

Magazyn Miasta

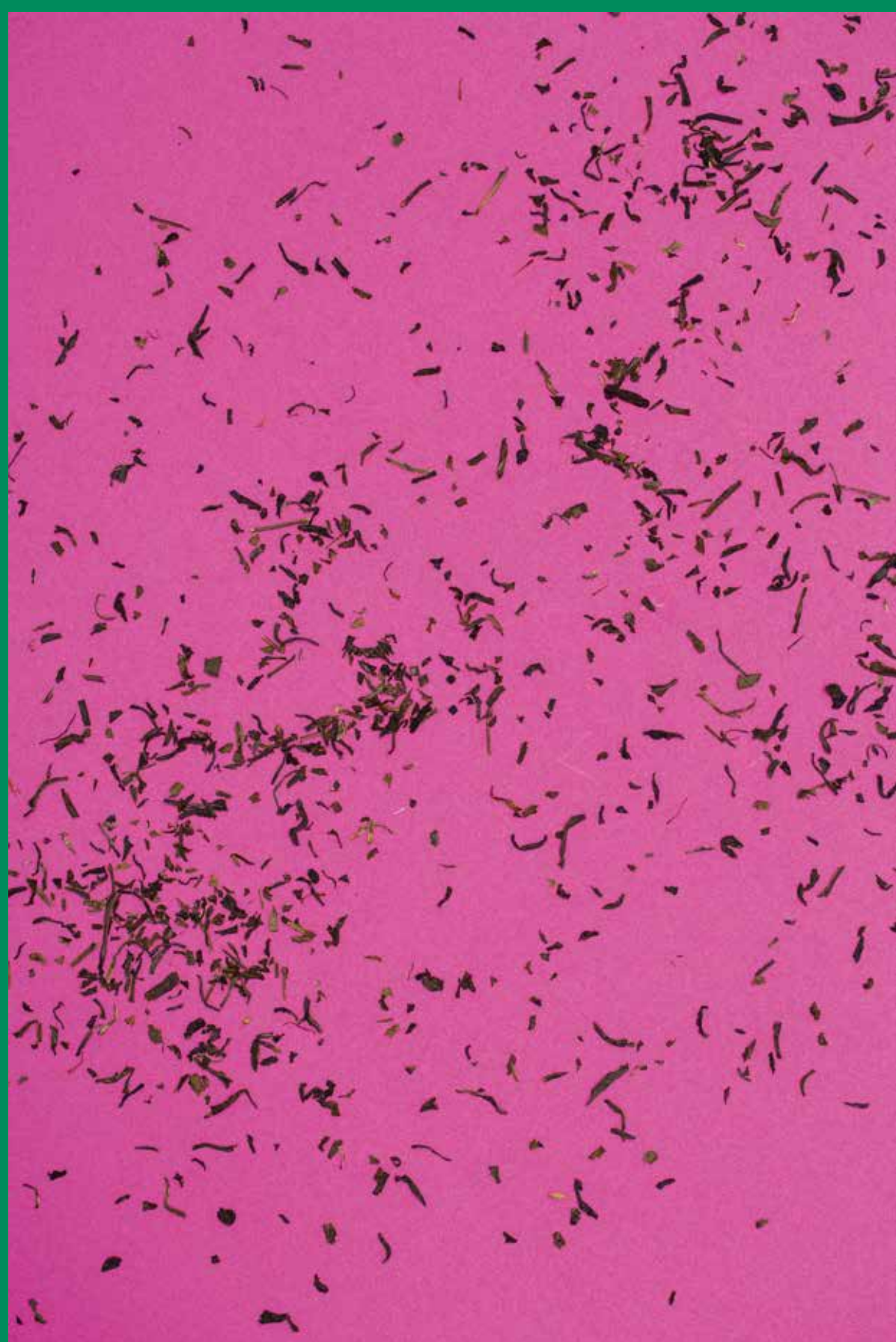
**CITIES MAGAZINE**

***The future of  
sharing in Central  
European Cities***

**3/ 2019**







# Editorial

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*Editor-in-chief* MARTA ŻAKOWSKA

You will undoubtedly recall our introduction of the love affair between the idea of sharing and the Central European cities. But just to be sure, a quick reminder. In the first issue of the *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine*, we presented the history and locally created rites of sharing in the post-Soviet cities of Central Europe. In the second issue, we described the present manifestations in the region of this enduring tradition, its current mechanisms, its response to the rapidly expanding economy of sharing in the world, and its local variations and effects.

In the current issue, we look to the future. How and what will we share in the cities of Central Europe? In today's fast changing world writing with any certainty about the future is risky – they say that the multiplied effect of a butterfly flapping its wings in China may soon be felt through the whole world. We can also meet some black swan all at once. Still, through the views and ideas of our authors, we attempt in this issue to predict the directions our future will take. Please join us in this valuable exercise because in times of climate crisis and environmental and shrinking resources all forms of sharing are and will be the weight of gold. Their popularity in cities enhances the development of the sharing economy, which grows in the face of various forms of economic crisis and glass ceilings. The demand for sharing in all its forms originates with people trying to save money, emotions and resources. Earn a little by renting your apartment for the weekend, or to find a cheaper, faster and greener way to get from place to place. Do not get saddled with a bank credit. Avoid mistakes



photo Krystian Bogucki

and bad decisions by sharing knowledge and experience. Join other people to avoid "the single supplement" – the common higher cost of doing it alone. These decisions are increasingly accompanied by a growing unwillingness to own things. The culture of abundance has created among many a growing resistance to consumerism as a way of life, and today's version of "have it all" is not to buy a drill, but to borrow it. The children of the generations killing themselves with work for more possessions are increasingly willing to have less and fewer things, especially if these things may harm them and the Earth in the long run.

In this third issue of the Magazine we are presenting some heroes of the modern way of life in cities of Central Europe and their practices. We describe how they invent new forms of sharing housing, create a common solar energy sources, and promote a healthier mobility culture. We explain how they see cooperation between academic units and knowledge exchange in the era of climate threats. How they experiment with urban democracy and how far they are involved to get effects. How they take over land and places in cities and transform their forms of ownership – from the strictly capitalist to cooperative, shared. How they fight to nationalize urban resources, because the right to the city is a fundamental value for them. And their work brings effects! But what are the chances that it will stay that way? Meet them with us – it's worth it, because the actions of this issue heroes shape and will continue shaping the new urban reality of Central Europe!

Happy reading!

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p.s. We recommend the previous issues of *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine*!

#1: [www.sharedcities.eu/material/shared-cities-magazine-117](http://www.sharedcities.eu/material/shared-cities-magazine-117)

#2: [www.sharedcities.eu/material/magazynmiastacities-magazine-vol-2](http://www.sharedcities.eu/material/magazynmiastacities-magazine-vol-2)

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# *The* **FUTURE** *of* **SHARING** *in Central European Cities*

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JUSTYNA KRÓL, illustrated by RZECZYOBRAZKOWE

For the next several years, sharing in the Central and Eastern European (CEE) region will mainly be provided by well-established, international platforms; only in time will we be able to build smaller, local initiatives



Let's begin our discussion about the future of sharing in the eastern region of Spain – and not without a reason. Decades ago, the postindustrial region of Mondragon in Basque Country faced severe economic and social shocks generated by the collapse of the local industry. The situation was dire, but as history shows, it was in no way hopeless for the local community.

Former industrial workers and their families got together and started designing a new socio-economic system that would keep them safe and employed. They looked towards cooperatives (both in business and in social protection) and soon after an impressive conglomerate known today as the Mondragon Corporation was born.

Fast forward to the second decade of the 21st century when part of the co-funding enterprises, Fagor, wanted to open a production plant in Poland. They offered to implement their cooperative model in Poland, but the local workers were against it. Negative associations with “sharing models” are still alive, which should come as no surprise, given decades of communism that used similar language but, in reality, were highly exploitative. Eventually, Fagor opened its doors in Poland but drops the ownership model from Spain.

When we talk about sharing, we immediately dive into intertwined discussions about trust, necessity (aka. scarcity) and technology. This should come as no surprise, given that sharing is in many ways an intimate

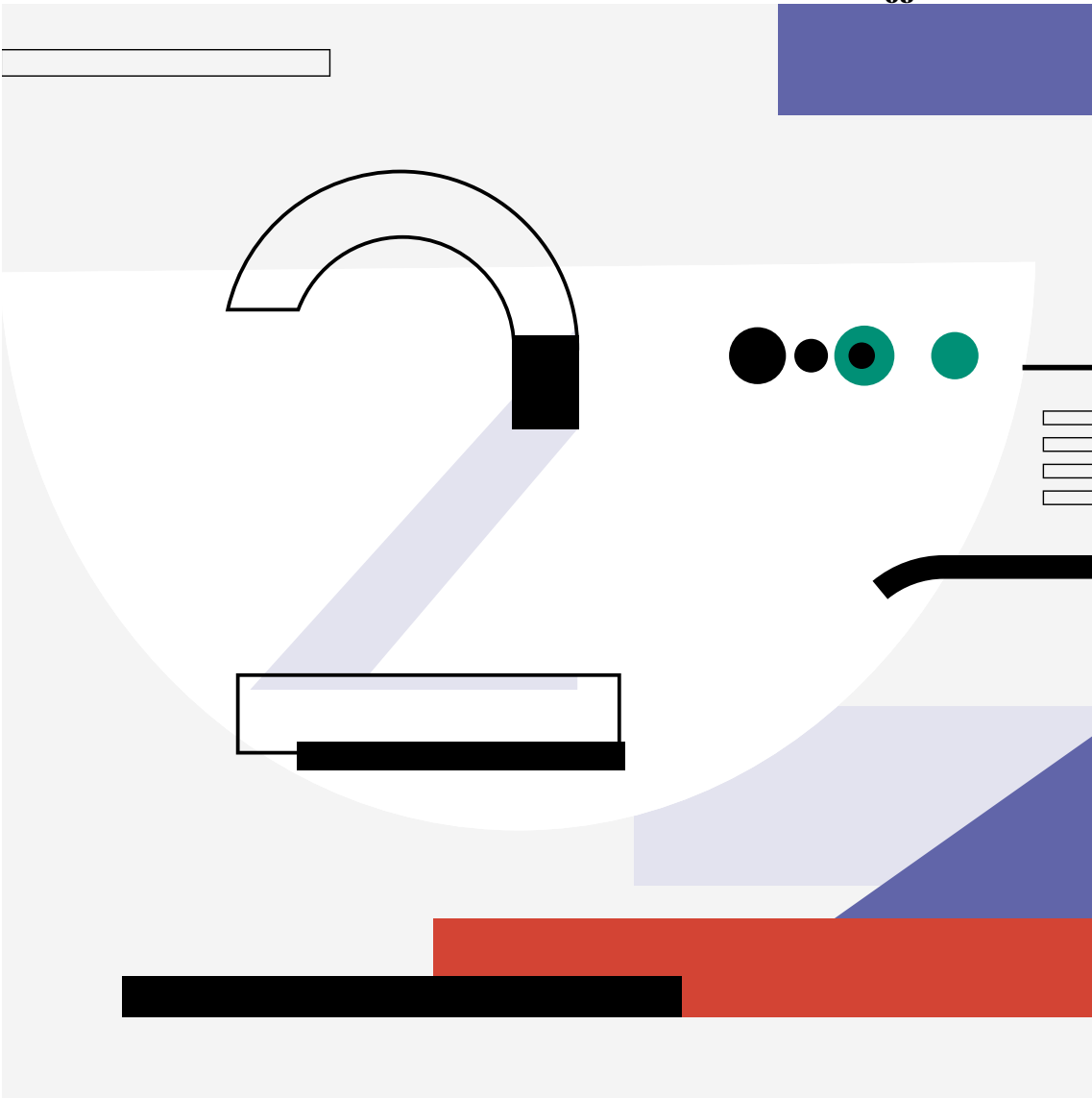
exercise of distributing ownership and decision-making among people who are not only not us, but might even be completely foreign to ourselves. Sometimes, we go into sharing because life leaves us no other choice; we don't have the resources to do otherwise. Sometimes it's the other way around – we have the financial means to own a thing, but we decided to share it since the thing itself is scarce or easy to deplete. Finally, technology makes sharing easier as you no longer need to physically look for people to share something with – potential co-sharers are already gathering on a platform of choice.

Are things that simple though? Are we at the threshold of a sharing period here, in Central and Eastern Europe? Or, as you can tell from the anecdote in the introduction, things are a bit more complicated in our neck of the woods. Let's have a look.

### TO TRUST OR NOT TO TRUST

Ever since 2001, Edelman – a global communications company – has been publishing its annual *Trust Barometer* reports. People from 28 countries each year are being asked to declare their levels of trust to four distinct sectors: business, NGOs, public institutions, and media. The answers are reported for two categories of respondents – mass population and informed public, 1150 respondents per country.





Among the analyzed 28 countries, there is one from the CEE region – Poland. For the last several years, it has consistently been stuck in the bottom of the ranking, sometimes being last, sometimes second or third to last. Even worse, this status does take into account that globally the level of trust has been plummeting for years now. In 2016 the title of the report left readers with no room for surprise. It was called “Trust in Crisis”, and if you are from Poland, this comes to you as no surprise.

This, unfortunately, is only the tip of the iceberg. The European Social Survey, conducted by an academic organization under the same name, provides a more in-depth look at what is going on in the region. When asked to assess if most people try to take advantage of you or rather that most of people try to be fair, the countries that heavily lean towards the previous are (in order): Italy, Hungary, Poland, Slovenia, Russia, Estonia and the Czech Republic. How can we encourage sharing when your major assumption is that the other person is trying to take advantage of you? And let’s be clear – this is merely an assumption.

Experiments, even anecdotal, show that there’s a significant discrepancy between what we think about each other’s trustworthiness and how trustworthy we really are. In 2013, Readers Digest conducted an experiment. A wallet was dropped on the streets of cities from all around the world. The list of “the most

honest” ones included: Budapest, Ljubljana, Warsaw, Bucharest, and Prague.

Granted, in no way is this a scientific study. Still though, it signals an important potential for how we understand and grow trust in the region. Voices of the new generation start talking about trust as “the currency of the future”. The higher your trust score on any sharing or service app, the more clients or co-sharers you can get. This then translates into new relationships, and yes – additional revenue. The uptake of AirBnB is just one of the examples. In Budapest, 8,000 apartments are listed on the site. This is close to a fifth of all short-term rental outlets in the entire country!

**SCARCITY: NUDGED TO SHARE**

Speaking of money... However you want to look at it, CEE is one of the regions that are best off in the world. Still though, there are cities and neighborhoods where scarcity becomes a norm and frugality means looking for things we can use without the necessity of owning them. Similar cases can be made for some age and income groups.

With the majority of the small and medium cities in the region depopulating and social security systems being stretched way too thin, the elderly face a set of “scarcity” challenges, to which sharing could



in the coming decades become one of the answers. Platforms like the SilverNest (USA) provide an easy way to find roommates, who can not only generate additional income to a senior's budget but also give them opportunity to stay socially active. Living Labs sprouting all across Europe test this sort of sharing solutions that could help tackle several challenges at once.

Women are a big part of this change as well; their role in the market is growing, with terms like "she-economy" making headlines. According to a forecast by the Polish Statistical Office, in 2050 in Lublin (Poland) we will have 113 women for every 100 men. Women live longer, but that's not the whole picture.

The trend of young men from the CEE region working seasonally in countries of Western Europe has not yet lost its strength. Women are left at home with their kids and become the sole decision-maker in terms of spending. At the same time, according to the World Economic Forum, "*Women are already among the most ardent sharing-economy customers.*" This in turn can have a significant impact on the future of sharing in our region.

### **BLOCKCHAIN FOR SOLAR**

Technology on its own end keeps making it easier to get into the sharing mode. Numerous examples of sharing economy related to most basic needs are listed

in the European *Caring and Sharing* report for 2018. They span from the dominating this space mobility and property-sharing solutions to an app developed in Budapest called Yummbier.com. Its promise was to "connect self-made cooks preparing meals at home for travelers and workers from nearby offices looking for authentic homemade food."

Mobility sharing apps and business models coming from CEE markets that have already spread way beyond the region and are also making economic headlines, with Nextbike being the prime example. Mobility, in terms of our openness to sharing seems easy though. Let's imagine a more complex situation.

In March this year, mayors from several European cities met to discuss innovations around switching to solar energy. The mayors formed a coalition called "Solar Cities" (citizenenergy.eu): "an initiative aiming to create a sustainable platform for collaboration between local-level governments, civic actors, the private sector and citizens". Among the founding fathers were the Georgian Rustavi, the Ukrainian Slavutich, and the Croatian Pula. Ambitions for the group are far from timid. One of them is to test emerging technologies, including blockchain for the purpose of sharing energy created by solar panels. This is where things get interesting.

As long as we talk about sharing a car for a ride from point A to point B (e.g. the Polish BlaBlaCar app), the

*Voices of the new generation start talking about trust as “the currency of the future”*

risks associated with the activity are limited. Imagine a situation, though, in which you enter a complex (legally and socially) relationship, in which based on blockchain technology, you can exchange and share energy with your neighbors, no longer relying on the central or a commercial provider. Such models have already been tested in other cities around the world, including New York, but the path to full implementation is still long and bumpy.

Legally, it is cities that are at the forefront of building grounds for the sharing economy. This is particularly noticeable in the area of mobility. Scooter and bike sharing platforms mentioned earlier are redefining the way we travel and commute but also the way we share public spaces. But what about energy trade? In Poland initiatives like the above mentioned would not legally be permitted at this point in time. Blockchain, specifically, still has a long road ahead in terms of proper legislation not only in the region but globally as well.

**WHAT IS THE FUTURE OF SHARING**

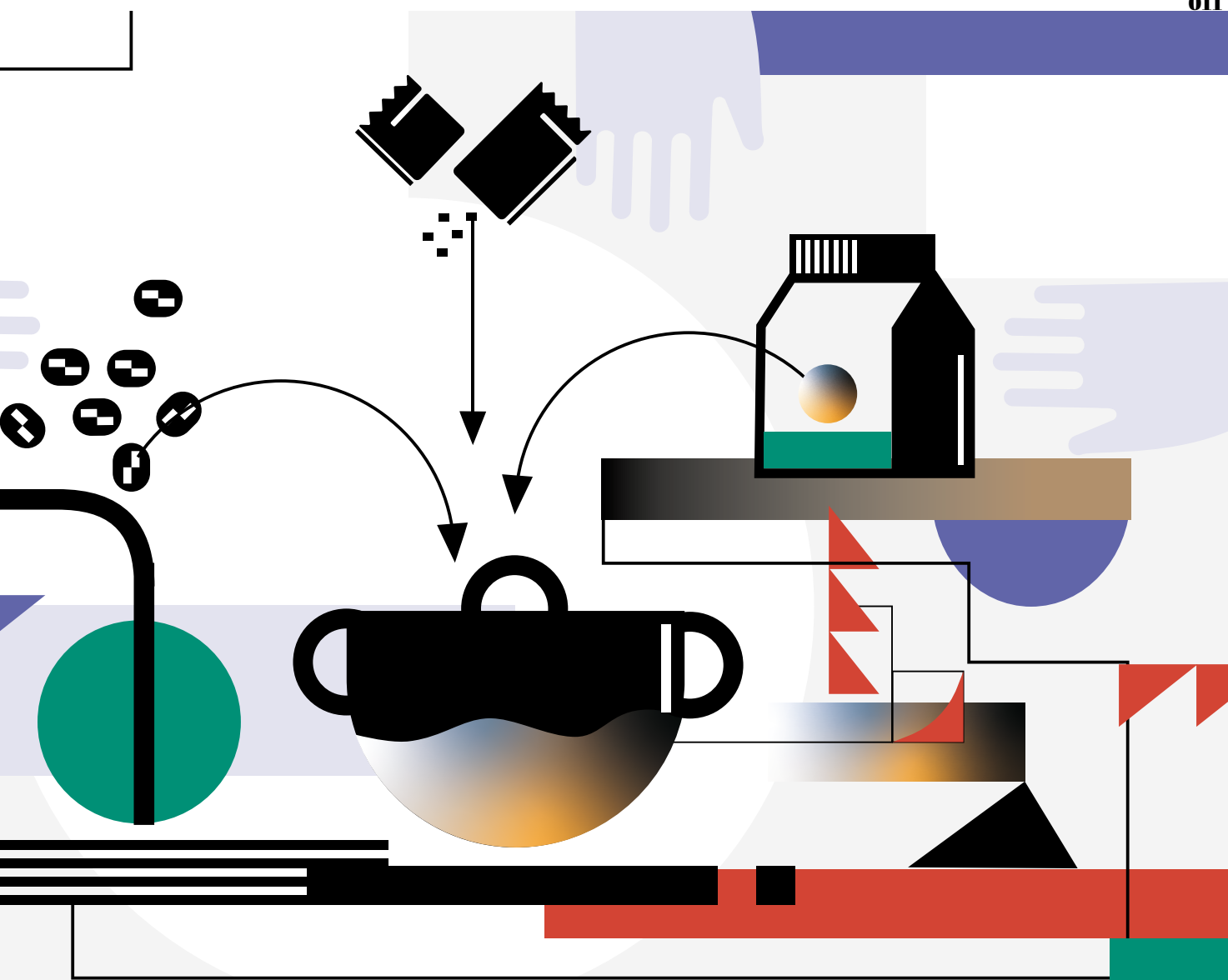
All of the data, examples and anecdotes presented above point to conflicting conclusions. On the one hand, social cohesion in the region and still vivid memories of the past times could make us believe that

it would take CEE cities longer to introduce the sharing economy in its full shape and form into the local markets. On the other hand, several signals point to the other direction and suggest that in fact we are living in a region, which can become the hotbed of sharing. Let’s circle round to trust for a moment, given that it seems to be a major roadblock on our path to sharing in the region.

In 2018, Hitachi together with a global consultancy, Method, published results of their research project Trust 2030 ([trust2030.com](http://trust2030.com)). The goal was to map potential scenarios for the future of trust split into three options: I trust you, I trust them, and I trust myself.

Radical transparency is the hallmark of the first scenario – Decentralised & Transparent. Imagine a situation, in which nothing goes by unnoticed. Everyone knows everything about everyone else. Control is in everybody’s hands now. This also means that you know how much your co-workers earn, so that you can make sure your remuneration is fair. It means that the insurance company has full access to your entire medical history. It means that food producers have to tell you the entire story of where the food has come from and how it was prepared.

The second scenario – Centralised & Curated – perpetuates and in a way radicalizes current trends. Corporations possess our information, and they are its guardians. They collect data on where we are, what we do,



how we feel, who we're in touch with... As a result, they are able to offer products and services fine-tuned to our needs and likes. It is so amazingly comfortable that we willingly cease our rights to privacy.

Finally, the third scenario - Distributed & Autonomous. Here we trust ourselves and people we know (better or worse), who are in our close social proximity. It is with them that we develop networks of sharing and cooperation. People start cleaning water, producing food and energy and fulfill their other needs without looking for support or ready-made solutions from the public administration or corporation.

Some scenarios seem more applicable in the CEE region than others. In the context of sharing, the last one is the most interesting to monitor. The notion of distributed networks cooperating locally to satisfy specific needs seems to be gaining ground in the region. This will not be a smooth ride, as the younger generations do not have many chances to learn how to effectively cooperate and communicate. For the next several years, sharing in the CEE region will mainly be provided by well-established, international platforms; only in time will we be able to prepare the ground for smaller, local initiatives. So too, the legal context will have to follow suit, most likely nudged along by EU regulations.

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**Justyna Król** - founder and CEO of Urban Workshop, an international urban futures lab, helping cities make most of the upcoming trends, engaging local communities on an unprecedented level. Winner of the special award during the first global Joseph Jaworski Next Generation Foresight Practitioners competition.



# *Our* **HOT** *Future* **IS** **HERE**



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ROSMARIE DE WIT

Parks and trees can keep cities cool and help manage the effects of climate change; additional challenges specific for Central European cities, however, might be of a technical nature. Simply, our cities are not as rich as cities in Western Europe!





photo Mr. Thekian, Flickr

Vienna, June 27th 2019, 2 am. The sound of a passing truck is deafening in the silence of the night. Closing the window is not an option, however. The light breeze is badly needed as even without the covers it is too hot to sleep. After a 35°C day in the middle of a heat wave, the nighttime retains its warmth, with temperatures never dropping below 26°C. Waiting for sleep to come, thoughts float to the next day in the office. How unproductive this day will be!

Although summer time may sound like ice cream, swimming, and long evenings outside with friends, the higher temperatures are putting a strain on our health. Threats such as avalanches may sound a lot more catastrophic; however, it is actually heat waves that are among the most dangerous natural hazards. Although their effects are often not as immediately obvious as that of for example floods or storm, heat waves can be incredibly destructive.

The United Nations Environmental Programme stated that the 2003 European heat wave was the worst natural disaster in the last 50 years in Europe,

claiming over 30,000 casualties. Long stretches of heat are especially problematic for very young children and the elderly, as well as people with already existing health issues. Even for fit adults, extended periods of high temperatures can result in fatigue and a loss of productivity. Obviously, enduring more extreme highs during the day can be exhausting, yet, it is the high nighttime temperatures which prevent our bodies from recovering.

### FAMILIAR ASSESSMENTS

Of course, heat waves are nothing new; nevertheless, our world is warming up. In its last assessment, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change – the UN body dedicated to providing an objective overview of the state of the climate as well as the causes and effects of climate change – reported that global temperatures have risen by 0.85°C since the 1880s. This may not sound quite so dramatic, but the effects are a lot more diverse than only an increase in mean temperature.





Heat waves, for example, now have become more frequent and last longer. The heat wave that struck large parts of Europe, ranging from Spain in the south to the Netherlands in the north and Central Europe in the east during the last week of June 2019, broke historical station records in many countries, including Austria, Germany, and the Czech Republic. A team of European researchers concluded that such a heat wave, with a return period of 30 years, would likely have been about 4°C cooler about a century ago.

Unfortunately, this warming trend will continue in the future. Using assumptions about future emissions of greenhouse gases – the main cause of climate change – scientists can determine the future state of the global environment.

For a future in which climate policies result in a reduction of emissions around the mid-century mark, the active climate mitigation scenario shows temperatures are projected to continue to rise by an additional 1.8°C towards the end of the century. Assuming a business-as-usual scenario, in which emissions continue to rise, this figure increases to 3.7°C. Returning to the situation in Central Europe, in case of the first scenario, it is expected that by 2035 it is on average to be 1.1°C warmer than today and would increase a further 2.6°C towards the end of the century, compared to the current situation.

As air temperatures in cities are generally warmer than the surrounding areas, an effect referred to as the urban heat island, these effects will be felt even more strongly in larger, denser municipalities. Urban

heat islands, which are often most pronounced during the night, are caused by many different factors.

On the one hand, urban surfaces, such as buildings, roads and parking lots, absorb more heat than more verdant surroundings. During the night, heat remains trapped between the buildings, resulting in increased nighttime temperatures as well.

In rural areas on the other hand, plants and trees provide shade, store less heat and allow for cooling through the additional evaporation of water. This effect, which can be compared to the cooling of our skin through sweating, is much reduced in paved and developed environments. Also, the lower wind speeds as a result of flats and houses cause reduced ventilation and reduces cooling in cities further. The situation is only compounded by our day-to-day activities, such as driving cars and heating or cooling our homes, which add to the urban heat load by releasing waste heat outside.

With the urban heat island effect added to the temperature rise caused by a warming climate as well as the steady growth of urban populations, it is clear that cities are among the most vulnerable areas to the climate crisis.

This raises the question: what can we do to keep our cities appealing and livable? Of course, an obvious way to reduce the risks and threats would be to actually limit climate change. This led 195 countries to adopt the Paris Agreement in 2016, the first universal and legally binding climate deal meant to avoid catastrophic climate change. In this deal, governments agreed to the long-term goal of keeping the increase in global average



***As air temperatures in cities are generally warmer than the surrounding areas, an effect referred to as the urban heat island, these effects will be felt even more strongly in larger, denser municipalities***

temperatures to “well below 2°C above pre-industrial levels”, and aim to limit the increase to 1.5°C. The Paris Agreement forces each participating country to set up a climate action plan, in which the steps to a climate resilient future as well as a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions are laid out.

Although the Paris deal does not specifically oblige cities to act, they do have the potential to deliver more than 40% of the emission reductions needed to reach the 1.5°C Paris goal. Being the home of about half the world’s population and the intensification of heat load resulting from the urban heat island effect, the urge to tackle climate crisis issues is strongly felt in cities. At the same time, cities are in the key position to quickly drive pragmatic actions and lead change.

This is why leaders of over 90 of the world’s largest cities, ranging from Buenos Aires to Berlin and from Warsaw to Wuhan, are united in the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group. Next to providing a network for the peer-to-peer sharing of knowledge and collaborations, one of the aims of C40 is for all its members to develop and start to implement ambitious climate action plans at the city scale in order to deliver on the 1.5°C goal.

### **THE REAL POTENTIAL**

Still, cities can do more to actively influence the local climate. The good news is that these actions not only help adjust to a warmer future but will also keep the cities cool and reduce the heat already being experienced today.

Here, the reversed processes responsible for the creation of the urban heat island effect come into play. Dark pavements and roofs absorb a lot of solar energy, hence heating up and also giving off heat to their surroundings. Using cool roofs and pavements, with lighter colors hence reflecting more solar radiation, can alleviate the heating effect. Also, permeable pavements, which allow for the interception of rainwater and subsequent evaporative cooling, are a possibility. Additionally, such porous pavements provide water management support, relieving the drainage system during periods of heavy rain. Similar effects can be achieved by green areas such as parks and trees.

Clearly, these adaptation options create new spaces for social interaction and add to the quality of living far beyond the reduction of heat. Such synergies are also found when considering green roofs, for example. Next to providing urban cooling through evaporation, the indoor climate of the top floors is also improved, reducing the need for air conditioning and increasing energy efficiency.

Many Central European cities are a mix of modern and old constructions, in need of substantial investment in renovations to gear up for future climate conditions and to improve energy efficiency. To aid city planners to develop evidence-based climate-proof plans, a recently published study looked into the effect of global climate change on the urban climate in Central Europe. The study, led by Dr. Anita Bokwa from the Jagiellonian University in Krakow, Poland, investigated the current



and future heat islands of Szeged in Hungary, Brno in the Czech Republic, Krakow, as well as the capitals Bratislava (Slovakia) and Vienna (Austria).

In the project, financed by the Visegrad Fund, researchers based in five different countries united to study urban climate as well as the effect of global climate change on Central European cities. As in the C40 network, the concept of peer-to-peer sharing (e.g. knowledge, skills, effective policies) was the basis of this collaboration. As most climate models do not perform well for small areas which have both highly complex land usage, like in cities, and that are located on the top of a hilly terrain, such as Krakow, special modeling tools are needed.

At a conference in 2012, Bokwa learned about the work from colleagues studying the climate of Austrian cities in mountainous terrain using the urban climate model MUKLIMO\_3, developed by the German meteorological service. While discussing possibilities to apply the model to Krakow, the climatologists quickly realized the interest and the potential to organize a joint networking project for several cities in Central Europe as many of these cities are located in hilly regions. This was the start of a supportive and enthusiastic collaboration investigating the characteristics of current and future urban climate across the region.

"We obtained the predictions of the effects of the climate change in a local scale which is rather unique," Dr. Bokwa stated. All of the studied cities show clear urban hot spots, with the highest heat loads in the city center.

Interestingly, this is not only caused by the dense urban fabric in the city, which absorb and store more heat than the surrounding land. In addition, the fact that the cities, except for Szeged, are surrounded by hills, increases the temperature differences between the urban core and the rural areas. Bokwa explained:

*"What was most interesting for us was the combination of land use and land form. We know that rural areas, the mountains, valleys and basins [experience] the highest air temperatures during the summer and lowest during winter, i.e. those areas are most extreme in terms of air temperature in the mountain environment. And we saw that those features can be also found in our cities and around them. In cities located in flat areas, land use is the most important and leading factor responsible for differences in air temperature.*

*In case of our cities, both landform and land use matter. The structure of our cities is rather similar to the structure of other European cities, but not American ones. In Europe, we usually have an old town in the*

*center, and new districts around it. So, the city center is an area with rather old, low buildings while around we have blocks of flats. From that point of view, our results can be useful also for other cities in Europe, located in similar environmental conditions."*

The research also revealed an increase in heat load as a result of climate change: assuming a business-as-usual development of greenhouse gas emissions, the number of days for which maximum temperatures are 25°C or higher is expected to approximately double until the end of the century for the studied cities. For Krakow, the number is expected to be even three times higher than today. Also future "hot spots" can be identified: "We were able to identify the areas in particular cities which most probably will be especially endangered with the air temperature increase."

## CENTRAL EUROPEAN ISSUES AND ANSWERS

*"Challenges that may be considered specific for our (Central European) cities concerning the management of the effects of the predicted climate change might be of a technical nature. Simply, our cities are not as rich as cities in Western Europe so, for example not all public buses and trams have air conditioning. Travelling in a tram without air condition during the heat wave is really a challenge, especially for older people suffering from various diseases. Apartments are equipped with air condition rather rarely and the cost of its operation is one of the reasons." Dr. Maja Žuvela-Aloise, head of the urban modelling group at Austria's national weather service ZAMG and also involved in the Visegrad project, continued: "This is also somewhat controversial, because installing air conditioning is one of the reasons for the increase in local heat and not really a solution to the problem."*

Although it sounds counterintuitive, indoor cooling indeed leads to a heating of the environment, an issue easily demonstrated by checking the temperature behind a fridge working full force. Žuvela-Aloise commented further: "Green infrastructure, such as green roofs, would be a more sustainable alternative, especially when considering the additional benefits. Green roofs not only cool the city but can help regulate indoor temperatures and hence increase energy efficiency too."

At the same time, such alternatives may not be feasible everywhere: "when we talk about places where



photo: Marc Costet, flickr, Public Domain Mark 1.0

you have older people, little children etc., like hospitals, kindergarten – acceptable air temperature is a must and air condition is a guarantee to provide it”, warns Dr. Bokwa. “Maybe we can balance between the need to use the air condition in some places and other options in other places?”

Whether heat is considered a serious issue is dependent on the location as well. In Vienna, having experienced five out of the ten hottest summers since the year 2011 in its 250-year recording history, the awareness is rising. In 2015, the City of Vienna published an urban heat island strategy in which practical actions and concrete initiatives are laid out to make the city cooler and, additionally, to improve the living space of the citizens by for example creating more parks, drinking fountains, and green facades.

In Krakow, which on average currently experiences only about half the number of summer days as Vienna, heat is not yet seen as a major issue. According to Bokwa, “the local authorities are rather skeptic when they hear about projections concerning periods well ahead. I think that they are so overloaded with current problems that future possible problems seem to be neglected. Maybe not due to ignorance or lack of good will, just because we still have to overcome some issues which were solved in the richer counties many years ago.” However, perhaps this discussion is yet to come. Maja Žuvela-Aloise says:

*“We already see, at least in Vienna, that the extreme heat can cause a chain of other problems that are not only related to health, for example, organizational, infrastructural and social problems like energy and water*

*supply, medical services, building regulations, renovations and investments, costs of maintenance, installation of green infrastructure versus air conditioning, etc. All these discussions are gaining importance and were not considered as a serious problem a decade ago.”*

Whenever the issue gains attention, the experiences with urban cooling methods in other cities such as Vienna, Berlin, or Warsaw can help support planning through peer-to-peer sharing of best practices and new techniques. As in science, sharing is key, Bokwa explains. “Sharing in the scientific community is, let’s say, an ‘aware sharing’, where people are aware what they are sharing and why, they want to deliver the results of their work to the others first to see whether they find it useful, but then to support the common effort of looking for the truth. And that is the main aim of the science.”

The next step? Continue the sharing of knowledge and integrating it while creating our future cities.

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**Rosmarie de Wit** – after obtaining her PhD in atmospheric physics at the Norwegian University of Science and Technology, de Wit worked at the NASA Goddard Space Flight Center in the USA. Returning “to Earth”, she joined the Austrian meteorological service ZAMG in 2016, where she is part of the urban modeling team.

\*The article was written with support from Anita Bokwa and Maja Žuvela-Aloise.

\*\* The study Urban Climate in Central European cities and global climate change was funded by the International Visegrad Fund under Standard Grant No. 21410222

# Power Discussions

MACIEJ ŚWIDERSKI

In the wake of the escalating climate crisis, no resource deserves more attention than the one we are using all the time – energy

When talking about the bottom-up sharing of resources, we either tend to think of the various transportation schemes relating to the idea of carsharing or about food, most commonly in a form of a cooperative which grows their own vegetables or buys them directly from a farmer, cutting the necessity for a middleman. In these times of crisis, we have to think about energy in this same way. Why? With examples of countries able to rely on green energy still very limited, it is important to take the matter into our own hands, as not only can it reduce our bills, but it can also show governments that the need for consuming fossil fuels is not as high as it seems.

In the European context, often very successful, bottom-up energy projects have a somewhat convoluted story. In the past, there was no direct or broad EU involvement in the promotion of community-based clean energy projects. This lackluster approach resulted in an uneven and extremely localized popularity of such initiatives, with Western Europe being able to boast of a large number of long-established examples, and the rest of the continent considerably lagging behind. Among the limited number of EU's incentives to promulgate new models of energy consumption, one can point out the general liberalization of the law allowing cooperative renewables schemes

to supply energy directly to their members. Yet again, the ultimate success of such citizen projects has been strictly dependent on the local laws and limitations (let it be national or municipal), creating a paradox where independent energy sources are dependent on national legislations oftentimes geared towards favoring fossil fuels.

This energetic impasse ended in 2018 with the European Union passing the Clean Energy Package which contains a revised version of the Renewable Energy Directive (REDII). As the first piece of EU-wide legislation containing guidelines on the successful diversification of the energy market, the Directive finally acknowledges that citizens and communities can form a pivotal section of the stakeholders in the energy system of the entire continent. It divides bottom-up energy projects into four major categories based on the provenance of the resources – individual projects, such as households or small and medium enterprises (SMEs); joint building projects, in which residents of the same apartment block form a cooperative to install equipment necessary for lowering the costs of energy consumption; renewable energy communities, which encompass various initiators, such as citizens, SMEs, or local authorities, setting up a legal entity aiming at producing renewable energy;





# FACTS

## *about Vienna*

32 citizens' power stations have already opened (28 solar power stations and 4 wind turbines). Over 10,000 people participate in these power stations.

The citizens' power stations of Wien Energie have garnered a total of over 60,000 MWh of green electricity since their launch, which means that they have reduced carbon dioxide emissions by over 17,000 tons.

The citizens' solar power stations alone cover an area larger than 19 football fields.

and citizen-aggregator cooperation based on a scheme in which an already active market participant pools smaller, independent producers together and helps them optimize the production of electricity.

This last type of the sustainable energy projects discussed by the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive, the citizen-aggregator cooperation, is still almost non-existent in the Central European context. The relative novelty of this region's independently managed renewable energy sources is probably one of the main reasons behind the lack of already well functioning projects of this type. Without a doubt, more has to be achieved in order to convince major regional stakeholders from the energy sector to look beyond the traditional reliance on fossil fuels. One can hope that EU directives will prove effective in shortening this process by requiring national governments to partake in this collective switch to green energy. Although Central and Eastern Europe are still far from the Western ideals when it comes to the models of sustainable energy consumption, it is definitively on the right path towards success. The Directive establishes clear rights for citizens and communities wanting to invest in renewables, with an indication that even national governments or private market participants must guarantee these rights.

The crucial one, although seemingly obvious, is the right to "produce, store, consume and sell renewable energy" – something that until now has not been inscribed in EU law. REDII is also a tool for the EU to require national governments to utilize civic involvement in the energy market and make it an indispensable part of the broader switch from fossil fuels to clean energy. Finally, it requires governments to make the process of citizen engagement in the energy market as smooth as possible, by simplifying the procedures on all the levels of administration. Whether the ratification of REDII will effectively contribute to the far-reaching changes in the European energy sector is yet to be seen, but already now we can witness a number of bottom-up initiatives springing up in Central and Eastern Europe. Let's take a closer look at some of them as we can almost be sure that this kind of initiatives will be one of crucial parts of our common future.



Photovoltaic  
panels on the  
roof in Wrocław



## Individual and joint building projects

Although probably most numerous among all the bottom-up, individual projects focused on renewables are not necessarily the most exciting, especially for the purposes of articles such as this one. It has become more common to see our neighbors installing solar panels on the roofs of their houses or even building small wind generators on their properties. Most of them are acting by themselves, some of them seek help from organizations actively promoting renewable energy. Yet, there always exist examples that, even if a bit uncanny, constitute proof of ingenuity.

One of them is from Radosław Wroński, a resident of a typical 80s housing estate in Krakow, who decided to use his share of the apartment block's roof's surface to install his own, personal solar energy power plant. Although the cost effectiveness of such personalized energy source may not be optimal at first, it allows other, less courageous residents to follow the lead and ultimately create

a very sustainable consumption model. A more typical approach to the joint building projects consist of the entire housing cooperative agreeing to contribute a share of the building's renovation funds to the construction of various cost-cutting installations. Of course, the most standard and effective option here is covering the majority of the roof's surface with photovoltaic panels. In the countries with higher levels of energetic consciousness examples of such collective endeavors abound, yet they are still relatively rare in Central and Eastern Europe.

However, two interesting examples come from Poland. In the first one, residents from a mid-sized Warsaw apartment block installed solar panels able to produce enough energy to power the common areas of the building (including corridors, attic, basement, and elevators). The whole venture, equaling over 70,000 PLN (approximately 16,500 EUR), was financed from the renovation funds without any



photo SM Wrocław-Południe

outside help. The surplus from this solar farm will end up in the municipal energy operator's (Innogy) network, under a scheme according to which every 1kW of energy transferred to Innogy will result in an 80% discount on a kW received by the building. This model of energy exchange is expected to fully repay the initial investment in 6 to 7 years, which is promising, given the fact that the longevity of the panels is estimated for more than 20 years working on full potency. Wrocław can boast of a much larger, almost jaw-dropping example of such community-based energy production in which the entire housing complex consisting of 35 high-rise buildings is equipped with photovoltaic panels. The sheer number of installations – almost 3000 – is simply awe inducing. Once again, the energy produced by them covers the needs for all the common areas with a significant surplus.

Apart from the scale, the main difference between this project and

the example from Warsaw lays in the financing model. In this case, the housing cooperative was able to secure a 1.7 million PLN grant and 2.5 million PLN loan from a regional government's program supporting clear energy. Interestingly, the success of this endeavor made the city officials more prone to investing into solar energy. One of the first steps undertaken by the city is the publication of a solar potential map covering the roofs of all the buildings within the city limits.



photo: Green Energy Cooperative

## Renewable energy communities

Community-based projects are by far the most popular among the larger scale initiatives aiming at energetic sustainability in the Central-Eastern European region. As was mentioned before, they can consist of various types of initiators ranging from groups of citizens (similarly to the joint building cooperatives) to entire municipalities. Given the ample EU subsidies originating in the structural funds, over the years it is precisely the municipalities that gained the status of the main drivers of community energy projects in this region of the continent. In the majority of cases, such municipality-owned renewable installations ornate public buildings such as schools or cultural centers. Across the region, local initiatives cooperate with various interregional and international organizations helping to make the transition towards energy self-sustainability possible.

Friends of the Earth, one of the most prolific among them, is currently involved in all the Visegrad

Group countries, as well as in the Balkans. A good example of their activities can be found in Pol'ana, one of the least economically developed regions of Slovakia. Already in 2005, several villages created a legal association called a "Bystricko Biomass" in order to minimize the energy expenses and collectively invest in a self-sufficient power production based on the local wood waste. Initially, it was aimed at heating the municipal buildings and replacing old and highly polluting coal boilers. This inter-municipal association has since managed to become energetically independent, additionally solving the problem of the leftover wood from several local sawmills. As indicated by the Friends of the Earth's Slovak branch, energy prices paid by the association are now 25% lower than at the biggest regional suppliers. Furthermore, the emission of greenhouse gases has decreased by 2,643 tons a year.

Similar projects can be found in almost every part of Central and





Green Energy  
Cooperative  
(Zelena Energetska  
Zadruga)

Eastern Europe, yet most often they are initiated by singular municipalities. A good example of such an approach, combined with a rather innovative financing model, comes from Križevci, Croatia, located some 60 kilometers to the Northeast of Zagreb. In this case, the thirst for renewables came as a part of a broader program aiming at stimulating the economy and entrepreneurship as well as supporting local SMEs through the creation of an entity called the Development Center and Technology Park. The main administrative building of the Center was to be fully self-sufficient with its energy production, yet such an endeavor could not have been achieved without proper funding. It is precisely here where the expertise of the Croatia-based Green Energy Cooperative (Zelena Energetska Zadruga, or ZEZ) came in handy. ZEZ, together with Križevci's authorities came up with an elaborate funding model based on crowdsourcing and micro-loan

investment. That way, not only local residents are co-owners of the photovoltaic panels installed on the roof of the Development Center but are also financially benefiting from the loan-like investments they made – lending the money to the cooperative, they can expect a return with a 4.5% fixed interest rate, well above the annual interest rates provided by commercial banks. What is more, the crowdfunding campaign was able to collect more than 30,000 EUR and lasted merely 10 days. Currently, the Development Center produces 50,000 kWh each year, which equals to 55 tons of CO<sup>2</sup> saved annually. The success of the Križevci case proves that financially attractive funding schemes can be a good incentive for the locals to get involved and contribute to the well-being of their wallets as much as the whole planet.

The last type of the sustainable energy projects discussed by the European Union's Renewable Energy Directive, citizen-aggregator cooperation, is still almost non-existent

in the Central-European context. The relative novelty of this region's independently managed renewable energy sources is probably one of the main reasons behind the lack of already well functioning projects of this type. Without a doubt, more has to be achieved in order to convince major regional stakeholders from the energy sector to look beyond the traditional reliance on fossil fuels. One can hope that EU directives will prove effective in shortening this process by requiring national governments to partake in this collective switch to green energy. Although Central and Eastern Europe are still far from the Western ideals when it comes to the models of sustainable energy consumption, it is definitively on the right path towards success.

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# HIGH-RISE *revitalised*

MARTYNA OBARSKA

How will high-rise housing estates transform in Prague, Bratislava and Warsaw – cities where demand on the real estate market still overweighs supply, which means that even houses made of precast concrete enjoy unwavering popularity?

What does the future hold for high-rise buildings? Scattered in the cities around the world, vast housing estates constitute arguably the most spectacular heritage of modernist architecture. They were depicted in films, formed the background in multiple novels, undeniably contributed to the creation of several music genres. And although their history, residents' life and changes they produced in urban structure have already been sufficiently covered by experts, the debate over their future is still nascent.

Apart from low-key, exclusive parcels, high-rise housing estates in Central Europe also feature gigantic housing complexes inhabited by thousands of people – the famous Petržalka in Bratislava is widely considered as one of the largest high-rise housing estates in Europe, while Jižní Město in Prague (commonly referred to as Jižák) is dwelled by 100,000 residents. In Poland, around 12 million people live in high-rise housing estates, accounting for almost 1/3 of the country's population. Despite bad reputation of some Central

European high-rise housing estates, such as Lunik IX in Košice, the vast majority is well-maintained, functional, having survived the austerity of undercapitalisation in the wake of the fall of communism and having successfully dismissed the prospect of turning into ghettos. The infamy of high-rise housing estates from the 90s has dissipated. Nowadays, they are regarded as a decent place to live – though understandably not the most prestigious by location or status, more often than not they feature better access to public transport and better planning compared to some modern top-of-the-range housing estates.

It is worth noting that more prominent Central European cities succumb to urban sprawl with new housing investments – particularly the lower priced ones – spreading chaotically and with disregard for area development plans. The distances between individual buildings are determined by the profitability of the investment, not by the quality of life of the residents. This means that, compared to such investments,





high-rise housing estates built after World War II are unexpectedly becoming more appealing – being more coherent and better connected (often located in close vicinity to the city centre or metro stations), while trees planted half a century ago entwine the houses in lush greenery. The residents can enjoy the luxury of distant views over the window unobstructed by their neighbours. In addition, a few years ago major Central European cities organised a wave of thermal modernisations and renovations of the high-rise housing estates, and while the aesthetic effects of these activities are often terrible, they increased the quality of life of residents and improved the technical condition of the buildings.

Catastrophic prophecies foretelling that precast concrete buildings can last only 50 years have not proven true either. Experts from the Polish Institute of Building Technology have devoted the last two years to assess the technical condition of high-rise housing estates in Poland. Their analyses show that the buildings

are in good condition, and the only thing the estates require is prudent modernisation with respect for the changing housing needs and in line with the challenges posed by the climate crisis. All these factors make high-rise housing estates quite an attractive place to live for the representatives of all social groups.

Riots that we are familiar with in such settlements as Besançon Planoise near Paris, are unlikely to happen in Central Europe, at least now.

Looking at the situation on the real estate market in large cities of the region, it can be concluded that they are much more probable to follow the case of Berlin, though in a modified form. What was special about Berlin? Following the fall of the Wall and the German Reunification, in Berlin – and other German cities – high-rise housing estates began to depopulate rapidly. For example, within seven years since 1991 the population of the Berlin borough of Marzahn dwindled from 162,000 down to 142,000. Over the years, some blocks were demolished, other were lowered or modified.



Housing estates in other Western European countries shared a similar fate – eg the Ballymun settlements built in Ireland in the 1970s have already disappeared from the face of the earth. However, after several years, the housing situation in Berlin changed – as a result of speculation of key players on the real estate market rental prices in the city increased. Today Marzahn and other Berlin high-rise housing estates are a popular, though hardly prestigious, place to live. The case of Berlin, ie a planned partial demolition of housing estates and raising the standards of the remaining buildings, probably stands a chance of fulfilment in Central Europe, but only in terms of modifying the high-rise houses themselves. It is difficult to imagine initiating demolition in cities where flats remain one of the most sought after goods on the market. So how can we modify Central European high-rise housing estates? Has this been already done and where to look for inspiration?

#### **“THE LAST MAN STANDING IN THE WAR OF MODERNISM”**

500 flats, 400 meters long, 10 floors – this is how Kleiburg, a building erected in the 1960s in Amsterdam, can be described in figures. It is an enormous construction. What makes it extraordinary? First of all, it was the only building in this part of Amsterdam that had not yet been

altered in any way, and hence it represented a monument of modernist architecture. Secondly, its metamorphosis, which began in 2013 and ended 3 years later, was awarded the Mies van der Rohe Award 2017 for best architectural project in Europe. The jury acknowledged the idea of the Consortium de FLAT for the renovation of the building, and at the same time by awarding the award gave a clear signal that the trend of breathing new life into high-rise housing estates signifies a vital direction in contemporary architecture. Many architectural critics emphasised that this decision of the jury suggested that following a wave of large-scale investments, first into impressive museums, and then in public spaces, the time has come to appreciate activities in the field of housing development. All the more so because the originators of the award, presented every two years since 1987, have stressed from its inception that their task is to recognise architects who ‘understand the profound changes taking place in the construction environment in Europe’. The renovation of high-rise housing estates has thus become one of the key challenges of contemporary architecture.

The jury reiterates their opinion on the challenges of the future, as this year the prize was presented to the Anne Lacaton, Jean Philip Vassal, Frederic Druot and Christophe Hutin, architects professionally dealing with high-rise housing, this time in Bordeaux, France. Their project included “gluing” three buildings onto





Lacaton & Vassal architectes;  
Frédéric Druot Architecture and  
Christophe Hutin Architecture,  
*Transformation of 530 Dwellings*  
– Grand Parc Bordeaux, 2017

the facade, thus adding 530 flats and spacious winter gardens with balconies, replacing windows with sliding glass doors to connect the living room with the newly acquired space, replacing elevators, modifying stairwells and rearranging the greenery near the buildings. The pictures from the implementation of the project show spacious interiors reminiscent of solutions used in luxury suites rather than social housing from the 1960s. Thanks to the new facade and the construction of winter gardens, not only did the residents gain additional space (the extension is 3.8m wide), but also more light and better ventilation. Importantly, the renovation was planned in such a way that the entire procedure did not require moving the tenants temporarily and was carried out as quickly as possible. 12-16 days were allocated to the modification of one flat. The renovation did not generate any increase in the price of rent, and its cost did not exceed the standard price usually spent on redecoration and standard thermal insulation of this type of facilities.

### PROTOTYPES PENDING

These were the most famous precast concrete housing estate modifications in Europe performed in the last few years, or at least the ones most often covered in the press. Did the architects from the former Eastern

Bloc countries analyse them? It is difficult to answer this question unequivocally, although looking at the projects in this area and the number of publications regarding high-rise housing, it seems quite clear that local architects have learned their lesson long time ago and they are now slowly starting to implement their own ideas. Solutions aimed to raise the standard of flats in high-rise housing have been long known to architects, now it is time to convince building owners, not an easy task given that the issue of ownership in such a type of housing is usually quite complicated.

One of the most famous successful projects of this kind is the concept of Gut Gut, a Slovak architecture office. Panelák (as high-rise housing estate is commonly called in Slovak and Czech) is their flagship project which popularised the work of this architecture studio already well-known in the region, reaching a wider audience from Western Europe. Importantly, the conceptual stage of the project in the city of Rimavská Sobota began as early as 2007, which clearly shows that the topic of renovation of high-rise housing is not new to local architects. It should be emphasised, however, that the project started as a prototype and hence was quite exceptional. Firstly, the architects were faced with an unusual ownership situation – the housing estate had only two owners. Interestingly then, the architects did not work with a housing cooperative which is the most common form

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***This specific, very popular in Poland 'colour strategy' has even gained its mocking name – 'pastelosis' of buildings***

of ownership of high-rise housing estates in this part of Europe. This can be a huge advantage, but it can also pose numerous obstacles due to the complicated nature of relations between various members of a cooperative or a somewhat rigid management structure in complex cooperatives managing as many as several thousand flats. Secondly, the building was uninhabited, and the current owners asked architects to reconstruct and remodel the house for long-term rental. In the first place, the architects from the Gut Gut studio adapted the floor area in the flats to meet contemporary trends on the real estate market by combining small flats and creating four apartments on each floor. A new floor was added to the building with two top-of-the-range flats housing five-room penthouses. The facade was extended with balconies, while the basement was equipped with a gym, a sauna and a café. Such efforts allowed the architects to create appealing flats that meet the expectations of modern customers and make the 'high-rise building' – or rather its new version – an appealing offer on the real estate market.

A completely different idea for a new life for high-rise buildings was offered by the members of Traffic Design, an artistic collective from Gdynia, who have been working in this coastal Polish city for years striving to restore the heritage of modernism. As part of their trademark, they employ artistic activities to introduce important topics into debates over public space. Gdynia is a specific city. Dubbed 'the white city' – like Tel Aviv – it is a true gem of modernism. Interestingly, Gdynia was created at a rapid pace, though extremely carefully planned and designed, the effects of which can be admired today by architecture aficionados. How was the city created? After Poland regained independence in 1918, the politicians of this young state decided to build a port, thus creating a symbol of connection between the country and the sea, as well as forming a gateway to the development of sea and ocean sailing. Once a small fishing settlement, Gdynia saw 130,000 people move in just over a dozen years – between World War I and II.

That was how Gdynia was growing up next to its larger brothers – Gdańsk, a Hanseatic behemoth, and Sopot, a popular spa destination. Fortunately, the city of Gdynia did not suffer air strikes during World War II, but in the post-war years, in order to accommodate new residents, large housing estates were built using precast concrete technology. After several dozen years of use, their condition required renovation, so the cooperative authorities of individual housing estates decided to roll out a vast thermal modernisation plan. Gdynia – the white city – was suddenly splattered with huge buildings of green, pale pink and purple rose. This specific, very popular in Poland – but not only in this country – 'colour strategy' has even gained its mocking name – 'pastelosis'. The pejorative term was introduced by Filip Springer, one of the most famous Polish reporters dealing with urban issues. In his writing, he described the conversations he held during his travels around Poland with people responsible for the renovation of high-rise buildings. The interviews showed that decisions about colours were usually made in a narrow circle of a cooperative's board and were dictated by the fact that someone (eg the secretary of the cooperative) just liked a specific colour. Members of the Traffic Design Association decided to mount a challenge to the infamous pastelosis.

In 2017, they established the White Blocks project and persuaded the management of a cooperative in Gdynia to carry out a model renovation of the high-rise building that would blend in with the city's architecture. Designer Jacek Wielebski from Traffic Design was the mastermind behind the design dominated by white colour and geometrical forms. The cooperative received the project for free. The activities of the association from Gdynia met with great response from all over Poland and were widely commented – not only in the architectural environment. Further projects are planned in a similar spirit with hopes that Polish housing estates will soon acquire a bit more subdued colours, while eccentric oranges, candy roses and pistachios will be forgotten.





Prefab house  
in Rimavská  
Sobota before  
reconstruction,  
2007



After  
reconstruction,  
2014

photo GUN ewe

photo Jakub Štokan, Martin Tuma (BoysPlayNice)



photo Jakub Skokan - Martin Tuma (BoysPlayNice)

Prefab house  
in Rimavská Sobota



photo Jakub Skokan, Martin Funták, GoysPlayNice)

### CHERRY ON TOP

Slovak architects from the Gut Gut studio developed construction solutions enabling the reconstruction of high-rise buildings, activists from Gdynia introduced good aesthetic practices of thermal modernisation. Do these types of activities exhaust the range of possibilities for transformations in high-rise housing estates in the near future? Definitely not. The space between the buildings is as important as buildings themselves. Housing estates made of precast concrete feature many advantages even today – above all, an extensive network of local services that have been created over the years. However, some buildings within the estates that have lost their current function should gain a new life. It is also worth taking care of the urban complement of some of the housing estates – after all, they were created in line with the idea of a city divided into functional zones, whereby residents live and work elsewhere. Therefore, it is necessary to ensure infrastructure for jobs in the vicinity of high-rise housing estates – eg by constructing modern office buildings. Large sections of greenery is another crucial factor to include within the confines of a high-rise housing estate – especially in times of climate crisis. They should be protected against building development and duly maintained, being a great example of small and large retention. Part of the green areas, such as community gardens, can also be allocated for community building purposes between the neighbours. What should we also focus on?

Michal Kohout, an architect and lecturer at the Prague Faculty of Architecture CTU, together with students decided to compare different types of housing estates in the Czech Republic. Their analyses show that high-rise buildings feature great potential to become very comfortable living spaces. The quality of life of their inhabitants

is already high. However, the complicated ownership structure that makes decision making extremely difficult may be the key stumbling block. According to Kohout, high-rise building estates created in the era of a strong state and managed by the state should be protected by the state in some form in the future. In his opinion, it is possible to adopt, for example, development plans that will enable the protection of entire giant housing complexes against the pressure of market processes but only at the central state level. However, this jigsaw puzzle has to include private owners and investors alike. It is evident then that the task is far from easy to make all pieces fit perfectly. What does the future hold for high-rise housing estates? We will find out very soon. One thing is certain – it has been quite some time since some of them turned 50 and they are doing great. Though two decades ago doomed to disappear from the urban landscapes of Central Europe, they persevere and prove otherwise. A whole generation of children raised in high-rise buildings has grown up – and it is ‘their’ place on earth.

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# AROUND *the* CORNER

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set edited by **KATARZYNA IWIŃSKA**

Which trends will shape the way we will be living in Central European (CE) cities and using common space in the nearest future?

## **Multi- generational flats**

Living together with our parents... a nightmare or a dream come true? There are many different patterns in CE showing that multigenerational living arrangements are becoming more and more popular. For example, in Poland it is a relatively new phenomenon for people who have already entered adulthood to still live with their parents. Yet, Eurostat data shows that almost 45% of young Poles aged 25-34 have not set up their own household. Reasons for this new trend include: the difficult economic situation, problems with getting a mortgage, and the general distrust of renting from landlords. The sheer scale of this growing group has earned them the new moniker of “nesters” as they are not very keen on leaving their parents’ roost.

A similar process has taken place in the Czech Republic. It is not news that elderly parents move in with their adult children; a new occurrence though is that adult children move back in with their parents.





photo Martinka Spusta Architekti Maspart

As the national statistics show, in the last decade, the number of young adults aged 20 – 34 living with their parents has increased by 25%. The main factor for this state of affairs is the difficult situation on the housing market: since people have to pay the relatively high cost of rent, they cannot afford to save for a deposit at the same time. There are different solutions the Czechs make use of to solve some of the issues related to combining different generations in one unit. Usually, families will search for conversion possibilities such as an attic or independent floor. If there is a separate building available in the countryside such as a barn, it may be converted into a living space as well.

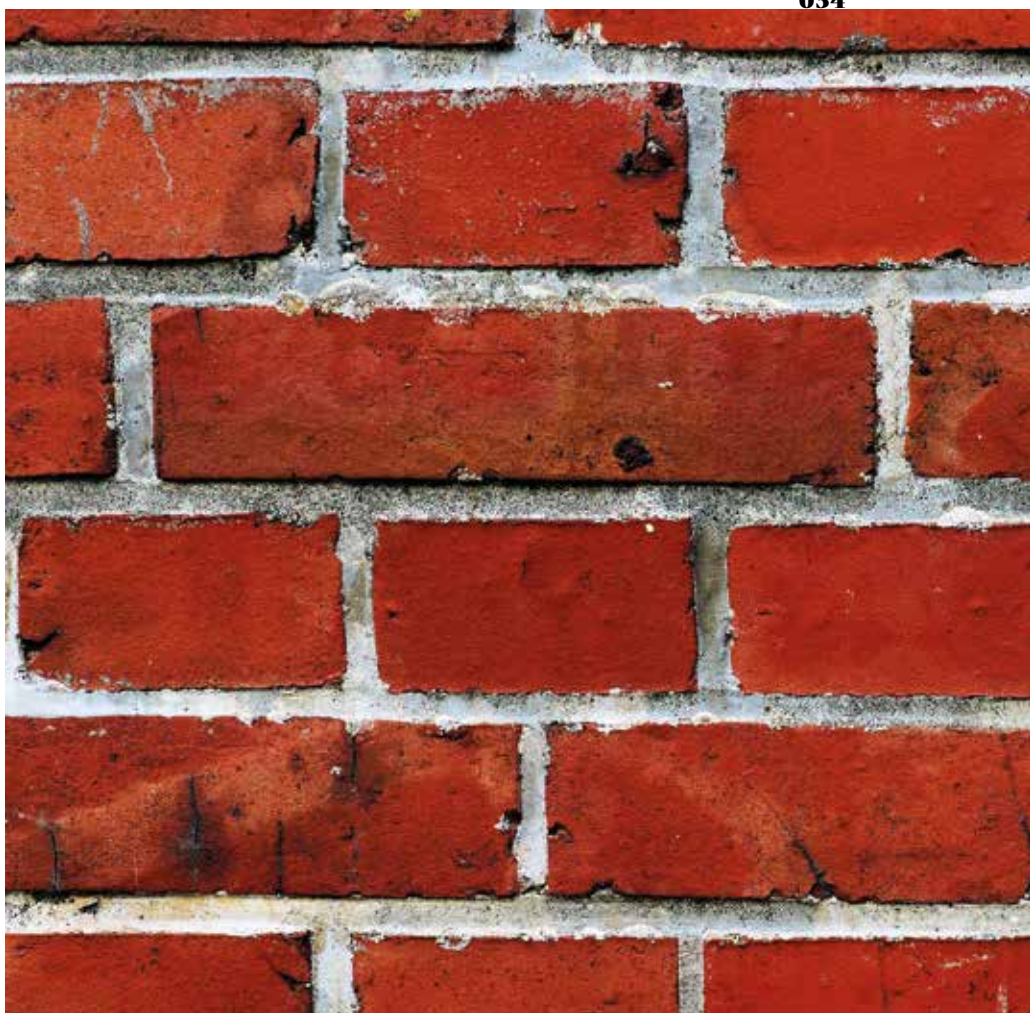
There are several components which can make this shift more or less attractive. Admittedly, a multi-generational buyer is drawn to provide support and health care for their family. However, splitting the cost of a mortgage and other expenses among a larger group

makes the whole endeavor more feasible. To meet these needs, a niche has been developing among the new investments to cater for such multi-generational families. These new designs are gaining popularity in, for example, Southern Moravia – a region in Czech Republic, where the recognizable L-shaped houses on rectangular plots can be found. A multi-generational family home here consists of three parts: the main house, seen from the street, where parents with children live. Secondly, a smaller house for the grandparents in the back, and, finally, the backyard which was historically used for farming.

Another example from the Czech Republic, Šternberk is a single-story house constructed in 2017 with a total surface of 190 sq m. Architects Pavel Martinka and Ondřej Spusta say that they wanted to create a house as simple as possible considering it is already complex to design for three generations living under one roof. Part of the house

is dug underground, on the ground floor there is a smaller apartment with direct access to the garden. On the first floor there is a bigger apartment with terrace and a garage for two cars.





## Division of space

Gated communities have been very popular and broadly experimented with in the USA, where the first gated communities were established in the 1960s. In Central and Eastern Europe, this phenomenon was set up in a completely different background, amidst the post-socialist transition, which is still taking place. Here the first gated communities popped up in 1990s when they appeared around big cities such as Vienna or Berlin. In the post-socialist bloc, however, different factors were the cause for establishing gated communities than in other cities.

In Bratislava as in other eastern cities, a polarization of society has been expanding over the last two decades. In the capital of Slovakia, the contrast in urban fabric can be easily seen – villas and new shopping centers stand in juxtaposition with the increasing number of visible homeless people, neglected houses, and derelict factories. Another important factor

is the fact that there are relatively large pieces of land available in the inner city. However, as they are very expensive, they are only available for either rich residents or big investors. As a result, the land is privatized, often in the form of a gated community at the expense of public areas. One of the well-known examples of a gated community in Bratislava is often referred to as the “Slovak Beverly Hills”. It is an area of villas, each which fetch an astronomical price and are inaccessible for mere mortals. Fashionable neighbors, a notable address, and the accompanying prestige are considered here as key factors attracting buyers. Gated communities in Bratislava started to spread after 2000 and their numbers are still growing. At the moment, there are no government measures to prevent their continued development. However, the quality of gated communities is visibly falling. Often what the gated community adds to the area is solely




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***Jacek Gądecki, one of the polish researchers investigating gated communities stated that soon those estates will have to be revitalized soon***

the gate and fence around it; there are no extra benefits stemming from the fact that it is fenced. Especially when the housing estate is built on the outskirts of the city. In that situation the fence can even be seen as an obstacle as pedestrian flow is limited to the open gates.

The process of segregation is present not only in big cities but also in smaller ones, like the village of Ostrovany in eastern Slovakia. Ostrovany is a village just outside the larger community of Šarišské Michaľany. The UN estimates that around 40% of Slovakia's Roma reside in such settlements, numbering more than 600. In 2009, Ostrovany built a physical barrier, a 150-m-long wall, to separate the 1200 Roma residents from the 586 non-Roma villagers known as gadzos. The wall (which cost 13,000 euros to erect) resembles those in the West Bank and formerly in Berlin. This impression is only compounded by some harsh facts: in the Roma houses there is no running water, and among

the residents, the unemployment rate is reaching 80%. The process of building the wall started in 2008 when the local council agreed to work on the problem of growing criminality in the village; this "criminality" was mostly linked with children stealing fruit from the gardens close to the settlement. While non-Roma citizens claim the fence is only a solution for reducing the amount of theft from their gardens, Roma residents say they feel like they are being kept in a zoo.

Such methods of segregation show that physical barriers are still present in our cities. The question is how will they develop in the future. Jacek Gądecki, one of the polish researchers investigating gated communities stated that soon those estates will have to be revitalized soon. They will no longer fulfill the needs of their residents.

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***[...] we need different things  
when we study, when  
we work, when we have  
children or when we get old***

## Coliving

A Polish architect who specializes in co-habitation projects, Przemysław Chimczak, estimates that in 2017 there were only a few examples of coliving in the world. By the end of 2018, there were around 200 examples and this number continues to rise exponentially. There are a couple trends which can explain why coliving is gaining such popularity. First, the generation of “singles” is growing; the nuclear family is no longer the main household model. Second, people are looking for meaningful relationships outside their homes; when they move to a new place and don’t know anyone, building a social network gives them a sense of belonging and security. Moreover, the need for multifunctionality has appeared; not everyone can afford the space in their flat to have their own library or working place, but still they may want to have these comforts. This is why flexibility is so important: we are recognizing that people’s needs change during

the course of their lives – we need different things when we study, when we work, when we have children or when we get old.

In Poland, according to the current prognosis, we can expect a demographic tsunami – Poland will experience an outflow of residents connected with ageing of the society. Therefore, there are two main groups for which coliving will be an interesting offer in the future. These are young people and seniors. While this is growing global trend, the question is whether it is going to impact the way housing investments are shaped in Central Europe? Young people are becoming more and more mobile, they travel not only for touristic purposes but also for university exchanges, job offers, or simply when they want to change their place of residence. Millennials are less willing to invest in long-term credit for buying a flat than previous generations. An easily accessible flat for rent is much more appealing for those who are not sure





Smartti  
Mokotów

where their carrier or destiny will lead them. The rate of bought and rented flats is also changing along with increased economic stability of a country.

In addition, these living arrangements can be most beneficial for seniors. Matthias Hollwich – the director of the well-known architecture firm, HWKN – claims that the current solutions for older people such as retirement settlements or nursing homes rather lead to social segregation than happy ageing. A mixture of different age groups

can keep seniors in shape and allow them to age more healthily.

In Warsaw, the first coliving investment is going to start in the 4th quarter of 2019. It is going to be located in Służewiec, an area full of large corporate buildings. The developer YIT is going to build 334 premises with a total surface area of 6200 sq m where almost 1000 people are going to live in close proximity. Tomasz Konarski, President of the Board of YIT in Poland, says that Smartti Mokotów (the name of the development) is a project

addressed to people for whom socializing is an important part of life.

Future residents are seen as those who appreciate living in a creative surrounding where they can work and live comfortably. The investment will include coworking spaces, services, restaurants, a gym, areas for relaxation, and a reading room. There will even be an outdoor gym and a football pitch on the roof.



## New forms of shared spaces

The refugee crisis is a hot topic in Germany, both in terms of integration and housing shortages, but the sharing culture can be very helpful in addressing these issues. The andOFFICE team of architects aims at tackling these problems with their *Hoffnungshauser* – House of Hope. It is a modular timber construction, suitable for fast, high-quality affordable housing. As the modules are prefabricated, the House of Hope can be built in any location, without compromising on quality. The first one has been operating in Leonberg since 2016. Others have been running in Esslingen and Bad Liebenzell with a few more in the planning stage or under construction. The idea was to combine refugees and local residents in their daily routines; they are living next door to one another, and share common spaces indoors and outdoors.

*Hoffnungshouse* is an intercultural, multi-generational house. At the beginning it was a gamble, there was some scepticism from the local residents, but now it looks

like a big success story. The house offers not only comfortable living standards (complying with social housing standards) but also social integration into the local society. Sharing physical space is one aspect, but the residents can also meet in the common rooms, work in the garden or children can play together. There is also a special program adjusted to the refugees. They can have counselling sessions regarding the personal trauma they have endured, or they can get a consultation on education or job opportunities. The concept also envisages an exchange of abilities: neighboring residents help refugees on a voluntary basis with matters such as homework, telephone calls, and even doctor visits. The willing ones can organize workshops in their own homes.

*Hoffnungshouse* is not just innovative socially but also technically. The building looks fresh and bright; it has a soft cubature. It is easier for refugees to rebuild





*Hoffnungshauser*  
- House of Hope

their lives in such surroundings rather than with the popular, ugly containers where they are often forced to live. The buildings are organized as two-in-hand with interior staircases. One of the important elements of the building is the curved wooden balcony, which can be produced cheaply thanks to computer-aided manufacturing. Compared to conventional production methods, such a method saves 250 tons of carbon dioxide. Inside, a central element of each unit is the big kitchen. The amount of load-bearing walls is minimized so that the floor plan can be adjusted to other uses in the future. The space is effectively planned out with large, shared balconies which provide a convenient transition between private and public spaces. The entire building can be constructed in six to eight months. The design for the Esslingen house was the 2018 Iconic Award Winner for innovative material and a 2019 German Design Award nominee.

In Bad Liebenzell, the House of Hope has 51 residents in 11 apartments: 32 are refugees and 19 are German students. Refugees do their own tasks according to their age and needs: they go to work, schools, or kindergartens; they can also attend language lessons or complete a training courses. As Dominic Schikor, the social worker at the house explains, there is a very good cooperation with the Integration Manager in the District Office, which is why the necessary procedures work so effectively. Currently, there are 300 people living in all of the houses. There are, however, many big cities interested in continuing the project. In Leonberg, an extension is already being built as the demand is so high. Consider the success of these projects, it is possible that the Germans developed a golden mean for future integration.



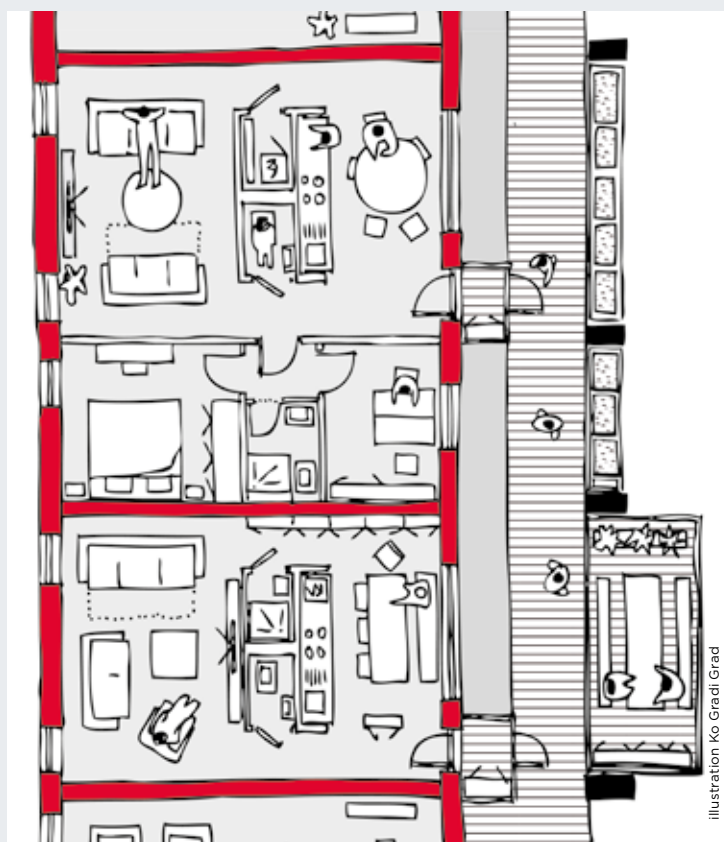


illustration Ko Grad Grad

## Bottom-up cooperatives

Coliving, multi-generational living... what if we add on top of that self-financing? One can predict that this is a direction of more and more investments of the future, but such cooperatives are already operating in western Europe. In Berlin, for example, there is even a website bringing together such groups: CoHousing-Berlin.de. In the German capital, there are over 1000 cohousing buildings and groups which make the city a center for coliving in Europe.

Michael LaFond and Winfried Haertel, cofounders of CoHousing, define it as collaborative living. It is community oriented as opposed to individual apartments: the house or houses encompass community rooms, a common garden, or other shared spaces that the community can decide on how to use according to their specific needs. It is self-organized as the environment one lives in is co-designed by the residents. It is not solely your apartment, but it is a whole block that you have influence on. It must

also be sustainable as residents take responsibility of the place for the long period of time. Lastly, the cofounders stated that CoHousing is cosmopolitan as the movement is growing and more and more people from abroad want to learn about this way of participatory and cooperative housing method.

Such cooperatives are also popping up in eastern Europe. MOBA – a network of pioneering housing cooperatives in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe – celebrated one year of operation in January 2019. In the network there are housing cooperatives from Belgrade, Budapest, Ljubljana, Prague, and Zagreb. MOBA puts affordability first, and helps future residents to develop, finance, maintain, and operate the multi-apartment building or buildings. The cooperative, participating households and individuals own the building and take the necessary loans to pay for the construction of it. Members cannot speculate with their flat so that it is an affordable solution not only for the first generation

but also for the future generations. Members of the cooperative pay a one-time “entry fee”, and then they pay monthly contributions.

One of the pilot projects from MOBA is planned in Belgrade, Serbia. In Belgrade almost the only way to get an apartment is to inherit it or to take a risky loan. Low wages combined with the high prices of real estate result in 150,000 people with unsolved housing problems. Pametnija Zgrada is a 4-storey building project located just outside the center of Belgrade. It will contain 23 flats of a total surface of 935 sq m. The flats will vary in size, starting from 24 to 84 sq m. The approach to the building is modular, basic size is 37 sq m and between 1 to 4 rooms can be added to that. There will also be a shared space of 90 sq m. The House will be constructed according to Passive House energy efficiency standard, and the use of A-class materials would provide high standard of living and minimize maintenance costs.

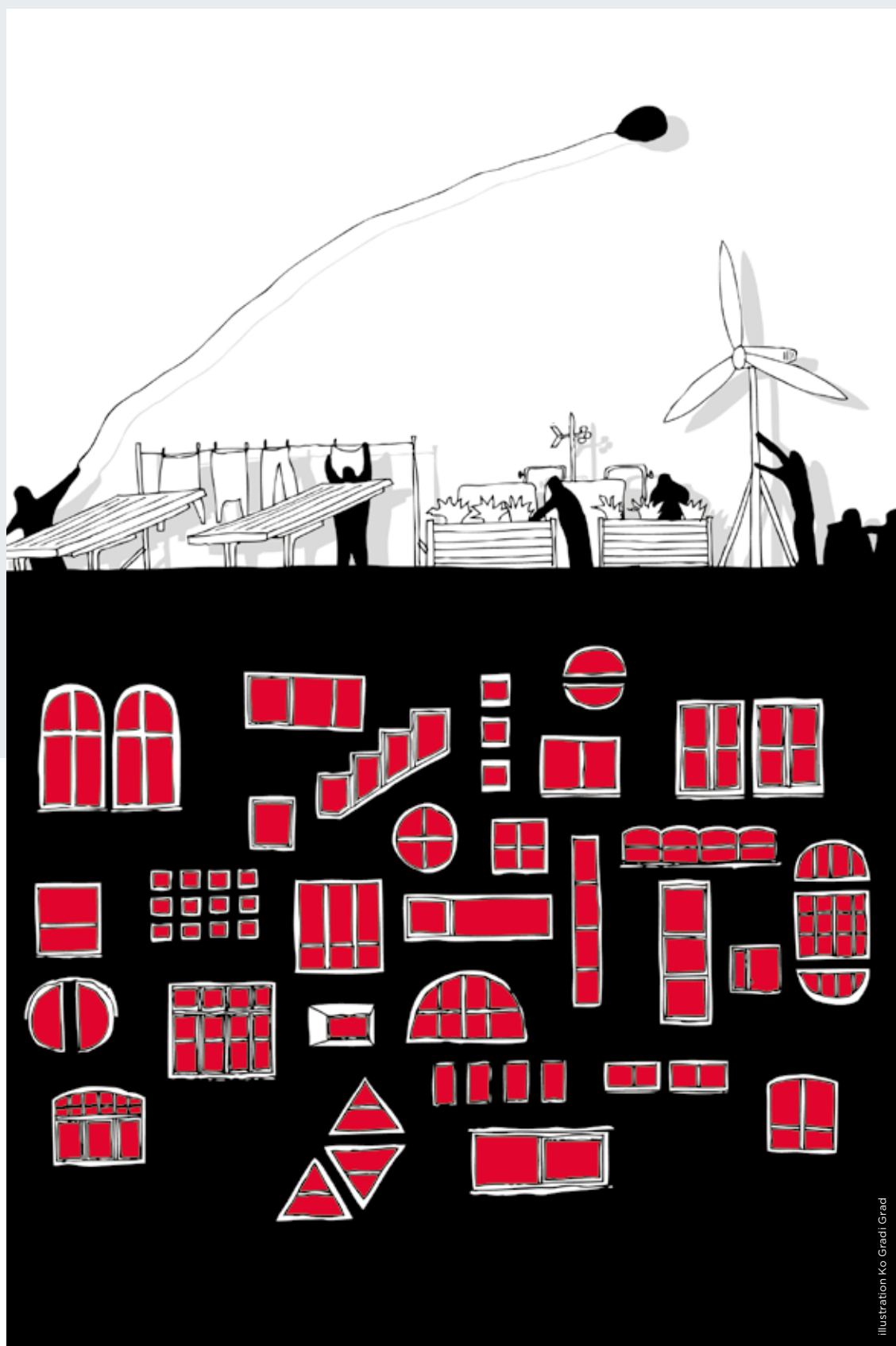


illustration Ko Gradi Grad

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German solidarity  
demonstration,  
Berlin



*Socialise*

# BERLIN

*Towards self-governed municipalism*

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JOANNA KUSIAK

Entering unknown legal terrain, the activists have prepared for battle on a twofold front: political and legal. The activists envision a new public institution aimed at providing affordable flats to Berliners of all nationalities





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If one were to create a list of the top most influential words in German politics in 2019, there would be a clear winner: *enteignen*. Enteignen, enteignen, enteignen. Written with a hashtag, with an exclamation mark, with a period. Typed on touchscreens, printed in papers, sprayed on walls and metro cars. Discussed at length on prime-time television. “I wouldn’t have thought this is even possible” — reflected Germany’s star-journalist Frank Plasberg in March 2019 on his political talk show *Hart aber fair* [Hard but fair]—“We have been talking for 11 minutes about the possibility of expropriating a corporation in Germany.” *Enteignen* does indeed mean “to expropriate.” Yet, in Berlin in 2019, it has come to mean so much more: a whole new way of running a city.

### FIRST, EXPROPRIATE...

The exhortation to “expropriate!” is a fairly straightforward call for action. Berlin’s popular campaign “Deutsche Wohnen & Co. Enteignen” calls for the

expropriation of all corporate landlords who own more than 3000 apartments in the city. The campaign takes its name from the biggest of those landlords, “Deutsche Wohnen,” which currently owns about 115,000 apartments in Berlin, but includes at least nine other corporations such as Vonovia (approx. 40,000 apartments), ADO properties (approx. 22,000), Covivo (approx. 15,000), and Akelius (approx. 13,000). Together, they own at least 250,000 apartments. At least, because some of these corporations conceal their scale through a web of subsidiaries in order to avoid paying taxes. This is the case of the Pears Group, a British property giant that—as per the calculations done by investigative journalists from Correctiv—in 2017 alone “saved” at least 17 million euros in German taxes by owning their Berlin properties not directly but listing them under a dozen limited companies with poetic names such as “Angel,” “Juventus,” and “Second Wedding,” all of them registered in tax havens<sup>1</sup>. Yet no matter whether the corporate landlords (stock-listed companies and private equity funds) choose to advertise their portfolios,



as does Deutsche Wohnen, or to conceal it, as does Pears, their obligations are essentially not to the tenants (as is the case with traditional landlords), but to their shareholders or investors, who expect rising dividends. Corporate landlords are in the business of speculating on the value of “Betongold,” a German expression that means “concrete gold.” What they see in Berlin’s apartment buildings are not people’s homes, but as a space to store their investment capital. They have therefore been busy using their scale and legal departments to find ways to drive up rents, significantly contributing to the world-record 20.5% leap in Berlin housing prices in 2017<sup>2</sup>, and exasperating thousands of tenants.

Tenants have long been a political force in Germany, as its housing system is dominated by rentals. Both East and West Germany solved their postwar housing crisis by building communal housing on a mass scale. In the West, private industry also provided housing for their employees in order to keep salaries low and thus grow exports. As Berlin was a showcase for both state socialism

and welfare state capitalism, its housing stock has benefited from all these policies. Despite the recent, growing wave of converting rental units into individual properties, 85% of the city’s apartments are still rentals.

With such high a share of rental housing, Berlin’s modern history can be narrated through a lens of political negotiations, street clashes, and courtroom cases led by the tenant movement. From the very first housing struggles in the nineteenth century, there were both great victories (for example, the legalization of Kreuzberg squats in 1980s) and bitter losses (when the housing’s *Gemeinnützigkeit*, that is its status as a “common good,” was abrogated in 1989). On the whole, however, and especially in comparison to other countries around the world, German tenants continue to enjoy relatively strong legal protections. Most rental contracts are permanent, and any increase of rent within the existing contract needs to be justified. The legally-oriented tenant associations such as the Berliner Mieterverein (founded in 1988) and the Berliner Mietergemeinschaft have been





crucial in asserting these rights. In addition to legal advice, they offer members legal insurance schemes that cover all court costs and attorney fees in cases of conflict. As having insurance takes away the financial risk from suing landlords for tenants, individual litigations have long been a relatively effective strategy to enable people to stay put, and for lawyers-activists to influence jurisprudential tendencies—that is, until corporate landlords exposed the limits of this strategy.

The emergence of corporate landlords has clearly exposed the limits of both German tenant law in general, and individual litigation as a strategy. Multibillion euro housing corporations have their own legal departments, and pay highly competitive salaries to lawyers tasked solely with finding loopholes in tenant law. They also leverage their scale to exercise influence on the system. Rent increases in Germany are typically justified in relation to the “Mietspiegel” (or “rent mirror”), a benchmark based on yearly average rent in a neighbourhood unit. Because corporations like

Vonovia or Akelius have built their portfolios through the mass-privatization of communal and industrial housing in the 2000s, they often own entire blocks, and thus may own a significant share of a neighborhood unit. So, by increasing rents in their own stock corporate landlords drive the “rent mirror” up, thus continually justifying further increases. Deutsche Wohnen even ventured further by trying to invalidate the whole “rent mirror” in a lawsuit (they lost in the second instance). Above all though, corporate landlords also strive to terminate as many old contracts as possible, which in some cases allows them to double the rent for the new tenants. In their 2018 annual shareholder report, Deutsche Wohnen openly boasted about using “tenant exchange” as part of their arsenal of “measures with rent-increasing potential.”<sup>5</sup> All combined, these measures belong to a broader offensive to massively increase Berlin rents. Tenants have thus understood that even by continuing to litigate in return, they will always only ever be on the defensive, only ever delaying rather than preventing



rental increases. So they changed the conversation. On top of fighting ever more “rent-increasing measures,” they decided to tackle the problem at its root: to expropriate Deutsche Wohnen and others.

### ...THEN SOCIALIZE.

“Expropriate Deutsche Wohnen & Others” is the exact translation of the initiative’s name, and the slogan seems to sum up its program—but that’s not exactly the case. For the movement, the call to “expropriate” is only a first step, a metaphoric shortcut that makes it possible to relaunch the discussion about Berlin housing on new terms. The word “expropriate” makes for a good slogan, because everyone understands it. “Expropriate” spells out a simple and efficient solution to the problem that concerns the majority of Berliners, either as a reality or as a threat (according to a recent study, 40 % of Berliners aged between 45 and 55 will not be able to afford to stay in the city after they retire)<sup>4</sup>. Yet what the movement is really proposing is legally and politically far more refined. The proper legal term for it is not “expropriation” but “socialization”: *Vergesellschaftung*.

Socialization does not fit into a political catchphrase, as it needs lengthy explanation. It does, however, have its own paragraph in the German Constitution. Article 15 allows either state or local governments to turn land, natural resources, and strategic means of production into common ownership “for the purposes of socialization.” This constitutional clause was originally designed as a tool to prevent what legal experts called the “misuse of economic power against society.” German Basic Law (which is the formal name for the constitution) was written after World War II by a parliamentary body that included an unprecedentedly high quota of people who had suffered political persecution. As memories remained fresh about how German industry giants had supported Hitler’s rise to power, politicians of all factions agreed that economic monopolies may be dangerous for democracy. Thus, while the German Constitution strongly protects private property, it also acknowledges that property comes with social responsibility. With Article 15, it also gives the state a tool to intervene if the concentration of a strategic type of property in private hands endangers society’s wellbeing.

In the 1950s, Article 15 triggered a famous controversy between Germany’s two star-lawyers: a former Nazi-supporter, Ernst Forsthoff, and a radical social democrat,

Wolfgang Abendroth. The latter insisted that “social welfare state” is a legally binding term, and that the state should protect social rights as much as it protects individual freedoms. Although Abendroth’s formal victory in this debate has been written into jurisprudence, in reality he would seem to have lost. Especially now, in the context of neoliberal globalization, many social state prescriptions of the German Constitution sound like empty promises. Moreover, never in German history has Article 15 been used.

Entering unknown legal terrain, the activists have prepared for battle on a twofold front: political and legal. Historically, large-scale transfers of private property into public ownership have usually occurred through nationalizations, a tool associated with top-down state policies. Berliners are seeking to invert this order and reinvent nationalization, as it were, as a grassroots project. Although, technically speaking, the socialization of housing is not possible without the Berlin Senate legislating it, the activists want to prompt such legislation through a popular referendum. The first hurdle has already been cleared—on June 15 the initiative handed 77,001 signatures to the Berlin Senate (only 20,000 valid signatures were formally needed for this stage). The Senate can now either move ahead to the second stage (which would demand 170,000 signatures), or first ask the Federal Constitutional Court to assess the legality of the proposed legislation. As both the supporters and the opponents of socialization keep commissioning new (and opposing) legal assessments, it becomes palpably clear that law, despite appearances, has never been a merely “neutral” or “technical” domain, but is a sphere of political negotiations. Summoning the political ideals written into the German Constitution—ideals that predate and contest the post-political neoliberal consensus—Berliners want to reclaim not only ownership of housing but the whole of the democratic process. In this way, socialization is also a call for a new collective way of being a city.

## ***Entering unknown legal terrain, the activists have prepared for battle on a twofold front: political and legal***

### **COLLECTIVE AUTONOMY AND SOCIETY’S WELLBEING**

The legal purpose of socialization is, according to Article 15, the wellbeing of the broader society. For that reason, although socialization presupposes compensating the private corporation which is stripped of its property, the law prescribes that such compensation (which also needs to be separately legislated) can equal the market

price. Especially in the context of the housing bubble, such would defeat the purpose—if the municipality were to spiral into unreasonable levels of debt, the argument that socialization is for the “common good” would clearly be thwarted. At the same time, the debates triggered by the DWE also palpably demonstrate that “market price” itself is not the objective “value” of the buildings in question, but rather a speculative value that is strongly influenced by the political and regulatory environment. This was especially visible when—partly to take the heat out of the expropriation debate—on June 6 the Berlin Senate announced that it was going to freeze all Berlin rents for five years. In a single day, Deutsche Wohnen stocks lost over 20 %. The wellbeing of Deutsche Wohnen thus conflicts with the wellbeing of the Berlin tenants, whom the democratically elected Senate decided to protect after several years of sharp rent increases.

As opposed to expropriation (a standard legal tool that is used, for example, for building highways), socialization requires not only public ownership, but also the participatory management of the property in question. All profits from rent would then be used for the maintenance and modernization of buildings, and for the construction of new housing.

The activists envision a new public institution aimed at providing affordable flats to Berliners of all nationalities. Tenants, administration workers, and members of the public would be equally represented in its governing body, which would also include deputies from the Berlin Senate. The idea is thus to manage the newly socialized housing in a more democratic way than the currently existing municipal housing companies which, despite being publicly owned, have meanwhile adopted a managerial for-profit model characteristic of the private sector. By socializing large housing portfolios, Berlin tenants want to influence the whole housing system, gearing it with the sort the participative mechanisms typical of small cooperatives while overcoming the bubble-like, privileged character of alternative housing projects. Popular support for the expropriation-cum-socialization of corporate housing has been as high as 54.9%. While this looks impressive, if not unbelievable, for such a radical initiative, it’s actually not that surprising. DWE needs to be seen as a continuation and a culmination of a whole range of the democratic housing struggles that have been fought in Berlin over recent years, including initiatives such as *Miethäuser Syndikat*, *Mietenvolksentscheid*, *Kotti & Co*, *Stadt von Unten*, and several others. Many of them

are engaged in sharing knowledge and building common strategies, and all ultimately see themselves as factions of the same broad tenant movement. The general tenant demonstration on April 6 was attended by approx. 40,000 people—and there are at least as many silent supporters.

It is crucial to take those silent supporters just as seriously as the frontline activists. Ultimately, the purpose of all Berlin tenant struggles is to reclaim and transform the concept of popular autonomy<sup>5</sup>. This does not mean doing everything on one’s own, or fetishizing the grassroots. The Berlin tenant movement is truly diverse when it comes to people’s socio-economic background, and the activists are aware that being an activist is itself a privileged position: self-organization demands time and/or money, and not everyone can afford it. At the same time, the idea of individual self-reliance has been willingly co-opted by the neoliberal state and turned into a technique of governance, a convenient excuse for the state to shed its social responsibility. To truly socialize Berlin would mean overcoming the dichotomy between autonomy and representation: exercising collective autonomy while holding the state to its social responsibilities. Will the nearest future bring this shift?

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# *From* **PRIVATISATION** *to* **COMMUNITY** **USE**

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LEVENTE POLYAK



We are witnessing an emergence of different strategies to counter corporate ownership, real estate speculation and privatization through community ownership models and cooperative land use schemes. Will civic spaces in Central Europe be a competition for public spaces or an extension of them?





photo Leventhal Poljak

ZKU,  
Berlin

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***The ownership of spaces  
determine physical access  
to spaces and structures  
how these spaces are  
developed, maintained,  
controlled, and generate  
revenue***

In the last few decades, ownership has become a key factor of our societies and economies. As the economist Thomas Piketty demonstrated in his recent book, "Capital in the Twenty First Century", the late 20th and early 21st centuries witnessed the return of the primacy of wealth over work in economic benefits and ownership has become an increasingly important part of wealth production.

Piketty's conclusion means that after a few decades following the welfare reforms of the 1920s, when work had constituted the principal path towards emancipation and social mobility, the dismantling of the welfare state in Western societies in the last third of the 20th century has globally reduced the value of work and has degraded it into a secondary source of income, behind revenues from property. Among the ownership of other goods like financial products or intellectual properties, the ownership of spaces, that is, real estate, has become a defining element of today's urban and rural areas: this process corresponds to the increasing role of private and corporate owners in our cities and countryside and to a general withdrawal of public ownership across the globe.

The ownership of spaces determines not only physical access to spaces but also structures how these spaces are developed, maintained, controlled, and generate revenue. As sociologist Saskia Sassen suggests, the ownership patterns of our cities are changing and these transformations should concern all of us. The corporate acquisition of buildings that Sassen describes as "a shift from mostly small private to large corporate modes of ownership, and from public to private", thus reducing the social diversity of cities and limiting the choices of disadvantaged communities.

This corporate takeover is not only occurring in global cities. To varying degrees, it is also happening in Central European cities like Vienna, Warsaw, Berlin, Rome, and Budapest; cities which are not necessarily the focus of global investment firms and development companies but which have undergone considerable transformation in the recent decades. This process, described by Sassen, of concentrating urban property ownership into the hands of the privileged few has not gone uncontested:

we are witnessing an emergence of different strategies to counter corporate ownership, real estate speculation, and privatization through community ownership models, cooperative land use schemes, and new mechanisms for oversight of public property management. While these cases represent a variety of models and formats that help the establishment of non-speculative ownership patterns, their success is largely determined by the socio-economic contexts in which they unfold.

#### THE PATHS OF PRIVATIZATION

In the past decades, Central European cities have gone through massive transformations but with significant differences. In the 1990s, with the Fall of the Berlin Wall, cities in the region seemed to converge towards a shared path, that of embracing the liberal market economic model. However, while some cities in East Germany – most notably Berlin – advanced towards social democracy and others – like Vienna – followed the welfare-oriented growth patterns, characterized by strong public control over housing and the real estate market, the cities in Central Europe have proceeded towards a total privatization and liberalization of their property markets.

With different arrangements, cities from Warsaw via Prague through Budapest rapidly privatized their previously nationalized, publicly-owned property stocks, resulting in the highest proportions of private ownership in Europe. The different mechanisms of privatization created the varied landscapes after the post-communist transition. In Prague, properties were restituted to their original owners, who generally sold them to investors, who renovated them and turned them into high-end housing or hotels in the city center<sup>1</sup>. In Budapest, tenants had the right to buy the apartments they rented for 10% of the estimated market price: this resulted in a highly fragmented ownership structure, with difficulties in coordinating the desires of many small owners in apartment buildings and at industrial sites alike. In Warsaw, the privatization process had

a few hidden turns: investors buying and collecting pre-war ownership certificates have begun to reclaim their ownership to parcels that ceased to exist in their previous form after the war; speculating with land under post-war buildings has created unprecedented tensions around the ownership of the land, buildings, and tenancies, resulting in both evictions and reactionary protests.

Privatization has not only affected housing but also other segments of the property markets in Central European cities. As space is a crucial component of community organizing, social cohesion, and cultural exchange, civic spaces accommodating gatherings and events of socialization, activities of education, sport, and work are key ingredients, “foundational institutions”<sup>2</sup>, of the public city. The buildings reclaimed for community functions vary in their profiles from “free spaces” through “houses of culture” to “co-working spaces”, and differ from each other in their organizational and management principles, accessibility, financial sustainability, and political dimension. What links these community-run, civic spaces – incubators, theatres, school buildings, cinemas, gyms, social kitchens – together is that they all address the lack of existing facilities for social activities, welfare services, independent work, and cultural exchange.

Privatization and speculation have therefore had a strong influence on how community spaces are created, run, and maintained, depending on public policies, funding sources, democratic traditions as well as on habits of activism and the availability of affordable spaces. While Vienna has continued to enjoy strong public institutions and publicly-funded and -owned community venues, in Berlin the emerging practice of temporarily using hundreds of vacant buildings and abandoned sites across the city has contributed to the emergence of a new cultural scene, with new roles in urban transformation, first with spatial pioneers and then with spatial entrepreneurs. On the other hand, in Warsaw, Prague, Bratislava, and Budapest, many new initiatives grew out of civic initiatives with significant community backing: their relative independence from

public funding and the lack of framework for long-term tenures gave community spaces some autonomy but little stability in these cities.

### THE CAPITAL

From the second half of the 2000s, flexible regulatory environments attracted an unprecedented volume of financial capital into European cities; this process was facilitated by the global financial markets. The stock market crash of 2000 and the growing distrust in the previously favored IT stocks pushed investors towards the supposedly safe real estate market. At the same time, interest rates were substantially reduced by the central banks, which wanted to prevent a recession<sup>3</sup>.

The cheap capital that flooded international markets found an easy way into real estate. In Berlin, international capital created a new situation: while in the 1990s, investment in Berlin properties was mainly coming from German investment firms, they were joined in the early 2000s by large international firms. The presence of cheap money prompted investors into real estate development projects that corresponded to no real demand. This speculative real estate boom had a strong impact on cities and their spaces. While international investment capital generated new development in the center of Warsaw, in other Central European capitals, investment capital focused mostly on the existing urban tissue, buying up apartments in historical buildings and benefiting from rising property values as well as growing tourism and the increasing demand for short-term accommodation.

In the meanwhile, after waves of privatization, corruption and the misuse of public properties, many citizens and communities in the region felt that public assets are no longer depositories of public values, citizen activities, and community access. Disappointed by the public sector’s complicity in prioritizing private and corporate profit over public interest, many community groups and civic initiatives have begun mobilizing to revive the idea of the commons in order to secure public



and community use beyond the exploitative logic of the public and private domains.

Emerging in various parts of Europe and beyond in the past decade, these initiatives began to explore alternatives to publicly offered spaces and services to establish new forms of property ownership and use; those which would be more resilient to the oscillations of the market and immune to the impulses of speculation and private profit-seeking.

SHARED FRAMEWORKS

Among the strategies to consolidate civic spaces and secure long-term community access and use, shared and cooperative ownership has proved to be a valuable framework. In the field of housing, shared ownership has been an emerging model since the 1970s in Berlin and Vienna, though the potential for tenants willing to take the risk of becoming owners of non-residential spaces was only first demonstrated in Berlin by the ExRotaprint initiative only in the 2010s. When their building complex was put up for sale by the Berlin Municipality’s Real Estate Fund, tenants began to look into the possibility of buying the area. Teaming up with two anti-speculation foundations, the non-profit company established by the tenants became the owner of the 10,000 m2 complex, setting a precedent in Berlin that inspired many experiments in cooperative ownership and a campaign to change the city’s privatization policy.

The existence of such organizations that can help shared ownership with their financial resources and legal experience is of key importance. One of the foundations that made this transaction possible, Stiftung trias, works on taking land off the market by separating







photo: ewepte polysak

Open Jazdów,  
Warsaw





the Old Market  
Hall Alliance,  
Bratislava

the ownership of land and buildings: supported initiatives lease the land from the foundation in the form of a long-term Heritable Building Right (Erbbaurecht), and their lease fee is collected in a mutual fund run by Stiftung trias where the accumulated capital is then used for further property purchases in support of like-minded initiatives. In recent years, Stiftung trias has also been working with public administrations, securing functions for properties that municipalities are obliged to sell under austerity laws.

ExRotaprint’s model of ownership shared with anti-speculation organizations offered responses to the dilemmas of gentrification, speculation, and risk and has since been replicated by many other organizations becoming an inspiration for initiatives aimed at changing the general policies of privatization. The strategy to turn privatization into an advantage for a civic space has been proven feasible for many initiatives in Berlin as they were facing similar threats from the side of the municipality’s real estate policy and large institutional investors and developers. Alternatively,



long-term land lease allowed many initiatives like the Zentrum für Kunst und Urbanistik, a cultural collective, to create community venues on publicly owned land; these contracts – some as long as 25 years – allow and encourage participants to invest significant funds in the development of their sites.

Although many civic initiatives across Europe were able to follow the example of ExRotaprint and began contemplating cooperation with anti-speculation foundations and ethical finance organizations in order to buy their buildings, the model cannot simply be implemented anywhere. Its adaptability depends on the ideal combination of low real estate prices, relatively transparent public real estate management, stable and suitable legal environment, and high purchasing power. In other settings across Central Europe, the lack of appropriate legal forms and the post-socialist suspicion related to collective ownership and shared assets make alternative models of ownership difficult to conceive. When asked about helping community initiatives in the more eastern regions of Central Europe, representatives of Stiftung trias are usually cautious: the differences in the legal systems make this transfer rather complicated and risky.

In many cities of Central Europe, the hegemony of private homeownership, realized at the expense of the rental market, created a norm that does not leave much space for experiments in shared and collective ownership. As members of the Budapest-based Rákóczi Kollektíva experienced, there are a number of socio-economic circumstances that created obstacles for their co-housing initiative: the absence of public awareness (policy tools), financial mechanisms (non-individual loans), and legal frameworks (shared ownership formats) make the transfer of existing co-housing models to Visegrad Group very complicated.

## CRISIS FLOW

By the time the ExRotaprint model became internationally known and began inspiring citizen initiatives across Europe, the possibilities opened in the real estate market as the crisis was coming to a close. At least concerning the availability of financial capital, the real estate markets began to return to their pre-crisis dynamics. While this recovery signaled the end of a missed opportunity in some cities to exploit weaker demand and lower prices to build a more accessible property system, the return of investment capital brought about a housing crisis and a return to the classic, investor-driven development

mechanisms in most Central European cities.

In this context, instead of shared ownership models, most initiatives in eastern Central Europe have looked into other means of securing long-term tenure and assure community profit. In Warsaw, the Open Jazdów<sup>4</sup> initiative relied on massive citizen mobilization and protests to put pressure on the municipality and prevent the demolition of an entire neighborhood of post-war wooden buildings. In this case, community power has been turned into political leverage to create a particular form of participatory governance that enables dozens of NGOs to use the buildings and engage with local communities.

In Bratislava, the Old Market Hall Alliance<sup>5</sup>, an NGO formed to revitalize the city's abandoned central market hall, has conceived of a model that allows the organization to be economically sustainable and financially separated from the Municipality, with no public subsidies involved. The 15-year (initial 10 years + a 5-year extension) contract signed between the Alliance and the Municipality states that the Alliance pays a symbolic 1 euro rent per year to the Municipality and has to invest 10,000 euros per month in the renovation of the market hall for the entire duration of the contract: this amounts to 120,000 euros per year and almost 2 million euros by the end of the contract. This sum is covered by the revenues generated by short- and long-term rental arrangements and the contract assures that the building remains in public ownership but is managed by an NGO that gradually renovates it by reinvesting its profit into the building.

Likewise, the theatre organization FÜGE took over an abandoned school building in Budapest and turned it into a cultural incubator house for theatre-related groups and other cultural and creative producers. Similar to the Old Market Hall Alliance, FÜGE has a 5+5 year contract and its investments into the building are accepted as part of the rent. These long-term contracts, although not challenging traditional property relationships, can allow organizations to invest in the building and encourage the development of more sustainable business plans.

Although the real estate market's return to "normal" after the economic crisis endangered numerous civic initiatives, many of them were equipped with the tools and skills that enabled them to take the next step towards stability. The end of the crisis and the returning real estate boom in many cities brought up the question of autonomy and ownership even stronger: how can initiatives without much capital move beyond the vulnerability of short-term tenancies and changing prices?

THE PUBLIC AND THE CIVIC CITY

The questions that inevitably generated important discussions about the role of various sectors in public cities could be formulated thusly: can civic actors or communities better manage spaces and services that traditionally belonged to the public domain? Or is the involvement of civic actors in providing public services just another way of privatizing services and dismantling the public domain and its welfare services according to the “Big Society” model of the UK Tory government? Are civic spaces a competition for public spaces or an extension to them?

In some contexts where alternative finance is available through ethical banks, social investors, or anti-speculation foundations, shared ownership can be a solution to assure long-term tenures. In other circumstances, where such funding sources are missing, communities may look into the possibilities of long-term leaseholds or new public policies securing the commons for community use.

The extension of the public realm towards speculation-free spaces provided by private-civic cooperation should be joined, but not overwhelmed, by public administrations and public funds. If regulations of public-civic cooperation in the context of traditionally strong public administrations have been limited to the right of use and have not yet created applicable shared ownership models, shared administration, as a way to share public responsibilities and resources with community organizations, citizen groups and public-minded private developers may prove to be an important model in creating community co-ownership over local assets and keeping profits to benefit local residents and services to ensure more resilient neighborhoods and more autonomous civic spaces in Central European cities.



ExRotaprint,  
Berlin



photo Levente Polyak

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- 1 See: Reprivatisation: How Hindsight Helps Us Move Forward. *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine #1*, 2017, <https://www.sharedcities.eu/material/shared-cities-magazine-117/>.
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- 3 Uffer, S. (2013). The Uneven Development of Berlin's Housing Provision. Institutional Investment and Its Consequences on the City and Its Tenants. In M. Bernt, B. Grell and A. Holm (eds.) *Berlin Reader: A Compendium on Urban Change and Activism*. Bielefeld: Transcript Verlag.
- 4 See: *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine #2*, 2018, <https://www.sharedcities.eu/material/magazynmiastacities-magazine-vol-2/>.
- 5 See: *Magazyn Miasta: Cities Magazine #1*, 2017 and #2, 2018.

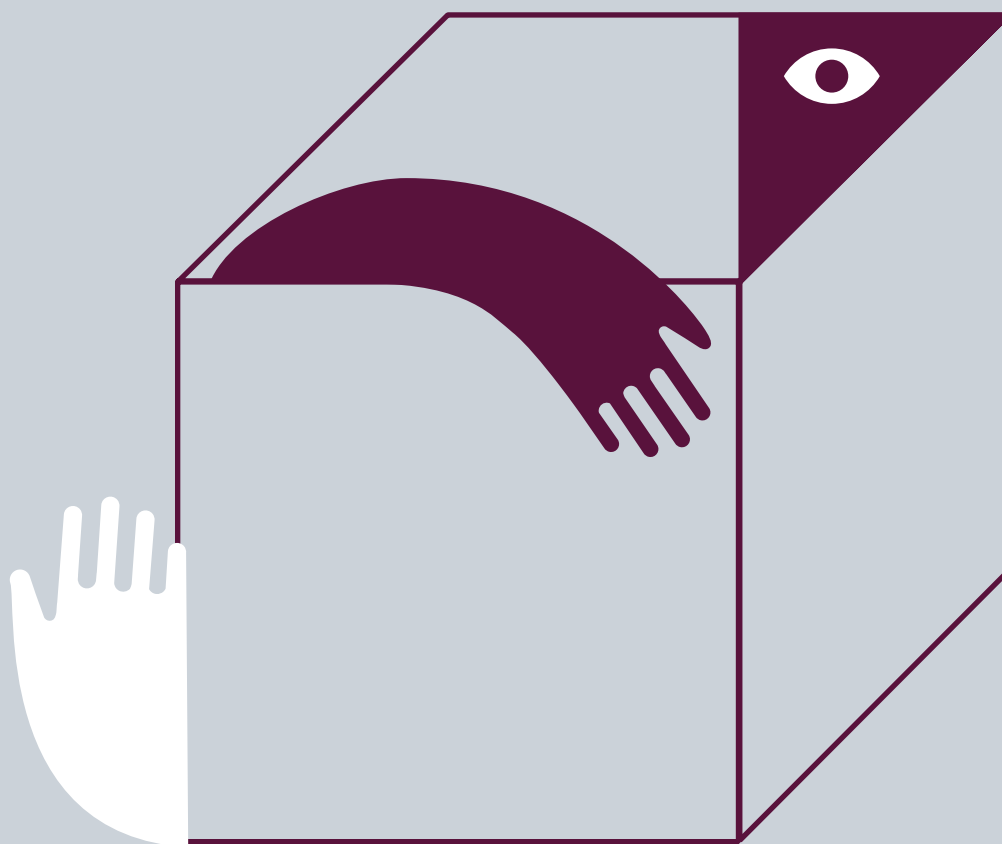


# Time *for* US!

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EWA STOKŁUSKA, illustrated by RZECZYOBRAZKOWE

The idea of sharing more power over the cities with their residents is here to stay. The experiment with Polish urban politics has shown the extent to which it is possible and the elasticity of its implementation



It has been literally centuries since people learnt that power is something very difficult to share once you manage to get it. And while the general rule of politics as a competition – presenting those who win it with a unique chance to put into life their visions for society, state, or city – holds strong, the reality of municipal politics has been changing for some time.

A lot has been said already about the changing paradigms of democratic politics and the ascending role of a more network-oriented democratic model, in which socio-political systems are shaped not only by the conditions of the well-established institutions, but more and more by the quality of certain civic practices and exercising so-called “civic virtues”. As soon as the political system is stable enough and the society *en masse* affluent enough to spend some time self-reflecting on this topic, the re-organization of traditional divisions between those who rule and those who are ruled gains more importance and becomes a serious argument in political discourse. Regardless of the rather undisputed legitimization of classic democratic structures such as councils, committees, and representatives of executive power, awareness of their imperfections as well as expectations that these offices should be open to hear from the voices of their constituents has been growing strong

and will continue to do so in the future. While some attribute this situation to a slightly presumptuous assumption that a single resident knows better what he or she truly wants and deserves from local government, it can also be derived from a deeply humane longing to be heard out and recognized in one’s opinions and needs.

This is what residents are expecting more and more from their politicians and public officials in cities, and it also what they are eager to express – either during local elections or reviewing the conduct of local decision-makers and challenging them in their previously undisputed prerogatives.

#### **PARTICIPATORY CORRECTNESS**

It is no coincidence that the urban movements initiatives who made themselves visible in local elections in Poland in 2014 and again in 2018 – for instance in Warsaw, Poznań, or recently even in Gdynia – run under the mottos of *the right to city*, *city as a common good* and *an imperative of residents acting together for the city*.

In Poland, dealing with the complicated legacy of the Polish People’s Republic (PRL), concepts such as common good or responsibility of public administration

and authorities have been compromised for a long time, evoking memories of the times when they meant nothing or were misused in the public sphere. It seems, however, that those notions are finally reclaiming their position as cornerstones of communities willing to redefine themselves as socially-conscious, more supportive of its members, and putting priority on its residents' quality of life. They are the basis on which the new narrative about cities is built.

This is where public participation comes forward. A concept encompassing both a philosophy of engaging residents in public decision-making on a regular basis and a set of tools (methods) to facilitate the interaction in effective ways, ones compatible with the reality of public administration proceedings. Something perceived by many politicians no more than 5-6 years ago as a horrific *coup d'état* directed towards their position of power and an attempt to undermine it has now become (even if sometimes on the verge of tokenism) an expected approach and an element of political correctness. No candidate for mayor will deny that he or she is willing to listen to the residents and invite them to have a say about the future of their community. In places where administrative structures seem reluctant to adapt to that trend, we can observe for some time now a bottom-up mobilization towards imposing more participatory approach on the local government led by citizens themselves.

Local legislation has been more and more helpful in this matter: citizens' initiatives to start consultation processes, participatory budgeting, petitions, etc. are lawful participatory tools in many Polish communes and are used by residents to make their voices louder and formally recognized by the authorities. Although there are still many "grumps" – unfortunately, mostly among the army of public officials (clerks), who perceive it as a nuisance in their work – residents who want to have their say about how their communities change are consistent in their demands to be treated seriously by public administration and local authorities, and they are growing in numbers.

### BATTLES ON PUBLIC SPACES

When local authorities are reluctant to make decisions or avoid discussing pressing issues, citizens already manage to organize themselves and stir movements engaging people, for example, in formulating their visions for public spaces in cities. For years such Polish initiatives – led often in parallel or open opposition to the local government's plans – have been managed by non-governmental organizations and could seek grants from Norwegian and Swiss Funds dedicated to fostering and strengthening public participation, or

financial support from the domestic Democracy in Action Programme run by the Stefan Batory Foundation. Such professionally organized projects have taken place in, for instance, Białystok, Toruń, and Konin, but in none of those places did they manage to generate a proper reaction from the authorities. Nowadays, similar initiatives are becoming more agile and are initiated by non-formal groups, who do not wait with their causes for grants but manage to self-organize using local resources and know-how brought by their own supporters. Usually, they are not less effective than those with grants and professional organization.

In Gdynia, a Polish sea-side city run by the same mayor for the last 20 years, and notable for its extremely high real estate prices, such a well-organized, bottom-up initiative led by a local association, Miasto Wspólne (Common City), has recently managed to successfully disrupt preparations of a zoning plan for the area of the so-called Polanka Redłowska. This charming glade at the verge of the forest reserve Kępa Redłowska and adjacent to the seashore used to be the location of a complex of public open pools, powered by the filtered sea water. As the investment became no longer financially viable for the city budget, the land was sold to a private buyer, but as it has not seen an investment for over 20 years, in accordance with Polish law it returned to the city. Objectively speaking – it is probably one of the tastiest bits among Gdynia's building plots. Which makes it more than obvious that the initial proposal for the zoning plan in this area consisted of hotel construction.

Declarations from the city authorities concerning the future of Polanka Redłowska motivated a group of activists not only to mobilize local residents to put forward their critical comments to the plan within the formal consultation procedure but also to put pressure on the mayor to organize a public hearing on the matter. The latter resulted in the mayor prolonging the decision about the zoning plan for 4 months, giving opponents of the original planning proposal time to come up with other solutions. When this text was written, the community-led process of providing alternative visions for the place was still in motion – activists had until the end of August 2019 to submit their proposals. What they managed to achieve on the way was one of the most noticeable public discussions about public spaces in the recent history of the city. Surveys, consultation points, architectural workshops; all of it was done thanks to engagement of a group of "concerned citizens", growing and consolidating along the way as well as using crowdfunding to be able to print promotional materials and survey forms.

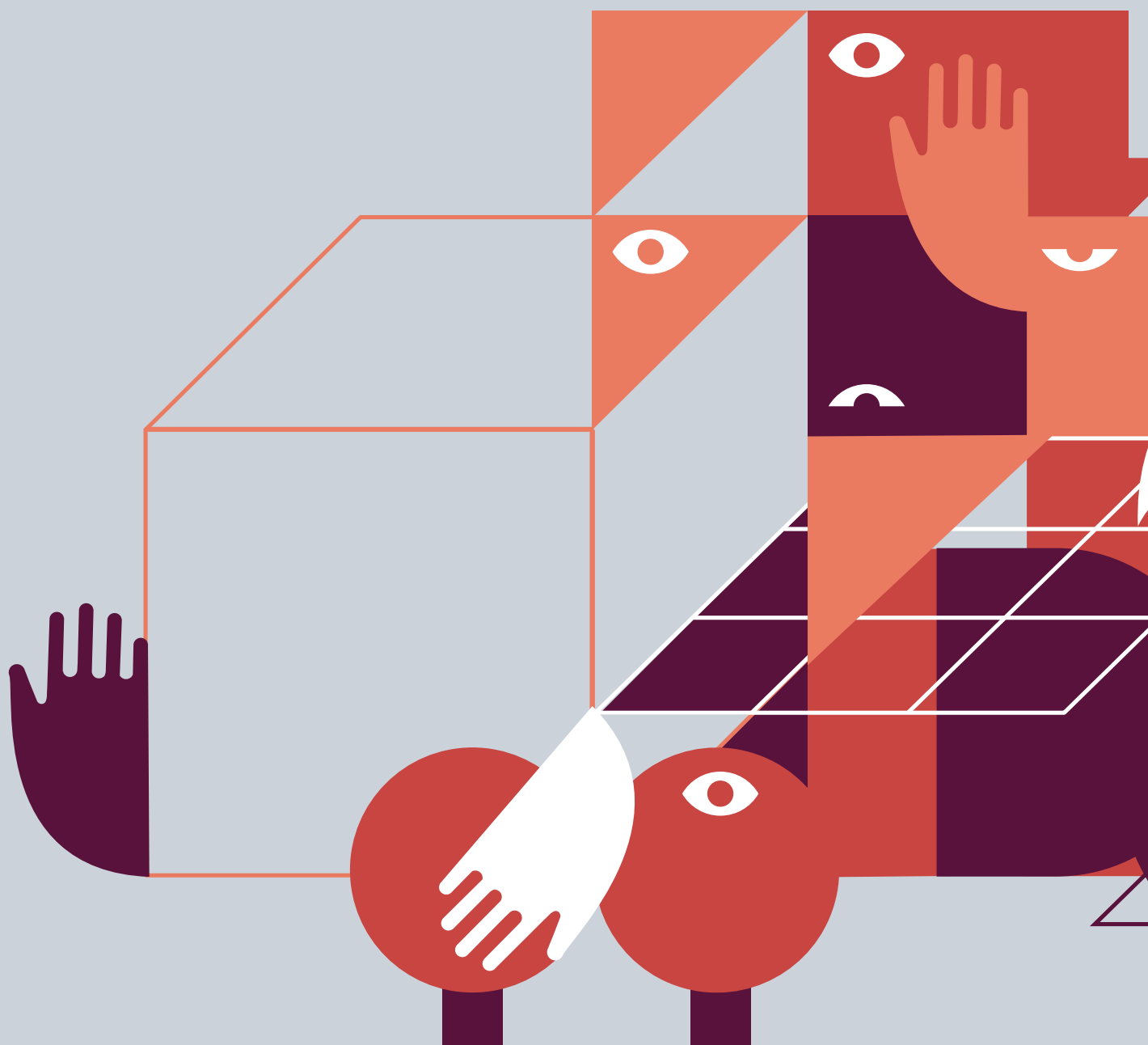
A civic "war on public (and especially green) spaces" will probably be the most common area of residents' mobilization in cities in the years to come. Some will be won peacefully, for instance, with projects



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***A civic “war on public spaces”  
will be the most common area  
of residents’ mobilization  
in cities in the years to come***





submitted for participatory budgeting (a growing numbers of such proposals constitute a visible trend in participatory budget {PB} processes all across Poland). Some will probably be fiercer and more spectacular with a lot of local authorities still attached to the thought that selling the most profitable city plots is the most logical way to secure city revenues. Either way, they will be arenas for self-organized, community-led initiatives.

The way we think about public spaces is changing rapidly and especially in cities, where for a long time we forgot about their importance and sacrificed a lot of them for infrastructure dedicated to cars. The years to come will be spent on attempts to reclaim them and make them more accessible to pedestrians and create more sustainable means of transportation.

Some of those attempts might succeed from completely grassroots initiatives, using crowdfunding to make the change. In the UK, there is already a website

dedicated to such small-scale projects aimed at transforming local public spaces, Space Hive ([www.spacehive.com](http://www.spacehive.com)). Others will function as a haven for changing the narrative and make the local authorities rethink some of their decisions about spatial planning. Although crowdfunding urbanism is still more of a concept than a real tool of change<sup>1</sup>, bold ideas for transforming public spaces put forward by residents can be a powerful nudge for existing ways of thinking about designing the city realm.

#### DIALOGUE BEATS IT

A lot has been said and written about the bright future of participation paved by the growing access and possibilities provided by internet technologies. Perspectives for e-voting, liquid democracy, easier access to information and tools allowing engagement practiced “in slippers” and without the necessity to leave



your couch encouraged visions of mass-scale participation. Unfortunately, so far, they have not delivered.

Technology has done a lot for increasing the transparency and accountability of local governments as well as for providing residents with information that is a cornerstone of actual engagement. It cannot, however, substitute a situation of dialogue when people with different interests come together and must tackle real city challenges taking into consideration those various perspectives. Such undertakings are much more time-consuming and complicated, both in terms of logistics and effort required from all parties. However, they also prove to deliver more complex and savvy results.

Eight years after the first PB procedure in Poland took place in the city of Sopot, this mechanism evolved to probably the best recognized participatory tool, and, at the same time, one of the biggest sources of disappointment for participation practitioners. While

it was deceptively easy to reduce the procedure regulated by strict rules and focusing on the massive mobilization during the voting phase, it became a beloved token of participation for many local authorities. In many places, it contributed to bidding wars among mayors on who provides the biggest jackpot for these annual citizen rivalries, how many individual proposals are submitted, and how many residents vote for them.

The quantity superseded the quality of participation. It took couple of years to realize that this approach results first and foremost in strengthening those who are already active and have social and cultural capital to promote their ideas among those similar to them – young, wealthy, and with Internet access (as participatory budgeting has become in Poland a longed-for opportunity to try out e-voting).

That is why some cities have been looking for a more deliberative approach to engaging their residents



in co-deciding about local budgets. For the last three years, cities such as Dąbrowa Górnicza and Gorzów Wielkopolski have tried to replace voting mechanisms with a series of workshops or open meetings during which participants tried to come up with proposals reconciling various interests represented in the community. One could not just submit an idea and promote it; rather they had to dedicate time and engage in a discussion with other residents who were the first judges of his or her proposals.

Although last-year amendments in the act on commune self-government rigidified the framework for changes in the procedure and experimenting with it (i.e. making a general election an obligatory way to choose citizens' proposals that should be put in the budgetary resolution), it did not stop cities in their efforts for making PB an opportunity to truly engage residents in a discussion about challenges the city faces and to look together for solutions to resolve them.

That was the idea behind the 2019 Participatory Budgeting in Gdynia where over 80 residents, representing diverse age groups and administrative districts, in cooperation with over 20 public officials from various units of local administration, spent three Saturdays together discussing their ideas for changes at the city level and putting together proposals for their realization. Over 60 ideas were finally transformed into 38 projects, 15 of which were eventually put to the popular vote of all residents.

It was a difficult process for both the residents and administration: requiring them to throw off the well-known dynamic between public officials and petitioners as well as conceding sometimes one's ideas in order to work on a proposal that might maximize the group's interest instead of that of the individual. Yet, this is where the future of public participation at the local level is shaped: in dialogues aimed at building a better understanding of the complexity of the city organism and a more informed approach towards planning public spending. Furthermore, in making the effort to take into consideration the needs of less vocal social groups – by coming into contact and getting to know each other, confronting viewpoints and having a chance to work together on solutions that are more embedded in joint effort – a sense of responsibility materializes.

### **THE FUTURE BELONGS TO LONG-TERM PROCESSES**

The future of participation in cities should bring us a shift in understanding of its temporal dimension. True participation is rarely a one-time action: it should be a philosophy behind engaging residents at various phases

of implementing new policies and initiatives.

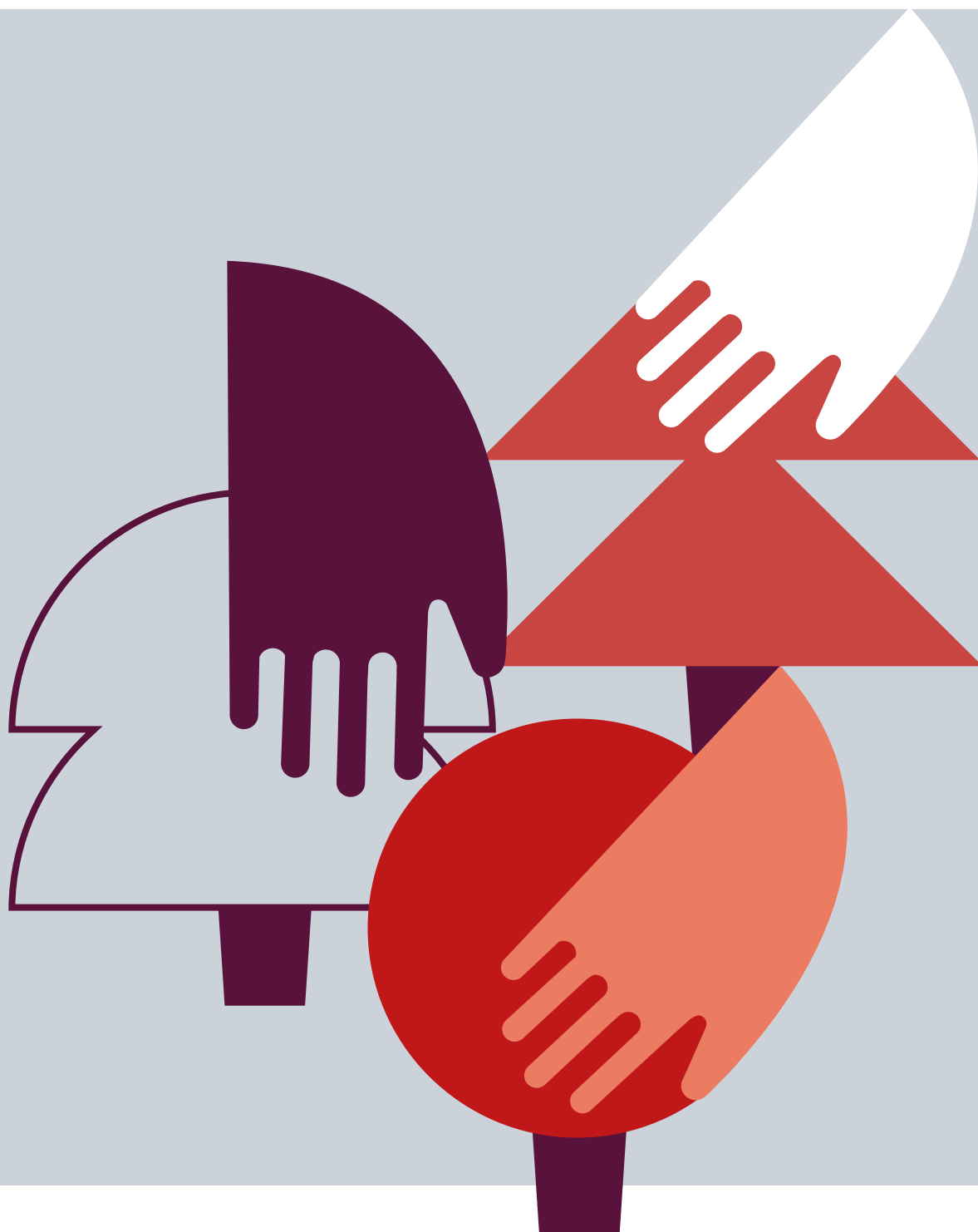
In terms of designing public services or realizing public investments, this should mean long-term engagement of various stakeholders of the given initiative – from a diagnosis of their needs to dialogues with them at every level of the design phase. Using the community as a source of ideas, bringing together various groups to enable an interdisciplinary approach to the complex challenges and reacting to remarks expressed by the future users of the “product” the city administration is working on – these are the inspirations from the design sector that are slowly entering the realm of cities.

The Social Innovation Lab in Gdynia, a unit of local administration responsible for urban revitalization in the city, has just recently reorganized Gdynia's Department of Investments into sections, distinguishing User's Experience Section. Its task is to prepare and implement a model for running investments in the areas revitalized under the Urban Regeneration Programme that will ensure a long-term involvement of all the stakeholders in the changes introduced in the given locations.

It is a long-term plan to work with residents, business owners, NGOs, but also various actors of public administration, to establish a sustainable change in the community. An initiative incubated in one the youngest and most innovative units in the city, by a team of relatively young public officials, is run from the beginning with a premise of building a model that could be later replicated at the city level with other city investments. An ambitious dream to be observed closely.

Perhaps this text should have started with a disclaimer: despite being generally a pessimist by nature, I am an incorrigible optimist when it comes to the future of participation in the cities. Alarming phenomena of polarization and political aggression that can be observed at traditional state-level politics are accompanied by much more reflexive processes happening locally, especially in urban environments.

In that sense I very much hope political theorist and author Benjamin Barber was right when he attributed to cities such qualities as pragmatism, creativity, and cooperation, and expected them to use that potential to build better, more practical models of self-government, funded on civic trust. When it comes to looking for pragmatic applications of engaging citizens, Polish cities are indeed promising training grounds for new models of “committed communities”. The future belongs to them – or so it seems.



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# VIENNA

## — A Shared Welfare City

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ALEKSANDER GURGUL

The city Vienna has become synonymous with progressiveness in Central and Eastern Europe. The Austrian capital is one of the leading metropolises in the quality of life rankings and has become a role model in the region

It has been a long time since the discussion on public space and public transportation in Vienna reached a new, higher level. The question is no longer whether urban or individual transport is more important, but to what extent car entry restrictions should be implemented.

While this less conventional thinking is not uncommon, for Vienna (back in the 1920's, the social-democratic city authorities took responsibility for affordable housing and started the social development project which continues until today), the Central Europe capital – one of the largest cities in the wider region – is trying to go further in its thinking about the common good.

Citizens of Vienna want their city to present an urban welfare model where it's not just about commuting to and from work or school but also about adapting to the climate crisis and public space intended to serve everyone. So the city keeps working on different levels of sharing resources and spaces. Compared to other large Central European cities – seems like the changes Vienna is undergoing will get us closer to what many envision as a sustainable urban future.



## One thousand water springs

In the era of climate crisis and “heat islands”, access to drinking water is one of the most important tasks to tackle by the municipal authorities. When it comes to this matter, Vienna is succeeding once again.

The city has over a thousand springs. All of them can be found on a map available on mobile devices: smartphones, tablets etc. Yet, Vienna is going further and trying to be smarter in how it approaches the shared public space and services of the streets themselves. The city hydrants in Vienna have become not only drinking fountains but also municipal showers. That is possible thanks to the 3-metre-high attachment (each one is equipped with a drinking tap) that can be easily installed on the hydrants. The only problem Vienna deals with right now, is the fact that it has not found a name for this city innovation.

At the beginning of this year, to make life in Vienna more ecological and comfortable, the city authorities together with a private entrepreneur (Cup Solutions) launched the “myCoffeeCup” project and has already been joined by 50 companies in the center. The initiative involves using returnable cups, which can be reused up to 500 times. First, you buy a mug for €1 from any one of the participating

companies. After returning the cup to one of the partner vending machines or branches, customers receive the €1 refundable deposit again. According to estimates from officials and project managers, around 84 million disposable cups are used every year in Vienna. The aim is to save one million of them in the first year of the project alone. In turn this should spare almost 23,000 kilograms of wood and more than 10 tons of paper.



## Cool, green solutions

The Viennese environmental department, in cooperation with academics, has also developed a fast and uncomplicated solution for creating more green surfaces throughout the city in a project called “green facade modules”. The first 50 modules appeared this year in the 10th district Favoriten as part of a pilot program. The modules are designed to reduce the temperature in the building, so that no air conditioners are needed and the harmful dust hovering over the streets can avoid being captured and transferred inside. They are especially effective in densely built-up areas where they have a positive effect on the microclimate.

Each module, depending on the choice of plants, can cover up to 8 square meters of a façade, and the cost of one module is estimated to be around €2,000.

When selecting plants, several variants were considered, such as classic ivy or grapevine, wisteria and clematis. The requirement for the chosen species was that they would not damage the façades of the private buildings.

As the use of individual domestic air conditioners increases the demand for electricity, Vienna is also developing a network

of centralized urban cooling for buildings. This technology uses cold water from the Danube Canal, which is first chilled down to about 6 degrees Celsius at one of the cooling stations, and then it is transported via pipeline to the surrounding buildings; eventually, the water is recirculated through the station and cooled once again. The energy necessary for the operation of the machines in these stations is obtained from the waste incineration plant. According to Ulli Sima, a member of the city’s environmental management board, the central system manages to cool down, among other things, Vienna’s main station and some hotels.

So far, the system has been in operation for 10 years. By 2020, the Austrian capital intends to increase the capacity of the city’s central cooling network to 200 MW, equivalent to more than 1.2 million conventional refrigerators, requiring an investment of around €50 million. Viennese urban planners are also trying to act in local areas. For instance, Zieglergasse street has been rebuilt to make the hot days more bearable. The new installations included four water curtains, five pergolas with benches, 24 trees and 150 bicycle racks. In total, Vienna intends to co-finance similar heat

island projects in years 2019-2020 with €2.3 million of allocated funds.

On hot days in Vienna, you can also catch your breath on the Danube island, Donauinsel, which is already 30 years old. Originally used to protect the Austrian capital from flooding, today the area is very popular for recreation and leisure purposes. The 21 km long Donauinsel can be conveniently reached by public transport, and it has become a popular destination for sports, cycling, walking, picnics, and barbecuing: there are two public barbecues organized on the island, and 15 accessible areas where you can barbecue for a small fee. In total, 54% of Vienna is considered as shared green space and the people living in the city take advantage of it.



photo Hannes A. Schwetz, Flickr CC BY-SA 2.0

## Mobility matters

In May of this year, Petra Jens, Vienna's the Officer for Pedestrian Matters of the City of Vienna and deputy head of the Vienna Mobility Agency, came to Poland. In Bydgoszcz and Kraków, she gave two lectures on the Schulstrasse project; an idea that sees the temporary (for 30 minutes) closing of streets around schools for car traffic so that children can walk or cycle safely through them.

"In Vienna, every fifth child is brought to school by car. It is not difficult to imagine how the movement of these parental taxis, which often stop in forbidden places, can be troublesome," – said Jens at a meeting in Kraków. In order to implement the project successfully, the school management, the caretaker, parents, and district councilors as well as officials responsible for traffic control and the police, all must work together. As a result, the number of people coming to school on bicycles, scooters, and public transport increased by a few percent in Vienna. In turn, the number of cars coming to school has even halved. Shortly after leaving Kraków, the councilors tried to introduce at least a pilot project in the city, but resigned after receiving criticism.

The other transport innovation is the field of electric cars. Exactly 3233 electric cars were registered in the Austrian capital until 31 December 2018, roughly 1100 more than the year before (an increase of 33%). It is estimated that by 2030 the number of electric cars in the Danube metropolis will rise to more than 80,000. In comparison, in the entire Polish Republic there are only around 6100 electric (either fully electric or plug-in hybrid) cars registered.

The rise of e-mobility in Vienna will require the expansion of necessary infrastructure, which translates to around 8,000 public charging stations. Wien Energie, the largest regional energy provider in Austria, has set itself the target of installing 1,000 additional charging stations in public places by the end of 2020. The project will cost around €7 million. According to Lisa Grohs from Wien Energie, anywhere in Vienna, you will not be further than 400 meters from the nearest charging point.



photo CAPTAIN RAJU, Wikimedia Commons



## Public potpourri

While I'm writing these words, a considerable debate on homelessness has just broken out in Poland. Arguments used in this discussion are varied, some are even brutal, especially in Kraków. One of the city councilors argued that the homeless on the trams literally stink and leave stains on the seats. In response, he received criticism from all over Poland.

Although the language used by the Kraków councilor is unacceptable, it is hard not to notice – especially in summer – that the problem of ugly smells on hot days on public transport is very real (and not only considering the homeless people!). Vienna decided to approach it comprehensively and started neutralizing unpleasant smells in public transportation to minimize the critical voices trying to limit its shared aspects.

The authorities have started a pilot project in July which involved spraying four different air fresheners on the U1 and U6 trains. The perfume was sprayed via the ventilation system on the metro cars, so that they could spread evenly. The odour-spraying wagons were marked, so the passengers knew what to expect inside. The passengers could decide via an online survey whether they

liked the project and if it should be continued.

In fact, this is not the first time Vienna was engaged in solving the “smell” problem as in 2018 passengers were freely distributed...deodorant. Such perks are surprising when you consider the annual ticket for public transportation in Vienna costs just €365 for residents, which means that citizens of Vienna pay only €1 per day. This makes it probably one of the cheapest public transportation systems on the whole continent. Berlin, following in Vienna's footsteps, is considering adopting similar initiatives in the near future.



## Biking around

When it comes to cycling, Vienna is ranked 9th in the Copenhagenize Index ranking of the 20 most cycle-friendly cities. In total, the Austrian capital today has about 1.4 thousand km of bike lanes and 120 municipal bike rental stations. According to data from Vienna, 61% of households have a bicycle, which is 3% more than those owning a car.

Want to move something heavy to or from your apartment? Not a problem – the Grätzlrad bikes let you take care of larger deliveries by bike rather than by car. The cargo bikes can be borrowed for up to 24 hours or over the weekend from fourteen different locations in Vienna. Most importantly, they are free of charge: you just leave a deposit and an ID. There's a range of models available, including bikes with seats and seat belts for children.

Vienna, as most major cities in Eastern and Central Europe, has recently been struggling with the e-scooter invasion. The discussion also broke out in Polish cities where there have been accidents involving pedestrians (including some fatal consequences).

The Austrian capital decided that e-scooters would be treated as bicycles. This means that the regulations concerning cyclists also

apply to users of e-scooters. They must be equipped with brakes, lights, reflectors, etc. Users are not allowed to drive on pavements and an electric scooter can be parked on the pavement if a passageway of at least 2.5 m wide is left. If there is no separate cycle path, they have to drive on the street.

In accordance with the regulations, electric scooters are allowed to travel at a maximum speed of 25 km per hour. It is forbidden to talk on a mobile phone while driving, there is also a limit of 0.8 per mille of alcohol in blood for a e-scooter user. Currently in Vienna, there are six companies offering 7.5 thousand e-scooters in total. Scooters abandoned in inappropriate locations are removed at the expense of the company that rents them, and if the company does not collect them in a timely manner (on a working day it is only 4 hours!), it will pay a €700 fine. There is also a special hotline where you can report abandoned scooters.



photo Nash - flickr CC BY-SA 2.0

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**Aleksander Gurgul** – journalist at "Gazeta Wyborcza" based in Kraków, writes mostly about city planning, urban design and sprawl, mobility, environment, and the climate crisis.



Review by **EWA ZIELIŃSKA**

## ***Haus der Statistik***

Is there a place in Europe for a new “Palace for Culture and Science”, like the monumental original located in the centre of Warsaw? Is it still acceptable to have these huge complexes – comprised of social, cultural, educational and administrative functions – positioned on the most attractive and expensive plots in the cities? While not everyone might agree, the authorities and citizens of Mitte, Berlin, have said “yes” to these questions and are renovating the former Statistical Office’s building – Haus der Statistik – and the surrounding area to serve a new function.

Facing the front of the Haus der Statistik is one of the most recognizable landmarks of Berlin, the Fernsehturm (Television Tower). Set in the famous Alexanderplatz – a combination of traditional office buildings, testaments to the area’s acquired commercial status, and more contemporary architecture – the

neglected socialist administrative seat, originally built in 1968 and abandoned for good in 2008, stands out in sharp contrast. During a short period after the fall of Berlin Wall, the building was home to, among others, the headquarters of the “Gauck”, the Federal Commissioner for the documents of the State Security Service (known as the Stasi archive). In the midst of the 2008 world financial crisis, the building was put up for sale but couldn’t spark any interest from investors. Classified as unmarketable, it was sentenced to demolition.

Its turning point came in 2015. First, a large poster: “Art, Culture and Society” was hanging on the façade by the artist group Alliance of Threatened Berlin Studios (AbBA). The banner successfully raised questions about the future of the building to the broader, surrounding community. Then, the initiative Haus



The roofscape,  
Haus der Statistik



Integration of  
urbans sports  
and recreational  
use, Haus der  
Statistik



der Statistik, which was just taking shape at that same time, assigned its concept of multifaceted community integration to the development plan during a workshop procedure undertaken by the Berlin Senate. The idea was to create a space that could supplement the functions of Alexanderplatz with affordable housing and spaces for art studios, education and social work to be located in the Haus der Statistik. Eventually, the concept received the support of the district council in Berlin-Mitte. Authorities added one more function to the prototype: a new seat for the local administration, which currently is forced to rent its offices from a commercial property. To realize this vision, the whole area was acquired by the Federal Agency for Real Estate Tasks (BImA).

Artists, architects, foundations and associations all engaged together in the discussion set up by the ZUsammenKUNFT Berlin – Cooperative for Urban Development so that there would be a legal form for the contractual cooperation of potential partners. Nowadays, ZUsammenKunft is one of the partners in Koop5, which has joint responsibility for welfare-oriented development of the building. The other members are the Senate Department for Urban Development and Housing, the district offices for Berlin-Mitte, the state-owned companies Wohnungsbaugesellschaft Berlin-Mitte and Berliner Immobilienmanagement.

According to Clemens Wise from ZUsammenKUNFT, what makes Haus der Statistik an urban phenomenon is not only the wide cross-sectoral cooperation but also the way in which new ideas are developed and tested. Competition on the architectural project was in fact an urban planning workshop procedure open to the public and lasted six months. In the beginning, three design teams were selected to work

with diverse audiences and submit their proposals; the final decision was made by a expert jury, the representatives of ZUsammenKUNFT Berlin and authorities. The winning project is now on the municipal agenda, which contains a development plan that has to be ready for 2021. According to the timeline of the agenda, the whole project, including a new Rathaus as well as affordable flats and studios should be completed by 2028.

The process of prototyping the building's new functions is quite unique and definitely inspirational; let's hope future urban developments will be implemented in a similar manner. Pioneering areas were appointed as prototype spaces. Together with shared ground floor and open spaces, they are devoted to activities that should create vital environment for both social and cultural urban life. Anyone could apply with a program proposal for pioneering areas for a maximum three years. The district committee – consisting of representatives of Koop5, public institutions and civil society – will decide which initiatives best fulfill the criteria during the learning process which will continue until 2021 and consists of three phases appointed to “Activate” (2019), “Build” (2020) and “Consolidate” (2021) the project.

How was it possible to include both public and civil society sector in a long process of programming, prototyping and investing in art, culture and social work, to commonly introduced soft interventions and to spend 350 million euros for the final project? For Clemens, it seems quite obvious. First of all, investing in affordable spaces is in the agenda of municipality. Second, as he says: “We convinced people that old, abandoned buildings that remain in the public domain are resources, not waste.”

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Review by MIŠO HUDAK

## Výmenníky

In the Slovak city of Košice, there are unconventional examples of community centers inside neighborhoods which lack the formal entities, and these spots (*výmenníky*) repurposed the heat-exchange stations, which lie pockmarked across the post-communist landscape. They are designed to be used by members of the community that need space for any number of artistic, creative and civic activities.

To understand why these *výmenníky* were developed in this particular city, we have to go back to the end of the 19th century when Košice was a peripheral town in the Hungarian part of Habsburg Monarchy. After the First World War, the city became a growing hub of the eastern region of the newly established state of Czechoslovakia. After the Second World War, it became the home of an enormous steel plant. Košice

went from being a mid-sized town sprawling around a medieval old city center to a quarter-million-strong, industrial metropolis in the span of two decades.

The medieval city center was surrounded by collective housing estates and panel blocks with thousands and thousands of new flats. There was residential structure (identical blocks of flats) and, after a while, some supporting services also appeared (schools and shops). Yet, ever since the 1960s, when the first major neighborhoods were built on top of former meadows, there had been almost no effort to establish a new identity for these homes, places, and spaces.

The situation became worse when the considerable rate of construction for these newly built streets and blocks suddenly stopped after the fall of the communist regime. Previously, it had been a success





story of the latest homes with all the modern gadgets as elevators, flushing toilets, hot water, and electricity. Especially in the first phases of new development, for many people moving to the city from rural areas, those gadgets were cultural and technological shocks. But after several decades of living in these homogenous, anonymous dormitories, those places lost the sense of being a home and became a space just for sleeping; eventually, these neighborhoods started slowly to fall into disgrace. Thankfully, the story does not have to end here. From 2008 to 2013, Košice entered the preparatory stage of becoming the European Capital of Culture 2013. Alongside the numerous, associated projects, there was one crystal clear vision.

Those collective housing areas had dozens and dozens of small heat-exchange stations which were designed to distribute the warmth to all the flats and homes. These stations were concrete cubes, 100 square meters large and situated in the very centers of local districts. As technology progressed in last half century, the need

for these huge concrete cubes diminished until only a small cabinet for computers was big enough to complete the task. Several of these cubes were converted into local pubs and warehouses, but six of them were revitalized into community centers a.k.a vibrant places, where local people have opportunities to express themselves and the qualities of their respective neighborhoods. Blanka Berkyová and Michal Hladký – two young people who co-created the program, vision, and mission of the European Capitol of Culture project for Košice – brought together the idea to use these inoperable concrete cubes for something useful. Community workers mapped out the needs of the local people, gathered them together through many planning events, and with these joint powers, they were able to create lively programs for locals, designed and curated by locals. The *výmenníky* were revitalized under the investment projects during the European Capital of Culture era. 85% of the funding came from the European Union, through the European Regional Development Fund.



The *výmenník* at Wuppertálska street focuses on urban gardening while the *výmenník* at Važecká street is dedicated to fashion, and the *výmenník* at Štítová street is centered around exhibitions of non-professional artists and so on. Community art is no more closed off to peripheral spaces, and the *výmenníky* are part of all-city festivals of street art, neighbors and food festival. In the beginning, there was just one pilot concrete cube. Just one decade later, there is a string of them functioning as a whole living organism around the city.

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Review by **MACIEJ ŚWIDERSKI**

## ***Alternative Sports Club ZŁY***

With the popularity of various cooperatives on the rise across Poland, the “sharing is caring” approach is slowly becoming a fixture of our daily routines. We share food, car rides, energy sources, and knowledge. Quite often, such a sense of collectiveness goes in hand with an active promotion of healthier and more sustainable lifestyles. Alternatywny Klub Sportowy ZŁY (Alternative Sports Club ZŁY; AKS ZŁY for short), is a perfect example of this synergy. Established in Warsaw in 2015, this football club is one of the few initiatives in the history of Polish sport that can boast of being fully owned and managed by its supporters, sympathizers, activists, athletes, and coaches – basically anyone who wants to chip in and enjoy a healthy match.

The managing of AKS ZŁY is divided into several departments, each of them run by a plethora of volunteers, all members of the cooperative. Some of them are responsible for the operation of football teams, others for managing the finances and acquiring funding, and still others organize various social events aimed at promoting the club. Interestingly, the club works as a totally democratic organization, with each member having one vote during general meetings when crucial developments are discussed. At the moment, the club has two intercultural teams – male and female. Both are participating in the national football leagues, which proves that AKS ZŁY is not just your typical neighborhood weekend sports team but rather a club with far more serious aspirations. Although specializing mostly in football, the club’s objective is to broaden its offer while maintaining its democratic management model. By allowing its members to decide which disciplines it should follow, the cooperative will be able to cater to the real needs of the people involved in its daily activities.

However, sport is not the only type of endeavors in which AKS ZŁY is engaging – ever since its establishment, the club has been actively involved in an ever-growing number of cultural initiatives (mostly on a small-scale, local level) consisting of concerts or events geared towards youngsters. This type of activities, somewhat unusual for a sport cooperative, aims at promoting the idea of a member-owned club and is, quite obviously, focused on attracting new members. As stated on the club’s website, it is not preoccupied with profits but rather with ambitions. Cooperating with both professionals and locals – including adolescents and children – it successfully shows that sport can be an amazing tool of intergenerational cooperation contributing to the well-being of Warsaw’s residents. As more and more people are looking for new models of cooperation and engagement, also during the so-called leisure time, the Zły model of collectiveness may become more popular in the future by provoking practical inspiration.



fot. Maciej Woźniak



fot. Maciej Woźniak

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Alternative Sports Club ZŁY – If you want to learn more about the club's activities and get involved, you can find all the necessary information at [www.aks-zly.pl](http://www.aks-zly.pl)

Helena Doudová (ed.)

Post-Socialist Cities and Active Citizenship  
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# Shared Cities Atlas

*Post-Socialist Cities and  
Active Citizenship in Central  
Europe*

Helena Doudova (ed.)

The “Shared Cities Atlas – Post-Socialist Cities and Active Citizenship in Central Europe” applies the new, global ‘sharing paradigm’ in architecture and the public sphere to a site-specific situation in seven cities in Central Europe. Mapping current practices of sharing and new fields of action in case studies, the book contextualizes the phenomenon in research papers, data, and photography.

The ideas of a ‘right to the city’, of common resources, or ‘the urban commons’ – all of which are in vogue in contemporary architectural discourse – illustrate the paradigm shift towards a sharing perspective. In ‘sharing cities’ the

emphasis lies in the right to remake the cities as a form of urban social contract with a specific creative or critical agenda. This book presents creative forms of sharing driven by idealistic positions and collective actions, thus offering new approaches to sharing of spaces and architecture, experience and knowledge, data, and collective histories.

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The “Shared Cities Atlas” is one of the main outcomes of the project “Shared Cities: Creative Momentum”, a four-year cultural project that brings together eleven partners from seven major European cities: Belgrade, Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Katowice, Prague and Warsaw. The project establishes an international network for a creative discourse at the intersection of architecture, art,

urbanism and the sharing economy to contribute to the transformation of urban spaces. From 2016 to 2020 more than 300 activities take place, festivals, films, exhibitions, artists’ residencies or case studies. The “Shared Cities: Creative Momentum’s” ambition is to show urban citizens that their participation and cooperation is essential for creating a pleasant and valuable urban environment.

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Living in the city, we're used to sharing – green spaces, bus seats, even the air we breathe. We know that sharing a car or a flat can make it worthwhile. Instead of owning a bike we can rent one, too. Sharing has become a part of urban life.

**Shared Cities: Creative Momentum** is on a mission to improve the quality of life in European cities. By exploring aspects of sharing and urban design we are creating new ways of living in our cities. Together.



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