Finnish Greens have surged to record-high popularity, with recent polls placing them as Finland's second largest political party. But while the Green League is winning the hearts and ballots of voters in urban centres, the rural electorate remains cool to their wooing. Why aren't the Greens connecting with the countryside – and is this symptomatic of a growing urban-rural ideological divide in Europe?

On an overcast day, a visit to the sleepy east Finnish town of Outokumpu in North Karelia is about as inspiring as watching paint dry. The empty streets are flanked by unprepossessing grey buildings, and the melancholy regulars in Pub 'Wildhouse' recall a scene from an Aki Kaurismäki movie.

Some might recognise Outokumpu as the name of Finland's leading steel manufacturer, but the town's sole tourist attraction, the Mining Museum, is among the few surviving reminders of the town's glory days as a prosperous copper-mining hub. The eponymous corporate giant has long since relocated to more lucrative pastures.

In recent years, Outokumpu's fortunes have taken a woeful turn for the worse, echoing a pattern seen in many fading mining towns from Wakefield in North England to the coal mining belt of Appalachia. Ever since the last mine was closed in 1989, Outokumpu has been blighted by high unemployment, economic setbacks, and rapid population decline.

FADING FORTUNES

The town's unemployment rate is alarmingly high: 18.6 per cent at the end of July 2017, more than double the national average of 7.5 per cent.[1]

The population – totalling just over 7,000 – has been spiralling downward since 1975, with young people and families moving to bigger towns in search of a brighter future. Between 1975 and 2014, the proportion of under 15s declined from 22.5 per cent to 14.2 per cent, and that of over 65s increased from 8.9 per cent to 14.2 per cent.[2] The high elderly dependency rate exacerbates the strain on the already beleaguered public purse.

Outokumpu is among many small Finnish towns where the Green 'hipster agenda' of liberal urbanism meets with a response of frosty indifference. In the April 2017 municipal elections, the Greens gained only 3 per cent of the local vote, while the conservative agrarian Centre Party seized 30.6 per cent. Although Outokumpu is anything but a farming town, local voters are responsive to the Centre Party platform of "keeping the whole of Finland viable".

Jenni Karimäki, Senior Research Fellow at the Turku University Centre for Parliamentary Research, regards Outokumpu as a typical example of the malaise afflicting eastern Finland.

"With people moving away, eastern municipalities are struggling to make ends meet to provide services for the ageing population amid declining tax revenues. This does not create a favourable environment for the Greens to attract voters. The Green agenda is usually more salient in circumstances of prosperity than austerity."

HIPSTERS VERSUS HAYSEEDS?

While the streets of Outokumpu look gloomy and grey, the panorama that unfolds from the 96-metre mining tower is a breath-taking spectacle of green. Situated in conifer-rich heartlands, the declining industrial hub is surrounded by endless miles of woods that stretch as far as the eye can see – pristine nature of the kind the Green League is keen to protect.

Miles of woodlands also surround Jyväskylä, a larger town located 178 kilometres south-west of Outokumpu, but unlike its eastern neighbour, Jyväskylä is green both inside and out. The Green League is currently the biggest party, having won 19.9 per cent of the ballots in the April 2017 municipal elections. This victory marked the first time in history that the Greens emerged as the most popular political party in any Finnish town.

A stroll through the pedestrian precinct yields clues as to why this university town is sympathetic to Green values. Bearded hipsters commute by bike between the city centre and the

1 North Karelia Employment Bulletin 2017, Finnish Centre for Economic Development, Transport and the Environment.
2 City of Outokumpu Budget 2017-2018

student villages of Kortepohja and Roninmäki, and a young clientele fills the cafés and bars along lively Kauppakatu Street. The city attracts tourists with architectural landmarks designed by the legendary Alvar Aalto, and residents enjoy a lively cultural scene.

INVESTING IN LIVEABILITY

With a steadily climbing population of 140,000, Jyväskylä is the largest city in Central Finland. Unemployment has declined rapidly: it has shrunk by 18 per cent in only twelve months according to the latest statistics. The demographic structure is more balanced than in the east, with 16 per cent of the population aged under 15 and 17 per cent over 65.

With the city's economic prospects brightening after years of austerity, the forward-looking local authorities are focusing their sights on investment and development. One of the city's key goals is to reduce dependency on fossil fuels through measures such as reducing oil consumption.

"While the population is growing at a rate of 1,500 new residents a year, per capita carbon emissions have declined by 40 per cent since 2010," says Pirkko Melville, City of Jyväskylä R&D Manager.

Recent surveys indicate that the majority of the city's residents are happy with their quality of life. Among the assets enhancing liveability is the active work being done to profile Jyväskylä as 'a city of sport and culture'. Various ambitious initiatives are being undertaken to increase the city's appeal, including the full overhaul of its concert hall, the construction of a completely new hospital scheduled to be operational in 2020, and the new Hippos2020 sports centre, which, together with the new hospital, will form a national centre of excellence focusing on health and wellness.

THE "GREENING" OF THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

Thriving towns like Jyväskylä are at the forefront of what the newly elected Jyväskylä-based Green Party chairman Touko Aalto has described as a "continental shift" in Finland's political landscape. According to recent polls, the popularity of the Greens is at an all-time high. The Green League is currently the biggest party in Jyväskylä and the second-biggest party in Finland, ranking second only to the conservative National Coalition.

The Green League has continued to make steady gains on traditional political parties by appealing to a diverse electorate with a broad agenda highlighting issues such as education. The recent rise of right-wing populism and the migration debate have also spotlighted the Greens as a humane, liberal alternative.

"The current conservative government coalition and its unpopular decisions to cut education funding have been 'fruitful' for the Greens, who have explicitly opposed these issues and profiled themselves as an education-friendly party," notes Karimäki.

THE STARK CONTRAST THAT EXISTS BETWEEN TOWNS LIKE JYVÄSKYLÄ AND OUTOKUMPU SEEMS TO MIRROR A WIDENING WORLDWIDE RIFT BETWEEN URBAN AND RURAL VOTERS

INVISIBLE ISSUES

But while the Greens are pushing all the right buttons in Jyväskylä and other larger towns, 'big city issues' such as public transportation, compact urban development, and environmental preservation seem less relevant in rural areas struggling with acute economic hardships.

"If you live in a city, it's much easier to demand environmental preservation, since it doesn't affect your livelihood or everyday life. The Greens often have a negative image among rural inhabitants as they are perceived as making life more difficult with demands that often run contrary to the interests of agricultural entrepreneurs and rural land owners," says Karimäki.

A somewhat different view is taken by Emma Ojanen, researcher and chair of the Jyväskylä Greens, who argues that the urban-rural divide is largely over-exaggerated: "There are lots of people in rural areas who are interested in nature conservation, clean water, sustainable energy, and other Green themes."

She contends that the Greens' weaker performance in rural areas is more a communication issue than a real difference in people's interests. "The public doesn't know much about Green rural initiatives. We have promoted the use of biogas for years, which would create jobs in rural regions. Often people simply haven't heard our thoughts because they don't get much media coverage," she reflects.

"People are often happily surprised to hear that we even have a specific organisation called the 'Rural Greens' which focuses on issues relevant to rural regions, such as food production, forest management, and sustainable energy production."

ARE CITIES THE NEW NATIONS?

The stark contrast that exists between towns like Jyväskylä and Outokumpu seems to mirror a widening worldwide rift between urban and rural voters.

Many theorists believe that cities – as engines of economic growth and home to half the

global population – are new hubs of power that can find agile solutions to problems which nation-states have been unable to tackle. In its recent report on education trends, the OECD even argues that "cities are becoming the new nation states."[3]

MANY METROPOLISES HAVE MORE IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER THAN WITH RURAL REGIONS IN THEIR OWN COUNTRY

What this essentially means is that large concentrations of people living together in a small space share many identical concerns and challenges. Today's cities are ultra-connected hubs of employment, business, developed transport systems, and innovation, yet along with the positives come many shared problems, such as pollution, extremes of wealth and poverty, overcrowding, and issues related to migration.

Cities have become their own cultural and economic micro-climates, and many metropolises have more in common with each other than with rural regions within their own country. New York can identify more readily with London or Shanghai than with Nebraska – a megatrend that is pushing cities to hook up and share lessons to help each other find solutions to common problems. When one city comes up with an innovation, the blueprint can be copied in a similar metropolis.

LEFT IN THE DUST

According to the OECD, cities are "now the most relevant level of governance, small enough to react swiftly and responsively to issues and large enough to hold economic and political power."[4]

Cities are thus forming a global village from which rural areas are more or less excluded. Scholars such as Stanford professor Jonathan Rodden see this urban-rural polarisation as an outcome of globalisation. The groups who benefit from globalisation and trade live in cosmopolitan cities, while those who feel 'left in the dust' typically live outside urban centres.

As a result, the way people vote is increasingly determined by where they live. In the US, the rural vote is solidly Republican, while cities vote Democrat. In Britain, the pro-Brexit vote was concentrated in rural areas, while cities voted in favour of the EU. The lion's share of support for the French far-right politician Marine Le Pen came from rural France, and in Germany, the recent influx of refugees provoked the greatest backlash in the least densely populated areas. Berlin continues to draw foreigners and Germans alike, but surrounding rural areas are suffering from rapid

3-4 http://www.oecd.org/education/trends-shaping-education-22187049.htm

demographic change. The same pattern can be observed all over Europe: rural regions are in crisis as younger, educated people move to cities in pursuit of a better life.

YOUNG CITIES VERSUS OLD VILLAGES

Political parties thus tend to be seen as either defending the urban 'haves' or the rural 'have nots', which is a salient challenge for the Finnish Greens, who are traditionally pigeonholed as an 'urban' party.

"The Finnish Greens started out in 1976 as a Helsinki-based political party opposing car domination, the demolition of historic buildings, and brutal urban planning. We have traditionally been strong in the capital, but I think we have successfully moved beyond our Helsinki-centric image," says veteran Green politician Osmo Soininvaara.

He notes that the age demographic is also a significant factor: "Our supporters tend to be younger. It's not that we don't have young rural supporters. The trouble is that there are just so few young people living in the countryside now. Most of them migrate to cities."

Soininvaara adds that the urban vote is in the end more important for the Greens, since the battle for political dominance in Finland is ultimately fought in cities. "Of course we need to take care of rural areas, too, but the rural population is so small that you don't win elections by focusing only on rural issues," he ponders.

"You can win elections in Finland simply by capturing the urban vote, because most of the population is concentrated in urban centres. But focusing narrowly on urban issues would be a mistake. The nation must not be divided."

How, then, can the Finnish Greens extend their reach beyond their current urban base and engage the electorate in rural regions?

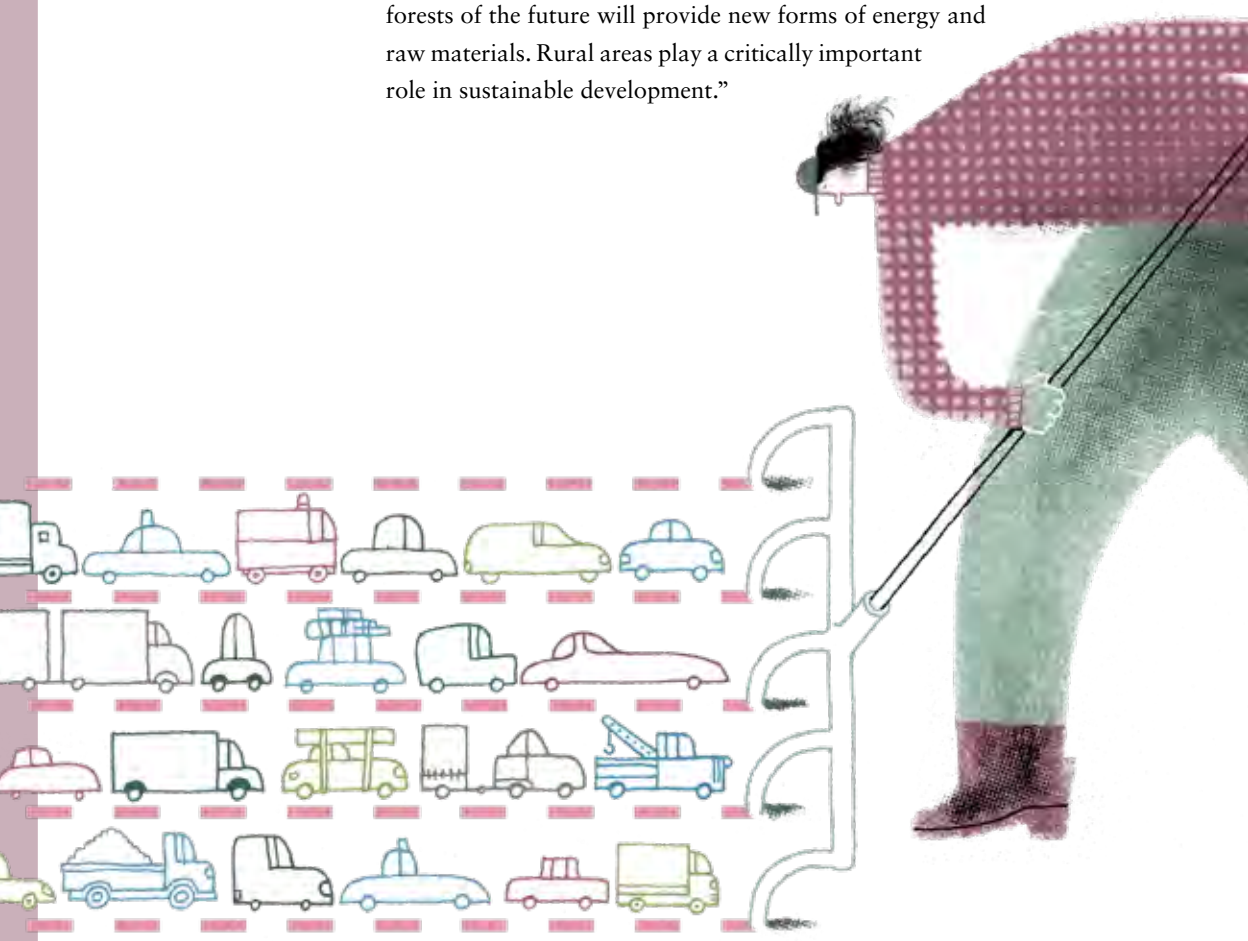
UNITING URBAN AND RURAL INTERESTS

"To a certain extent we already have expanded our base. Right now in the polls we are the second largest party in Finland: we already are a relevant political force. In the April 2017 municipal elections there were many rural regions where a Green candidate was elected for the first time. That's a stepping stone for nationwide change," states Ojanen.

She believes the Greens can attract a wider electorate by further broadening their agenda. The towns of Jyväskylä and Nokia offer a good example of how campaigning around the themes of education, employment, and well-being are well received also in regions outside the capital.

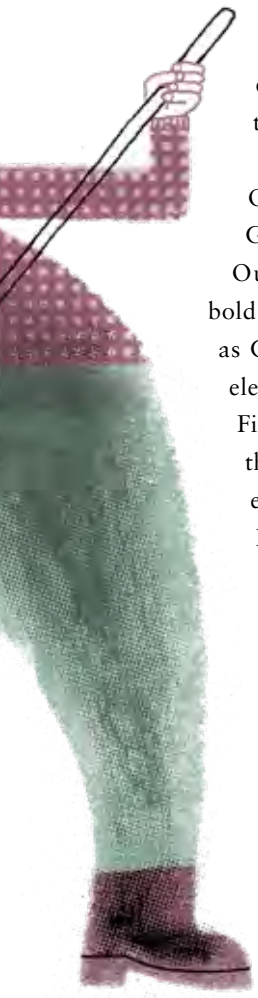
"The results of the municipal elections show that there's much more interest in Green themes than might be expected. It's important not to underestimate people's interest in a better future. Education, science, human rights, environmental protection and biodiversity, renewable energy – all these themes are important everywhere," notes Ojanen.

She sees sustainable food and energy production as a core issue uniting urban and rural interests. "It would be strange to think that rural areas are not 'on board' with Green agendas, since the farms and forests of the future will provide new forms of energy and raw materials. Rural areas play a critically important role in sustainable development."



CONNECTING LIKE-MINDED PEOPLE

The June 2017 election of Touko Aalto as the new Green chair is likely to be a strategic advantage in future rural campaigning. As the man behind the Jyväskylä triumph, Aalto is expected to attract more rural votes than a party chair from Helsinki.



Ojanen believes the key to a Green turnaround in towns like Outokumpu is encouraging the bold pioneers who take the first step as Green candidates. "In the recent elections, we had towns in Central Finland where people took part for the first time and immediately got elected to the municipal council. Everyone has to start somewhere. Finding these like-minded people is the first big step."

Soininvaara agrees that finding good local candidates is the only way to gain support in outlying regions. "In Finland we vote for individual candidates, not for parties, and in towns like Outokumpu, we haven't been able to establish a strong organisation. But wherever we have had good local activists, our support has been good."

COMMON SOLUTIONS TO WICKED PROBLEMS

While cities across the world continue sharing lessons and learning from each other's experiences – and while Jyväskylä hipsters will most likely relate better to their bearded peers in Helsinki or Hong Kong than to the realities of post-industrial towns like Outokumpu – it serves no one's interests to deepen the urban-rural cleavage.

The challenge – both for the Greens and for all other political parties – is finding a platform that convincingly unites rural and urban aspirations, reaffirms Emma Ojanen.

And the political group with the strongest potential to unify rural and urban agendas under the common banner of sustainability appears to be – at least for now in Finland – the Greens.

SILJA KUDEL
is a Helsinki-based freelance journalist from Sydney who is a regular contributor to various cultural and business publications.

CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

WHY LOCAL POLITICS STRETCHES BEYOND CITY LIMITS

AN INTERVIEW WITH
GEORG KÖSSLER

Berlin has been a pioneer in rolling out green policies at a local level – from bike lanes to renewable energy. We talked to Georg Kössler, Green Member of the Berlin State Parliament, about the actors and policies it takes for cities to lead the way on divestment and fighting climate change, but also about the obstacles to surmount to achieve a broader transformation.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL: Why do cities have such a unique and important role in the fight against climate change?

GEORG KÖSSLER: Cities have always been spaces of innovation and progressive ideas. They are often places where new technologies are invented and implemented. They are educational and research centres, thus providing fertile ground for green ideas to develop and flourish. In Germany, the *Energiewende* [energy transition] has so far put strong emphasis on rural areas in its first stage, as this is where solar panels and wind turbines are most often installed and biomass is produced. Right now, our cities are catching up and face the more complex challenge of renewable energy production and smart energy consumption in urban areas. At the same time, the majority of cities worldwide are dealing with the effects of climate change, from heatwaves and floods to the influx of climate migrants, and since 90 per cent of all urban areas are coastal, the very survival of cities depends on fighting for climate justice.

What is the power of cities today?

GEORG KÖSSLER: Since cities are responsible for two thirds of the world's energy consumption, their shift towards renewable energies is a make or break issue. Cities will determine the speed of the transformation

ahead. And they have a responsibility to speed up, as dense urban areas have more ways of ensuring a high quality of life with a small carbon footprint, for example through improved public transportation.

What we have to acknowledge, despite that, is that cities don't achieve their impact through formal multi-level governance arrangements, but rather by being a visible beacon for change. A case in point would be Copenhagen, which is widely praised around the world for its progressive policies, yet these policies are often markedly distinct from those of Denmark as a whole. Cities will primarily influence other cities rather than rural areas, thereby leaving some areas behind for which we have to find different solutions.

How important are cities' alliances and networks in your opinion?

GEORG KÖSSLER: Right now, cities' alliances are just another platform for decision-makers to meet and exchange. They have yet to show what they are capable of. Cities belonging to alliances like C40 should take the lead by carrying out a complete divestment from fossil fuel investments or promoting a timely 100 per cent renewables target.

Just like nation-states or regional bodies, cities are more likely to move towards a sustainable transition if it serves their own economic and social interests. However, in Berlin we see how the political will is formed not only by the classic instrument of politics, but by bottom-up initiatives as well – sometimes against and sometimes in alliance with political forces. It is important for us Greens to tell the positive stories: our bike-revolution in Berlin was only possible because Greens and bike initiatives pushed hard for it and our demands were favourably received, and many are aware of the positive results of bike-based traffic in Copenhagen.

Which factors have enabled Berlin to become a leader in the fight against climate change?

GEORG KÖSSLER: After last year's parliamentary elections in Berlin, a new Red-Red-Green (SPD, the social democrats – Die Linke – Bündnis 90/Die Grünen) government was formed. For the first time ever, the Greens are participating in a ruling coalition and for the first time, we are able to govern this city. Before, we had been in district councils. But as Berlin is a federal state and a municipality at the same time, local districts have less power than elsewhere in Germany. Therefore, getting into the Berlin government was crucial.

Although the city leans Left politically, Greens have always found themselves in opposition due to various circumstances. The city was divided for years, resulting in a more complex political situation: the inner districts have

IN BERLIN WE SEE HOW THE POLITICAL WILL IS FORMED NOT ONLY BY THE CLASSIC INSTRUMENT OF POLITICS, BUT BY BOTTOM-UP INITIATIVES AS WELL

Green strongholds as well as some local Green mayors. The outskirts tend to vote more traditionally but in large parts of the former east, this means a strong vote for the left-wing Die Linke. This contributes to a progressive majority since Die Linke in Berlin is more progressive than in the rest of Germany where it has a more populist approach.

Given the beacon-like character of the German capital and keeping in mind the 2017 German elections, we made sure to have a resolution to phase out coal in Berlin by closing our four coal power plants well before 2030. Berlin became the first federal state to take such a step.

To ensure an ecological transition, the Greens got hold of the Departments for Energy, Climate, and Traffic. However, we have been struggling since then with a prolonged transition phase of restructuring, recruiting, and general organisation. Due to this, our first year was marked by largely political resolutions and guideline decisions. Now we are entering the second stage where real infrastructure is being built and green investments are being made.

Berlin has been instrumental in carrying forward the divestment movement – which steps have been taken and with what results?

GEORG KÖSSLER: The issue of divestment was strongly put forward by local activists who organised a small-scale but very energetic campaign. The Greens supported this with resolutions and demands. When the Greens got into government, the sitting finance senator[1] had already prepared a divestment plan for Berlin. He was lobbied hard by the activists well before the election and I assume the perspective of a soon-to-be coalition with the Greens, as well as running himself for a seat in a progressive constituency, helped in this (similar initiatives on the federal level failed so far as no prominent government figure had put their weight behind the issue). His plan included the creation of a new index which

1 In the last coalition between the Christian Democrats (CDU) and the SPD, the sitting finance senator (equivalent to a finance minister on the federal level) was an SPD member.

combines German financial safety regulations with our sustainability requirements. Thus, other cities can more easily divest by just shifting money into this Berlin Divestment Index.

For all items on our policy agenda, we have strong allies – but not always the same ones. While the communal water supplier is supporting us in better adapting to climate change, i.e. pushing for more green roofs, the public waste management company is supporting our efforts to get rid of disposable coffee cups. Our biggest project, a new mobility law which includes a strong shift towards a more bike-friendly infrastructure, will only be able to succeed if bike activists maintain their strong pressure on us politicians. So far, car-friendly conservatives have not succeeded in turning public opinion against our new approach.

In a unique process, the Berlin Parliament convened a special committee to analyse Berlin's path towards an emission-neutral city. The resulting *New Energy for Berlin* report, was passed unanimously by all parties during the last parliamentary term. While it isn't a legislative act, it served to build a consensus on the measures Berlin needs to adopt to respond to climate change. The recommended measures comprise the whole range imaginable, from pushing renewable energies, to modernising housing and phasing out coal. Thus the committee's work has become a blueprint for our policies.

Despite progress made towards divestment, we still have a long road ahead of us. With the Berlin Energy and Climate Programme, we are about to enact the general low-carbon roadmap for our city. It includes a wide variety of goals and around 100 measures from all sectors: energy, traffic, housing, economy, and private households, as well as adaptation to climate change. We defined short-term (2020) and mid-term goals (2030) and reference to the Berlin Energy and Climate Programme is supposed to help us in the coming years to push through this green transformation. Measures, among others, include a solar masterplan in Berlin to increase solar energy capacity from 0.6 per cent to 25 per cent of energy production, a shift from coal to gas in the heating sector, power-to-gas/heat units, the construction of 'climate-friendly' city quarters, and an increase in energy storage capacities.

Many possible incentives such as tax cuts or changes in energy regulations have to be made on the federal level. Berlin can only give mitigated support to private transitional projects such as loans through the state's Investitionsbank [business development bank of the Federal Land of Berlin] – or direct financial support. On the other side, there are many shared responsibilities with the local municipalities when it comes to traffic infrastructure. Berlin, however, has many public buildings which have to serve as cores of transitional changes. For example a school which will serve a whole quarter (Stadtquartier) with its combined power and heat unit.

Berlin has created a sustainable investment fund – how does it work?

GEORG KÖSSLER: Berlin's public savings funds include around 750 million euros of which about 150 million are invested in stock market funds. Instead of just passing stricter guidelines and investing in 'green indexes', we built a new one. We wanted to exclude companies which profit from fossil fuels, nuclear energy, or war weapons as well as from child labour or companies that are in conflict with the UN Global Compact guidelines or tax regulations. Further, we opted for a best-in-class approach: from each sector the companies with the highest ESG scores (environmental, social and corporate governance) were taken. Thus, we build our own – stable, secure, and green – index. Other countries and states are free to use it as well, the management of the index for Berlin is done by the Deutsche Bundesbank. So far, the index is performing above average and shows we are on the right track.

Beyond the immediate fight against climate change, do you think the city — and Berlin in particular — is the space that can contribute to shaping a new societal model transcending those of the industrial and modernist 19th and 20th centuries?

GEORG KÖSSLER: The shift away from a fossil-fuel-based economy that relies strongly on individual cars is certainly easier in cities. In Berlin, half the inhabitants don't own a car and many of my generation are content with a mix of cycling, public transport, and car-sharing. In this respect, it is easier to rely on 'small is beautiful' solutions in cities. Our challenge will be to ride this postmodernist wave further – pushing back cars and enabling more sustainable lifestyles – while finding solutions for the outer districts which still rely heavily on cars. We do not want the city to split into two opposing camps, which is why we put great emphasis on the notion of better mobility as a whole.

One needs to keep in mind that new models of governance, which aim at more bottom-up policy-making, will not only result in more sustainable policies. A strange coalition of populists, pro-business neoliberal and West-Berlin conservatives have just initiated and won a public referendum. They want to force the local government to keep the old and shabby inner-city Tegel airport open despite a new BER airport being built just outside the city limits. Naturally, the fact that the BER is struggling with heavy delays is not helping either. Despite being a dense city with a vibrant culture of debate and a multitude of press outlets, the debate was one-sided and populist.

While Berlin has many eco-minded inhabitants, the postmodern lifestyle of neoliberal flexibility does not inherently make sustainable decisions regarding one's own lifestyle easier. Often the easy, short-term, or hedonistic solution is the

best we can manage, as we all try to survive being more and more entangled in the frantic city life. Sustainable solutions therefore have to bring relief and ease as well. People won't go the extra mile to buy at an organic shop. It is hip, but you just don't have the time for it.

Cities are the faces of societies. Berlin is currently one of the most visited cities in the world. Most people come not to just relax and take holidays, but to "breathe Berlin". This is our opportunity and we aim to get some showcase projects started: for example climate-neutral clubs which generate their own solar power and recycle water, and a green roof project, which brings more plants to public roofs to cool the city in the summer and function as a 'swamp' during heavy rainfalls.

What should be the role and place of cities in 21st century Europe?

GEORG KÖSSLER: The Greens would love Berlin to become a rebellious city like the 'Sanctuary Cities' in the US and we really push for it. Already, Berlin is open and tolerant in terms of queer lifestyles, drugs and much more. However, I don't see cities as new actors of governance. What we see right now throughout the Western world is a drifting apart of liberal urban areas from more conservative rural areas, many of them 'left behind'. I would strongly advise bridging this divide instead of deepening it. While the U.S. mindset uses nationalism as a cohesive force, we should find other ways.

With the emergence of more and more megacities in the Global South, the exchange between cities and metropolises becomes more important. New infrastructures are being built there faster than our own, which evolved over decades and centuries. Let's make sure we learn the most sustainable ways from each other. We need to talk about examples of best practices, which is why I hope city networks and alliances will continue to grow. They might not set the global agenda, but they can help each other in setting the pace of transformation in their respective countries.

GEORG KÖSSLER
studied political science in Germany and Sweden. He then joined the Grüne Jugend (Green Youth). Since 2008 he has been involved in Green politics in Neukölln and Berlin. From 2012 to 2017 he was speaker of the Green Party's national working group on Energy and in 2016 was elected to the Berlin House of Representatives for Bündnis 90/Die Grünen.

‘UGLY BRUXY’ OR BRUXELLES ‘RE-BELLE’?

ARTICLE BY
EVELYNE HUYTEBROECK &
EDOUARD GAUDOT

A searing diatribe by a journalist bemoaning the flaws of the ‘Capital of Europe’ sparked much debate on the state of Brussels today, around both its aesthetic attributes as well as the processes going on beneath its surface. Closer inspection reveals how the tangles and disjointedness of the city’s politics are mirrored in its public face, yet some ‘Bruxellois’ – whether by origin or by choice – argue that the city does not deserve its bad press.

In spring 2013, Jean Quatremer, a long-standing European correspondent for the French daily *Libération,* who has lived in Brussels for over twenty years, published on his blog a damning indictment of his adoptive town. He describes a ‘dirty’ city, engulfed by ‘car madness’, an ‘urban planning mess’ of ‘cracked pavements’, at the mercy of ‘outrageous property speculation’ over which there is no apparent control in light of the impotence of the political will, weakened by its fragmentation between different interests, jealously guarding their own powers and competing levels of decision-making.

In a few hours, and over several days, this ‘Ugly Bruxy’ post had triggered fierce debate, and indignant reactions from citizens and politicians alike. Yet it seems the most shocking element of this devastating attack was less the substance of the comments than their tone.

For this criticism, so French in spirit, doesn’t stop there. It is often expressed by other nationals living in the European capital, whose Scandinavian, Germanic, or Mediterranean urban cultures clash with the Brussels way of life. Between the pleasures of a rich cultural life

FR

This article is available in its original language (French) on the Green European Journal website.

'BRUXELLES PAS BELLE' OU BRUXELLES 'RE-BELLE'?

Après 40 ans de massacre à la bétonneuse, Bruxelles émerge peu à peu de la grisaille automobile et des limbes de sa gouvernance chaotique grâce a des politiques urbaines innovantes, inspirées en partie par les écologistes.

and the nightmare of derelict public services, the mood of these citizens, who have made Brussels their home, speaks volumes about the charming and infuriating contradictions of the dual federal capital, that of Belgium and of the European Union.

As with many other cities and capitals, or at least in a more marked way, Brussels demonstrates the interconnection, or rather what has for too long been a disconnection, between city politics and the political city. A scene of struggle but also a societal laboratory, for better or worse, the political character of Brussels the city is re-emerging, amidst the scars of the urban policies which damaged it for so long.

THE BRUSSELS BULLDOZER MASSACRE

Yet at the heart of the controversy, the notorious 'bruxellisation' – the city's increasingly grey concrete face – is no myth. Indeed, it has become the symbol 'par excellence' of what not to do in city planning. The city was wilfully destroyed from the 1950s to the 1970s, with the intention of retaining only administrative functions in Brussels. These post-war decades saw Brussels become directly dependent on federal political power, and decision-makers who, for the most part, lived outside the city. Brussels was then a tremendous source of profit for dodgy developers, and of monumental inspiration for politicians and bureaucrats, enthusiasts for spectacular building projects and flashy opening ceremonies.

A patchwork of old stone and new concrete, blending Belle Époque art déco marvels and the tracery of medieval lanes with the carving out of new roads, Brussels was changed for ever.

But in many ways the case of Brussels is no exception. The post-war boom of the 'trente glorieuses'[1], obsessed as they were by growth at any price, set the scene in Western Europe for a huge massacre by bulldozer and cement-mixer. At the same time, Liège concreted over la Sauvenière, and Paris started bristling with towers, redesigned its 'Front de Seine' district, built the 'périphérique' ring road, and laid out the embankment roads which today provoke passionate pro-and anti-car debates. In Lyon, the Croix-Rousse and Fourvière tunnels were dug, the Perrache transport hub was built, and the A6 and A7 motorways cut across the city centre. Milan, capital of the Italian economic miracle, underwent a similar transformation, breaking away from traditional Italian urban planning. And what about London's congestion, or the motor industry's urbanisation of the Ruhr? Subjected to the 'social ideology of

1 The label attributed to the thirty years from 1945 to 1975 following the end of the Second World War in France, which witnessed strong economic growth and rising living standards.

the car'[2], the 'industrialising industry' of the 20th century, Western Europe, in particular at its economic core, became, according to one's point of view, either a fantastic futuristic megalopolis, or a vast 'open-air carpark'.[3]

THE CHALLENGE IS MORE ONE OF POLITICS THAN OF PLANNING

This period also witnessed the nascent European Community's institutions establishing themselves in Brussels. The first building to be constructed was the Berlaymont, opened in 1967, and the European district then progressively spread into the spaces freed up by the major arterial roads Loi and Belliard. But there too, the setting up of 'Europe' in Brussels took place amidst enormous chaos, without an overall vision or development plan. Entire historic districts were destroyed, fuelling property speculation, and some resentment from locals feeling neglected by the authorities.

WHO IS BRUSSELS?

Viaducts, tunnels, and the destruction of historic districts and heritage sites thus represented the heyday of this dark period. But without any overall plan, without thought for quality of life, public spaces, or mobility, the distinctive feature of Brussels lies less in the concrete than in the chaos of its governance. 'Brussels' is not a single entity but a collection of multiple players. The 19 independent communes which make up the city constitute a remarkable model of decentralised governance, close to their local communities. The downside of this localism can, of course, be seen in the power struggles, the organised irresponsibility in situations of conflict between competing municipal majorities and lack of communication between administrations, and policy differences where the obvious solution would be harmonisation.

Symptomatic of the chaos of the governance of Brussels' urban planning, the corrupt practices surrounding the 'European Quarter' and the 1965 scandal of the destruction – right in the city centre – of Victor Horta's art nouveau masterpiece the 'Maison de Peuple', underline the traumas which finally managed to awaken the consciences of the people of Brussels. Local residents burst into the public debate, and began to speak up through neighbourhood and local residents' committees, heritage associations and groups of concerned architects, to demand a different kind of regulation of public spaces. The emergence of the Green Parties Ecolo and Groen (then Agalev), in 1980 and 1982 respectively, is an indication of how voices at the heart of political parties also joined

2 André Gorz, 'L'idéologie sociale de la bagnole', *Le Sauvage* 1973.
3 Peter Sloterdijk, *Eurotaoismus. Zur Kritik der politischen Kinetik*, Edition Suhrkamp 1989.

the call to demand more 'power to the people of Brussels'.

A product of this progressive raising of awareness, as well as growing community dissent, the 'regionalisation' of Belgium was underway. In 1989, the Brussels region was given its own government and independent institutions, laying the foundations for a more organised approach to planning. By allowing a regional steering of new planning instruments for protecting its heritage and regional development plans, the 1989 regionalisation shifted the paradigm – at least in part.

But, then as today, there is more at stake than just the organisation of the built environment, and urban planning. The impoverishment of the city centre, and the exodus of the rich fleeing an unattractive city, make social cohesion a growing challenge. For, unlike other large capitals, Brussels is wealthier in its comfortable leafy suburbs, and poorer in the city centre and in the northern districts, where life is more precarious for local people, many of whose backgrounds lie in the working-class immigration of the growth years. These social inequalities are reflected in the urban fabric, and highlight the disparity in the resources available to different districts to rise to the challenge of managing growing social and cultural diversity between Brussels natives, the commuters who make up more than half the workforce, European immigration, and immigration from outside Europe.

A CITY FOR ALL

In Brussels, even after regionalisation, the integration of issues of the environment, energy, and sustainability into urban planning is still inadequate and patchy, being fitted round the edge of city policies in a vertical way, rather than being embedded at all levels of city decision-making. It is this challenge which the 2004 to 2014 administration – comprising of Green ministers for the first time – wanted to meet, by trying to pursue more holistic policies, introducing ecological and energy issues into the heart of public, economic, and social policy, to bring in lasting transformation for the Brussels region. The fact is that managing transport, energy transition, and public spaces – the main challenges of a 'city for all' – is less about policies for economic redistribution, despite the importance of local social action movements, than about tackling urban segregation.

The originality of the ecologists has been to join the dots between social inequality and environmental problems, rather than standing and watching as the better-off flee the city. It is decent transport which helps to avoid ghettoisation; it is an energy transition which will help tackle both poverty and climate change; it is with green recreation spaces that a better quality of life for all can be provided. In sum, to put in place new policies, alliances between different sectors of activity, consultation with local people, positive information and communication, and

real incentives. All of this in a bid to increase residents' pride in their city, and make of them ambassadors to the outside world. And all while protecting existing neighbourhoods, and the architectural heritage that blends art nouveau, art déco, modernism, and innovation.

A CITY TO CALL HOME

After forty years of soulless concrete, the region's 'Beacon Buildings' initiative has highlighted integrated eco-design approaches, combining energy efficiency with variety of materials, architectural quality, and replicability. Since 2007, a combined area of more than 500,000 m² has been built or renovated, through hundreds of projects: collective and individual housing, offices, schools, nurseries, etc. Little by little, the face of Brussels is changing, and this method is now being copied as far afield as New York and Vancouver.

From 2010, the 'Passivhaus' standard has been imposed for all new public buildings, and, since 2015, for all new private buildings. This building revolution means conventional heating can be avoided, and ensures substantial gains both for public finances, as well as for fighting climate change. What is more, this new building stimulus is in part meeting the need for social housing by increasing housing stock and tackling the precarious situation of renters, whose energy costs are sometimes higher than their rent.

From 'beacon buildings' to 'sustainable neighbourhoods', every transformation of the city must combine building the future with enhancing the past. Rather than demolishing the old industrial districts and historic heritage sites, the region is choosing to renovate and improve neighbourhoods with 'sustainable neighbourhood contracts'. Distributed across Brussels (four per year), and with a clear timetable (over four years), these programmes involve buildings as much as public spaces. What is more, these 'neighbourhood contracts' enable residents to actively participate in the renovation of their urban environment, through inclusion initiatives and renovation skills training for young people. These contracts also integrate environmental issues such as water management, transport, waste treatment, and preserving biodiversity.

A CITY OF THE FUTURE: CAP 2030

Brussels has not yet healed the wounds of its past unrestrained development. Its greatest challenges are certainly to reduce excessive car use, improve air quality, give more space to pedestrians and cyclists, and preserve and enhance its existing heritage. But it must also dare to take some bold contemporary architectural initiatives, to create sustainable neighbourhoods along the old railway lines, to integrate nature into these districts, and to ensure that population density increases at a human scale. Brussels is also facing an

enormous social and economic challenge: the struggle against a growing 'precarity', and very high youth unemployment (over 20 per cent, rising to 40 per cent in some districts), improving qualification levels for young people in Brussels, and bridging the gap that has opened up between certain neighbourhoods in the north and the south of the city.

As a predominantly French-speaking city in Flemish territory, a European capital which has not yet managed to reconcile natives, expatriates, and Eurocrats, Brussels remains torn between regional, municipal, and federal powers. It still suffers from multi-layered governance of badly shared out responsibilities, and sterile competition between the Region and its 19 communes. Greater Paris, Greater London, Metropolitan Lille… on a sheer regional scale, Brussels is facing the same problem as all large European metropolises: that the interdependence between different administrative levels, from neighbourhoods to the greater city, is not reflected in the political and administrative governance of the city. The challenge is more one of politics than of planning.

Jean Quatremer's very harsh words still resonate, emphasising the scale of the challenges ahead. But they do not do justice to the greatest strength of this city which stands apart: the affection it evokes in its inhabitants. Its charm, the parks which make it the greenest city in Europe, its cosmopolitan diversity, its multilingual cultural life. Little by little, Brussels is humming its old charming tune, Bruxelling[4] again, and one day, even the naysayers will join in.

4 Following Jacques Brel's famous tune "C'était au temps où Bruxelles bruxellait"…

EVELYNE HUYTEBROECK
is a member of the Brussels Parliament and local councillor in the Brussels commune of Forest since 2012. She is a committee member of the European Green Party. She was regional minister of environment, energy, city renovation and social affairs in the Brussels Parliament between 2004 and 2014.

EDOUARD GAUDOT
is a strategic advisor to the Greens/EFA in the European Parliament. He is also an author and has taught at College of Europe, Natolin. He is a member of the *Green European Journal*'s editorial board.

TAKING ON CITY HALL
THE CHALLENGES OF GREENING PRAGUE

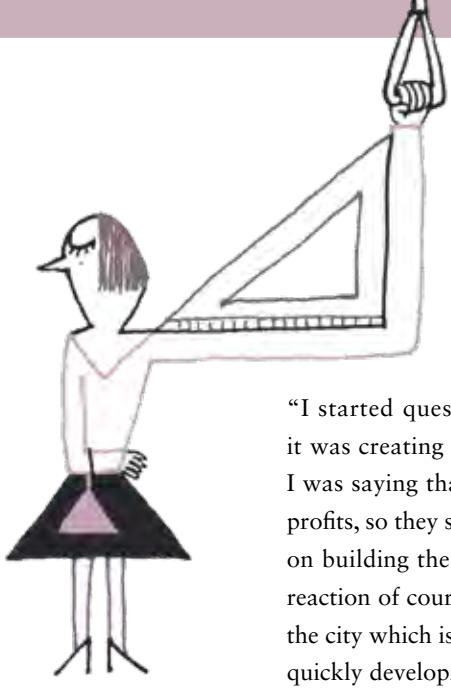
ARTICLE BY
MORGAN HENLEY

Czech Greens in the capital city of Prague must contend with the region's history and with conservative and pro-business forces when dealing with the core urban issues of housing and construction, as well as mobility. How can Greens then develop a positive and sustainable vision of the city that also resonates beyond its boundaries?

Prague is one of the few places in the Czech Republic where Green politics and policies can be tested and seen in action. The Czech Greens are a part of the broad coalition making up the city's government, having received 11 per cent of the vote in the last municipal elections of 2014. No small feat for a party without a single elected member in the parliament. To connect the dots of sustainable city policies, Greens must contend with the region's past – and also preserve some of the positive aspects of the communist period – as well as with pro-business, anti-regulation attitudes inherited from recent decades during which Central and Eastern European governments embraced neoliberalism. At the heart of their urban struggle, Greens attempt to tackle two major political challenges – development and mobility – and therefore forge their vision of the city, namely one that connects beyond the city limits and ecosystem.

ARRESTED DEVELOPMENT

Like in most of the Central European region, Prague still remains quite friendly to business developers and their projects, often giving them a deciding say over the city's own strategic plans. In 2010, a report on property developers in Prague observed that, "the asymmetric power relationships existing between the municipality and the private sector can lead to the development of regeneration projects that



"I started questioning this system because it was creating deficits in the public budget. I was saying that the developers are making profits, so they should cooperate with the city on building the public goods. That caused a reaction of course, from this financial part of the city which is very strong in Prague, a very quickly developing city."

are loosely regulated and primarily serve the profit motives of international capital, rather than the pressing needs of the municipality in question, such as the construction of affordable housing."[1]

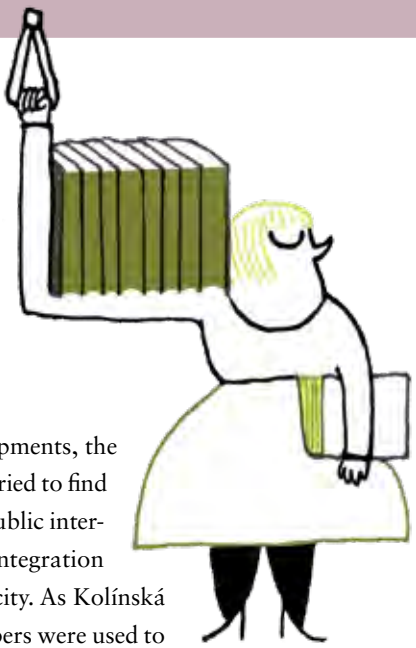
During Prague's municipal elections in 2014[2] Greens entered into a coalition in which Matej Stropnický, former leader of the Czech Greens, became vice mayor, making him one of the highest-ranking elected Greens in the country.[3] It didn't last long. Within a year of proposing a controversial plan to restrict the power of developers and put in more building regulations, the other members of the Prague government called for his resignation.

"There's people who would just let the developer do what he wants and make the profit he wants to make. Then the city has to build all the rest, the schools, the parks, the public transport and so on," explains Stropnický.

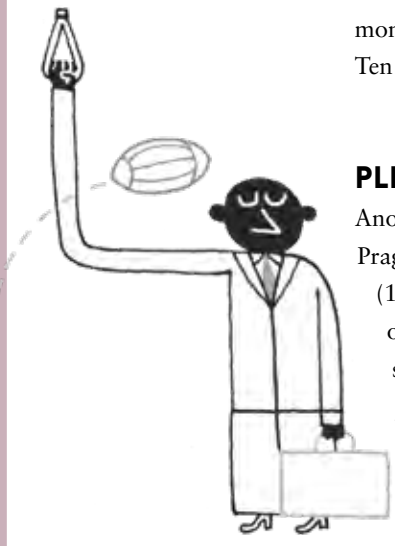
After Stropnický's plan to rein in the developers was rejected, he was replaced as vice mayor by another Green, Petra Kolínská, and the Greens remained in government. Kolínská, a Green local politician since 2006, is more diplomatic than her predecessor, but still struggles with the cautious approach of coalition partners which has reached a level where citizens and businesses are outpacing their elected officials in creating progressive change in their city.

"I see that in the field of activism, active citizenship, we have very interesting results," says Kolínská. "For example, Prague Pride, other human rights or music festivals, pianos on the streets, new start-ups like bike-sharing, or guerrilla gardening. You can feel how people are enjoying public space more than ten years ago. But [local] companies and people are more active and more progressive than their political representation and I feel that the political representation is too careful."

1 Cook, Andrew, 'The Expatriate Real Estate Complex: Creative Destruction and the Production of Luxury in Post-Socialist Prague', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 34.3 (2010): 611-628.
2 The local government of Prague is arranged in a tiered system, with the Magistrate of the Prague being at the top, followed by self-governing municipal districts. The responsibilities of the City Magistrate include public transport, waste collection, police, care of historical sites, or other issues of citywide significance. The municipal districts are responsible for parks, schools, some social and health programs, and public housing.
3 The Greens currently have six elected Senators as well as some regional and local councillors throughout the country.



But regarding plans for new developments, the Greens in the Prague City Hall have tried to find a way to make sure it is done with public interests in mind and with the gradual integration of a more sustainable vision of the city. As Kolínská explains: "Ten years ago, the developers were used to corruption in the city hall, to sending money to private accounts in exchange for the building permits, regardless of public opinion, of course. Now we improved the rules for collaboration and communication between private developers and city hall offices. For example, in the autumn of 2017, a new city planning centre opens where the city and the developers introduce their projects and everybody can come and see the projects in advance, send questions and get answers. In Smichov [Prague 5], there is a big brownfield where a pilot project – on the collaboration between developers, citizens, and politicians – invited citizens to contribute to the design of public spaces for this private project. Private companies had very positive feedback because public participation helped them improve their projects. Developers are a natural part of society in the city, but they have to respect strict rules. By now, developers have slowly learned to invest some of their money into public space and entities, such as schools or kindergartens. Ten years ago, this approach didn't exist."



PLEASE MIND THE GAP

Another Green fight has been to lower the price of public transport. In Prague you can now get a yearly transport pass for 3,650 Czech crowns (140 euros). This was a campaign promise in 2014 and carrying it out is something they don't mind boasting about. And rightfully so. Prague's reliable and efficient public transport, a legacy of their past, is a crucial aspect of life in the city.

"Prague is at the very top among European capitals in public transport," says Stropnický. "More than 60 per cent of all

the journeys that happen every day in Prague are made via public transport, which is twice as many as in Copenhagen, for example. I think we should develop more public transport because people don't see it here as something that's socially stigmatised. Everyone uses public transport, it's very popular. I think that most people in Prague are even proud of it."

Despite this, the Greens regularly find opposition in the local council when trying to advocate for more public transport. "Transport is the thing that we have the most controversies over in the assembly here in Prague because we want to explain that the streets should be for different types of transport, not just for cars," continues Stropnický.

Improving public transport and shifting away from personal car usage inevitably meets opposition from pro-business actors in the city council and again from developers. "It's a conflict we are facing here; we're trying not to expand the city into the suburbs any further and trying to concentrate the new buildings in the city centre or closer surroundings", says Stropnický. "The rising number of people travelling by cars, mainly from the suburbs, is a problem. This creates again a conflict with the other areas, with the developers who bought the land in the suburbs for cheap to develop housing outside the metropolitan centre, something we opposed."

Kolínská sees public transport as being even more crucial – as one of the ways Greens can appeal to rural voters, a demographic which they have struggled to reach, something which remains one of their greatest challenges. In the last Parliamentary election in 2013, the Greens received twice as many votes in Prague as they did in the rest of the country. No other Czech political party has such lopsided electoral support.

"In the former regime, public transport covered almost every village, every small city", explains Kolínská. "After the change of regime, there was a very fast change in the financing and image of public transport. Buying became one of the first steps to show that we are free, rich people. So people moved away from trains and buses to cars. Now, there is a wish to return to public transport but there are no provisions. As the Green Party, we want to support public transport, not only in the big cities but also to have good connections between cities and villages. I think it's the most important area in which the wishes of people from the countryside are in line with our policy."

CONTINENTAL CONNECTIONS

Trying to find the common interests of rural and urban inhabitants and translating that into policy is not just something the Czech Greens struggle with; it's an issue across the continent. As Stropnický explains, "The reaction of the people living in the countryside in Great Britain for example, when you look at Brexit, is quite similar to the reaction of the countryside of the Central European regions: we are feeling left by the wayside. We're just all feeling that we've been left behind here and that it's just the leftovers of your profit that you're leading us towards. So we are turning to people who acknowledge this problem."

The city question therefore reaches far beyond and above urban policies in the Czech Republic, because the country is the most Eurosceptic of all the former Eastern bloc, with only 35 per cent of the country believing that staying in the EU is a good thing. "Definitely in the capital and the bigger cities, the EU is more popular than in the countryside or small villages", says Kolínská. The Czech Greens are one of the few parties (if not the only one) in the country which is clearly pro-European. The capital city and bigger cities then become a great political lever for positive messaging on Europe – as long as they don't drift away from the other towns and rural areas.

Without all of the pressures and complexities of national governing, Prague, like many other cities, is the type of place where experiments can be done on both a policy and political level. So far, it seems that the Czech Greens are taking advantage of this. Whether it will be fighting against corrupt developers or improving public transport, what the Czech Greens are able to do at the city and local level will be important to learn what Green governance actually looks like and what it can bring that other political forces don't.

MORGAN HENLEY
works for the European Green Party. Originally from the USA, she has lived in Prague, Paris, and Brussels, where she currently resides. She holds a Masters in International Relations from Charles University. Her main interests are Central Europe, climate change, U.S. politics, and feminism.

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE
A JOB FOR CITIES

AN INTERVIEW WITH
ANNE HIDALGO
& EDWIN M. LEE

We are entering a phase of unprecedented global cooperation between cities, with mayors from all corners of the globe, of many and varied political stripes, rallying together. C40 Cities is one of the platforms fostering this approach, underpinned by a sense of global solidarity and responsibility. Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and Mayor of San Francisco Edwin M. Lee are both strong advocates of the potential of such networks to promote practical and sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing problems facing the world today.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL: Today cities are the principal carbon dioxide (CO_2) emitters and energy consumers in the world. They have the opportunity and responsibility to take defining action on climate change. With Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and bearing in mind their limited powers, what can cities do in the fight against climate change?

ANNE HIDALGO: When we see political divisions felt and voiced more passionately than ever, I am reminded of my friend, the philosopher, activist, and urban theorist Benjamin Barber, author of *If Mayors Ruled the World*, who sadly died this year. His favourite quote was from former New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia: "There is no Democratic or Republican way of fixing a sewer." When mayors from the C40 network[1] meet and consider the impacts of climate change our cities are already facing, there is no place for ideological division. We are focused only on delivering the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement and creating prosperous cities for our citizens. Through the C40 network of 91 cities concretely tackling climate change, you can

see the exchange of ideas and innovation, and healthy 'coopetition' [cooperative competition] constantly driving fellow mayors to be even more ambitious in our climate plans.

The Paris Agreement was an incredible diplomatic achievement, which could not have been secured without the decisive role of the United States of America. And I am convinced that, with or without the White House, the US will get the job done anyway. The response from over 370 cities across the US, pledging their support for the Paris Agreement, is proof of this commitment. Regardless of President Trump's final decision, the most important cities of the world, united in the C40 network, assume their responsibilities. We know there is no alternative.

In September 2017, with a pioneering group of the mayors of Boston, Durban, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Mexico City, and New York, we committed to work with C40 to develop climate action plans that will deliver the scale of emissions reductions required to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Once again, cities are shaping the century ahead.

EDWIN M. LEE: The results of the 2016 election here in the United States have certainly heightened, if not necessitated, a sense of climate responsibility at the local and state level. We have a federal administration that continues to deny that climate change is a threat, even as intense hurricanes barrel through cities like Houston and Tampa, wildfires consume the Pacific Northwest, and severe drought persists in the Midwest. The President's withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement was a particularly catalysing moment. In the days afterwards, U.S. cities stepped up. More than 300 U.S. Climate mayors signed a letter of support for the Paris Agreement, expressing our continued commitment to protecting our planet and people. In addition, countless business, state, education, and non-profit leaders and organisations also pledged their commitment to act on the climate.

From a global perspective, leadership from cities has never been more urgent. Networks like C40 Cities are bringing the power of cities together for the global good. C40 represents one quarter of the global economy and 650 million people. That is a significant share of the global market that can truly move the needle forward.

Last year, I announced the launch of a community choice aggregation programme that allows residents and businesses to choose cleaner,

1 Created and led by cities, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, well-being, and economic opportunities of urban citizens. The current chair is Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, and three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as president of the board.

more renewable energy at competitive rates. This programme is critical to San Francisco's citywide goal of achieving 50 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020, and 100 per cent by 2030. Last month, Salesforce, one of our San Francisco-based companies, announced that it will power its current buildings and newest building – the largest tower on the West Coast of the United States – with 100 per cent renewable energy. Given that our federal administration continues to abdicate its responsibility when it comes to confronting the realities of climate change, it is important that local governments, businesses, and non-profits continue to step up.

Over the past centuries, mobility and energy in the city have been designed around a fossil fuel-based model tailored to meet the needs of private cars, male individuals, and industry. How can we shift to a different conception?

ANNE HIDALGO: I am confident that the era in which our streets have been dominated by fossil fuel-powered vehicles is coming to an end. Our citizens want and deserve healthier streets. You can see this in the decisions being taken by pioneering mayors around the world, to restrict the most polluting vehicles and incentivise citizens to choose public transit, cycling, and walking. I am proud that for many years now, Paris has been leading the way. For example, when we introduced the Vélib' bike-hiring scheme, just six cities in the C40 network had such a scheme. Today 43 cities of the network have bike-sharing schemes. That represents hundreds of millions of bike journeys in cities each year, not generating any greenhouse gas emissions. By pedestrianising the right bank of the river Seine, we have created a wonderful new space for Parisians, and those who love Paris, to enjoy. We have also committed, along with Mexico City, to ban diesel vehicles from entering the city altogether by 2025, because these cause the most damage to public health. Air pollution kills more than four million people worldwide every year, and the majority of these deaths occur in cities. These policies are based on the urgency of both the health crisis and the climate crisis we are facing.

You can see in the announcements being made by car manufacturers that they recognise the need to shift their business model to a future that will be dominated by clean vehicles. CEOs, investors, and consumers are all changing the way they think about transport, as well as energy production, urban planning, and many other areas of city life, to embrace a sustainable and green future.

EDWIN M. LEE: Cities have a tremendous opportunity to shift the current mobility paradigm. For one, we recognise that how we move people and goods has an impact not only on our economic success, but also on the well-being, climate, and public health of our

JOINING WITH GLOBAL NETWORKS IS THE BEST WAY TO ACCELERATE THE ACTION NEEDED TO AVOID THE WORST OUTCOMES – E. M. LEE

communities. Shifting to renewable fuels and zero-emissions vehicles can bring better air quality and reduced health impacts, particularly in communities most affected by pollution and vehicle congestion. In San Francisco, about 50 per cent of our public transportation fleet is full electric or carbon-free renewable energy.

We also have one of the largest municipal fleets of diesel buses in the country. In 2015, I directed our transportation agency to convert our entire fleet to renewable diesel, which has a significantly lower emissions and pollution profile than traditional diesel. We even scaled this work to gain greater adoption in private and regional transportation fleets by using renewable diesel as an immediate drop-in transition fuel as we move towards a zero-emissions vehicle future. This requires an electrified transportation market. The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the largest markets for electric vehicles in the United States, thanks to investments in electric vehicle infrastructure. We know that demand for Teslas, Chevy Volts, and Nissan Leafs is only going to grow, which is why we made it policy that all new building construction in San Francisco should have enough electrical capacity and infrastructure to support on-site vehicle charging. This will bring greater access and equity to charging throughout our city neighbourhoods.

To truly imagine a different conception of mobility, we will need to go beyond fuel-switching and electrification. As cities, we need to re-think how we design our streets, make transportation investments, and guarantee both public safety and equal access, especially to residents who face the greatest mobility challenges. San Francisco's 'Transit First Policy' prioritises public dollar investments in public transportation that rely on low- to no-carbon fuels. We are investing in more bike lanes and an expanded bike-sharing programme, two bus rapid transit projects, and a new 'Central Subway' project that will improve transportation connectivity and access for transit-reliant communities. In 2017, we'll also begin the first phase of a project to ban private vehicles along our major downtown corridor, making it more bike- and

pedestrian-friendly. Being 'Transit First' has helped us shift our own paradigm towards a multi-modal transportation system that provides safe, walkable, transit-accessible, and bikeable options to all communities and all of our residents.

Cities share similar concerns and challenges, especially regarding climate change. You are both involved in networks of megacities – what is their geopolitical and concrete policy significance in today's world?

ANNE HIDALGO: Climate scientists are cautious about attributing specific weather events to climate change. Yet, from the summer 2017 monsoon flooding of Mumbai and Dhaka, the destruction wreaked by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma on Houston, Miami, and Havana, and the heatwaves and forest fires affecting Los Angeles, the incredible impact that climate change is having on our cities is self-evident.

This is the context in which mayors are now operating. Every decision that we make is based upon the urgency of the climate crisis we face. C40's *Deadline 2020* report revealed precisely what cities need to do to deliver on the Paris Agreement. The short answer is that, in order to prevent catastrophic climate change, action needs to begin now, at full speed and scale. To achieve that ambition cities need to share knowledge on what policies, projects, and approaches work best, so other cities can learn from them and act without delay.

Each year C40 and Bloomberg Philanthropies host the C40 Cities Awards, recognising the most innovative efforts by cities around the world in tackling climate change. The striking thing about the finalists, announced this month, is the scale of the ambition and the degree to which they seek to transform whole areas of city life. Sustainability is no longer about recycling schemes and solar panels on

city halls. It is an integral consideration in every part of city policy-making, from public health to economic development, from urban planning to infrastructure investment.

EDWIN M. LEE: Cities have always shared a sense of connectivity to one another, which has only been strengthened by the global economy and a growing interconnectedness. Cities have also played a prominent role in the geopolitical landscape as well, as hubs of innovation and cultural activity.

As I begin my final two years of service to the people of San Francisco, I am aware now more than ever of the important role that our major cities must play on the global stage. The C40 cities truly represent a counterbalance to the climate scepticism and cynicism coming out of Washington D.C.

Climate change cannot be solved in one city. Joining with global networks is the best way to accelerate the action needed to avoid the worst outcomes. Networks like C40 give San Francisco the chance to share our best practices and lessons learned when it comes to green building, energy, and waste reduction. Networks that cross city-state lines also give us access and open up channels of communication. San Francisco is also an active member of the Pacific Coast Collaborative, which has connected us with peer cities and states along the West Coast and sparked greater collaboration and thought partnership. And the Under2Coalition[2] signed by sub-national entities demonstrated that nations, states, and cities can come together to do something great for the planet.

What is happening today reminds me of the moment in June 1945 when delegates of

2 http://under2mou.org/

WOMEN ARE MORE VULNERABLE TO CLIMATE CHANGE THAN MEN; IT IS OUR DUTY TO PAVE THE WAY FOR THE NEXT GENERATION OF FEMALE LEADERSHIP – A. HIDALGO

50 nations gathered in San Francisco to sign the charter that led to the formation of the United Nations, and how that changed the world for the better. Next year, as city, state, and regional officials prepare to come to San Francisco for California Governor Jerry Brown's 2018 Global Climate Summit, our cities will have an opportunity to send a message of unity to the world.

Networks of cities present great potential but how can we ensure that such initiatives involve citizens from all walks of life and do not remain projects designed by and for a well-off, well-educated globalised elite, in which only a select few have a voice?

ANNE HIDALGO: My predecessor as C40 chair was Eduardo Paes, then mayor of Rio de Janeiro, and under his tenure C40 reached an important milestone of including more than 50 per cent of cities in the network from the Global South. To deliver on the Paris Climate Agreement will require the cities of Europe, North America, and Australia to urgently cut our per capita emissions. But just as vital will be to ensure that the cities of China, India, Africa, and Asia achieve sustainable development. There are more electric vehicles on the streets of Chinese cities than any other country. Paris, and cities across the C40 network, are looking to our fellow mayors in every part of the world for inspiring ideas.

One of my key priorities as chair of C40 is to ensure that the citizens of our cities have a voice in the decisions that are shaping our climate future. I want every citizen of Paris and of every city to help guide our efforts. Our goal is to secure the future of our shared planet and that cannot be delivered by decisions of far-away people in closed rooms. Cities are inherently shared spaces and therefore the future of our cities must be a shared endeavour.

EDWIN M. LEE: At the heart of San Francisco's climate action and economic success is a commitment to collaboration, equity, inclusion,

and innovation. When I took office as mayor, I made a promise that San Francisco's environmental policies would work to benefit everyone. Success would only be achieved if we developed inclusive policies that directly engaged and benefited our city's under-served populations. For example, San Francisco's transportation sector remains one of the most significant sources of emissions. We are tackling this challenge by focusing on air quality, electrification, public transportation, and pedestrian and cyclist safety. But it is also important to link our efforts to education and jobs. In February 2017, San Francisco became the first U.S. city to make our city college free to all residents. When I announced new mandatory requirements to expand electric vehicle charging capacity in April 2017, we were positioned to connect it with a free Electric Vehicle Hybrid certification programme at San Francisco City College. This programme will train our local workforce to service the increased adoption of electric vehicles and charging technology. These educational and job pathways are critical to transitioning our communities to the low carbon jobs of the future.

Part of my goal in leading San Francisco's global engagement is to amplify the voice of those who believe in climate change, and be a welcoming beacon to those who are not yet engaged. We must understand and encourage those who are struggling to simply meet their basic needs and for whom the climate conversation seems overwhelming. These are the people who will feel the impacts of the climate crisis most. We must bring the lens of inclusion and collaboration to climate change work at all levels – from global to local.

To solve the climate crisis, we need everyone's help. So much work is happening on the ground in cities big and small across the United States that is cutting-edge and bridging economy, environment, and equity issues. Our role as cities participating in alliances and networks is to lift up that work and continue to place equity at the centre of the conversation. The same can be said of our many city organisations that help to advocate for policies on a local level.

Anne Hidalgo, the good news is that more and more female mayors are leading cities. Why is the connection between women, climate, and cities so important? And what are the objectives of the Women4Climate initiative?

ANNE HIDALGO: Ever since I was elected mayor of Paris, the media has emphasised that I am the first woman in this role. Across the globe, I am no longer an exception to that old rule, which was maintained for far too long. My friends the mayors of Washington D.C., Tokyo, Sydney, Barcelona, and Cape Town share similar experiences. Women are breaking through the glass ceiling at more and more local elections, and women mayors are increasingly normal. The figures bear this out:

INCLUSIVE VALUES ARE WHAT WILL TRANSLATE TO CLIMATE SUCCESS AND GREATER INNOVATION AND PROSPERITY FOR ALL — E. M. LEE

in 2014 just four cities across the C40 network had women mayors – now, since the beginning of 2017, 15 mayors are women, a 275 per cent increase. Governing large metropolitan areas is no longer forbidden territory.

Climate change is real and those who doubted it may have changed their minds with the recent hurricanes. But there is another inconvenient truth we need to tackle: women are more vulnerable to climate change than men. It is our duty to pave the way for the next generation of female leadership. The actions of future women leaders will be key in the fight against global warming.

Women4Climate will offer support, advice, and guidance to promising young women and their sustainable projects, for the benefit of the largest possible number of people. In Paris we have already identified a group of 10 inspiring young women leaders who will be mentored through the scheme, whom I am confident will be leading the way for decades to come in the global fight against climate change.

How do you imagine the city of the future?

ANNE HIDALGO: By 2050, more than two thirds of the people on earth will live in cities. To ensure the future of our planet, those cities of the future will need to produce close to zero greenhouse gas emissions. That might seem like a massive shift in the way that our cities operate, but I am confident that the spirit of innovation and collective ambition that defines city life will make such a transformation possible. Those cities will also be healthier, more prosperous, and more equitable.

EDWIN M. LEE: Urbanisation and increased density have many benefits for the environment, but will also create challenges. As cities, how do we ensure equity among our populations? How do we manage transportation needs and housing demands along with social service delivery? We know that cities will continue to be hit hard by rising sea

levels, hotter temperatures, and more extreme weather conditions. As we look ahead, I believe cities are primed to be leaders in tackling these challenges. We can lead the transition to a green economy. San Francisco has managed to reduce our emissions by 28 per cent from 1990 levels, while our local population has grown by 19 per cent and our economy by 79 per cent. Our commitment to inclusive climate work is leading to greater prosperity and innovation.

Cities are the future. We are the laboratories and incubators of innovation, especially with climate action and politics. San Francisco will continue to be a model of inclusive values that celebrates diversity and acceptance. These inclusive values are what will translate to climate success and greater innovation and prosperity for all. At a time when our nation is trying to close our borders, figuratively and literally, San Francisco and cities throughout the world will be beacons of hope.

ANNE HIDALGO
has been mayor of Paris since 2014. In December 2015, she became chair of C40 Cities, the leading network of the 90 most important cities in the world committed to addressing climate change. Hidalgo was first deputy mayor of Paris from 2001 to 2014.

EDWIN M. LEE
is the 43rd mayor of the city of San Francisco, located in California, United States. San Francisco's first Asian American mayor, his policies have led to the city experiencing its most successful economic expansion ever, whilst still achieving a substantial reduction in emissions from 1990 levels.
Twitter: @mayoredlee

THE ORDER OF BARCELONA
CITIES WITHOUT FEAR

ARTICLE BY
JORGE PINTO

In Europe and beyond, the hegemonic liberal vision that has hitherto dominated global politics is being challenged. This impetus is not emerging from nation-states themselves, but from new alliances and constellations of power that fight the inertia of the nation-state. Today it is especially in cities that new conceptions of citizenship, development and sovereignty are being shaped, bridging the global and local.

Confronted with the lack of action and proposals by their countries, many cities have been trying to assume a leadership role regarding some of the most pressing issues of our times, from the reduction of inequality to the struggle against climate change. They do so thanks to their capacity to involve civil society – and all its diversity of views and ideas – to an extent which is difficult to achieve at the national level. This has allowed municipalist movements to assume power in various large cities, grounding their actions in democratic and participatory values, reinforcing the historic role of cities as progressive and cosmopolitan places, places of tolerance and of intercultural meeting.

A key characteristic of the current municipalist vision is the fact that, besides the attention given to the city itself, there is a clear global vision: a cosmopolitan sense, in which all citizens feel part of the city but also part of the global community. It was precisely under the banner of municipalism and a vision of a global *polis* that more than 700 mayors and activists from 180 countries came together in Barcelona, in June 2017, to discuss what 'fearless cities' can do. It might not be too optimistic to argue that this has planted the seeds of a new global and municipalist order – the 'Order of Barcelona' – that could potentially supplant the previous Westphalian order. This new order is one where

PT

This article is available in its original language (Portuguese) on the Green European Journal website.

A ORDEM DE BARCELONA: AS CIDADES COMO PEÇAS FUNDAMENTAIS DA GLOBALIZAÇÃO

Podem as cidades moldar ideias e conceitos políticos de modo a ter sucesso onde os estados-nação falharam, enfrentando os principais problemas da atualidade?

fearless cities and regions have a more preponderant role in the definition of global politics, bringing decision-making processes closer to the people. This municipalist vision can support the development of republicanism, a political theory that has been kept in the shadows for too long and is increasingly worth exploring.

RETHINKING REPUBLICANISM

Republicanism as a political theory has its roots in Ancient Greece and Rome, with figures such as Aristotle or Cicero amongst its main thinkers. Central to the definition of republicanism are the notions of freedom as non-domination, civic virtues (Cicero talked of four: justice, prudence, courage, and temperance), participation in the political life of the community and the debating of ideas, public over private interest, combatting all forms of corruption, and also the defence of a state based on strong laws – the "empire of laws and not of men", to use the words of the 17th century political theorist James Harrington.

Within republicanism, there are two different lines of thought: on the one hand, civic humanism (or the neo-Aristotelian line) and, on the other, civic republicanism (the neo-Roman line). The first, similar to communitarianism in its defence of a single vision of the common good, defends the positive concept of freedom, in which the individual is free through active participation in the political life of the community. The second, clearly the most popular amongst current defenders of republicanism, argues for a vision of liberty in which individuals are free as long as they are not dominated – either by the state (*imperium*) or by other individuals (*dominium*) – and are protected from arbitrary forms of power.

Non-arbitrary interference that serves to reduce domination over individuals – i.e. actions taken (by the state or the city, for example) in order to increase one's liberty – is not only accepted but defended. To give an example, when we think of the fight against economic inequality and climate change, it is difficult to make much progress without any kind of interference from public powers, such as a stronger taxing system or better economic (re)distribution. And this interference is politically more difficult to justify through a liberal vision of freedom based on non-interference, than through the republican approach of non-domination.

A classic example used to distinguish between non-interference and non-domination is the case of the slave and the master. If the slave has a good relationship with the master and doesn't suffer any punishment throughout their life, the vision of liberty as non-interference would consider such a slave to have more liberty than another one who is regularly punished. On the other hand, the republican notion of liberty as non-domination would say that although this slave has slightly better life conditions, they

A NEW GLOBAL AND MUNICIPALIST ORDER – THE ORDER OF BARCELONA – COULD POTENTIALLY SUPPLANT THE WESTPHALIAN ORDER

are not free, because all the actors – slave and master – are aware of the difference in terms of power and know that, whenever the master decides – an arbitrary form of power – the slave can be punished. Thus, in this view, the bigger the difference in power, the bigger the risk of domination. This offers the political justification to avoid the (increasing) inequality between states, cities, and individuals.

The political participation defended by republicanism implies the existence of a political community, which is, in theory, more easily promoted at the municipal level. At this level, it is easier to give a voice to citizens, and for them to be able to disagree openly, debating and deliberating the matters that interest them. Complementarily, municipalism contends that the local is extremely important and that it is at this level that citizens have a greater capacity to actively participate and to know the problems that affect them, and are being better prepared to resolve them. Obviously, in an interconnected world, there are a number of problems that cross borders, with inequality and climate change being at the forefront of this.

Republicanism needs therefore to be conceptualised in such a way that it can be applied globally, but the answer is unlikely to lie in a hypothetical global government. Rather than concentrating power in one entity, it would be better to distribute it among cities, states, and regions linked in a network. International institutions could, nevertheless, ensure that basic liberties are respected, guaranteeing a common minimum of republican freedom to every individual around the globe. The exact shape of a global republican approach is subject to big discussions between those who defend a statist view (where people are represented by their states) and those defending the civil society view (representation via non-state actors such as NGOs). Municipalism provides strong arguments in favour of a third view, a more expansive one that keeps the best of both other approaches, by facilitating the multi-layered representation of citizens at the international, national, *and* city level. With greater opportunities to participate politically in their own republics,

citizens' voices would carry more weight, both locally and globally, proving the advantage of this local/global republicanism when compared to the nation-state and the intergovernmental approach. And, after all, who better than the citizens themselves to put forward solutions to the problems directly affecting them?

THE SUN IS SETTING ON WESTPHALIA

For the first time in human history, the number of inhabitants in cities has overtaken that of inhabitants in rural areas. This is a fundamental change in the way that societies organise themselves, and everything indicates that this trend of migration from the country to the city will continue. Although this reality must not mean a lack of investment at the level of territorial cohesion policies, or the abandonment of the rural world, it is also clear that cities will assume an increasingly important role in the definition of public policy. This is a moment in which states are increasingly losing control and sovereignty, to use Saskia Sassen's words.

A world governed by sovereign, independent nation-states, coming out of the Peace of Westphalia, has been questioned by the advancement of globalisation. While it is true that states remain an essential element in governance and can be expected to stay this way in the near future, the progressivists who aim to achieve a more just and sustainable world should start to think about how a new model of global organisation could be designed. We do not want a retreat to a world of siloes that do not communicate, therefore it is of primary importance to think of alternative globalisation models. This is where municipalist cities come in.

There are a number of cities and their respective metropolitan areas which today represent what in the past was considered a state, in terms of their size, population, and income. However, the autonomy of cities in various domains is still very limited by the definition of national laws, which creates conflict at the level of sovereignty between state and city. This conflict is seen most clearly in the notion of citizenship rights. The European Union provides a case in point and can define the role of cities in the future. Currently, access to European citizenship is granted solely through the intermediary of national citizenship – people can enjoy European rights only when they enjoy the citizenship rights of one of the Member States. Now, the discussions surrounding the acceptance of refugees have started to expose some of the problems of this model. While the number of refugees that each state should receive has been decided at the European level, a number of states have postponed this intake.[1] In contrast, some of their cities have not only

1 In September 2015, in one of the peaks of the refugee crisis and faced with lack of governance and reluctance by Member States to open their borders to refugees, the European Commission adopted a refugees' relocation policy, intended to relocate 120,000 refugees among the Member States.

shown themselves willing to take refugees in, but have also held demonstrations to demand this. This is a clear example of conflict between the three levels of sovereignty. It can be expected that such conflicts will increase as cities continue to grow in importance and states continue down the opposite path.

A small number of progressive cities, challenging the established order in radical ways but acting more or less separately, will find it difficult to achieve great things. However, a global network of rebel cities[2] acting in a coordinated way, sharing their experience and knowledge, errors and lessons, will be able to completely reformulate the way in which globalisation takes place. A republican globalism based on cities organised in a network can therefore be our next step. And there are various examples of attempts to form these networks, with varying levels of success, such as: 'Solidarity cities', 'Eurocities', the 'Global Parliament of Mayors', or the 'Global Covenant of Mayors for Climate & Energy'.

But specifically, what can be done to promote municipalism and to strengthen republican freedom within cities? A first step is to look at what has been done already, namely regarding remunicipalisation initiatives. Secondly, one can look at city governments such as the ones in

2 Using David Harvey's expression, who in his 2013 book lays out the potential role of cites as places of social justice and ecological resistance.

Paris and Stockholm which have assumed a leadership role in pressing issues such as climate change. It has to be noted that the construction of a republic of cities will not only include larger cities, as proven by the municipalist examples of A Coruña and Bristol with their complementary currency system. These latter cities exemplify the republican motivation of the citizens and the civic virtues that animate them: the search for more justice, participation in the life of the community, and a strong sense of perseverance. These practical examples are truly inspirational and serve as baseline for other municipalist movements and for the definition of a 21st century brand of municipalism.

BARCELONA: THE DAWN OF A NEW ORDER

The definition of a new global order should not happen through the creation of a hypothetical global government but through greater shared sovereignty. States should share their sovereignty with supra-national institutions (such as the European Union), but also with sub-national institutions, namely cities. The European Union can, as a matter of fact, be a good environment in which to experiment with municipalist republicanism in the 21st century, by supporting existing projects in various countries and promoting a true Europe of the regions and cities, in which subsidiarity does not boil down to intergovernmentalism, but to the sharing of skills, responsibilities, and funds with cities and regions. Direct contact between European institutions and cities must therefore be increased and improved, not making it dependent on the states in which these cities are located. Republican cities would therefore have various platforms on which to make themselves heard, and be able to have a more influential role in public policy and in shaping alternative development models. This true subsidiarity – clearly distinct from the current model – would help to promote the republican notion of non-domination at the European level.

Global municipalism has therefore a fundamental role to play in the critical moment we are living in, through the promotion and support of governance for the common good. Responsibility to the entire human community, based on the criterion of global justice, is a necessity for those municipalist movements which, having emerged initially as opposition forces, now have to start implementing their proposals.

TODAY A EUROPEAN REPUBLIC, TOMORROW A GLOBAL REPUBLIC

Throughout history, the constitution of citizenship has been defined as top-down. That is, the definition of a specific political area was followed by the attribution of a series of rights and responsibilities associated with belonging to that area. But the European Union can radically challenge this model, going

to the heart of belonging to a nation state: citizenship. Allowing access to the privileges of European citizenship for those who are not citizens of any of the EU countries but reside in their cities, would represent a true change of paradigm.

We can imagine a European Republic[3] formed by various republics at the municipal or regional level. Small, medium, and large republics agreeing on deliberation as a way of doing politics and creating the necessary platforms for citizen representation. Places with alternative currencies at the regional level, as exists in Bristol now, that promote sharing and the decommodification of goods. Republics that follow the example of Barcelona and where the citizens, also through their representatives, are members of energy production and distribution cooperatives, living in cities designed for this end: living. Cities and regions where everyone has the right to not be dominated, giving everyone a set of minimum conditions (e.g. access to shelter, to education, to health, to transport, and a basic income) that allow them to freely exercise their activities as citizens. Republics that look inwards, concerned about the quality of life for those living there, but also look outwards, cosmopolitan and open to those who arrive, conscious that there exist multiple visions of the common good.

The message from the main municipalist projects is opposed to a dark and defeatist vision based on fear. With a message of hope, justice, perseverance, and courage – essential republican civic virtues – these movements have managed to awaken in citizens a sense of urgency to act and to grasp their future with their own hands. Not by chance, the first municipalist meeting in Barcelona was called 'Fearless Cities'. But fear of what, exactly? Of course, to no longer fear being open to all those who seek shelter there, be they residents or refugees. To be courageous in confronting states when they fail in the definition of progressive policies, in fighting inequality, in investing in education, and in promoting a sustainable development model. To not fear involving citizens in their civic virtues, giving them the platform necessary to make themselves heard. To not fear being ambitious in envisaging the future. And what objective could be more ambitious than the definition of a new global order?

JORGE PINTO
is a research associate at the Centre for Ethics, Politics and Society (University of Minho, Portugal) and co-founder of the Portuguese party LIVRE.

3 To use Ulrike Guérot's expression, although not directly referring to it.

THE CITY TAKING THE COMMONS TO HEART

ARTICLE BY
DIRK HOLEMANS

The Belgian city of Ghent plays host to a broad range of projects and initiatives around the commons. But it has yet to adopt a model which really places a commons-focused approach and logic at the core of its institutions and processes. Recent work undertaken by experts on the commons provides a roadmap for the city to re-imagine and reconfigure its structures around citizen participation, the sharing of resources, and 'translocal' cooperation.

NL

This article is available in its original language (Dutch) on the Green European Journal website

GENT DRAAGT DE COMMONS EEN WARM HART TOE

Michel Bauwens stelt in zijn *Commons Transitie Plan voor Gent* dat nieuwe burgerinitiatieven enkel kunnen uitgroeien tot een echt alternatief als de overheid ze op innovatieve wijze ondersteunt.

Michel Bauwens, one of the world's experts on the commons and founder of the P2P Foundation, distinguishes at least three main reasons why cities would want to stimulate initiatives and projects related to the commons. First, these play an important role in the ecological transition, they allow for goods, workshops, and infrastructures to be shared. Second, they enable a faster transfer to a circular economy by sharing information about production chains, in addition to offering opportunities for local jobs and meaningful labour. And instead of outsourcing everything to private companies working with long supply chains, communal knowhow and coordination platforms allow the realisation of shorter supply and distribution chains. And finally, as the commons are based on open systems, they strengthen democracy and participation. What is still missing, however, in Ghent and elsewhere, is the 'maker city' model of the commons, namely a production model based on open design.

A STRONG COMMONS COMMITMENT

Ghent, a city of 260,000 residents in Belgium, has a remarkable history of citizen initiatives and other forms of self-governance. In the

Middle Ages it was a big, wealthy city with over 50 guilds. During the industrial revolution it was the cradle of new labour movements and cooperatives. For some ten years now there has been a third wave of activity, now comprising over 500 citizen initiatives, ranging from an energy cooperative and a digital citizens' platform for car-sharing, to numerous local food initiatives.

At the political level, Ghent has a tradition of progressive parties, with a relatively large Green Party that has been on the scene for the last few decades. In the 2012 local election, a red-green 'cartel list' won the majority in the town council. It has been governing the city together with the Liberal Party on the basis of an innovative social-ecological city project. The progressive tradition translates into an open culture of policy-making, leaving Ghent's 4,000 municipal workers quite some leeway to develop initiatives of their own and interact with citizens. All the same, Belgian cities' scope for policy-making, as well as their fiscal autonomy, is limited compared to a country like Denmark.

It is therefore no coincidence that Ghent city council, witnessing the proliferation of citizen initiatives, is the first city in the world to ask Michel Bauwens to devise a *Commons Transition Plan for Ghent*.[1] Bauwens and his colleague settled in Ghent in the spring of 2017, talked to 80 Ghent commoners (citizens leading or involved in projects around the commons), held a survey on the nature of the commons and the role of the city, and interviewed various municipal services and town councillors. This resulted in a wiki of some 500 documented citizen initiatives.

The aim however was not just to map projects, as the research question was twofold and of a political nature. It first looked at the potentially new facilitating and regulating relationship between the local Ghent government and citizens to enhance the development of commons initiatives. It then asked if cities can be actors in social, economic, and institutional change at a time when nation-states are no longer capable of regulating the transnational economy. Can networks of cities be part of a new transnational governance model?

On the basis of research into the commons in numerous cities, Bauwens, for the purpose of his *Commons Transition Plan*, starts from two premises. First, the town council, the commons citizen initiatives, and quite a number of Ghent's residents are no longer purely local actors. They have become part of transnational and translocal networks, which together can exert influence on socio-economic changes worldwide. This is demonstrated notably in

1 *Commons Transitie Plan voor de Stad Gent*. Michel Bauwens and Yurek Onzia. Ghent, Belgium: City of Ghent and P2P Foundation, 2017. https://blog.p2pfoundation.net/wp-content/uploads/Commons_transitieplan.pdf

up-and-coming 'global design communities'. Local projects such as fab labs[2] are connected to global fab lab information flows, communities, and sometimes even coalitions. Second, cities can more consciously manage the way they cooperate. There are already examples in the field of climate policy or the regulation of Uber, but this can be taken much further. International coalitions of cities should be true institutions for translocal and global cooperation.

WILL YOU BE MY PARTNER (CITY)?

Appreciating commons initiatives is one thing, organising as a local government so as to offer structural support is quite another. This requires a fundamental shift in the culture and structure of government, for which Bauwens uses the concept of the 'Partner State', here transposed to the city as local government. The city is then no longer a territory which needs politicians behaving as managers; it is, first and foremost, a living community of creative citizens. This means that instead of privatising businesses or outsourcing to public-private partnerships, the aim is the development of public-*civil* partnerships.

In order to make Ghent a Partner City, Bauwens starts from what already exists in the city in terms of transition policy. In the context of its broader climate policy, Ghent for some years has known *Gent en Garde* (Ghent and whisk), a sustainable food system strategy for the city. The central organ within this transition strategy is the *Voedselraad* (Food Council), bringing together all food chain stakeholders, hence consolidating the many existing and new initiatives around local food and the so-called short supply chains and bringing producers and consumers into contact with each other.

The Food Council, as the representative organ, also seats people within vested structures, who cannot or do not want to negotiate on an equal footing with the new commons initiators. That's why a second organ is needed, the contributive organ, which in this case is the existing working group on urban agriculture. This independent working group itself is a coalition of various urban agriculture projects, experts, and committed citizens. It allows for the mobilisation of expertise in civil society in a power-neutral way.

Based on this existing structure and to boost civil participation, the *Commons Transition Plan* can help found two new institutions. First, the States-General of the Commons, organised by sector and acting as an umbrella. This is a platform designed for citizens who care for the commons and are committed to them. The second organ is the Chamber of the Commons, analogous to the existing Chamber

2 A fab lab (fabrication laboratory) is a small-scale workshop providing services and equipment for digital production.

of Commerce. In this Chamber, citizens sit as entrepreneurs, committed to the resilience and future of the commons economy.

The difference in perspective makes both institutions indispensable. By striving in this twofold way for more voice and influence, the contributive organ gains strength in its dialogue with the representative organ and the city. They make sure that there is co-creation and they erect a barrier against any long term encapsulation caused by policy-making. The whole scheme can be rolled out for many other sectors, with the public authorities being fed constantly by commons initiatives and ideas.

WHETHER IT IS ABOUT STIMULATING THE COMMONS OR REGULATING THE HYPER-CAPITALIST AIRBNBS OF THIS WORLD, CITIES ARE TAKING THE LEAD

In addition to this, Bauwens proposes to copy successful institutions from Italian cities such as Bologna. First, a Commons City Lab, to support fresh, experimental commons initiatives, to devise commons agreements, and to disseminate successful initiatives and models. Second, the commons regulations, which endorse the right to initiate commons-orientated projects and regulate the supportive role of cities and other urban actors. The 'Right to Initiate' is a positive right which is not aimed at the replacement of public services, but harbours the values of 'care' and 'reform'.

WHERE THE CURRENTS MEET

It is a striking fact that whether it is about stimulating the commons or regulating the hyper-capitalist Airbnbs of this world, cities are taking the lead. So it's London rather than the British government that has the nerve to take action against Uber if it violates existing rules. Cities being in the vanguard is no coincidence. Even if there are more reasons at play, the fact that a local council is more easily approachable for citizens than a national government certainly has something to do with it; conversely, for a mayor it is easier to engage local actors in policy-making.

This pragmatic response, however, conceals an ideological aspect, which in my book *Vrijheid & Zekerheid* (Freedom and Certainty) I describe as the 'Land of Two Currents'.[3] In Europe there is both a dominant neoliberal main current and an alternative counter-current. The main current is formed by most national governments, international institutions, and big corporations. National governments find themselves in the straitjacket of the Maastricht Treaty values (placing monetary objectives before social and ecological ones). Urban governments

3 *Vrijheid & Zekerheid. Naar een sociaalecologische samenleving* (EPO, 2016, in Dutch). Dirk Holemans. An English essay with the core elements of the book will be available at the end of 2017 on the website of the Green European Foundation (Ecopro project): www.gef.be

IF CITIES WANT TO BE AN ACTIVE PART OF A NOVEL FORM OF TRANSNATIONAL GOVERNANCE, THEN THEY HAVE TO ACTIVELY FOUND MULTI-CITY COMMONS COALITIONS

have more autonomy in that sense; it is simply impossible for lobbyists of large corporations to be present in every city. The city is the place where a multitude of sustainable citizen initiatives start and, like small streams feeding into a larger river, come together to strengthen each other. It's mostly the local governance level – which is closest to the citizens – which joins this undercurrent. It's also the place where local alternatives can successfully develop into a real political alternative. The election of Ada Colau as mayor of Barcelona, running on the citizen platform Barcelona en Comú, is an illustration of how this can take place.

JOINING FORCES

If cities want to be an active part of a novel form of transnational governance, then they have to actively found multi-city commons coalitions. This is at the same time a pragmatic proposal: as commoners and entrepreneurs take initiatives and create local standards, the need increases to make them strong enough and allow them to operate in a classical profit-orientated environment, which shifts social and ecological cost (externalities) onto society. Cities and the commons initiatives can only attain real relevance when they succeed in pooling their knowhow and infrastructure. Jointly, cities might for example support the development of open source software platforms allowing the setting-up of working commons systems for, say, car-sharing and bicycle-sharing, minting complementary coins, or the management of food production in short-chain agriculture, from seeds to online sales.

Part of this will mean sharing knowhow about the commons approach in various towns and cities. Then we can see which regulations and new institutions work most effectively in supporting commons initiatives. As a useful example, Bauwens refers to the coalition of 16 large cities signing the *Barcelona Pledge* and its FabCity model, which aims at relocalising half of the production of food by 2054.

THE NEW TRANSLOCAL HORIZON

The importance of the *Commons Transition Plan* that Michel Bauwens devised for Ghent clearly transcends its local character. The new institutional structures that Bauwens proposes, in particular, are of crucial importance. It is clear that after a ten-year increase in citizen initiatives, Ghent needs new structures to channel this energy so as to change society and its economy in the direction of a more honest, sustainable, and shared future. All the proposed innovations at the city level will absorb a lot of time and energy from local commoners, governments, and generative entrepreneurs. There is a big danger here of everyone recognising the importance of the expansion of translocal networks, but not getting round to making them a reality. In his plan, Bauwens mentions the need for the translocal networks in addition to what has to happen in the city itself. It would be important to anchor the translocal aspect in every new institution from the start.

However, more cooperation is necessary to develop the counter-current needed. Essential in this respect are networks of cities cooperating with university networks to develop and share the necessary knowledge and design. If tomorrow 20 towns and cities allocate funds to develop, say, a digital platform for an alternative 'Fairbnb', and then implement it in cooperation with the urban commons actors, then there is real political leverage by a counter-current against the neoliberal actors. That is the real struggle we are facing and the lesson to be drawn from the 1970s. In those days there was also, from the energy of what today we refer to as 'May 68', a broad spectrum of civilian actions and initiatives, staking a claim to more space for citizen autonomy in relation to government and economy. If this space was won in the field of, say, new rights (gay marriage, flexible career options, euthanasia…) in a number of countries, then in the field of the economy the reverse has happened – citizens have lost ground. By organising globally, the power of the business sector has grown far above and beyond both that of the nation-state and of self-organising citizens. If the new wave of citizen movements is to acquire real power, then it will have to organise itself translocally from the beginning, whereby coalitions of cities with clear political and economic objectives take the lead. This will require an awareness and continuous attention on behalf of Green activists and politicians, which should underpin all of their actions.

DIRK HOLEMANS
is coordinator of the Belgian Green think-tank Oikos and a member of the board of the Green European Foundation. His most recent book is *Vrijheid & Zekerheid*.

CAN CITIES AND CITIZENS REINVENT PUBLIC SERVICES?

ARTICLE BY
OLIVIER PETITJEAN

In different forms, the remunicipalisation of public services has been gathering pace across Europe's cities and towns in recent years. This trend goes far beyond a simple reversal of privatisation. It is also about reinventing local public services in a context of climate change and globalisation, and opening spaces for the active involvement of citizens. Can it point to a new direction for Europe?

For some years, the prevailing narrative in Europe, from pretty much all sides of the political spectrum, has been one of 'crisis' – an economic crisis, a democratic crisis, the climate crisis, and of course a so-called 'refugee crisis'. The problem with this crisis narrative – no matter how much basis it may have in facts – is that it is often used to undermine a sense of our collective capacity and willingness to address common issues, including (but not exclusively) through public institutions. In that sense, it goes hand in hand with the impression of an inevitable decline of the role of government (at all levels) and of the public sphere in general.

We need counter-narratives and fortunately, there are some at hand. One of these is remunicipalisation: the story of cities and citizens reversing privatisation, and successfully developing better and more democratic public services for everyone, while addressing wider challenges such as climate change. In a way, the push for privatisation and for the continued decline of the role of the public sector (and all other forms of non-profit service provision) has perhaps never been stronger than it is today in Europe and the global level, as evidenced by the privatisation agenda of Donald Trump in the United States or Michel Temer in Brazil. Yet it is all the more significant – and heartening –

This article is based on the Transnational Institute's 2017 study, *Reclaiming Public Services: How cities and citizens are turning back privatisation*, co-edited by Satoko Kishimoto and Olivier Petitjean.

to see so many people in large and small cities – elected officials, civil servants, public services employees, and citizens – willing to redress the failures of privatised services and, by doing so, invent the public services of the future.

REMUNICIPALISATION SURGE ACROSS EUROPE

This is the story that a recent book, *Reclaiming Public Services: How Cities and Citizens Are Turning Back Privatisation*, seeks to highlight. While it documents dozens of cases of remunicipalisation across continents and across sectors, Western Europe clearly stands out, both in purely quantitative terms and in terms of the significance and ambition of the cases. There are well-known examples, such as the German *Energiewende*, which has seen dozens of local grids taken back into public hands, and dozens of new public- or citizen-owned renewable energy providers created. In France, water remunicipalisation has been in the news for some years, and there are also significant trends towards remunicipalisation in sectors such as public transport or school restaurants. Even in Britain, the pioneer of privatisation and liberalisation policies in Europe, some cities such as Nottingham, Leeds, or Bristol have created new municipal energy companies to address energy poverty and shift towards renewable sources. In Spain, many cities conquered by progressive citizen coalitions in the 2015 municipal elections have embarked on systematic remunicipalisation policies. At the other end of the continent, in Norway, a similar process has been unfolding, with city councils led by progressive coalitions implementing a reversal of past privatisations of social services, in close coordination with trade unions.

Of course, as the list above illustrates, remunicipalisation can take many different forms. In some sectors, such as water, it involves taking back into public hands a service that is a natural monopoly. In other sectors that have been historically or recently liberalised, it is realised through the creation of new, not-for-profit companies that provide a 'public option' – whether they are public-owned, cooperatives, or hybrid forms. Many cases of remunicipalisation have been and continue to be politically polarising, but many are not. Sometimes citizens themselves are in the driving seat, and the newly created public services open a significant space for citizen participation; sometimes the process is confined to city council meeting rooms. The word 'remunicipalisation' itself could be questioned, because some of the services in question had never been publicly managed or didn't previously exist, because it is happening at intermunicipal or regional, rather than city, level and because some of what we call remunicipalisation actually involves cooperatives and other forms of citizen-owned, rather than city-owned, companies.

WHEN PARIS REMUNICIPALISED ITS WATER SERVICES IN 2010, IT SAVED 35 MILLION EUROS A YEAR JUST BY FOREGOING PAYMENTS TO PARENT COMPANIES

Nevertheless, out of all this diversity a coherent picture can be drawn: not a turn of the tide (except in some sectors in some countries) nor a coherent movement, but an emerging remunicipalisation trend that has the potential to be a game-changer, in many ways, and far beyond public services. This trend has remained mostly under the radar, apart from some clear exceptions such as the German *Energiewende*, because most of it happens at local level, as local authorities do not necessarily wish to publicise the actions they are taking, for fear of being accused of being ideologically-driven, and of course because there are powerful players that would rather keep people in the dark about these possibilities.

BEYOND DE-PRIVATISATION

So why Europe, and why now? First, in the shorter term, the economic crisis and austerity imposed on local authorities in Europe has forced many of them to take a closer, harder look at their budgets and to seek greater control over their expenses. And more often than not they have indeed found, in spite of what private sector propagandists continue to repeat tirelessly, that privatisation is more expensive than direct public management. When, for example, Paris remunicipalised its water services in 2010, it saved 35 million euros a year just by foregoing payments to parent companies. Later, the regional court of auditors confirmed that remunicipalisation had allowed Paris to "decrease the price of water while maintaining high investment levels". In Newcastle, United Kingdom, the modernisation of signalling and fiber optic cable system was carried out by a new in-house team for about 11 million pounds, compared with more than double this figure that it would have cost if done by a private company. The city of Bergen, Norway, where two elderly care centres were taken back in-house, had a surplus of half a million euros whereas a one million loss was expected. The costs of waste collection and cleaning services decreased from 20 to 10 million euros annually in León, Spain, with remunicipalisation, and 224 workers have received public employment contracts.

Second, 20 years or so have now passed since the large waves of liberalisation and privatisation of public services that swept both Western and Eastern Europe in the 1990s and early 2000s. It is a good time to appraise the real achievements and shortcomings of private management. It is also a time where a lot of concessions, leases, and so-called 'public private partnerships' (or PPPs) contracts expire, and get to be renewed – or not. Whereas privatisation of services such as water has been more in the limelight in past decades, outsourcing to the private sector has also started to progress in sectors such as local health and social services, and local administration. It is interesting to see many examples of remunicipalisation in precisely these sectors in countries such as Norway, Sweden, or Austria, where water, for instance, has never been privately managed. Local authorities seem to have found they could provide a better service directly, at a lower cost and with better conditions for workers.

But the story of remunicipalisation is not just about reversing past privatisation or redressing its failures. In many sectors, it is also about a profound reinvention of public services; a paradigm change. In the energy sector, this is obvious enough, with the rise of decentralised, renewables-based energy systems. But the ongoing paradigm shift is not restricted to addressing climate change, in the narrow sense. It is also visible, for instance, in the waste sector, with the emergence of 'zero waste' policies. Reducing waste volumes is often mentioned as one of the key motivations for cities that have decided to remunicipalise waste collection and disposal services, because it is in contradiction with the business model of private waste companies, which remains entirely focused on landfills and incineration. Similarly, in France, the main reason why many small and large cities have recently remunicipalised school restaurants is to provide organic, local food to children, whereas contractors such as Sodexo typically relied on standardised, international supply chains. Some smaller French towns even source the food for their school restaurants from local municipal farms, or through partnerships with local farming cooperatives. The strong connection between remunicipalisation and the 'relocalisation' of the economy (and of the cash generated by public service bills) is a common thread that cuts across all these sectors.

A RENEWED FOCUS ON CITIES AND ON CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

It is no coincidence that we see cities at the forefront of this movement. Indeed, they are first in line to deal both with the consequences of austerity and with the new challenges of climate change and resource constraints. It is at the local level that reality strikes, and it is harder for local politicians than for national

or European ones to ignore the very concrete daily consequences of public policies. One would also like to think that European cities have retained a bit of their political traditions of freedom, asylum, and citizenship. There is no doubt that active citizen involvement and participation – for which cities remain the most natural space – is at the heart of the ongoing paradigm shift and has been a fundamental driver behind many of the most interesting remunicipalisation cases of recent years in Europe, whether in alliance with local politicians or against them. Citizens have pushed local authorities to reclaim public services and in many cases have played an active part in creating and running these very services. In doing so, they are effectively reinventing what 'public' actually means. Fundamentally, it is about (re)building collective capacity and solidarity, beyond public services. In this sense, there is indeed a strong connection between the fight for local public services and the fight for the rights of refugees and migrants. The example of Barcelona and other Spanish cities, where years of organising against evictions and water or power cuts have led to the election of progressive municipalities committed both to remunicipalisation and migrants' rights, are just some amongst many illustrations of this connection.

All of this begs the question, of course, of whether the current emphasis on the role of cities in the public services sphere – and in climate issues or the topic of welcoming refugees and migrants – reflects, before anything else, a retreat of progressive forces from the national level. Are national governments not, at the same time, increasingly committed to the interests of big business and to forcing austerity on society, local authorities included? Although remunicipalisation is alive and thriving throughout most of Europe, there is also a distressing pattern of national governments actively opposing and seeking to prevent it. The Spanish government, along with the private operator and other business bodies, actually took the city of Valladolid to court, after it remunicipalised its water system. It has also adopted legislation to prevent the creation of new municipal companies or new public service jobs. Similarly, the UK now has a law actually banning city councils from creating new local bus companies.

Even if they do not all go to such extremes, it would be difficult to name one European government that is actually encouraging or even merely enabling remunicipalisation at the moment. As for the European institutions, they officially maintain some form of 'neutrality' towards the public or private management of essential services. But the culture prevalent at the Commission and the balance of power at the European Parliament and Council results in rules and legislations that, even when they do not directly favour the interests of large

CITIES ARE FIRST IN LINE TO DEAL BOTH WITH THE CONSEQUENCES OF AUSTERITY AND WITH THE NEW CHALLENGES OF CLIMATE CHANGE AND RESOURCE CONSTRAINTS

corporate players, tend to consider integrated, liberalised markets at European level, where a handful of large for-profit players compete with each other, as the 'normal' way things should be organised. Big business knows how to make itself heard in Brussels, whereas the local governments and citizen movements that drive the remunicipalisation movement on the ground have a weaker presence, if any, in the European capital.

NETWORKS OF CITIES TO COUNTERBALANCE CORPORATE INFLUENCE

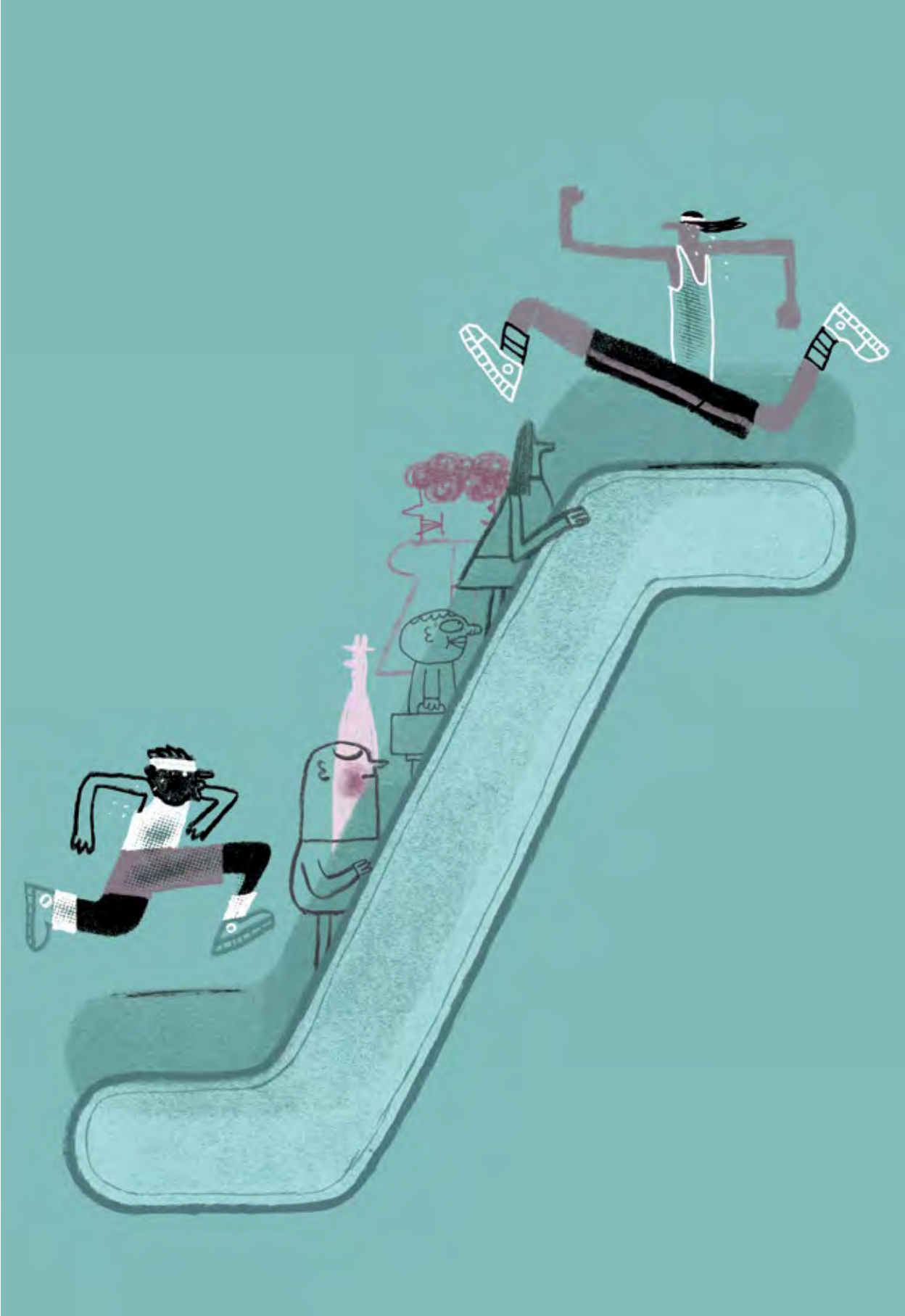
Can the remunicipalisation trend thrive and expand without proper support at the national and European levels? Do cities have the capacity to deal, by themselves, with the wider economic and geopolitical forces at work today, over which they have very little control? In the short term, remunicipalisation and the fight for better, democratic, sustainable and inclusive public services will continue to depend on the personal energy and motivation of citizens and officials. This certainly appears fragile in comparison to the established machineries of the private sector and unfavourable national and EU policies. However, there is potential for responding to the challenge. Networks of collaboration between remunicipalised public services are building up at regional, national, and European level, particularly in the water and energy sectors. Mutual assistance between cities can be an effective way to address the limitations of smaller, local public operators in comparison to large multinationals; and it could even become an effective check on the influence of multinationals over public policies.

Of course, these networks also need to develop beyond the limits of Western Europe, particularly in places where the balance of power between cities and large international companies (who more often than not have headquarters and shareholders in Western Europe) is much more unfavourable. The Eastern half of the continent is the obvious place to start. Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, has recently decided not

to renew its heating contract with Veolia and is now facing a one million euro compensation claim in front of an international arbitration tribunal. A few years ago, the authorities of Sofia, Bulgaria, cancelled a referendum on water remunicipalisation, allegedly because they were threatened with exactly the same kind of procedure. And whilst countries such as France, Germany, Spain or even the UK are experiencing a wave of public services remunicipalisation, their governments and the European Union often turn into active promoters of the private sector's role in providing essential services in other countries and continents, including by subsidising European multinationals under the mask of 'development assistance'.

The remunicipalisation movement in Europe already demonstrates that there is an alternative for the future of public services to the vision currently prevailing at the EU and national levels. One of the key challenges ahead is to consolidate this alternative vision and impose it on institutional agendas, both within Europe itself and in its relations with the rest of the world and particularly the Global South. With remunicipalisation, and with the reinvention of public services that it often entails, Europe has something much more valuable to share with the world.

OLIVIER PETITJEAN
is a French journalist with experience in the NGO sector and the publishing industry. He writes for the French progressive news website *Basta!* (bastamag.net) and is the editor of the Multinationals Observatory, a website dedicated to information and investigations on French multinational corporations.



BIG FISH, LITTLE FISH

THE STRUGGLES OF POLAND'S SMALL TOWNS

ARTICLE BY
HANNA GILL-PIĄTEK

Of the more than 900 towns and cities in Poland, only a handful of larger ones – hailed as 'development locomotives' – are thriving, while the rest lag behind. Life in these towns can be even harder than in the rural areas, hitherto regarded as the most deprived places in the country. Yet, some small cities are now blazing trails of their own – devising and implementing new development models.

Throughout history, Poland's cities never gained as much independence and strength as their Italian or German counterparts. They have never been as significant politically and economically as in Western Europe. In the 16th century, when the economic rift started to emerge in Europe, Poland found itself on the side of those who supplied simple resources such as cereals or timber. This conserved the agricultural landscape of the Polish economy for centuries. Attempts at founding cities based on carefully considered plans, such as the Renaissance city of Zamość, were hardly the rule. And the pre-Communist industrial revolution on the other hand only created a handful of cities, such as Łódź and Żyrardów, but their story did not fit the predominantly aristocratic historical narrative founded on attachment to land.

After the fall of the Berlin wall, the new reality was again influenced by the past and Polish cities were not recognised as important public policy actors. They were merely treated as a legacy, something that simply had always been there. Meanwhile, the agricultural sector had a dedicated ministry, and later on, a Ministry of Regional Development was also created. During the transition period, cities had to fend for themselves, and the neoliberal testing ground of Poland's economy did not offer them many opportunities for harmonious development.

PL

This article is available in its original language (Polish) on the Green European Journal website.

JAK BYĆ MAŁYM MIASTEM I PRZEŻYĆ W POLSCE: PRAKTYCZNY PORADNIK

Małe miasta, dotąd pozostawiane na uboczu procesów modernizacyjnych w Polsce, dziś stają się laboratoriami zmiany.

UNEVEN TRANSITION

In 2009, 20 years after the break-up of the Eastern Bloc, the Civic Platform (PO) government, led by the then Prime Minister Donald Tusk, released a report titled *Polska 2030*. The opening page contained a photo of the neoliberal PM, a serious and considerate expression on his face, and the following page – a photo of a team of over a dozen young specialists. "In the 380 pages of the report, a team of young economists, lawyers and sociologists led by Michał Boni (then a member of cabinet) outlines a fascinating picture of a country in transition, liberated by its in-depth transformation but at the same time imprisoned in deeply ingrained old civilizational patterns. *Polska 2030* tells a story of a country that has no present, only a constant strife between the past and the future. That's because constant development is a defining feature of today's Poland"[1] – such was more or less the tone of commentaries in the national media. The government had reasons to be optimistic, or at least so they believed. It had just been announced, with much publicity, that Poland was the only 'green island' in Europe, unaffected by the turbulence of the global crisis.

The report was fairly honest in diagnosing the situation: after the dynamic and not fully understood 1990s political transition, Poland had begun to modernise. However, not all parts of it were modernising at the same pace: it was already clear that some regions lagged behind economically and socially. Shortly after Poland got connected to the drip of EU subsidies in 2003, it found itself in what the economists came to call "a middle-income trap" and its leaders started to look for a way out. The report acknowledged the disease, but the cure it offered was the so-called "polarisation and diffusion development" model in which support was to be provided to the big cities, christened as "development locomotives", in the hope that they would work out solutions that would magically trickle down to smaller towns and villages.

If we were to use the liberals' favourite metaphor of giving a fish versus teaching to fish, the Civic Platform government bravely decided that poor fishermen needed the technology to build an oceanic trawler more than they needed access to the local lake.

IN DIFFERENT LEAGUES

The effects of the deepening inequalities between Poland's regions and cities were to become visible rapidly. They were amplified by the investment rush ahead of the Euro 2012 Football Championship, when the metropolitan cities were given stadiums

1 Wawrzyniec Smoczyński, Polityka, 17 June 2009. http://www.polityka.pl/tygodnikpolityka/rynek/294154,1,raport-polska-2030.read

worth hundreds of millions of euros and hastily built motorways. Meanwhile, the provincial areas of Poland lacked basic social infrastructure elements such as crèches, healthcare facilities or public transport. Due to the dismantling of labour codes and the fact that Poland had the largest proportion of people working under 'junk' contracts in Europe, entire towns were practically excluded from the system of unemployment benefits, public healthcare or pensions. In some cases in the peripheries of the 'green island', you got paid just over 6 eurocents per hour of work peeling onions.

While the quality of life stagnated, anger grew. The small towns were increasingly frustrated by the widening contrast between the urban upper-middle-class lifestyles they saw in the TV soaps, and their own reality of having no prospects, which could not even be described for lack of adequate language. As the weak state had ceded more and more responsibility for education and historical policy to the Catholic Church and the Right, in 2010 it became a new tradition for young men from all over Poland to flock to Warsaw to join the Independence Marches and take it out on saplings lining the streets of the capital city which they hated. Nationalism became the foundation of a new class pride, in line with Walter Benjamin's insight that "behind every fascism, there is a failed revolution."

In 2013, a person living in a medium-sized Polish town (20,000 to 100,000 inhabitants) on average earned a mere 56 per cent of the earnings of a person working in a big metropolitan city. That was lower even than incomes in agricultural areas. The polarisation and diffusion model wreaked the most destruction on small cities and medium-sized towns. It was now a fact that their development lagged behind. In order to realise the scale of the phenomenon one needs to understand that of the 926 towns and cities in Poland, only 66 are relatively large urban centres, and only 10 are metropolitan cities with major agglomerations. The traditional division into rich urban areas and poor rural areas is no longer valid because the real developmental divide separates small and medium -sized towns from the rest of the country.

In the same year 2013, when the crisis of small towns was unfolding, Stefan Niesiołowski, a Civic Platform MP, responded to reports about large numbers of undernourished children in Poland by suggesting that they should forage for wild sorrel and mirabelle plums. However, while politicians seemed to consistently ignore the deepening inequalities in their constituencies, civil servants in local governments and ministries gradually started to describe the reality using the language created by urban activists. It was thanks to the co-operation between the two groups that the National Urban Policy, the first ever document to emphasise the role and specific character of towns and cities, was developed.

In 2017, the Law and Justice Party (PiS), who identified and seized the political opportunity to claim to represent the underrepresented during the elections of 2015, unveiled its "Strategy of Responsible Development". Despite containing many debateable visions for the country, its economy and its energy sector, it offers several concrete solutions to improve the development opportunities of neglected towns and small cities. The identification of 370 cities in need and the pledging of 650 million euros of government support are positive developments in this regard, with the caveat that small cities will still need to learn how to access the funds, and more importantly, how to make the best use of them.

IT WOULD BE A MISTAKE TO CHERISH AN IDYLLIC VISION OF SMALL TOWNS AS SANCTUARIES OF NATIONAL HEALTH, TRADITIONS AND HARMONIOUS LIFE

THE COSTS OF IMITATION

Before we move on to the small towns and cities, let us first look at the ten greatest 'urban locomotives': the capital city of Warsaw; the historic Kracow; Katowice with its massive agglomeration in southern Poland; Łódź in central Poland, which has only recently caught some favourable winds in its sails; Poznań and Wrocław in western Poland; Gdańsk which forms the coastal Tricity together with its two neighbours; Lublin in eastern Poland; and the similar-sized Szczecin and Bydgoszcz – the latter involved in unending competition with Toruń, akin to the rivalry between Turin and Milan. When we look at the way those metropolitan cities have been modernising, we easily notice that they have been colonised by certain Western models and patterns. A 'childhood disease' that was particularly common in the cities during the last decade concerned a fascination with a simplified version of Richard Florida's creative class concept. However, much more damage was done by ideas which had long been discarded beyond Poland's western borders as harmful to the people and the environment, such as the belief in development through oversized investments and expensive sporting events.

Obviously, following foreign examples is not always bad. In some cases, such transplants are good and serve people well: pocket parks and *woonerfs* (living streets) which Łódź has come to love, are a case in point. Those solutions owe their success to their small scale, appropriateness to the inhabitants' needs and high-quality of implementation. Much more often, however, the policy of imitation engenders massive costs, as has been the case with Warsaw and the expressways it built within, rather than outside the city, or Poznań, which is one of the cities still paying for their large and expensive

stadium. The mayors of the 'locomotives' failed to notice that in the cities they were imitating, football was much stronger than in Poland, allowing the stadiums to support themselves, and traffic services were more efficient in preventing transit traffic from pouring into inner cities. Another bizarre case concerns the construction of the Gdynia Kosakowo airport, located just 32 km away from the functioning and not overly congested Lech Wałęsa airport in Gdańsk. The pointless project was co-funded by an EU subsidy, but the airport never opened. These are examples of superficial imitation without any guarantee of success.

THOU SHALT MODERNISE

Let us come back to the liberals' favourite fish metaphor and the more than 800 small towns which have just been taught reasonably good fishing techniques and given access to fish in the form of universal social programmes, and on top of that stand a chance of benefitting from what is called 'premium for backwardness'. They could avoid repeating the mistakes made by the big cities. Unfortunately, not all of them do.

In many places, brain-drain, the weakness of the local media and social control, shortage of new ideas and isolation have conserved social relations which resemble a tribal model more than they do a mature local democracy. Activists in big cities often decry the so-called 'new public management' model and protest that the city is not a business, but in the small towns it would be more adequate to shout that the city is not a *folwark*[2]. It would be, but there is usually no-one to do the shouting. Robust urban movements are seldom found in cities of less than 50,000 inhabitants, and individual whistleblowers quickly get intimidated and silenced. It would be a mistake to cherish an idyllic vision of small towns as sanctuaries of national health, traditions and harmonious life.

The other sin of which the small-town local governments in Poland are guilty concerns the superficiality of their notion of modernisation. While Poland's large cities understand 'modernity' to mean the solutions implemented in the past by global metropolitan cities, even if they are now considered to have been mistakes, small towns tend to repeat the mistakes of the big cities, to which they add quite of lot of their own inventiveness. It is not unusual to see destroyed urban landscapes where century-old trees have been cut down in the central market squares to give way to concrete paving arranged in fancy patterns, and where public spaces have been transformed into empty, barren plots. Such things happen in cities which see their heritage as nothing more than an open-air museum and understand modernisation to mean incessantly transforming urban spaces into ever wider roads and ever bigger parking lots.

2 *Folwark* is a serfdom-era farm where the landlord's will was often the ultimate law. It used to form the basis of Poland's agricultural economy.

SILVER LININGS

But is this one-sided picture not too pessimistic? Of course, it is. There are plenty of small and medium-sized cities which are testing grounds of urban transformation, despite the unfavourable conditions in which they have to operate. Take housing, one of the biggest problems in Poland. A positive example in this regard comes from Ostrów Wielkopolski, a small town in central Poland. No other place in Poland can match its affordable housing scheme where 171 apartments have already been delivered to tenants, primarily young and low-income, and the number keeps growing. Ostrów seized its opportunity as early as the 1990s when it established a municipal housing company. Thanks to the self-financing nature of the scheme, the first investments have now been fully repaid, and the Ostrów system has inspired the concept of the national governmental programme launched in 2017.

Słupsk, a city of under 100,000 inhabitants near the Baltic coast, had long been considered to be lagging behind and capable of competing only with its slightly bigger neighbour, Koszalin. However, since Robert Biedroń, originally an LGBTQiA activist, took over as the city's president, Słupsk has managed to enter a partnership with IKEA to upgrade its lighting, and to launch an unprecedented revitalisation programme which features massive involvement of housing communities, companies and NGOs.

Good examples do not necessarily have to come from towns with progressive governments. Small Brzeziny near Łódź, governed by a fairly conservative mayor, has hired the town's unemployed to do renovation works and promoted the development of social co-operatives. Towns and cities located in more peripheral locations face different challenges. Gorzów Wielkopolski, a city of 117,000 inhabitants located a mere hour's drive from Berlin, has successfully taken on multiculturalism, a rare phenomenon elsewhere in Poland. Back in the 1960s, Gorzów was where Poland's Roma were forced to settle. Today a Roma community of several hundred people lives in the city centre. Instead of seeing this as a problem, as the much larger Wrocław does, Gorzów decided to integrate its Roma inhabitants through culture. The Romane Dyvesa culture festival has become its flagship promotional brand.

Positive stories can be found even in very small towns of 5,000 to 10,000 inhabitants. For example, tiny Dobiegniew near Gorzów has a model Social Integration Centre and is one of the best-performing towns in the governmental Model Revitalisation scheme. Nearby, picturesque Barlinek, which used to be called 'little Berlin' before World War II, has successfully promoted itself as an excursion destination for pensioners from the other side of the border.

The transition period has left Poland's towns and cities with a legacy of serious problems caused by the privatisation of public services, which led to rising utility bills in most homes in Poland. While Berlin and other Western cities seek to re-municipalise their utilities, in Poland a debate on re-municipalisation is still unthinkable. But Leszno, for example, a town located between Poznań and Wrocław, has never privatised its heat and power plant and has been able to act on energy poverty. Starachowice, a town located in the Świętokrzyskie region, one of the most disadvantaged areas of the country, also sought and found a creative way to avoid privatisation: it transformed the upper floor of its municipality-owned shopping centre, which had proved difficult to rent out, into a comprehensive facility for seniors, at the same time driving the business of the shops downstairs.

All those ideas have three things in common. Firstly, they are not imitations and are based on local potential. Secondly, they are creative attempts at using the existing regulatory tools or overcoming their limitations. Finally, they were conceived by local visionaries who had the trust and support of the local governments. Even though the local governments in question represent various political views, the Far Right is almost non-existent in the cities mentioned here. Smaller cities and towns are capable of working out their own development models without resorting to imitation or having unfit models imposed on them.

It is quite easy to predict a future in which government assistance will give a boost to such innovating cities, while in others, the 'helicopter money' will only conserve the tendency to think in terms of parking lots and follow *folwark*-era habits. This is why formal and informal networks for the exchange of experiences among the constellation of Poland's towns and small cities have such an important role to play. If we manage to overcome the old tendency of smaller urban centres to focus on their own backyard only, and if we succeed in building solidarity between them, things will move forward by themselves, even without much government investment. If not, the gap between towns and small cities on the one hand, and large cities on the other, will continue to widen, followed by the spectre of rising radicalisms.

HANNA GILL-PIĄTEK
is a revitalisation expert, urban activist, journalist, and member of the Polish Greens. From 2011 to 2014, she ran the Political Critique community centre in Łódź, and later worked on revitalisation as a civil servant in Łódź and Gorzów. She has co-authored *Poverty: A Guide for Children* with Henryka Krzywonos.

GUARDIANS OF THE PROPERTY

POP-UP HOUSING FOR POP-UP PEOPLE

ARTICLE BY
JULIA TOYNBEE LAGOUTTE &
SAMIR JERAJ

Across London and other European cities, a new way of living is taking root: property guardianship. Blocks of flats, police stations, social housing, libraries, offices, warehouses, schools – buildings that have been taken out of use – are occupied by a new anti-squatting measure: people who guard property by living in it. Whilst ostensibly a win-win situation for everyone, this industry is a symptom of the desperate state of urban housing and ultimately reinforces the factors that caused it, as well as normalising lower conditions and precarity.

The pitter patter of a keyboard hums in the dust-speckled London space. Two tattered sofas in the corner are dwarfed by 70 square metres of open office space. Matthew, a thirty-something freelance documentary film-maker, is working from home. One floor down, along from an old reception area, is a makeshift kitchen shared with 12 other people.

Matthew is a property guardian, one of many thousands living in European cities such as London. Property guardianship started out in the 1990s in the Netherlands as 'Anti-Kraak' (anti-squat), a way to counter squatting. The owner of a building would employ a company to manage the building until it was sold, demolished, or redeveloped. That company would find people – often students and artists who needed cheap living and working space – to live in the building for below market rents and very short-notice agreements. The building would remain occupied, and thus secured against squatting. Some of these companies are set up for the sole purpose of property guardianship

This article is grounded in research done by Julia Toynbee Lagoutte for her 2016 Master's Thesis.

while for others property guardianship is one option in their portfolio of security measures. These businesses have since spread from the Netherlands to other parts of Europe; industry pioneer Camelot Europe has offices in the UK, Ireland, Belgium, Germany, and France.

Whilst initially seen as a marginal and stop-gap solution for students or artists, property guardianship in London and elsewhere has become increasingly normalised, formalised, and expensive. Amidst the largely positive press, criticisms from lawyers and guardians themselves have joined those of squatter and housing organisations, pointing out that the legal grey area guardians occupy – as neither security guards nor tenants – opens the door wide open to exploitation of this new class of 'sub-tenants'. On top on this, this practice represents a symptom of a problem; a symptom that has managed to market itself as a *solution*.

WHERE ARE MY RIGHTS?

Property guardians in the UK are legally classed as 'licensees', not tenants (they pay a 'license fee', rather than rent). They are not protected by tenant rights, such as those regarding privacy and tenure. The average contract between a guardian and the property guardianship company would include: the right for the company to visit all areas of the property at any time without warning; no pets or children (even to stay one night); no guests in the building without the guardian present. Without tenants' protection, there are no rules about how many toilets and showers are needed for a certain number of people, for example. In one old doctor's surgery in South London, nine guardians shared one shower and one kitchen. Many properties don't have internet or phone lines and often guardians are not allowed to install washing machines or ovens – the short notice period means this is often not worth the cost anyway. The deposit guardians have to give to their property guardianship company (up to 800 pounds) is not legally protected, and companies such as Camelot are notoriously bad at returning them. Initially, guardians were given as little as 24 hours to move out but this has increased to 28 days after lawyers highlighted this was not legal. Many contracts also prevent guardians from speaking to the media about their experience.[1] In order to legally protect themselves from having to provide tenants' rights, property guardianship companies ensure guardians cannot claim 'exclusive access to a space', one of the key conditions of being a tenant. This they do through unannounced visits to the guardians' rooms whenever they want, often once or twice a month. Mirela, a mental health nurse from

1 'The high price of cheap living: how the property guardianship dream soured'. *The Guardian* 2015, Lucas Amin and Margot Gibbs. https://www.theguardian.com/society/2015/dec/24/the-high-price-of-cheap-living-how-the-property-guardianship-dream-soured

PROPERTY GUARDIANSHIP REPRESENTS A SYMPTOM OF A PROBLEM; A SYMPTOM THAT HAS MANAGED TO MARKET ITSELF AS A SOLUTION

Romania, explained, "I don't feel comfortable with a stranger coming in my room and finding a note when I come back. Someone has been here. I feel like my space is invaded and also because I'm quite tidy I wouldn't like people to know if I have clothes around. I'm paying, at least give me my privacy."

Guardians are not protected from sudden rent hikes: one morning Matthew received an email informing him his monthly 'fee' would increase from 350 to 550 pounds the following month. Guardians have no idea whether they will stay 28 days or three years in a place. Alice, an archaeology graduate working in tourism, was given notice to leave within two weeks of moving into a new place, shouldering time and financial burdens that she could ill afford. The lack of security built into being a guardian affects their homemaking; they tend to make less effort or have less furniture and a more makeshift and temporary feeling leads to many never really feeling at home, even after years of inhabiting a place (especially knowing a stranger could enter at any moment). This is particularly visible in larger properties – such as ex-care homes or old office buildings – with locks on cupboards, new guardians coming and going without input from other residents, and the anonymous feel of a hostel. Many guardians report feeling anxious about the possibility of having to move on and uncomfortable with the lack of privacy and rights. Alice remarked of living in a property guardianship that "I didn't feel secure, I never felt stable."

POP-UP PEOPLE

Looking at the characteristics required of a guardian, we can begin to see how property guardianship represents an extension of deeper contemporary socio-economic trends into the area of housing. For the characteristics required of them – reliable, flexible, disposable – are also those of the growing group of people who make up what economist Guy Standing has dubbed the 'precariat'. For this 'class-in-

the-making', work is increasingly precarious, short-term, and flexible. The rise of zero-hour contracts exemplifies this: in the UK today there are 1.7 million zero-hour contracts, making up 6 per cent of all employment contracts.[2] This is four times higher than in 2000. This shift towards temporary jobs and being 'independent contractors' underpins what many have called the 'sharing economy' but in reality is better described by the term the '*access* economy'.[3] This includes platforms that enable people to monetise temporary access to their assets – such as their property (Airbnb) or their cars (Uber and Lyft) – and platforms that just connect service users with service providers, such as Deliveroo. Property guardianship as a platform linking service users with service providers to extract money from the use of temporarily empty properties, and the provision of this service by people on insecure and right-less contracts, is the epitome of these processes. It is a new manifestation of these under-the-surface dynamics that foster ever more imaginative efforts to bring new areas into the market and extract profit from them; bringing it to a level at which even the spaces in between the owner's usage – when assets are apparently *unused* – can be used to extract money. In a new twist, guardians also pay for the privilege of providing the service of guarding properties.

The rights of the 'pop-up people' who maintain these new structures have been watered down if not dissolved. Just as guardians don't have tenants' rights, Uber drivers or Deliveroo couriers as independent contractors shoulder the financial investments and risks of their trade and don't have rights such as sick pay or insurance. Just as Uber doesn't have the responsibilities towards its drivers that taxi companies do towards theirs, property guardianship companies do not have the same obligations towards their guardians as a landlady towards her tenants. What this represents in the broader picture is the creation of new structures of work and living which appear the same as before, but lack the same rights and protection and require a huge level of flexibility and insecurity of the person providing the service. Property guardianship represents the creeping of these processes of flexibilisation, precarity, and decreased rights into the new area of housing. In this scheme, which seems more emblematic of neoliberal logics the more one learns about it, housing becomes a by-product of providing a service, not a right. These pop-up people are also commodified as products as well as service users: guardians' bodies are effectively replacing infrastructure (security companies would previously have boarded up the buildings and installed CCTV). Guardians like

2 'Number of zero-hours contracts stalls at 'staggering' 1.7m'. *The Guardian* 2017, Angela Monaghan. https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2017/may/11/number-of-zero-hours-contracts-stalls-at-staggering-1-7-million

3 'The Sharing Economy Isn't About Sharing at All'. *Harvard Business Review*. Giana M. Eckhardt and Fleura Bardhi https://hbr.org/2015/01/the-sharing-economy-isnt-about-sharing-at-all

Matthew, Alice, and Mirela are also products marketed to property owners; "we provide reliable and trustworthy guardians", as Ad Hoc Property Guardians company boasts.[4] Guardians often have to provide references and, in some cases, proof of a social conscience and willingness to invest in the local community (such as with Dotdotdot Property Guardians).

WHOSE CITY?

More than most cities in Europe, London shows us how extreme the housing crisis can get. Private renters there spend around 70 per cent[5] of their income on rent, sterile luxury developments are being built in areas once known for being affordable and vibrant, and social housing is being demolished and neglected, and replaced with private housing – with young professionals displacing working-class people who are pushed further and further out. Property guardianship plays a role in facilitating this.

Research by Green London Assembly Member Sian Berry found that 24 out of London's 32 local governments were using property guardians in their empty properties[6], with over 1,000 people in over 200 publicly-owned buildings in 2016. East London's iconic social housing building, Balfron Tower, was recently transferred to a housing association. Since its social residents were moved out in 2014 for so-called 'refurbishments' guardians have lived there, and the housing association has now announced it will be renovating the flats with a property developer and selling them on the private market. By preventing neglect and squatting for years, property guardians *unwittingly* – for they are victims of these same processes – played a role in facilitating its passing from public to private hands, easing the process by allowing the housing association to sit on it without doing anything for several years. This is actively encouraged by the state – through recent legal changes such as criminalising squatting in residential properties and loosening regulations about changing a building's use from commercial to residential (to let guardians stay there), as well as the deregulation of the housing market that started under Margaret Thatcher in the 1980s. Almost all properties managed by property guardianship company Ad Hoc are in council-owned estates. Property guardianship also obscures and normalises the fact that there are so many empty houses in cities like London, private as well as council-owned, that have been emptied of residents in order to sell to private developers.

4 'Living the Ad Hoc way'. Ad Hoc Property Guardians website. http://www.adhocproperty.co.uk/property-guardians/living-the-ad-hoc-way/
5 'Tenants in England spend half their pay on rent'. *The Guardian* 2015. Hilary Osborne https://www.theguardian.com/money/2015/jul/16/tenants-in-england-spend-half-their-pay-on-rent
6 'Property Guardian Use in the Public Sector in London'. Sian Berry Assembly Member website. http://www.sianberry.london/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/SianBerry_Property_Guardians_London_2016.pdf

The point here is that property guardianship is not a natural and inevitable consequence of market forces in which people who need housing fit neatly into naturally empty spaces, but is part of a wider process where buildings that *are* in use are emptied of their residents and turned into vehicles for monumental levels of profit. Its increasing profitability is due to state intervention in some areas – in supporting property owners in extracting more rent from their properties – and the withdrawal of state intervention in others, when it comes to ensuring affordability and protection for tenants. Whilst some guardians liked the idea of living in large and unusual spaces, most we spoke to were motivated by the high cost of renting. In this situation, renters in London are forced to trade in rights and security by becoming guardians for rents they can afford. And whilst the state is the main engineer of this process, the winners are private actors and companies for whom the London housing market is an increasingly lucrative cash cow – whether by buying up London's public housing stock and turning it into unaffordable private accommodation or now through property guardianship (Camelot Europe having a yearly turnover of five to six million pounds). This slow takeover of publicly-owned properties and assets by private actors, supported by the state, is a classic feature of neoliberalism and bears out Naomi Klein's argument that neoliberalism, rather than weakening the state, is highly dependent on it.

CONFUSING THE SYMPTOM WITH THE SOLUTION

Property guardianship is a symptom of London's broken housing market – but its appearance as a win-win solution which both solves the blight of empty properties and provides cheap housing means it is confused by many with the solution. It thus obscures the extent of the problem and provides an excuse for politicians not to act. Owning empty property used to incur costs, but now it is increasingly profitable, and this will surely have an effect on property owners, just as research has shown that Airbnb drives up property prices.[7] Whilst reinforcing the narrative that the 'invisible hand of the market' will eventually sort out all problems, property guardianship is actually state-led and it is part of the problem, not the solution – not only that, but it contributes to it, by normalising corporate control of housing, lower tenant rights, and insecurity, by easing the process of gentrification, and masking the extent of the problem. It is a new way of extracting rent from properties, exploiting people like Mirela, Alice, and Matthew's desperate need for housing in London.

7 'American Prospect: The Unsavory Side of Airbnb'. *American Prospects* 2015. Steven Hill. http://www.steven-hill.com/american-prospect-the-unsavory-side-of-airbnb/

When David Harvey, in his seminal book *Rebel Cities*, wrote about the city as the factory for a new type of class struggle that would birth real revolutionary movements, he argued that it was against new types of urban rent extraction and human desperation such as property guardianship that these movements would arise. This edition explores how cities foster new forms of political and social experiments – yet these cannot be understood without identifying what they are reacting against. And whilst a key characteristic of the 'precariat' – and of guardians – is being fragmented, dispersed, and not rooted anywhere, which makes it harder to organise and demand their rights, groups of urban precariat workers, such as Deliveroo couriers and Uber drivers, are starting to stand up for their rights, as are guardians such as Rex Duis who has published a charter for property guardianship companies.

A recent court case in the British city of Bristol has called into question whether property guardianship will continue in the UK. Regardless of the outcome, this practice has exposed certain processes at play within European cities, such as the tendency to put the needs of corporate actors before even something as basic as the right to decent housing. It raises questions about urban space: how are neoliberal economic processes reshaping and curtailing people's access to urban space, and how can this access be safeguarded? What will happen to the already feeble political will to solve the deep yet politically resolvable housing crisis of London and other European cities if the expansion of property guardianship is seen as a viable alternative? Instead of being a solution, property guardianship must be a catalyst to examine and respond to the worsening crisis it springs from.

JULIA TOYNBEE LAGOUTTE
is currently editorial assistant at the *Green European Journal*. She is an anthropologist, with a focus on development and human rights and is especially interested in issues of mining, indigenous rights, gender, and politics.

SAMIR JERAJ
is a journalist with a focus on issues in private rented housing. He was a Green Party councillor in Norwich from 2008 to 2012. He's the author of *The Rent Trap* with Rosie Walker (Left Book Club 2016) and can be found on twitter as @sajeraj

WHOSE CITY IS IT ANYWAY?

REFLECTIONS ON GLOBAL URBAN DYNAMICS

AN INTERVIEW WITH
SASKIA SASSEN

When looking at contemporary cities around the world today, one could easily conclude that they seem increasingly designed to accommodate the requirements and interests of powerful financial actors, over those of the citizens who inhabit them. As these faceless players encroach ever further onto a range of spaces – both physical and intangible – in the urban landscape, while ordinary people seem to be increasingly losing ground in their own neighbourhoods or being pushed out completely, what prospects are there for citizens to resist these dynamics?

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL: You wrote *The Global City* in 1991, can you explain this concept?

SASKIA SASSEN: The widespread notion in the 1980s that being in a specific place no longer mattered to economic sectors that could use digital technology spurred me to check out highly digitised economic sectors and led me to focus on the finance sector, the rising economic star after its deregulation, which allowed financial firms to enter all kinds of domains which they had been excluded from, from student debt to home mortgages.

That turned out to be the first step towards conceptualising the global city function. It became an effort to detect a new, somewhat elusive formation deep inside major cities: a sort of vast, complex, and diverse operational platform that installed itself in what were the major economic centres in the 1980s – New York, London, and Tokyo. That function eventually included about 40 major cities as globalisation proceeded and incorporated more and more countries.

My concept in its narrowest version was 'the global city *function*,'[1] a sort of bridge that enabled entering the deep economy of a country.

What also amused me was the notion that there was a combination of elements that might produce this ironic outcome: the fact that the most powerful, rich, and digitised economic actors needed urban land or 'central places,' perhaps more than ever before. Large corporate firms engaged in routinised production could locate themselves anywhere. But if they went global they needed access to a whole new mix of complex specialised services almost impossible to produce in-house, as had been the practice.

A second hypothesis that was stronger than I expected was that this new economic logic, partial as it was, would generate high-level jobs and low-wage jobs; it would need far fewer middle-range jobs than traditional corporations. But those low-level jobs, whether in the office or in households, would matter more than one might imagine. I described these low-wage jobs in the advanced economic sectors, notably finance, as the work of maintaining a strategic infrastructure.[2]

How does the global city relate to globalisation?

SASKIA SASSEN: Standard economics does not capture the mix of dynamics that produced the global city function, nor does it capture the core dynamics of high-finance. Microeconomics and macroeconomics are at their best and most useful – or perhaps only useful function – when they deal with standardised economic sectors.

One key hypothesis I arrived at early on in my research was that intermediation was an increasingly strategic and systemically necessary function for the global economy that took off in the 1980s. This in turn led me to generate the hypothesis about a need for specific types of spaces: spaces for the making of intermediate instruments and capabilities. One such strategic space concerned the instruments needed for outsourcing jobs, something I examined in my first book.

But what began to emerge in the 1980s was on a completely different scale of complexity and diversity of economic sectors: it brought with it the making of a new type of city formation. I called it the 'global city' – an space for the production and/or implementation of very diverse and very complex intermediate capabilities.

This did not refer to the whole city. I posited that the global city was a production function inserted in complex existing cities. This was a function that cast a vast shadow over a city's larger space.

1 http://bit.ly/GEJ16_Sassen1
2 For an elaboration of these rarely mentioned issues see: http://saskiasassen.com//PDFs/SS_EconomicCleansing.pdf

In Europe there are more and more networks of cities and urban movements emerging and claiming a voice. Citizens express the will to 'take back control' and start new initiatives, such as energy cooperatives, repair cafés and fab labs. Can we be optimistic?

SASKIA SASSEN: This is a difficult one for me to answer. It needs to be focused on the specifics of cities and these vary enormously. I definitely would answer yes. But it will take work, and it will mean that residents must know their rights and what they can claim from local and national governments regarding changes in their city and/or their neighbourhood. At present, most citizens perhaps are not aware of the claims they can make – an interesting item in itself. This effort then needs to expand to the right to make claims in domains where there is currently no clear law or statutes, and also to go beyond this… There is work to be done on several fronts to achieve this citizens' standing vis-à-vis the local government of a city. It is a battle worth fighting and a mode worth developing.

What are the forces and/or actors that are really shaping cities in Europe today?

SASKIA SASSEN: Two very different forces seem dominant; they are also partly still emergent in that they are different from earlier urban logics in European cities. One is the ascendance of cities as major actors and concentrators of key economic and political trends. The significant cities do not necessarily need to be the biggest – Frankfurt is a powerful city even if much smaller than London or Paris. The rise of a strong economic function that, somewhat unexpectedly, turned out to *need* urban space has made a major difference, for good and for bad. Cities are once again becoming wealth-making machines, a function they had lost when the dominant economic sectors were focused on infrastructure, building housing, the explosion of suburbs. The wealth making function has some positive effects (updating infrastructure and transport, generating jobs, and so on) but also serious problems. The vast majority of urban residents and urban economic functions tend to be modest and hence at risk of being destroyed by the new high-end functions.

As I argue in my book *Expulsions*, a key dynamic in today's Western economies is a range of expulsions of people, and other types of actors such as small firms, from the economic and social options they once had.

My focus there is precisely on that point of expulsions – an edge that is foundationally different from the geographic border in the interstate system. The focus on the edge comes from one of the core hypotheses running through this book: that the move from Keynesianism to the global era of privatisations, deregulation, and open borders

THE RISE OF A STRONG ECONOMIC FUNCTION THAT, SOMEWHAT UNEXPECTEDLY, TURNED OUT TO NEED URBAN SPACE HAS MADE A MAJOR DIFFERENCE, FOR GOOD AND FOR BAD

for some, entailed a switch from dynamics that brought people into 'the system' to dynamics that push people out.

How do you see the future of cities and the whole discussion around 'smart' and 'resilient' cities?

SASKIA SASSEN: The discussion around smart, connected, and resilient cities is political, and it is also – or should be – central to the environmental question, as well as to social justice.

One observation that I have researched in my work on global cities is that in our current period cities have become far more significant for geopolitics, the global economy, and social justice, than they were in the period dominated by Keynesian logics. In that earlier period much was under the governance of the state and the post-war rebuilding was under state management to a large extent.

But when governments deregulate and privatise economic sectors once under direct management of the state, these managerial and regulatory functions do not disappear. They are transferred to private firms: they reappear as specialised financial, accounting, legal, advisory services for corporations. And these types of activities tend to be in cities, especially global cities, if they are complex because a firm's market is global. And this is not always good.

We need counterweights to this emergent power system that is urban-centred. And that means strengthening the status and capacity to make effective claims of the vast majority of a city's population who have a modest income. None of this necessarily eliminates the ongoing role of the inter-state system and its multiple institutions. But in the long run it has made cities *de facto*, rather than *de jure*, key actors in national economies and in cross-border economic spaces, transcultural circuits, environmental struggles, social justice struggles, and so much more.

It matters in my analysis that besides the growing concentration of power in major cities, there is also the option – especially in larger cities that cannot be fully governed – of contesting power in ways that go beyond what we can claim from national governments. We the residents can re-make parts of the city in simple ways that we cannot do regarding the national state.

The complexity and incompleteness of major cities gives those without power the chance to make a local economy, a local culture, a local politics. They can actually stand up to power – to some extent – and say, "We are not asking you for anything, we are just informing you that this is also our city."

Are the urban movements in big cities not the feat of cosmopolitan, well-educated and connected elites who feel at home in Beijing, New York, Istanbul, and Berlin and share the same lifestyle – one increasingly distant from that of their actual rural neighbours?

SASKIA SASSEN: This is certainly part of the story. But I also see a new type of energy focused on neighbourhoods, with initiatives around greening, food plots, and re-localising production where possible. I will never forget that some of my brightest, really brilliant undergraduate students at the University of Chicago – considered the most intellectual university in the US – went into community work: localising production of food, generating local entertainment (notably music and circus), setting up coffee shops to avoid franchises, and much more. All of this is not going to change the major systems in the world, from high-finance to destructive mining. But it should be seen as a first step in mobilising our energies towards more social justice, environmental protection, people-centered activities, and so on. A politics of place that recurs in city after city and can thereby have potentially vast effects on key urban functions – from political to economic.

Can we equate the city with the migrant today? Is the city the result of all those 'thick' cultures coming in and spreading into what we'd call today 'cosmopolitanism' (although the roots of the word are somewhat different)?

SASKIA SASSEN: You said it! Yes, I think so, but cities are also the battlefield – it gets messy. I argue this a bit in my work on cities as containing today's frontier. I think we are witnessing the making of a third type of migrant subject – neither the familiar immigrant nor the refugee.[3]

The historic frontier was at the edges of empire – those spaces that we had not quite gained control over. But, in my reading, major actors, from U.S. and European to Chinese major sectors, have now succeeded in gaining access to most land in the world and can then engage in their extractive practices.

Why is the city today's frontier?

SASKIA SASSEN: My definition of the frontier is a space where actors from different worlds have an encounter for which there are no established rules of engagement. And I would argue that our big, somewhat messy, cities contain today's frontier. But with a difference: as I said earlier, in such cities the poor, the powerless can live, work, and make neighbourhoods, and they can stand up to power and make claims. And this is why I worry about the loss of the urban space that enables this; as it gets controlled by powerful actors who build buildings – that often stand empty – and therefore push out those who may not have power but have long felt that the city they live in and struggle for survival in is also *their* city.

3 http://bit.ly/GEJ16_Sassen4

SASKIA SASSEN
is Robert S. Lynd Professor of Sociology and co-chair of the Committee on Global Thought at Columbia University. Her research and writing focuses on globalisation, immigration, global cities, the new networked technologies, and changes within the liberal state that result from current transnational conditions. She is the author of, amongst others, *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo* (Princeton University Press, 1991) and *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the Global Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2014)

THE 'GUGGENHEIM EFFECT'
PRIDE AND PREJUDICES

ARTICLE BY
COSME DEL OLMO

In 1997, a declining industrial city in northern Spain, submerged in a deep economic, environmental, and social crisis, opened an innovative branch of the Guggenheim museum. Today, Bilbao boasts an urban landscape that is both considerate of its citizens and attractive to visitors. As a result, the 'Guggenheim effect' became a worldwide phenomenon, showing that a large-scale architectural project could transform a city. Or could it?

ES

This article is available in its original language (Spanish) on the Green European Journal website.

EL EFECTO GUGGENHEIM: ORGULLO Y PREJUICIOS

La inauguración del Museo Guggenheim en Bilbao marcó un hito en el campo de la planificación urbana. Veinte años después, la cuestión sigue vigente: ¿Puede la apuesta por un edificio singular transformar la filosofía de toda una ciudad?

On the south bank of the estuary of Bilbao stretches an esplanade where hundreds of tourists take selfies on their smartphones. Pedestrians swarm around the titanium construction that rises up beside it, futuristic and proud. Twenty years earlier, this land was the site of a dilapidated factory, and the only cameras coming into the city captured the required piece of industrial machinery before their owners hurried back to the aeroplane for their return flight.

The 'Guggenheim effect' gained the recognition of architects, managers, and town planners alike and is studied at universities throughout the world as an example of urban regeneration. This unique building created by a star architect Frank Gehry, imbued with a cultural purpose and dominating the urban landscape, changed building sites into parks, factories into museums and, ultimately, revitalised a marginal city in decline, heralding its transformation into a clean and harmonious global meeting point. However, for various reasons, repeating this success has not been simple and similar projects in other post-industrial cities have not had the expected impact.

DID A BUILDING TRANSFORM A WHOLE CITY?

In 1991, Bilbao's administrators had a big problem to solve. The metal sector and naval industry, which had been the engines of development for the city's economy, were showing signs of exhaustion, and the city was facing the risk of ending up as a grey ruin of grime and dirt. While the simplest solution appeared to be re-launching the production model that had brought it so much wealth, they decided to shift the city towards a new level of culture and services, with the idea of investing a good proportion of the money it was still enjoying.

Around the same time, the Guggenheim Foundation was seeking to expand beyond its New York headquarters. After several fruitless attempts in America and Europe, Thomas Krens, Director of the Guggenheim Foundation, set his sights on Spain, a country at the beginning of a cultural revolution. He flirted with Barcelona, Seville, and Santander, but Bilbao offered an ideal mix of ingredients: a rich city, in need of a change of direction, and an unmatched political consensus. These were times of agreement in the Basque Country: the Ajuria Enea Pact in 1988 had reunited all political forces against the terrorism of Basque separatist group ETA, and civil society was more in sync with its representatives than in other regions. Agreements were reached and three years later, the pact was signed that would result in the inauguration of the building on the 18th of October 1997.

The regeneration plan, however, went much further than this and included many projects beyond the museum's inauguration. As well as other signature pieces of infrastructure, such as Santiago Calatrava's airport or Norman Foster's metro, Bilbao put into effect an integrated and consistent urban strategy under the umbrella of the publicly-owned company Bilbao Ría 2000, still in operation.[1] Focus was on the citizens of Bilbao as the main priority, so that they would receive the greatest benefits from renovating the old industrial spaces. The improvement in sustainable mobility through a network of trams, the expansion and creation of green areas, collaboration with private investment, and the empowerment of local people for developing their own initiatives were some of the elements of the package of measures that accompanied the Guggenheim.

In addition to creating a city that is an efficient, clean, and enjoyable place to live, the intangible capital that it brought meant that the urban regeneration also translated into hard figures. According to calculations by the museum, its presence contributes

1 http://bilbaoria2000.org

424.6 million euros per year to Bilbao's GDP and provides over nine thousand jobs.[2] The number of cultural events organised in the city, which was scarcely eighty per year before its inauguration, is now over a thousand. The 'Guggenheim effect' in Bilbao has been a success story.

STUMBLING BLOCKS: THE CHALLENGE OF REPLICATION

Bilbao's impressive results encouraged local authorities all over the world to back a unique, cultural building in a bid to revitalise their economies. In Spain, the most obvious example of this 'Guggenheim fever' was the extravagant complex created in Valencia under the name of the City of Arts and Sciences, designed by Calatrava. Santander, meanwhile, is trying to make up for lost time with the inauguration in June 2017 of the Centro Botín, by architect Renzo Piano, following several years of delay. Other post-industrial European cities such as Glasgow, Warsaw, and Gothenburg have undertaken similar projects. Over the last two decades, more than 130 cities have contacted the Guggenheim Foundation to explore the possibility of founding a new branch. The city of Łódź, Poland, even got in touch with Frank Gehry to ask for an exact replica of the Guggenheim building to host a concert hall. Nevertheless, the results have been modest at best, while most have been disastrous. One of the few positively evaluated examples is the case of the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art in the city of Newcastle, although the city on the Tyne had already embarked upon an embryonic phase of urban regeneration. For the rest, the majority of these multi-million investments have not resulted in improving the city in social, cultural, environmental, or economic terms. What are the reasons for this generalised failure?

If we look into these projects' common factors, we see that they share a series of misconceptions that hinder their success. Firstly, as mentioned earlier, Bilbao benefitted from a political consensus on the desired model for the city which made it possible to plan for the long term independently of the electoral results, something not easily found in the majority of local governments. Large projects are often intended as a short-term political shortcut to replace consistent urban planning, which would require a long-term strategy. The local administration feels trapped by the pressure of 'eligibility checks' and opts to implement a revitalisation plan based solely on a visible cultural infrastructure which carries an unmistakeable signature, for which reason urban politics appears affected by a short-term bias in search of

2 Source: Guggenheim Museum Bilbao

FOCUS WAS ON THE CITIZENS OF BILBAO AS THE MAIN PRIORITY, SO THAT THEY WOULD RECEIVE THE GREATEST BENEFITS FROM RENOVATING THE OLD INDUSTRIAL SPACES

approval and quick money. This leads to funding the *visible* part of the change, leaving aside the *invisible* part. The symbol is constructed but the rest is missing.

The other big misunderstanding is found in the purpose for which the infrastructure is built. In a context in which cities see themselves as businesses competing in an international market[3] in which they have to fight for resources and develop a global brand, administrators identify these projects as an opportunity to improve the city's external image and give it global recognition. Another reason for these failures is the evaluation of the return on advertising that the project will generate above the sustained urban improvement. For example, in Valencia, the model was seeking to attract global attention at the stroke of a pen, placing the construction of the cultural infrastructure on the same level as the promotion of a visit from the Pope in 2009, the organisation of the America's Cup sailing competition, or the creation of a Formula 1 street circuit.

In the case of Bilbao, the 'branding' appeared as a positive side-effect, as the aim was always to improve the quality of life of its residents. The key fact that is usually forgotten in analysis of the Bilbao case is that this improvement was based above all on the range of complementary actions mentioned above, and not on the building itself. For the project to have its catalysing effect, it must be accompanied by a solid urban plan with the utmost priority on its inhabitants. Therefore, the 'Guggenheim effect' provided a pretext for other administrators to promote overambitious revitalisation strategies based only on the projection of a signature cultural infrastructure. The philosophy of "putting a *starchitect* in your life" is usually hidden behind a huge bid for culture, but it is rare that top-down promotion of this has taken root in the social fabric. It is not even possible to say that the

3 On 'city branding', see Hall T. & Hubbard, *The entrepreneurial city: new urban politics, new urban geographies?,* 1996 P. Anholt, S. *Competitive Identity,* 2007, Dinnie, K. *City Branding: theories and cases,* 2011, among others.

CONSTRUCTION OF LARGE-SCALE SIGNATURE PROJECTS HAS TOO OFTEN BEEN LINKED TO CORRUPTION SCANDALS

Guggenheim itself has brought significant added value to Bilbao's own culture: out of over a million annual visitors, people living in the province make up just 10 per cent.

THE DANGERS OF ILL-CONCEIVED MEGA-PROJECTS

The problem with the misinterpretation of the 'Guggenheim effect' is not limited to its eventual ineffectiveness. It has at times also brought drawbacks that have caused damage to the inhabitants of the affected city.

Firstly, the limitations on the decision to use public funds to carry out a financial injection of this type are very lax, due to being a policy option. A great number of the decisions of local government (licences, rates, authorisations, etc.) are regulated, but the margins for discretion are considerably widened in these unique contracts, making it difficult for the relevant bodies, and ultimately, the taxpayer, to control them. The construction of large-scale signature projects has too often been linked to corruption scandals, resulting in offences being committed involving extremely large sums of money, by elected officials as well as the companies involved. In other, more trivial, cases, the additional costs beyond the original budget have multiplied the expected cost to the public treasury by up to seven times. Unorganised investment left devastating figures in the previously-mentioned project of the City of Arts and Sciences in Valencia, in terms of duration and additional costs (the estimated cost at the beginning of the project was 175 million euros, which became over 1,200 million euros by its completion). An additional problem that has been observed in other Spanish cities such as Zaragoza (Zaha Hadid Bridge Pavilion) or Santiago de Compostela (City of Culture) is that of maintenance. When it is not integrated into the fabric of the city, the infrastructure itself cannot cope with the successive costs that are required and it ends up being abandoned.

In the case of countries such as Spain or Italy, the economic motivations of local government must be considered. The system of local financing leaves city councils with little margin for manoeuvre. They tend to see urbanism as one of the few sources of income belonging to them, for example through the granting of licences. This scarcity viewpoint has led them to endorse new methods of funding infrastructure, as is the case with PPPs (public-private partnerships), which although in theory can be a very useful tool for integrating private capital into projects with a public interest, in practice have often led to a certain confusion among public and private interests and, as has been mentioned, to corrupt behaviours. Both aspects (the scarcity of resources and the corruption) come together in urban planning, which is reduced to its nature as a money factory, fertile land for ruinous large-scale projects. In this respect, not all city councils provide Bilbao's list of services, which occupies the number one spot in the rankings drawn up by Transparency International España[4], which analyses 80 indicators related to citizen information and participation, as well as economic-financial aspects, information on contracting and subsidies, urbanism, public works, and the environment.

Another problematic dimension of this false idea can be found in the gentrification of the neighbourhoods affected by the project. In short, the creation of a new main area results in the increase of the price of housing in its vicinity, meaning that the residents living there may be displaced by holiday lets or investors. This situation produces a feeling of dispossession among local residents. In this way, the new space does not penetrate the urban dynamic and remains isolated from the residents' awareness. As a side-effect, this trend can be accentuated if the new space becomes inaccessible in economic and artistic terms: instead of the desired closeness, it causes the elitism of culture, which in the worst case scenario results in an institutional disregard of home-grown culture.

Lastly, an issue highlighted by many analysts is the loss of control over the project's scale. Administrators can become so absorbed by the new infrastructure that they end up adapting the urban planning to the building, and not the other way around. As we have noted, this focus usually leads to a lack of urban consistency which results in a variety of problems, from a misguided location of the construction to conflicts of power between government bodies or with regional and state administrations, leading to the abandonment of multi-million projects due to not having produced the expected result.

4 http://transparencia.org.es/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/aspectos_destacados_ita_2017.pdf [in Spanish]

A LESSON TO BE LEARNED

The original 'Guggenheim effect', the pride of Bilbao's administrators, was born from a rare confluence of factors. The huge building had a relative impact on the local residents, being above all the perfect chance to implement a package of measures which, unlike the figurehead, were aimed at the citizens of Bilbao. The museum became a magnificent symbol that helped to visualise the effort carried out to regenerate the city. However, the successive interpretations by other cities have been largely misguided, due to focusing on the architectural project instead of a complete urban plan. This does not mean that the 'Guggenheim effect' is a false legend, but that, as with a good book, it requires a reader that knows how to draw the appropriate conclusions.

The traditional view of urban administration is limited to the good management of economic, social, and cultural resources themselves. But in a global setting, where the levels of local, national, and worldwide government are ever more interconnected, alliances can be formed with public and private entities from all over the world for a better urban policy. The current legal-political framework of the EU favours these alliances, but leaves local government to their own devices. Despite its potential for creating projects and living spaces that are as exciting as they are disastrous, the city itself is absent from the EU debate. There is talk of institutions, Member States, and regions, but European governance begins in the cities, which are the immediate providers of public transport, education, police, and other essential services. European cities, old and experienced, have difficulty competing with their thriving rivals from other continents, and as a result of their anxiety, they engage in risky projects that at times can be damaging. In this context of regulatory gaps and competitiveness for alliances, the EU's role in encouraging cities to undertake projects in a responsible and considered manner, without losing sight of the general interest, becomes fundamental.

COSME DEL OLMO
has an MA in European Political and Administrative Studies from the College of Europe (Bruges). He holds a Law Degree from the University of Cantabria and an Environmental Law LLM. He has worked in eco-urbanism in BCNEcologia (Barcelona) and has written for various Spanish publications.

THE CITY AS A BATTLEGROUND

AN INTERVIEW WITH
BART STUART
BY **ERICA MEIJERS**

Historically, cities have always been centres of economic activity. But as a result of globalisation, a fundamental change is occurring in the way money is earned inside cities. This is becoming ever more visible and tangible for city-dwellers. If cities are becoming amusement parks for tourists, a vehicle to earn money, what space is left for its citizens?

NL

This article is the result of a partnership with the Dutch Green foundation publication, *de Helling*, for its 2017/3 edition.

DE STAD ALS STRIJDTONEEL

Erica Meijers interviewt Bart Stuart, kunstenaar in de publieke ruimte, over de strijd om de stad als bedrijf en pretpark of als plaats waar burgers samenleven.

A visual artist, Bart Stuart wishes to see 'human beings' become once again the focal point in the planning and development of cities. We meet in one of the trendy cafés on the grounds of the former NDSM dockyard, the Dutch Dock and Shipyard Company, where Stuart has a studio. From behind the large windows we have a view of the IJ, the artery connecting Amsterdam with the open sea. Once, the giant steel hulls of oil tankers were constructed in the docks. Now it's mainly pleasure yachts floating gently by.

ERICA MEIJERS: How would you define 'the city'?

BART STUART: Cites are battlegrounds where political views about the good life are being fought over on a rather small surface area. These competing visions go beyond the direct interests of the groups living and working in the city or those visiting it. And then there's the long term to consider. It's not only about what you can buy or consume now, but also about the issue of how to live together peacefully for a long time with many different groups of people. That issue is now being subjected to sustained scrutiny.

Why is that?

BART STUART: Behind it is a long process, which can be illustrated accurately in terms of the narrative of the former NDSM Dockyard, where we're sitting now. Here, too, there has been a development from labour to leisure. First there was the heavy shipping industry, providing jobs for thousands of people. Where the super tankers used to be built you now find luxury yachts. They are a final destination for people's leisure time. That's how the city's job is changing. From being a space for emancipation, the city now runs the risk of being turned into a space of segregation. In China, you still see many people migrating to the city to find a better future. In the city, historically, you started out as a worker, then moved upward through education. But today's urban economy hardly offers space for manual workers. In Europe even less so: from a manufacturing economy we have shifted to a services and sales economy, the consequences of which are becoming visible and tangible in urban environments in increasingly extreme ways. Take Amsterdam. It used to be a city of trade, with cacao, coffee, steel, and timber. Now the people themselves have been turned into merchandise: people living in the warehouses, renting out their accommodation to tourists; the old factories now housing cafés and restaurants; the ports are becoming festival grounds. Okay, we still have the largest petrol port; as a port Amsterdam fully thrives on oil, coal, and petrol, all highly polluting raw materials, with little future prospects.

How are these changes visible in the city?

BART STUART: In the first place, cities are simply becoming busier and busier: the growing hotel, restaurant, and catering industry, the tourists on their bikes-for-rent, and so on. But it runs deeper: life in the city as a battleground between conflicting interests in which you have to commit yourself is under pressure. In the 20th century, anarchist communes founded housing corporations in Amsterdam-North to ensure that workers had proper housing. It was a struggle you waged as a member of a collective. It took an effort. Today, the city is much more about convenience and entertainment, about consuming a menu that's been put together by someone else.

Here, we are looking out on an enormous and striking building under construction, the so-called Poortgebouw. In the old working-class neighbourhoods across the IJ [the body of water that runs through Amsterdam], they're now constructing housing for the super-rich. Here the most expensive apartment in Amsterdam is being built, sold for 15 million euros to a Chinese-Amsterdam resident – it caused quite a lot of indignation. But he has sold it on already, even if it's not even completed yet. It's not so much about living, it's not so much about building up a neighbourhood where people live together; it's purely doing magic tricks with as much money as possible. The building has been designed precisely to do

that: make money. The municipality pockets tax revenues and earns money selling land, but other than that neither the city nor the neighbourhood benefit; worse, the area is closed off for residents. Only foreign parties profit, because this is too big for local interests. This changes the concept of the city essentially. Money is no longer earned in the city, but on it. The way the apartment was sold shows this: the city itself has become a sales model. It's no longer a place where companies settle, the city has become a company itself.

You've seen that happening at the NDSM Dockyard. How did that go?

BART STUART: In 1985, it was the end of the line for the shipyard. All the dockworkers were made redundant. Then the shipyard changed from the pride of Amsterdam-North into its shame. For a long time the dockyard lay idle. In 1993, a good friend of mine, an artist, squatted in the slipway in which I still work and started using it as a studio. After a while he signed a contract with the administrator and started paying rent. I got involved a little later; with a group of artists we tried to revive the grounds. In 2000, the municipality started getting interested in the area; a competition was held for its redevelopment. Followed by policy schemes and big money. That's where things started going wrong in the first place: art became instrumental – a trailblazer for something else, namely earning money.

This process was set in motion by politics. It's good to know that the municipality owns all the land. By granting land, by leasing it, the municipality earns money. It's in its interest that land prices are as high as possible, because then land yields more money. That is a cynical economic model, often clashing with the interests of a neighbourhood. Two years ago all the artists here were told to move, the place was to be renovated and the accommodation was leased again at a much higher rent. Big companies moved in, run by foreign firms, with foreign real estate investors behind them. Not very nice neighbours, because you can't just call them up to help hang the paper chains when you're organising a neighbourhood party, while they're in the Bahamas. In this way the fraying edges of the city keep shifting and those living there are being pushed away by this corporate revenue model. Its basis is extraction: affairs belonging to the public sphere, those that were common property, are privatised and subjected to globalisation's large flows of capital. As a resident of this area you don't have a grip on that. A lot of money is made in a short period of time, which is subsequently not invested in the neighbourhood itself, but rather extracted from it.

You used to work in Chinese cities. Do you see the same thing happening there?

BART STUART: There are similarities, yes. I was in Shenzhen, a new town in the South of China,

specialised in microelectronics. In thirty years, what was a fishing village with a population of 30,000 has grown into a megacity with 30 million people. I happened to have dinner with the president of Merchants Group, a bank, and one of the richest project developers in China. First he showed me how important he is by mentioning that the turnover amounted to nine billion dollars annually. How did he earn all that money? Well, once he was given a lot of land by the Chinese state, including the harbour and the entertainment district. He built very expensive houses there, which earned him enormous sums. So a large part of the city is now his property, all because of a deal with the Communist Party. And that is happening all over China. What's more, the privatisation of cities is a global trend.

HOUSING IN INNER CITIES IS BECOMING MORE EXPENSIVE, WHILE POORER PEOPLE ARE FORCED OUT TO THE OUTSKIRTS, OR EVEN OUTSIDE OF TOWN

In Shenzhen you used to work with manual labourers. So there are people there with modest incomes. How do they live in a city like Shenzhen?

BART STUART: They are conscious of the hierarchy. They don't belong in the city and can't afford the housing there; they live on the outskirts and often have to travel to work three hours a day by underground, unpaid. You see that in a lot of Latin American cities, too: their centres are becoming centres of power and wealth and the people working there come from remote places in the surroundings. They spend more time travelling on the underground than working, so they remain poor. That is a very cynical development, which is happening here as well, but to a less serious extent. Here, too, housing in inner cities is becoming more expensive, while poorer people are forced out to the outskirts, or even outside of town. Here, too, hotels are cleaned by staff who are not affiliated to a trade union, making 4 euros an hour.

This raises the question of who owns the city? Who has the power to answer this question?

BART STUART: In Amsterdam, too, it is being admitted that money is the planner. All those cheese shops and ice cream parlours aren't there because we love cheese or ice cream so much; behind them are large financial structures changing the city into an amusement park for temporary sojourners. And those are not troublesome visitors, but consumers who want to be gratified with sex or weed or cheese or Nutella and ice cream, and once their wishes have been fulfilled, they return home again. But it is a very cynical notion of what human beings need in life [laughs]. The citizens, for one thing, don't benefit.

PROFITS ARE CHANNELLED ABROAD, WHILE THE NEIGH-BOURHOODS AND THE CITY FOOT THE BILL IN THE FORM OF A LOT OF NUISANCE AND RUBBISH

Where does politics come into this story, both worldwide and locally?

BART STUART: Well, that's hard. Politics should both question and fight the takeover of the city by multinational companies, instead of going along with the concept of the city as a company. Green Parties can play a meaningful role, because energy and food will be on the agenda in the years to come. But they should address the large financial structures instead of aiming at nice green projects like city gardening and carbon neutral cafés.

And you will need local government and Europe as well, because as a city on your own you can't beat those big companies. I see the current debate about urban autonomy as a rearguard action: how as a city do you think you can take on the 25,000 letterbox companies who came here because the city is a tax haven? I don't think you stand a chance against the lawyers of companies like Gazprom and the Rolling Stones, because we don't even have enough lawyers to tackle the dog shit! The whole idea that the creative class has to contribute to the city's competitive position is part of the notion of the city as a company, and what good is that to local citizens?

Green parties need to be critical. Airbnb is turning our homes into hotels with the use of algorithms. A Taiwanese bike rental company is filling the whole city with yellow bikes you can rent with an app, use for an hour or two and then leave anywhere. They are pushing away citizens' bikes and creating chaos. In Beijing I have seen those bikes being piled up in very big heaps. It's called the sharing economy and it sounds nice, but in fact it's fast food economics: houses, bicycles, taxis, everything is turned into fast food. This can only work if revenues provide excess value to the neighbourhood and the city. But profits are channelled abroad, while the neighbourhoods and the city foot the bill in the form of a lot of nuisance and rubbish. That's why I for one believe in strong government, because you need to regulate.

Which obstacles do you see for politics to reconquering the city for its citizens?

BART STUART: First of course there's the political outlook of the parties themselves: they need to recognise that the city is a place to live together and not some money-making vehicle. But a politics in which someone is judged on their short term results by the electorate determines policy-making, and fosters the fast food mentality.

Then there is the issue of political representation: parties have fewer and fewer members and there is less and less commitment. We must contemplate new forms of citizens' political commitment, and not only in a digital direction. People without a computer are increasingly excluded from participation, from having a say. Maybe we should vote on issues rather than parties once every four years.

Don't forget bureaucracy as a third obstacle. Amsterdam has 13,000 officials trying to steer urban planning. A colossus like that develops a logic of its own, aimed particularly at preserving itself. It seems as though politics limits itself more and more to checking if procedures have been completed properly, rather than enquiring about people's well-being. Thus, in the city centre many council houses have been sold in the last few years, which has dramatically hampered diversity. Then you hear: well, it's sad that those people have had to leave town, but procedures were run properly.

In short: public interest is no longer at the table, it's only about money and procedures.

What you're saying sounds rather gloomy.

BART STUART: Still I have hope that things can be done differently. These are tendencies, which can be reversed. But then we have to conduct the debate about the city in a different way. It's no longer enough to sit together in debating centres as like-minded Green and progressive people. You have to talk to people who are really affected by these developments. They are the ones who are not represented in politics. In that respect there are direct parallels between China and Amsterdam-North: problems are being discussed at a high level of abstraction and urban planners see the reality through the drawing-board. So the people who are having a hard time, or those who have been forced out because of your plans, you never get to see in real life and so you don't have to look them in the eye.

In Green Parties and Green programmes, problems are often solved by technology, for instance by the idea of 'smart cities'. But that amounts to giving away responsibility to larger systems that collect information about us and of us, and get rich by taking away money from the public domain. Smart cities don't invest trust between and in people. And that's what it's all about. It's about love. About a sense that the earth was here first and then we

came, and that the earth will go on without us; it's about commitment and love for the greater whole. What good are algorithms in times of crisis? Then we only have each other.

How do you do that, invest in each other?

BART STUART: Over and against the concept of the city as a company, I would like to put forward the concept of the city as a 'do-space'. People will have to take centre stage again. European inner cities have to change from passive consumer spaces into active 'do-areas'. This means that public space in big cities must be employed to develop workshops (not festivals!) collectively, in which people 'practise' active citizenship. All kinds of things can be discussed there and put on the agenda and at the same time a strategy for change can be developed, as an antidote to the privatisation of public space. It appears that in all the big cities of Europe and the US, a large majority of young city-dwellers are all in favour of Europe, in favour of democracy and a just distribution of wealth. We have to seriously start working with them. It's always a battle to shape a city, and it's something I like doing, too. Because cities aren't about comfort, relaxing with a cup of herbal tea in a café with sustainable windows. Resistance against neoliberal urban planning must come from the cities themselves.

BART STUART
is a visual artist who lives and works in Amsterdam as well as in the Chinese city of Shenzhen. He teaches at the Bildung Academy of the University of Amsterdam and at colleges of technology in Germany. For more information about Bart Stuart's work, go to: www.bartklaar.nl

ERICA MEIJERS
is a journalist and a theologian. She works at the Protestant Theological University in Groningen, the Netherlands. Until 2017 she was a member of the editorial board of the *Green European Journal* and editor-in-chief of *de Helling*, review of the political foundation of the Dutch Greens. In 2016 she published with Nuala Ahern the book *Green Values, Religion and Secularism*, edited in cooperation with the Green European Foundation.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

The Green European Journal is an editorially independent publication of the Green European Foundation. The Journal is a platform helping debates and ideas to travel across Europe's cultural and political borders and debate among Greens, and contributing to the construction of a European public space. The Journal regularly collaborates with partner publications and correspondents across Europe. Thematic editions explore a topic in depth from different analytical and cultural perspectives. The Green European Journal also publishes regular articles and interviews in various languages online. Find them all on the website, on social media, and in our monthly newsletter.

GREEN EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

The Green European Foundation is a European-level political foundation whose mission is to contribute to a lively European sphere of debate and to foster greater involvement by citizens in European politics. GEF strives to mainstream discussions on European policies and politics both within and beyond the Green political family. The foundation acts as a laboratory for new ideas, offers cross-border political education, and is a platform for cooperation and exchange at the European level.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL	Volume 16 Winter 2017 Printed in Belgium in a CO_2 neutral company 100% recycled paper
PUBLISHED BY	GEF
PROJECT COORDINATORS	Laurent Standaert Beatrice White Julia Lagoutte
EDITORIAL BOARD	Juan Behrend Erica Meijers Marta Loja Neves Edouard Gaudot Adam Ostolski Georg Maißer Riikka Suominen Kostas Loukeris Roderick Kefferpütz
GRAPHIC DESIGN	Claire Allard
ILLUSTRATIONS	Klaas Verplancke
SUPPORT	Lena

GEF
GREEN EUROPEAN FOUNDATION

Green European Foundation asbl
3 Rue du Fossé – L-1536 Luxembourg
Tel: +32 (0)2 234 65 70 I Fax: +32 (0)2 234 65 79
E-mail: info@gef.eu I Web: www.gef.eu

This publication can be ordered at the Brussels Office:
15 Rue d'Arlon – B-1050 Brussels – Belgium

This publication has been realised with the financial support of the European Parliament. The European Parliament is not responsible for the content of this project.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

You can find all previous thematic editions on the **Green European Journal** website, along with all our articles published exclusively online

The Green European Journal strives to be an inclusive and multilingual space. It provides articles not only in English but also in their original language and translated. Over 19 different languages are available on our website. Subscribe to our monthly Editor's Picks and follow us on Facebook and Twitter!

@GreenEUJournal
Green European Journal

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu

TALK OF THE TOWN

EXPLORING THE CITY IN EUROPE

Hailed as the new political centre and the battleground of our times, the role of cities today, across Europe and beyond, seems to have reached unprecedented significance. The dynamics of urbanisation, de-industrialisation and globalisation are central in the transformations our cities are undergoing today. At the local level, campaigns and policies around urban planning, mobility, public services and green spaces also have a defining impact. The gulf between rural and urban life, the critical threat of climate change, as well as the potential offered by European and international networks and alliances between cities, are also refashioning our conception of cities and their political agency. Constantly changing and adapting, the city seems to be universally distinguished by its vibrant, mercurial nature. In this edition, the Green European Journal contends that this open-endedness presents both a challenge and an opportunity to harness the city's energy, and direct it towards a more human, just and sustainable course.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL

www.greeneuropeanjournal.eu