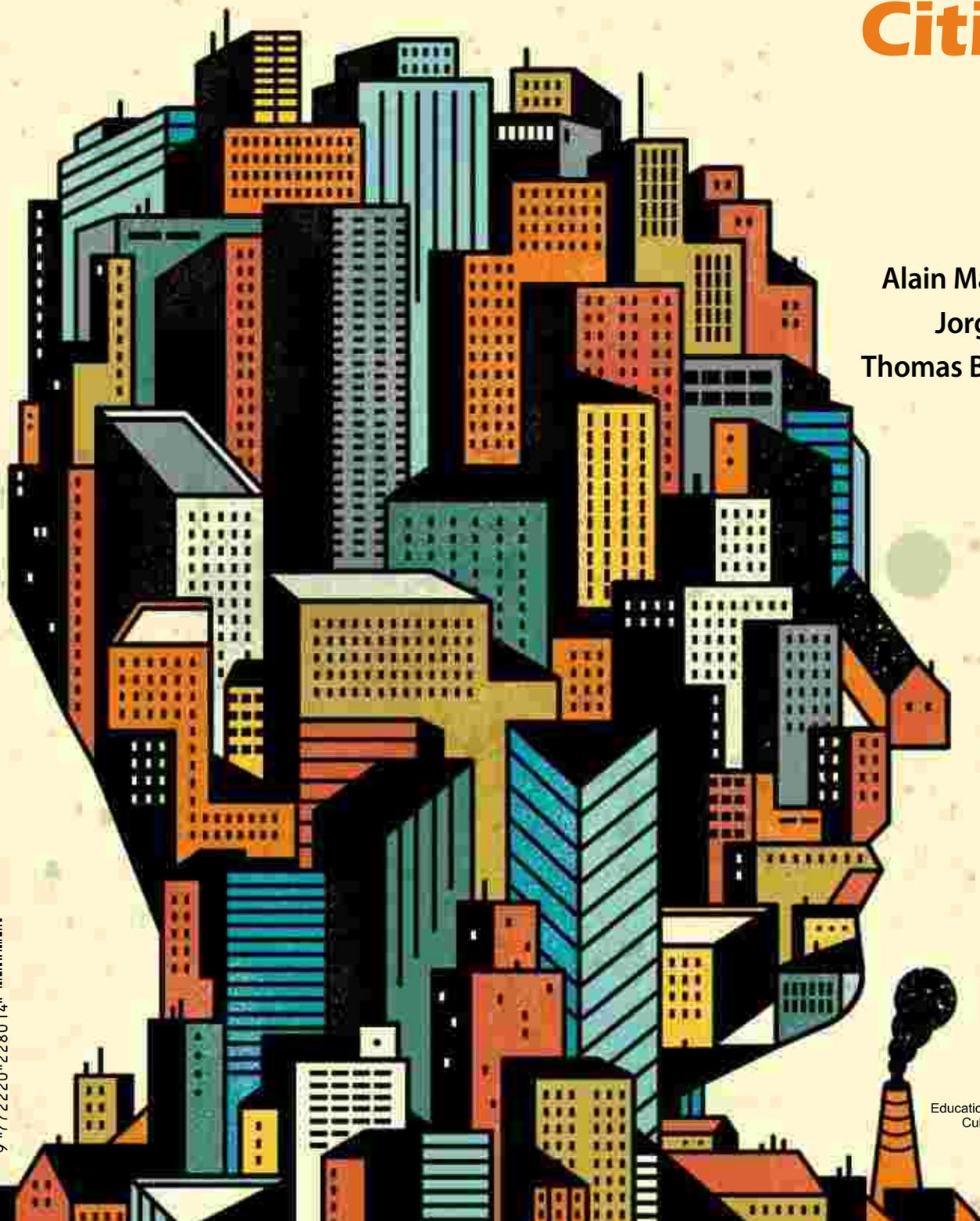


# THE UNESCO Courier

April-June 2019

## Reinventing Cities

Alain Mabanckou  
Jorge Majfud  
Thomas B. Reverdy



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# Editorial

2014 was a watershed year for humanity: for the first time in history, more than half of the world's population now lives in cities. By current estimates, this will rise to seventy per cent by 2050. These cities of tomorrow will, in many ways, mirror their forbearers; from the early city-states of Mesopotamia, to the Italian cities of the Renaissance, to the megacities of today – cities have historically advanced human development, serving as melting pots for people of diverse backgrounds to exchange and dialogue.

Yet the cities of today and tomorrow are also facing new, unprecedented challenges. Although occupying only two per cent of the world's landmass, they consume sixty per cent of global energy, release seventy-five per cent of

greenhouse gas emissions and produce seventy per cent of global waste. As cities expand, they threaten biodiversity, and place urban infrastructure and resources – from water to transport to electricity – under enormous strain, multiplying the impact of natural disasters and climate change. Unchecked development and mass tourism place cultural heritage sites and living heritage practices at risk. Rising inequality and migration – driven in many cases by conflict and disaster – make cities the focal points for new social cleavages, for exclusion and discrimination.

Given the magnitude of these challenges, cities across the globe have concluded that new ways of thinking, citizen engagement and, crucially, city-to-city cooperation, are the only paths forward.

We have seen this at UNESCO, which is home to no less than five city networks, each of which is working to harness the extraordinary capacity for innovation and connection that is a hallmark of cities.

For instance, cities account for seventy per cent of the global economy, including a large portion of the creative economy, which generates annual global revenues of \$2,250 billion and employs more young people than any other sector. That is why the 180 cities that form the UNESCO Creative Cities Network are working to leverage the ability of cities to bring creative people together, to spark economic growth, to foster a sense of community and to preserve urban identities. UNESCO's Global Network of Learning Cities is working to make cities sustainable by ensuring that all urban residents can benefit from lifelong learning. From learning to ride a bicycle to make the urban environment cleaner, learning to make local products using traditional practices and knowledge or organizing community theatre workshops in marginalized neighbourhoods, each new educational opportunity brings with it the potential for social transformation and development.

As one of the world's foremost laboratories of ideas, UNESCO is working to bring these networks of cities together, encouraging them to exchange and collaborate on the policies and practices that can respond to the growing needs of urban residents. The Pulitzer-winning journalist, Herb Caen, once said, "A city is not gauged by its length and width, but by the broadness of its vision and the height of its dreams." UNESCO believes that when cities share these dreams, and take inspiration from the vision of others, they can overcome the challenges of our new urban era.

This issue of the *UNESCO Courier* is full of stories of creativity, innovation and resilience. I hope they inspire you, and perhaps push you to engage with these issues in your own city or community.

**Audrey Azoulay,**  
**Director-General of UNESCO**

The probability of a city,  
*imaginary urban map by French artist*  
*Fabrice Clapiès.*

© Fabrice Clapiès



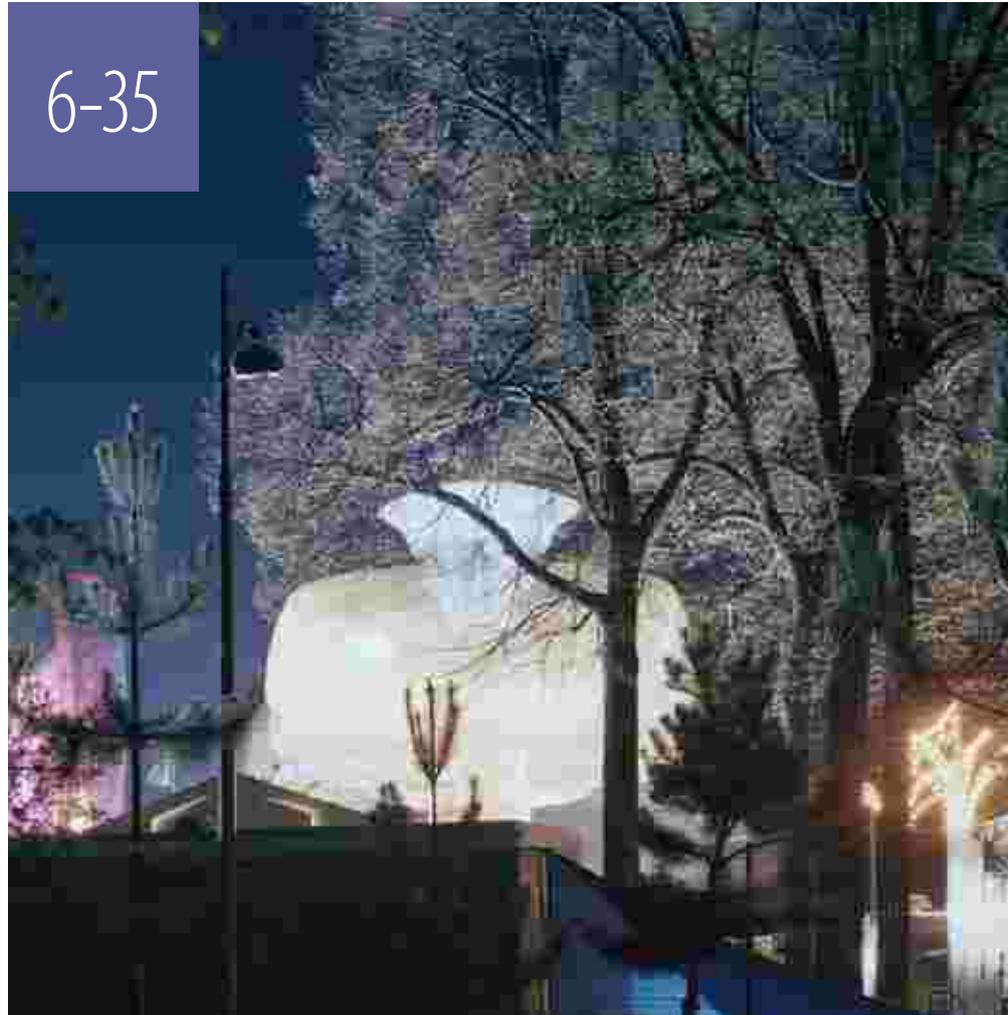
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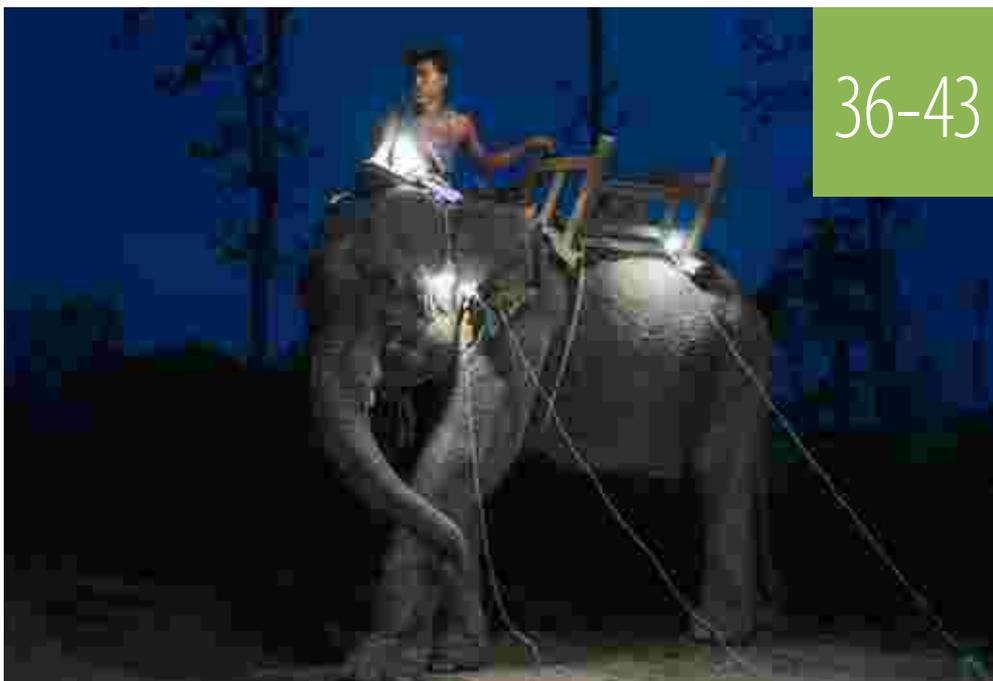
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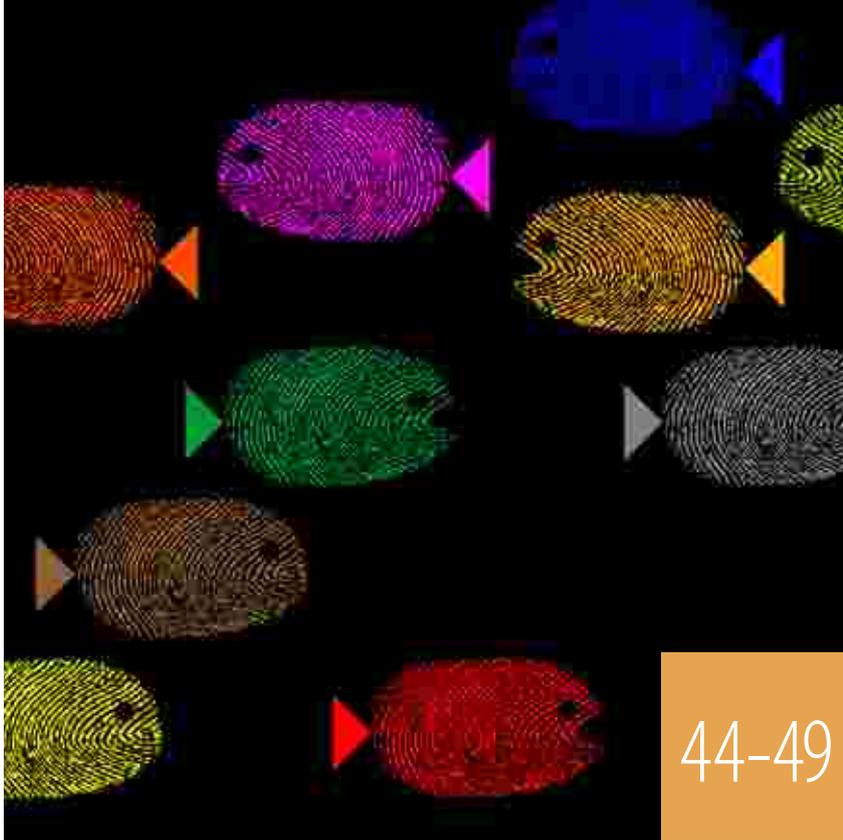


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## ZOOM

**Lighting up the world!**  
Photos:  
Rubén Salgado Escudero  
Text: Katerina Markelova



## In this issue

Cities have always been centres of power, attractiveness and prosperity. But the frenetic urbanization of recent decades is jeopardizing their historical function as melting pots that integrate and absorb newcomers. As they become more populated, they become dehumanized. Violence, inequality, discrimination – the larger the cities, the more these ills overwhelm them.

Nevertheless, even as they are dehumanized, cities are reinventing themselves. From street smarts as a survival strategy in Kinshasa (Democratic Republic of the Congo) to major national projects for the rehabilitation of single-industry cities in Russia; from the personal initiative of a gallery owner who revitalized the small town of Erriadh (Tunisia) to the mobilization of the masses against the authoritarian appropriation of public spaces in Warsaw (Poland); and from solidarity movements with migrants in London (United Kingdom) to synergies that revive the heart of Havana (Cuba) – creative forces are emerging and organizing themselves to give urban life new meanings and new perspectives. We may believe these are “tiny resistances” – to use the expression of the French writer Thomas B. Reverdy – but they make all the difference.

Two other writers share their views with our readers in this issue. **Our Guest**, the French-Congolese author Alain Mabanckou, talks about “mobile Africas” and the courage to write, while highlighting contradictory moments in colonial history. The Uruguayan-American writer Jorge Majfud condemns the racist attitude towards migrants in the **Ideas** section, which also provides an analysis of migration policies in the United States.

In the **Current Affairs** section – on the occasion of World Africa Day, 25 May – we publish an interview with Tshilidzi Marwala (South Africa), on the emergence of artificial intelligence (AI) on the continent. To mark the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May, we visit Gran Pajatén, Peru, with Roldán Rojas Paredes – the man who initiated its inscription on UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves. We also go to Sharjah (United Arab Emirates), which launches its World Book Capital programme in April 2019.

Finally, with **Zoom**, we travel to India, Mexico, Myanmar and Uganda, to visit places without electricity. An illuminating trip around the world!



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# Wide Angle



# Warsaw, the invincible city

Joanna Lasserre

Faced with mounting conservatism, progressive civil society in Warsaw is demonstrating a strong capacity for protest in order to defend democratic values. The “rebel” Polish capital – so often occupied, mistreated and destroyed – has held firm through many episodes of its history. It is still being reconstructed, in a constant quest for fulfilment.



© Jaap Arriens / NurPhoto

*March through the old town of Warsaw in November 2018 to celebrate 100 years of women's suffrage.*

Warsaw is not what you would call a beautiful city. It does not offer itself in all its magnificence to the hurried visitor, as does Krakow, the former Polish capital. A city with a hundred shades of grey, it was invaded by the younger generations after the fall of the communist regime in 1989. They squatted in the abandoned factories and turned them into places of artistic creation. They defended the architecture of the communist period in the face of pressure from new real-estate developers. The Palace of Culture and Science, for example, a “gift” from Comrade Stalin, completed in 1955, still dominates the city centre today – whether its many critics like it or not. As imposing as it is unloved by the people of Warsaw, this immense building of more than 800,000 square metres was a veritable cultural multiplex before its time – housing museums, convention halls, workshops, theatres and art-house cinemas.

Over the last thirty years, a myriad of new meeting places – galleries, clubs, bars – have flourished here and there in post-communist Warsaw, which continues to attract students, executives of international companies, artists and adventurers from all over the world.

You have to walk through the city's streets to let yourself be invaded by the energy that drives it, and let yourself be drawn into its many unexpected corners, to meet at random a group that marches here, another that parks there – when it's not a human tide protesting, brandishing banners and signs.

Silent marches and noisy demonstrations are frequent scenes in Warsaw. White flowers, black clothes, candles, firecrackers – all these mingle under a surge of white and red flags. But while some also bear the blue flag of Europe with its golden stars, others wave the black or the green flags of the nationalist patriots, nostalgic for a “Greater Poland from sea to sea”. While some proclaim: “Let us not leave democracy to die in silence!”, others demand a “pure Poland”, a “white Poland”.

This is the national paradox, which in recent years has turned into a veritable rupture between two Polands, which defy or ignore each other. And this rupture gushes forth in the public square, both literally and figuratively.

## Rebel city

Most often, the confrontation crystallizes in front of the presidential palace. Until April 2018, this was the arrival point of the religious procession that left the old town every tenth day of the month to commemorate – with a mass, prayers, hymns and speeches – the Smolensk disaster of 10 April 2010. On that day, ninety-six prominent people, including President Lech Kaczynski, were killed in a plane crash. A monthly ceremony, raised to the national level, was therefore to be repeated ninety-six times, till April 2018. It occupied the historic centre of Warsaw and attracted crowds of citizens who turned up regularly to protest against what they considered to be an authoritarian and religious appropriation of the public space.

The citizens' opposition to the nationalist trend started mobilizing in 2015, through a civic non-governmental organization, the Committee for the Defence of Democracy (KOD). On 13 December, the anniversary of the traumatic day when martial law was imposed in Poland by General Jaruzelski in 1981, tens of thousands of people march in Warsaw every year. The street demonstrations on that day in 2016 saw the largest turnout since the first free elections in 1989.

The citizens of Warsaw, joined by protesters from around Poland, took this opportunity to challenge state manipulation of the constitution, institutions, and the rights of citizens, particularly women.

Women are at the forefront of all civil society movements, bringing together a large part of the society. In 2016, a draft bill to ban all abortions sparked mass nationwide strikes and protests. The proposed legislation would have drastically curtailed Poland's already-strict abortion laws, which allow for the voluntary termination of pregnancy only in cases of severe fetal malformation, if there was grave danger to the mother's health, or if the pregnancy was a result of rape or incest. That time, the protesters won, and the government was forced to abandon the plan.

But on 11 November 2017, when women sat on the Poniatowski Bridge to block the path of nationalists marching during Poland's Independence Day, they were forcibly removed – and then brought to justice on charges of obstructing the freedom to protest.

The same scene is repeated every Independence Day. A handful of women, brandishing "Women against Fascism" banners, are pushed around by scores of men dressed in black, uttering sexist vulgarities, alternated with xenophobic, anti-Semitic and racist slogans.

The same mob shows up outside theatres. After each performance of a controversial play that contradicts the sacred codes of "Polishness", the Powszechny Theatre prepares to face a new riot organized by small groups of the far-right. The theatre – along with Krzysztof Warlikowski's New Theatre and some other famous theatres in the country – has always been a symbol of the struggle for the artistic freedom that remains a thorn in the side of authoritarian powers.

Could this be a coincidence? Poland's student revolt in 1968 – a milestone in the struggle for liberation from Soviet oppression – began with the withdrawal of a classic, Adam Mickiewicz's poetic drama, *Dziady* (*Forefathers' Eve*) from the Warsaw National Theatre's repertoire.

From fall to reconquest, so goes the life of this amazing city that draws its ardour and energy from its human resources.



© John Bob & Sophie Art

## Rebel city

This wave of rebellion and freedom is not new in Warsaw. Does it come from its river that cannot be tamed? The Vistula, with its vast and steep valley that prevents the right and left banks from getting closer, remains impetuous and wild. Bordered by sand and bushes, it gives the city its character.

For a long time, Warsaw retained its rustic style. Its emancipation began in 1915, under the reign of the Germans, who recaptured it from Russia during the First World War. Although it was severely exploited economically by the occupiers, the city was driven by an extraordinary determination and hope. Municipal elections were held, and the university and polytechnic opened. Warsaw was preparing to take on the role of capital of a sovereign state, which it finally attained at the end of the war, in 1918.

During the twenty short years following independence, the entire city became a construction site under Marshal Józef Piłsudski, a leader who was both adulated and controversial.

The result was that in 1939, Warsaw looked like other European capitals. It had an elegant city centre and many areas inhabited by workers, who made up half its population. A large Jewish neighbourhood, teeming with life, spread over at least a third of the area, stretching from the centre to the north of the city.

It was then that the bombs of Germany's invasion struck Warsaw, until the coup de grâce in October 1944. Hitler wanted to make the city an example of total annihilation, following the failed Warsaw Uprising led by the underground Polish resistance movement from August to October 1944. The city's right bank was almost completely destroyed, and the surviving population deported. Warsaw was nothing more than a vast field of ruins, and the possibility of its reconstruction seemed doubtful, given the magnitude of the task.

Yet, as early as in January 1945, homeless revenants were already flocking to the banks of the Vistula, to stir up the frozen rubble.



*Demonstration outside the Royal Castle in Warsaw, July-August 2017, to protest against the monthly commemoration of the Smolensk plane crash.*

They thus began, on their own initiative, a reconstruction that would soon turn into an extraordinary achievement for the entire nation. Fortunately, architecture offices and schools had clandestinely compiled inventories of historic buildings during the Nazi occupation. All was not lost. The market square, the town houses, the circuit of the ramparts, the Royal Castle and important religious buildings of the “invincible city”, as it was called then, would rise from the ashes – driven by a unifying national impetus encouraged by communist propaganda. This led to Warsaw’s inscription on the UNESCO World Heritage List in 1980. The Archive of Warsaw Reconstruction Office (BOS Archive), which kept track of this memorable period, was added to the Memory of the World Register in 2011.

“ From fall to reconquest, so goes the life of this amazing city that draws its ardour and its energy from its human resources ”

### Palimpsest city

Another fascinating chapter in Warsaw’s history is its ghetto. Many of us have heard about the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising in the spring of 1943 and its resistance, as determined as it was hopeless. But how many know the exact location of this huge enclosure, the largest in Nazi-occupied Europe? Built in 1940, it was erased from the map in 1943. Even the residents of Warsaw had only a vague idea of it, as the subject was taboo during the decades of communist rule. The barbed wire had disappeared, and when the city was liberated, only fragments of its eighteen-kilometre wall, several metres high, remained. It had been somewhere north of the Palace of Culture, it was said.

A new Warsaw was rising over the buried Jewish city, the memory of which would have vanished at the same time as its 400,000 or 500,000 inhabitants, if one man had not survived. His name was Hersz Wasser. He was the assistant of the historian Emanuel Ringelblum, who, with some sixty friends, worked hard to build the clandestine archives of the Warsaw ghetto they inhabited during the Second World War. Some 25,000 pages, carefully filed in metal boxes, were extracted from the rubble between 1946 and 1950. These unique documents, collected in total secrecy, were inscribed in the Memory of the World Register just after the fall of the communist regime in 1989.

Ringelblum and his team built a bridge from nothing towards the future. Defying all prohibition, they left us testimonies on the clandestine organizations, lists of deportees, chronicles, literary texts, works of art, diaries, private letters.... It was here, in the Ringelblum Archives, that we discovered the first detailed descriptions of the Chelmno and Treblinka extermination camps. Thanks to these archives, a team of contemporary researchers and writers have been able to reconstruct in detail – at least on paper – this district of the Polish capital that has disappeared.

A palimpsest city that writes its history on the pages of the past, without ever really erasing it, Warsaw is a vast mosaic that is constantly reinventing itself in time and space. More than stone and concrete, it is made up of flows of human energy and the currents that traverse through it – constructing and deconstructing its identity, made of rebellious memory and salutary oblivion.



An architect with degrees from the Polytechnic University, Warsaw, and France’s Université de Marne-la-Vallée, **Joanna Lasserre** (Poland) is involved in civic action in Poland and France, in parallel with her professional projects in architecture, urban planning and communication.

# A warm welcome versus hostility

**Gabriela Neves de Lima**

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Faced with a policy against migrants, the inhabitants of London's Haringey borough have launched a welcome campaign that has been shaking up British immigration legislation. Proving that finding common ground is always possible, the borough works with local communities, and the central government funds some of its projects. The idea of everyone working together to create a more welcoming neighbourhood is catching on.

Since the emergence of what is commonly referred to as the "migrant crisis" in the 2010s, the local authorities in Europe have been at the forefront of ensuring the integration of migrants and refugees into their communities. Some act within the framework of political agendas defined by governments, others are more proactive. The Haringey Welcome campaign in north London has chosen to adopt a collaborative approach, while remaining an activist and independent organization that takes a more antagonistic stance when necessary.

## Moral obligation against social injustice

Haringey Welcome is based on the notion of political solidarity, defined by the American philosopher Sally Scholz as a positive moral obligation which encourages collective action in the face of a situation of injustice or social vulnerability. Her ideology is the polar opposite of a hostile environment policy, explains Lucy Nabijou, coordinator of the residents' group that initiated the campaign. "It is about solidarity and justice, about fighting for values, contesting bad law and really trying to work together with the local government, seeking a real collaboration with local authorities to improve services," she adds.

With forty-five per cent of its population born outside the United Kingdom and five per cent having moved there in the last two years, Haringey is one of London's most cosmopolitan boroughs. "Haringey has a strong and proud history of welcoming asylum seekers and refugees and people who have chosen to re-settle in London. There are generations of people from around the world who have moved here and made Haringey one of the UK's most open and diverse boroughs,"

notes a report from the local council to the Cabinet, dated 15 November 2016. It was around that time that the founders of Haringey Welcome took their first steps, demanding that the neighbourhood implement the central government's voluntary resettlement scheme for Syrian refugees. Claire Kober, then council leader of Haringey and chair of London councils, pledged to relocate ten Syrian families – to give them "a place of safety" and the support they needed "in order to start rebuilding their lives".

But, as Nabijou points out, the council suffers from a lack of financial resources, training and dialogue with residents and community groups, which undermines its effectiveness. This is why Haringey Welcome has adopted a more collaborative approach in its negotiations with the local council, emphasizing the need to create new communications channels and build relationships based on trust.

The programme's purpose is not to advocate that elected councillors or local council employees violate national law per se, Nabijou insists, but rather, to increase transparency and accountability and to better navigate through available instruments to provide adequate services for migrants and refugees.

The Haringey council already seems to be moving in this direction. In September 2018, it launched the Connected Communities programme, with funding from the central government. It aims to improve local support for migrants in the areas of employment, housing, learning the English language, childcare and community empowerment. Although she welcomes this initiative, Nabijou has expressed her reservations about the choice of keeping it in-house, the viability of the project if it is tied to the current funding stream, and its ability to reach more vulnerable migrant groups.

Another highlight was the support of elected officials for a motion introduced by Haringey Welcome in November 2018. This, says Nabijou, provides a great opportunity "to put all the problems on the table and to rebuild local management".

## Threatened social relations

The need to rebuild local management is essential in a context of an upheaval in social relations. This is because the so-called hostile environment policy, which targets undocumented immigrants above all, and aims to deter migrants from crossing territorial boundaries, actually affects the entire population.

Migration policies involve not only the different ministries and local representations involved in border control and immigration management, but also the private sector and ordinary citizens. In practice, this means that there are also borders within the country. All aspects of social life are monitored and potentially reported, with increased risks of deportation. As a result, migrants and asylum seekers are discouraged from accessing essential services.

For instance, private landlords are obliged to check whether their future tenants have the right to reside in the country, and to keep proof of this, at the risk of paying a fine or being imprisoned for a maximum period of five years. With a more stringent redefinition of the "habitual residence" category, access to free health care has been curtailed, and temporary non-European immigrants have been forced to pay an annual surcharge for the duration of their stay. Between 2016 and 2018, schools were required to provide the state with information on children with a migrant background.

However, data collection has been stopped as a result of a campaign that is currently fighting for the destruction of this data.

Writing about the shift in focus of recent UK immigration legislation, British academics Nira Yuval-Davis, Georgie Wemyss and Kathryn Cassidy have concluded that it amounts to “everyday bordering in which ordinary citizens are demanded to become either border-guards and/or suspected illegitimate border crossers”. A relative, a friend, or a neighbour could become an informer. As Latvian anthropologist Dace Dzenovska suggests, personal conflicts could interfere with the defence of borders. These practices disrupt social and political relations, creating fear, suspicion and tensions within communities, and threatening local solidarity and conviviality. It is also important to note that certain social categories (such as those based on race, class or gender) are disproportionately impacted by these policies, indicating the relative fragility of their rights.

*Collage by children at the Sterrenbos pre-school in Hamme, Belgium, which received a special mention at the UNESCO Associated Schools Network global art contest, “Opening Hearts and Minds to Refugees”, 2017.*

## Joining forces

In this context, Haringey Welcome contributes to improving social relations on the ground, by building solidarity networks within the borough. The group has been working with schools, for example, to raise awareness of the implications of the hostile environment. It has also garnered support from other local community groups and migrant support organizations – all of whom work together to create a more welcoming borough.

By forging these links and working directly with elected and government officials, Haringey Welcome promotes a form of multi-stakeholder collaboration involving all interested parties. Some of the ways in which this can be done includes bidding for funding for integration initiatives from the Controlling Migration Fund of the Ministry of Housing, Communities, and Local Government. Establishing a working group of local advisors, migrant organizations and legal experts to develop a strategy for migrants, especially more vulnerable groups, would also be beneficial.

Beyond the political aspect, Nabijou observes that the Haringey Welcome campaign has another side-effect, that is equally central to the initiative. “Through mobilization, you get to know your neighbours, you meet new people, you are better informed about what is happening, and all this blends together to produce an extremely strong sense of community that transforms the place where you live,” she enthuses.



A political scientist, **Gabriela Neves de Lima** (Brazil) is a research assistant at the Department of Geography and Environment at the London School of Economics and Political Science, United Kingdom. She is a co-author of *Cities Welcoming Refugees and Migrants: Enhancing Effective Urban Governance in an Age of Migration*, published by UNESCO in 2016.



# Street smarts

## in Kinshasa

Sylvie Ayimpam

How do you survive when you're poor and caught up in an interminable series of social and economic crises? You learn how to get by! This is the motto of the inhabitants of Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Showing great ingenuity, they never miss an opportunity to invent a new job. *Romains, chargeurs, and other gaddafis* swarm the markets and streets of the megacity, closing the gaps in the system.

We are in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The scene takes place in the city centre of Kinshasa, the capital. Three young shoe-shine boys sit on rocks at the entrance of a school, equipped with stools, footrests, brushes and sponges. Next to them, a young man has set up a stand and watches over a cleverly-crafted electric charging system. On a small wooden panel, he has mounted several electrical outlets which are illicitly connected to electrical wires emerging from the ground, where they are attached to the base of a defective street light. This man calls himself the *chargeur* (charger).

While shoe-shine boys have long been an integral part of the urban landscape, battery chargers have emerged at the same time as mobile telephones. In the 1970s and 1980s, the city was full of micro-production units – shoe or paint factories, carpenters or jewellers, weaving or dyeing workshops sprouted like mushrooms, mainly in backyards. Since the mid-1990s, small businesses and services have taken over.

You have to know how to fend for yourself if you live in Kinshasa, among some 11 million inhabitants. The economic crisis, the failures of the state and public services, and the scarcity of salaried jobs are forcing city dwellers to earn their living through various forms of self-employment made up of small tasks and expediciencies.

In a context of anomy and extreme poverty, *la débrouille* – the French word for resourcefulness, making do, getting by or improvising – has become a way of life at which city dwellers excel.

It is at the heart of all economic survival strategies, especially among young people, who make up more than half of the city's population.

### Creativity born of necessity

Like the *chargeurs*, who fill the gaps in the home electricity distribution system now that mobile phones are hugely successful, other inhabitants show remarkable ingenuity by inventing diverse sources of income, taking advantage of every opportunity to make themselves useful. Starting with next to nothing, they launch new activities to meet different needs.

A table, a bench, some cooking utensils and charcoal are enough to set up a *malewa*, or cheap restaurant where you can eat for ten times less than anywhere else – even if hygiene is sometimes compromised. Are the buses overcrowded? No problem! The *wewas* (motorcycle taxis) are there to transport you. Are the streets flooded after the rain? All right, back carriers will ferry pedestrians across. Others, like second-hand spare-part dealers, mobile-phone repairers, or bottled-water vendors, are also at hand to help you out at any time.

A colloquial terminology is developing to keep up with these new activities, characterized by intermediation. The gap left by the lack of organization of public and private infrastructures is filled by all kinds of agents, brokers and subcontractors who offer their services individually or through networks.

Kinshasa, market town.



Plying their trades in the streets and markets, but also in any place of commercial transaction, including car parks, major intersections, bus stations and river ports, are *romains* (dealers in smuggled merchandise), *bana kwatas* (touts dealing in second-hand clothes), *chayeurs* (wholesalers' agents), *gaddafis* (informal fuel-sellers), *chargeurs* (touts working for taxis and public transport, not to be confused with battery chargers!), *cambistes* (street money-changers), and *mamas manoeuvre* (middlemen trading food products in river ports).

## Article 15

In the mid-1980s, the song "Article 15, Beta Libanga" by the Congolese musician Pépé Kallé (1951-1998), was a big hit across the continent, probably because so many Africans could identify with it. Article 15 is an imaginary article in the DRC Constitution that says: "Make do to survive!" All the Congolese know it and refer to it on a daily basis. "Beta libanga" literally means "Break the stone". "Making do is not easy," Kallé warns us.

"Article 15, my dears, make do to survive," he sang in Lingala. "Look at the river port: the dock workers carry heavy loads. Look at the bus conductors: they shout from morning to night. Look, there are stalls all over the city. Look at the taxi and bus drivers: they drive from morning to night. Look at us, the musicians: we sing to earn our living. Look at the students: they study to prepare for the future."

But the future we dream of, often remains distant, and in the meantime, we get by in Kinshasa, as in many other African cities. Resourcefulness has become a way of being, a marker of urban identity that spans the entire Kinshasa social space. The informal economy, which proliferates mainly due to chronic shortages, poverty and political instability, is far from being free of schemes, swindles, risks, conflict and violence. Nevertheless, it also includes social values, such as conviviality, solidarity, respect and loyalty. Ultimately, it contributes to a form of social self-regulation.

Admittedly, in the midst of an incomplete modernity, institutions are bankrupt, administrations shaky, civil society unstructured and traditions worthless. Yet what never ceases to amaze in Kinshasa is the resourcefulness and creativity of the people struggling to get by, reflecting the inventive spirit of individuals and the community.



A Congolese social scientist affiliated with the Institut des mondes africains (IMAF) in Aix-en-Provence, France, **Sylvie Ayimpam**'s work focuses on the issue of the informal economy in African cities. She is the author of *Économie de la débrouille à Kinshasa. Informalité, commerce et réseaux sociaux* (The economy of resourcefulness in Kinshasa. Informality, commerce and social networks), 2014.



# Russia:

## From monotowns to pluritowns

Ivan Nesterov

**The crisis in Detroit, America's Motor City, was splashed all over the international press when the city filed the largest municipal bankruptcy in American history, in July 2013. The stories about the fall and then, the renaissance of this once-great city, which had staked everything on the automobile industry, abounded. But we don't hear as much about the *monogoroda*, Russia's long-forgotten industrial towns, that share a similar fate. There are 319 of these single-factory towns, where a single industry or factory accounts for most of the local economy. How are they faring?**

It is 2 June 2009, and the world is in the throes of one of its most severe financial crises. In north-west Russia, the federal highway linking Novaya Ladoga and Vologda is blocked. More than 300 residents of Pikalyovo, a small town in Leningrad oblast [a region, with St. Petersburg as its capital], have formed a roadblock. They are protesting because they have not been paid for months. The three state factories that supported the town changed hands, taken over by three private owners: BaselCement, EuroCement and PhosAgro. However, these companies, who formed a single production line, could not agree on a series of issues, including raw material prices, production volume and development prospects. To such an extent that in this small town of 21,000 inhabitants, 4,000 remained unemployed.

It was only when Russian Prime Minister Vladimir Putin intervened in person that the conflict was resolved. On 4 June, he arrived in Pikalyovo, and brought the owners together – they eventually signed agreements to supply raw materials and drew up various long-term contracts.

The money needed to resolve the financial issues (including employees' salaries, money owed to raw material suppliers and transporters) was allocated by the Russian state-owned bank, the VTB Group, and production at the plant was resumed.

It is clear, however, that the personal intervention of a head of state cannot become a sustainable model for resolving crises. Especially since in most cases, the problems do not stem from disagreements between owners but from market exigencies. Indeed, Russia's transition to a market economy in the early 1990s has created a series of acute problems for monotowns.

At the top of the list is unemployment – jobless rates in these towns are twice as high as the national average in Russia. In addition, these towns were designed to accommodate the industry that supports them, rather than with the well-being of their residents in mind. Problems of pollution, and the lack of infrastructure, health and education are recurrent. To make matters worse, these towns are often situated in far-flung corners of the country, with exorbitant airfares making it impossible for people to travel. If they do finally make it on a plane, it often means they're leaving for good!

### Origin of monotowns

Around 13.2 million inhabitants – almost one in ten Russians – live and work in one of these 319 factory towns. Whatever their differences, they have one thing in common – their livelihood is entirely dependent on a single company or consortium, which employs at least a quarter of the population. They have all been formed around factories, major industrial forestry centres and the availability of raw material deposits (gold, iron, coal, oil, gas, apatite, etc.). In the case of Pikalyovo, the town and its cement factory were built in 1935, in the vicinity of the station of the same name, where deposits of limestone and cement clay had been discovered, five years earlier.

The first Russian factory towns were built in the eighteenth century, in the wake of reforms by Tsar Peter the Great, who encouraged linen manufacturing and industrial forges. The second wave of rapid development took place in the nineteenth century, with the emergence of textile mills and the development of light industry. But most of these towns were established in the 1930s, as part of Joseph Stalin's grandiose industrialization plans, which focused mainly on defence.

Today, there are more than 400 large enterprises in monotowns – including Russia's largest coal producer, the Siberian Coal Energy Company (SUEK); the metal and mining companies, Severstal and Mechel; and the world leader in diamond mining, Alosa. The number also includes state-owned enterprises, like Rostec, the industrial conglomerate, which manufactures and exports high-technology industrial products for military and civil use, and the Rosatom State Atomic Energy Corporation (ROSATOM), the nuclear energy company, among others.

There are factory towns all over Russia, but they are mainly concentrated in Siberia and the Urals region. There are twenty-four of them in Kemerovo oblast, for example, fifteen in Sverdlovsk oblast, and fourteen in the autonomous okrug [district] of Khantis-Mansis. Some of them have fewer than 1,000 inhabitants, like the mining village of Beringovskiy, Russia's easternmost town. Others have populations in the hundreds of thousands, like Togliatti, home to the country's automobile industry, with 712,000 inhabitants, and Naberezhnye Chelny, where Kamaz heavy-duty trucks are manufactured, with a population of 517,000. Most monotowns, however – around 216 of them – have no more than 50,000 inhabitants.

### New strategy

The problems facing Russia's monotowns is one of the main threats to the social and political stability of the country.



© Kirill Kukhmar / TASS / ABACA

After the Pikalyovo crisis, the state government drew up a list of these towns, which experts classified into three categories – towns with the most complex socio-economic conditions (red zone, consisting of ninety-four towns); towns at risk of deterioration of their socio-economic situation (amber zone, with 154 towns), and towns with a stable socio-economic situation (green zone, with seventy-one towns).

In 2014, the government adopted a strategy for the development of monotowns, based mainly on the diversification of their economies, investment and the creation of new jobs. It called on Russia's state development bank, VEB, which finances large-scale projects to develop the country's infrastructure, industry, social activity, and technological potential. The bank was instructed to set up financial instruments, primarily to aid red-zone factory towns to emerge from their crises. With this aim, the bank created a fund specifically for the development of monotowns.

*A copper-smelting workshop at the Norinickel factory in Norilsk, Russia.*

Once the strategy was in place, teams of representatives from the monotowns received training in investment and entrepreneurship. This training was provided by a top private business school, in Skolkovo, Russia's answer to Silicon Valley.

## The state pitches in

Today, the Monocities Development Fund works with teams of entrepreneurs, municipal and regional administrators. Most of the factory towns have developed and approved development programmes that take into account their particular territorial, climatic, socio-economic and production features – these are integrated into regional strategic development plans.

The Fund also provides the regions with the money needed for the projects, implemented by local and national enterprises, in cooperation with the municipal authorities. It contributes resources and skills, monitors spending, and shares best practices. In 2016-2017, it concluded twenty-nine co-financing agreements with the regions to attract investment projects worth 14.3 billion roubles (over \$217 million), for the reconstruction of infrastructure. In the long term, it is expected to invest more than 106 billion roubles (over \$1.6 billion) in factory towns.

A priority programme for the “Integrated Development of Single-Industry Towns” came into force at the federal level in 2016. Aimed at creating small and medium-sized enterprises, or individual, one-person businesses, linked to new activities, the programme is expected to generate some 230,000 jobs.

*Polar climate, pollution and isolation. In her series, Days of Night – Nights of Day, Russian photographer Elena Chernyshova investigates the capacity of the inhabitants of Norilsk to adapt to extreme living conditions.*

For Pikalyovo, for example, this would mean that more than 1,700 jobs of various kinds – the production of greenhouse vegetables, sportswear, furniture, etc. – are expected to be created by 2030. The development plan also provides for an investment of 20 billion roubles (\$303 million) in the town's economy.

Another significant privilege is that areas of advanced socio-economic development have been created, where companies benefit from unprecedented tax advantages. The incentives include reductions in taxes on corporate income, property taxes and mining royalties, and also on insurance premiums. By the end of 2018, sixty-three such territories had been established in factory cities, with a total of over 200 companies registered.

## Corporations lend a hand

The state alone cannot solve the problems of Russia's monotowns, however. Large companies have also lent a hand. In 2017, Nornickel, a mining and smelting company, laid an internet fibre-optic cable worth 2.5 billion roubles (over \$38 million) in Norilsk, a city situated 300 kilometres north of the Arctic circle. In 2018, CC Kolmar LLC, a coal-mining and processing company, undertook to develop regional tourism in Neryungri, a town in Yakutia, and co-invested in the reconstruction of the local airport.

In addition, large corporations have started to promote green industry. In 2008, Taneko, the oil and natural gas company in Nizhnekamsk, Tatarstan, invested in the development of a Single

Maximum Allowable Pollutant Emission Project, an automated air pollution monitoring system which has since been regarded as something of a standard for controlling harmful emissions. In 2016, Nornickel shut down the oldest and most polluting nickel plant in Norilsk, reducing harmful emissions by thirty per cent.

In 2017, Mechel installed collectors that capture ninety-eight per cent of the dust and gas in its coal enrichment plant in Neryungri. And Kolmar has built closed-circuit enrichment plants, which recycle waste water for reuse in the production process.

The tangible results of all these measures are expected by 2025. Meanwhile, in the first half of 2019, the Fund will already be announcing the list of the eighteen towns with sustainable economies that no longer classify as monotowns. The leading candidate is Cherepovets, a former steel manufacturing centre with a population of 318,000. In 2017, a major mineral fertilizer production unit was set up here by PhosAgro. Twenty thousand individual companies have also been established here, employing one in four of the active labour force.



Russian journalist **Ivan Nesterov** has worked on promoting the integrated development of South Yakutia, a large investment project, between 2008 and 2018. He has also been involved in mobilizing investment for socio-economic development projects in the Far East.



# Havana:

## Where everyone pitches in

Jasmina Šopova

Havana is finalizing preparations for a grand celebration of the 500th anniversary of its founding, in November 2019. Emblematic buildings in the historic centre of the Cuban capital are being restored. An exceptional renaissance has been underway for the past three decades, driven by the commitment of its inhabitants, the determination of one unyielding man, and a strong political will.



© Sebastian Liste / NOOR

*A scene from everyday life in Havana, against the backdrop of the Capitolio, 2015.*

“What the heart demands, the hand performs.” This proverb, engraved in Chinese ideograms on the roof of one of the most magnificent buildings in Havana, expresses the love that its inhabitants have for their city. “A land of passage for so many years, people of the most diverse origins from Africa, Europe, China, Yucatán have met here in a kaleidoscopic amalgam that has produced our unique but varied ethnic, ethical and aesthetic identity,” wrote the Cuban author, Manuel Pereira, in his article, *Enchanted seashell: a portrait of Old Havana*, published in the *Courier* in July 1984.

That was two years after the inscription of the historic centre of the Cuban capital on UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Old Havana comprises of more than 3,000 buildings, housing 50,000 people today.

About a decade later, in 1993, the state adopted a decree, making the city centre a priority preservation area. A Master Plan for the restoration of Old Havana was quickly drafted, overseen by the Office of the City Historian of Havana (see our interview, p. 18).

The effects of climate and urban growth have taken their toll on the old quarter, which has suffered severe deterioration since the beginning of the twentieth century. Cuba has rallied together to save its city. “It is impossible to rescue 465 years of stone overnight, but Old Havana will be saved. Its splendid face will be restored and be converted, not into a lifeless museum but into a museum that is living and can be lived in,” wrote Pereira, thirty-five years ago. Time has proved him right.

Based on a self-management strategy and adopting an approach that encompasses heritage, society, education and culture, the Cuban plan has become a model for the restoration and enhancement of historical urban centres, particularly in Latin American countries.

Recognized by international experts, the plan has won over twenty-five national and global awards and figures on UNESCO’s list of best practices in world heritage management.

One feature of the plan is that it involved the local population in the rehabilitation of their quarter. Over the years, more than 14,000 jobs, calling for different degrees of expertise, have been created by the Office of the City Historian for residents of the old town and nearby communities.

An education system has been set up specifically to meet the needs of the plan. It integrates the University of Havana, founded in 1728, and three specialist schools, to offer training to students aged 16 to 21. Twelve subjects are taught there, over a two-year period. To date, around 1,500 young people have been trained in vocations related to the restoration and rehabilitation of cultural heritage.

The Museum Classroom project brings primary schools and museums together to teach young children about the history of Old Havana. This is one of many ways to raise public awareness of heritage values among people of all ages. The City Historian's office, which has established these values, also promotes them. Thousands of families have benefited from cultural tours of the city, watched *Havana Walks* on television or read the monthly series, *Habana Nuestra* (Our Havana), in print and online.

Once subsidized by the state, the restoration of the historic centre now benefits from a system of self-financing, with the development of a local economy. Companies and tourism agencies were started to create a gastronomic, commercial and hotel network in the priority protection area, compatible with the cultural interests of the quarter. Museums, galleries and theatres have also been established in the most beautiful buildings, attracting a large number of national and foreign visitors – tourism is one of the most important sources of finance for the restoration of Old Havana.

Since the quality of life of its inhabitants is one of the main criteria of the restoration plan, a significant part of the resources it generates are used to finance social institutions. These include the Doña Leonor Pérez Cabrera maternity hospital, the Santiago Ramón y Cajal geriatric centre, which provides specialized care to around 15,000 elderly people, and the former Belén convent, which houses the Office for Humanitarian Affairs. This department focuses on the most vulnerable members of society, including victims of natural disasters, such as the frequent hurricanes. Here they have access to a pharmacy, a physiotherapy centre, an ophthalmology clinic, and also a food store, a hairdresser and a barber. Socio-cultural activities and meetings for people of all ages are organized here, including workshops on the environment, traditional medicine, and other topics of interest.

The development of squares, green areas, pedestrian streets and recreational spaces, and municipal services like street lighting, gas supply, waste collection and the cleaning of public spaces are all an integral part of this massive reconstruction plan. The most fundamental aspects – like making sure that people living in buildings under renovation are not rendered homeless – have not been neglected either. Through the plan, more than 11,000 families have so far benefited from a decent roof over their heads.



## Eusebio Leal:

# Havana, mon amour

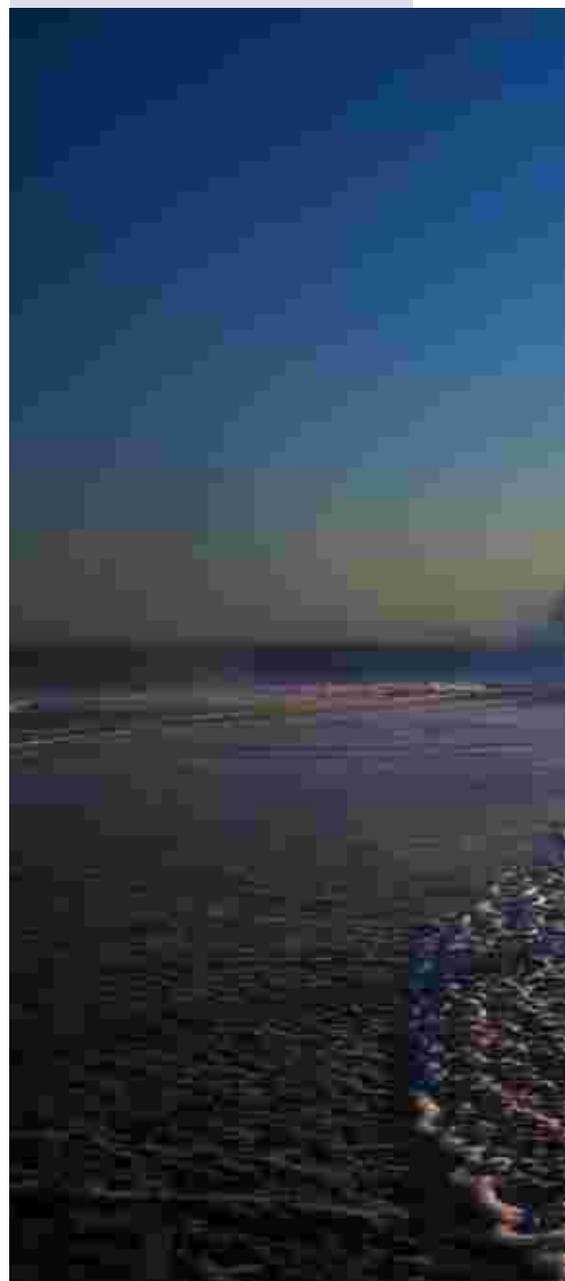
**Interview by Lucía Iglesias Kuntz,  
UNESCO**

**When you speak of Havana, you speak of Eusebio Leal Spengler. Which other city has its own personal historian? On the eve of the 500th anniversary of the founding of the Cuban capital, the City Historian of Havana – who has been in charge of the restoration of its historic city centre for over thirty years – takes us on a journey through its streets and monuments, showing us its strength, its beauty ... and its ailments.**

***This year, Havana celebrates five centuries of its existence. How is the city faring?***

If I were to put myself in the city's place, I think the ailments you have are what you feel when you've lived so long. Five centuries is little in comparison with ancient cities like Athens in Greece, or Istanbul in Turkey. But it's a lot for us in our Americas – with the exception of the great pre-Hispanic cities like Cusco, the Inca city of Peru, the Aztec Tenochtitlán in Mexico, or the Mayan cities of Central America. Havana was part of the new wave that began with the Spanish conquest and colonization at the beginning of the sixteenth century. The Cuban cities were founded immediately after the cities of Santo Domingo, La Vega, San Pedro de Macorís and Santiago de los Caballeros, in the Dominican Republic.

*Unusual flooding caused by climate change threatens the Malecón, Havana's famous waterfront promenade.*



I believe these cities have reached a noble antiquity, and also show the aches and pains of all the historical moments they have lived through. In our case, it is fundamentally the new era that began sixty years ago with the victory of the Revolution – the resistance of the Cuban people, of which Havana has been an emblem and a symbol.

***The historic centre, Old Havana, has been inscribed on the World Heritage List since 1982, for its “outstanding universal value”, that any visitor can appreciate. But what, from your personal point of view, is the value of Havana?***

The range of values is very large. There is the symbolic value – it is the capital of the nation, the country’s head. But at the same time, it is very representative

of all the cultural, intellectual, political, historical and social values of the Cuban people. It is also a catalogue of the most beautiful and dazzling architecture that the island has ever produced, with features that can also be found in Camagüey, Santiago de Cuba, or Trinidad.

The Moorish architecture, for example, which was influenced by the Hispano-Islamic tradition, is very characteristic of the historical centre. Then, there is also the timid but passionate baroque architecture of the Havana Cathedral – which is more like a state of mind, a kind of feeling or atmosphere that the Cuban writer, Alejo Carpentier, so vividly described in his great novel, *El siglo de las luces* (*Explosion in a Cathedral*), 1962.

“Havana is a living city, of wisdom and of memory”



© Benjamin Norman

There is also the neoclassical city, with El Templete, the monument to the founding of Havana. It is rather a small-scale model, that has been reproduced with great originality in other Cuban cities, like Matanzas and Cienfuegos.

And then there is the eclectic city in Centro Habana that is so impressive – filled with gargoyles, Atlanteans, extraordinary figures, imaginary creatures. The Art Nouveau – the Palacio Cueto in the Plaza Vieja – and then the considerable splendour of the Art Deco – as in the Emilio Bacardí building – are almost subversively introduced there, making the architectural dialogue even more intense.

Finally, there is the Havana of modernity, which reaches the height of its splendour with the work of the Viennese architect, Richard Neutra – the Casa de Schulthess, one of the most beautiful houses in the residential quarter where Quinta Avenida [Fifth Avenue] takes us.

Havana is a living city, of wisdom and of memory. In this lively metropolis, we find the acropolis of knowledge that is the beautiful university campus – and the great monumental cemetery, the necropolis, is beautiful too.

#### **Could you tell us what the November 2019 celebrations will consist of?**

The city government has developed an extensive commemoration project. The plan we drew up in the Office of the City Historian of Havana, which we designed specifically for the historical zone, is harmoniously incorporated into that project. Our task is to promote the idea of preserving the memory of the city, not only when it comes to commemorating its fifth centenary, but also in everyday life. I've dedicated more than three decades to this, and I have to confess that sometimes it felt as though I was preaching that cause in the desert.

Currently, we have developed a series of events, radio and television programmes, and the publication of a number of different works. We also continue to work simultaneously on the restoration of the city's monumental symbols – the main example of this will be the completion of major work on El Capitolio [the national Capitol building], the Castillo de Atarés and other iconic buildings in the heart of Havana. We will remember and celebrate not only the story of the act of the city's founding, but also its history and culture.

I would like to emphasize that culture is the key word in our master plan for the rehabilitation and restoration of Old Havana. Any development project that ignores culture, leads only to decadence.

On the other hand, the human factor is just as important. I would like to ensure that these commemorations generate a passion among the people. If they don't touch people's hearts, all we will have done is made a few official speeches, moved some stones and printed a few articles.

#### **Would you say that cultural heritage has more to do with everyday life, and is not just about museums?**

Of course I believe that museums are essential for history, memory and culture. The Museo de la Ciudad [City Museum] is of vital importance for the entire nation, and not just for the people of Havana. But I have also fought against museumization and defended the cause of a living city.

#### **One of the challenges facing World Heritage cities is the difficulty of reconciling tourism – sometimes on a massive scale – and the preservation of heritage values. Has Havana had to face these contradictions?**

We must ensure that Havana does not disappear under a tide of tourists. But at the same time, I believe that tourism – a necessary activity and an important economic factor – should not be demonized. In the case of Cuba, given its isolation, it is also an opportunity to initiate a direct dialogue with visitors from all around the world. That is something wonderful.

#### **While the rehabilitation is completed, many buildings in Old Havana still remain inhabited.**

In many cases, the buildings that were in ruins, and that we have restored, were inhabited by very poor families. This is still the case for many of them. The answer has been to provide safe and dignified shelter for thousands of people, offer education for young people and create safe jobs for adults. We have tried to implement what UNESCO defined, at the time, as "a unique project", something different. Unique does not mean better. We do not claim to have done better than other parts of the world. Rather, it was done according to our own experience.

In other words, in spite of the setbacks and mistakes we suffered in the search for a rehabilitation model, we finally found it (see p. 17).

#### **You have also put a lot of effort into restoring the Malecón, Havana's emblematic avenue that stretches along the coastline. You have defined it as "Havana's smile".**

I must confess that I have almost lost the battle against the sea, a battle that could only be fought by Neptune with his trident. I cannot forget the images of the devastating waves crashing against the Castillo del Morro, which has stood in front of the sea for centuries. These are Dantesque visions that are repeated at every step of a cyclone.

The tornado that hit us recently, during the night of January 27 and 28 [2019], causing the death of several people and wounding some 200, reminds us that the time has come to understand that climate change is a hidden threat to the elegant silhouette of the Malecón, which will always be that beautiful smile that Havana gives to the sea, and that we have a duty to protect.

We have lost the battle against the sea, but we must win our fight against climate change. Great challenges and new adventures await us.

#### **Don't you ever tire of working for Havana?**

It's true that everything has always led me to Havana. It's really been many years of work, hard work. I don't regret it. If there were another life than the one we know here on earth, my soul would wander eternally through Havana. It has been the greatest of my loves, the best of my passions, and the greatest of my challenges. I really do not know why I always mysteriously return to it, in light and silence, in life and in dreams.



Cuban historian, author and researcher **Eusebio Leal Spengler** is the City Historian of Havana, and director of the Master Plan for the rehabilitation and restoration of its historic centre. His works include *Patria amada* (Beloved Homeland), *Regresar en el tiempo* (Back in Time), *La luz sobre el espejo* (The Light on the Mirror), *Fundada esperanza* (Founded Hope) and *Poesía y palabra* (Poems and Words).

# When art takes over the street



© Inkman & Nilko / Galerie Itinérance / photo : Chrixcel

**Mehdi Ben Cheikh, interviewed by Anissa Barrak**

Long considered marginal, street art today represents a major trend that democratizes access to art and infuses urban spaces with a new social and economic dynamic. In the heart of the island of Djerba, Tunisia, some 100 artists have illuminated the small town of Erriadh – now known as Djerbahood – with about 250 murals. Mehdi Ben Cheikh, a French-Tunisian gallery owner who initiated this promising project, tells us how the idea continues to grow.

*How was the Djerbahood project born and why did you choose Erriadh as a location for it?*

In 2013, I had completed the Tour Paris 13 project, which received exceptional media coverage. This high-rise building in the 13th arrondissement of the French capital, was condemned to destruction and was demolished in April 2014. But before the deadline, about 100 artists of eighteen nationalities volunteered to transform it into a collective work of art. Façades, common areas and thirty-six apartments were taken over by the masters of street art. These works, though ephemeral, are now available on the Web, to a huge audience around the world.

This success encouraged me to set up another project that I had been working on for some time – organizing a street-art event in Tunisia, which would make people talk about the country in positive terms. Erriadh, on the island of Djerba, seemed to me the ideal place – with its luminosity, its beautiful traditional architecture, its urban development structured around a central square, its

*A collaborative mural by Tunisian artist Inkman and French artist Nilko.*

history, the legendary hospitality of its inhabitants. Let's not forget that if Djerba is indeed, as we believe, the land of the Lotus-Eaters of Homer's *Odyssey*, Ulysses was its most famous visitor!

Formerly known as Hara Essaghira, Erriadh is located near the famous Ghriba Synagogue, one of the oldest in the world. A Jewish pilgrimage site to this day, it was built by the exiles who fled Jerusalem after Nebuchadnezzar II destroyed Solomon's temple around 586 BC. Its population was therefore mainly composed of Jews and Muslims, who lived there together, as evidenced by its five synagogues (two of which are still in operation) and its two mosques. But following the massive departure of the Jewish population from the island in the 1960s, the small town fell into a state of lethargy – remaining at the margins of tourism, the island's main economic activity. Even though it's only six minutes from an international airport!

“Street art was not created with the intention of bringing art to the people, but in reality, that’s what it does”

**Did you face any difficulties getting the project accepted locally?**

I quickly obtained permission from the national authorities to start work in the public space. The country was in a period of transition after the revolution, municipal authorities had been dissolved throughout the country and replaced by provisional committees, but in Erriadh there wasn't even a provisional committee. So the project was started with private donations. With the support of some hotel owners in Djerba, I was also able to get a financial contribution from the Ministry of Tourism.

As for the inhabitants, we had to negotiate with them at first, of course. They didn't know what we were going to do with the spaces they owned. We explained the idea, the process, and it was mainly the women who persuaded their men to let us go ahead with it. Once the first works were completed, the inhabitants began to ask us to decorate their houses.

Suddenly, Erriadh woke up. It has become a destination and a transit point for thousands of tourists (the taxi drivers were thrilled!), many restaurants and several galleries have opened, and property prices have risen sharply. The lives of the inhabitants have completely changed. That's what matters most to me.

© Wissem el Abed / Galerie Itinérance / photo : Aline Dechamps



Mural by Tunisian artist Wissem el Abed.

**You brought in about 100 renowned artists. What persuaded them to join the project?**

The project makes sense. What interests artists is to create, and to share their work with as many people as possible. The contracts signed with them concerned only image rights. Our objective is to promote the reputation of artists and not to earn money directly through these events. And there's something for everyone – artists, cities, the public.

The artists represented thirty-four different nationalities and produced 250 murals! Groups of them took turns working every week, for a period of three months. They were free in their creative approach. Of course, we were all aware that we shouldn't shock the inhabitants with images of naked bodies, for example. It was necessary to respect the population, its culture. But beyond that, they were free to do as they pleased. Each artist interacted with the space according to his or her own inspiration.

Since this experience, the artist's place has gained more respect in Djerba. The inhabitants have understood not just the economic benefits that this art represents for them, but also the essence of the artistic approach. They met the artists, they forged close ties with them. The artist is no longer perceived as the village madman, marginal, but as someone gifted – who creates a structured imaginary universe and who, at the same time, can contribute concretely to the improvement of daily life.

Some people tend to think that street art can only succeed in a country where there's already a cultural and artistic dynamic – in other words, in the West. Djerbahood has proven the opposite. It shows that not everything is done elsewhere. That any place in the world can become, at some point, the capital of street art, even if it's located at the far end of an island.



***In what condition are the works that have been in Djerbahood since 2014?***

Very few of them remain. The great difference in temperature between the winter and summer, the humidity, the lime smeared on the walls – all this has affected the conservation of the works.

In the new project I am launching in Paris in April 2019, we use resistant materials like marine varnish, and restoration is part of the plan in the city's specifications. It is in this spirit that I would like to perpetuate the Djerbahood project, which enters its second phase this year. My objective is to make Djerba a huge street-art lab – like Ibiza, in Spain, is the island of musical creation and electro.

***How can street art be defined?***

Street art is an appropriation of urban space through an artistic approach, whatever its nature. It includes as many styles and worlds as there are artists. It goes from graffiti to gestural or chromatic figuration, from sound and light installation to physical performance.

Artists play with urban infrastructure, with architecture, with light and shadows. Graffiti can measure seventy centimetres or as many metres high! Regardless of the medium used, the most important thing is to take over the streets.

This kind of artistic expression has always existed – the Lascaux cave that dates back to the Palaeolithic period is proof. But street art is now booming, particularly in Latin America, the United States, Europe and the Arab world. Street artists el Seed, Shoof and KOOM – to name just a few artists of Tunisian origin – have now acquired international reputations and embody the exceptional dynamism of this art form that wants to build bridges between people.

El Seed, for example, has transformed the face of Kairouan, a Tunisian World Heritage site, and paints his *calligraffiti* all over the world – South Africa, Canada, South Korea, Dubai, Egypt, US, France. Hosni Hertelli, whose pseudonym Shoof means “look” in Arabic, has also resurrected traditional calligraphy in his own way – through painting on ancient Tunisian façades, but also through music and light. His show *White Spirit* attracted thousands of spectators in Australia and France. Musician and calligrapher Mohamed Koumenji (KOOM) combines these two arts in his plastic and luminous works, while drawing inspiration from Sufi tradition and incorporating modern technologies. An example that showcases his great talent is his multidisciplinary creation, *On the Roads of Arabia*, co-organized by Paris' [founded by Cheikh] Galerie Itinerrance at the Louvre Abu Dhabi in November 2018.

***Bringing art to the people rather than confining it to the places reserved for it – is that what street art is about?***

Street art was not created with the intention of bringing art to the people, but in reality, that's what it does. Because it's practised in public spaces, it's offered to people free of charge, at street corners. It's the most democratic artistic movement there is, but also the most appropriate for its time – relayed on the Web through photos and videos generally taken by the artists themselves, its reputation is based on the recognition of the greatest numbers, through social media. Once the artist is recognized, she or he can choose to exhibit in galleries, which link street art to art in places dedicated specifically to art.

Therefore, it's a whole system parallel to contemporary art that's being established. I have mentioned the project launched in Paris in April 2019. It's on Boulevard Vincent Auriol, where we are creating a real museum of a new type. Everything has been thought about – the lighting with projectors using solar energy, the sound system, the durability of the works. Street art does not have to chase museums to be shown – it plays with the city, it's created under the public's eye, it has exchanges with the urban population, and it is accessible to everyone for free.

***And anyone can become a street artist! But in the absence of gallery owners or museum curators, isn't there a risk that this art will alter cultural heritage sites? In Kairouan, for instance, the domes have recently been painted.***

We can indeed question the aesthetic value of certain works that emerge in the public space. But we can also say that instead of white domes, some of our mausoleums now have colourful domes! Even if it's more or less well done, I think that in a few years' time, we will end up with interesting results – street art is an art that is constantly being renewed.

There is no need to fear art. Sometimes we want to pass off certain creations as art, when they don't deserve the name, because they serve abominable ideologies. But these are extremely rare exceptions. Art has never been a threat to anyone, quite the contrary. I am convinced it's the best weapon against obscurantism.



A French-Tunisian visual arts teacher, **Mehdi Ben Cheikh** founded the Galerie Itinerrance (<http://itinerrance.fr/>) in Paris in 2004. He stages street-art projects involving artists from all over the world, and has published two books based on the two major projects he set up in Paris and Erriadh respectively: *L'événement street art Tour Paris 13* (2013) and *Djerbahood, le musée de street art à ciel ouvert* (2014).

# The city, a circus under a starlit tent

**Thomas B. Reverdy**

The French writer Thomas B. Reverdy has almost always chosen urban spaces as the setting for his novels. Obsessed by the “unbearable presence of absence” in our dehumanized cities, he imagines the emergence of tiny resistances.

“These are cities!” The words, famous, are from Rimbaud. This is the sentence that opens one of the *Illuminations*, in which the poet describes not a city, but a circus tent, its machines and its inhabitants-acrobats, the myriad spaces, acts, routes and noises that populate it, chaotic, blind to each other, and yet regulated like a music score. Around 1872, three years after the posthumous publication of Baudelaire’s *Le Spleen de Paris* [*Paris Spleen*], the city had thus become an image. It could be used as a metaphor, and this metaphor did not say what a city is, but what it evokes. Not the production, the commerce, but already the displacements, the anonymity, the trades being lost and the poverty that is suddenly noticeable in the cracks of apparent wealth. Since the island of Thomas More, most utopias are urban. All dystopias are. The city is an imaginary place. A show. A circus.

## Travelling places

I have almost always placed the setting of my plots in the city. I should say I have moved it to the city. Cities make it possible to be everywhere, both at home and abroad, and this displacement is fundamental. It is the step sideways, the oblique vision, it is the gap in reality, the displacement that suddenly creates space for the deployment of fiction. When, in

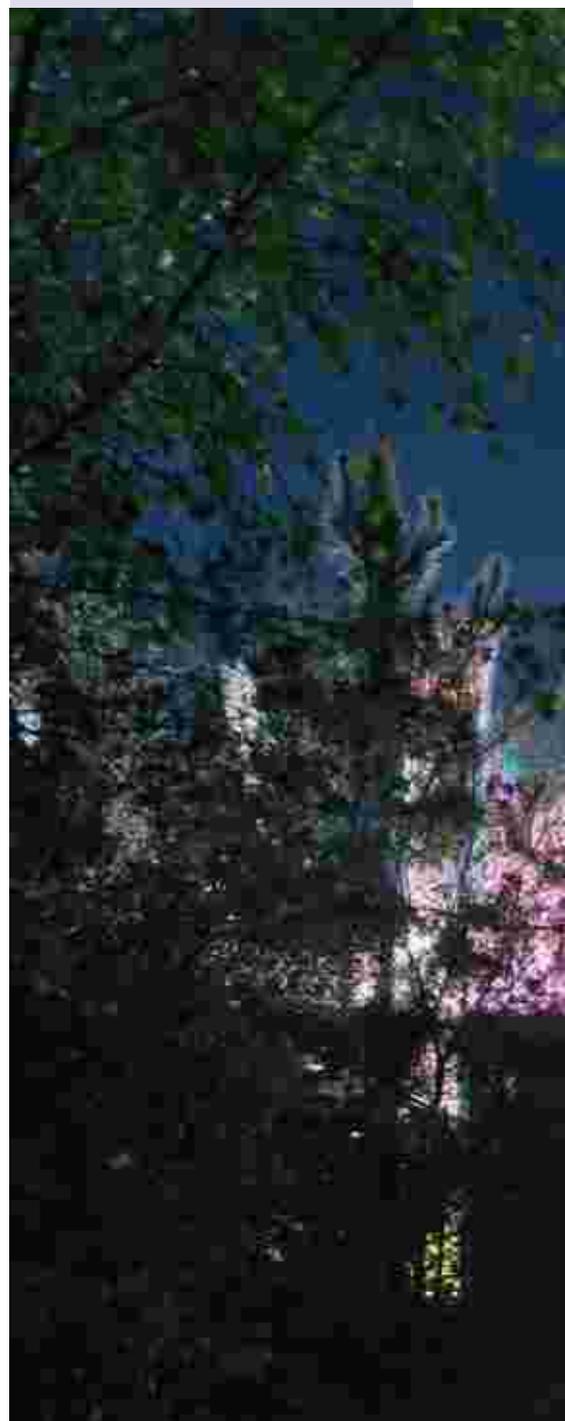
my second novel, I moved part of my plot to Brooklyn, opposite Manhattan, I was obeying this need to ward off my subject. I distanced it twice: first to New York, which I knew well from going there frequently, but where I did not live; and then to Brooklyn, which is not the New York we imagine, from France. This decentring was certainly fundamental for me, it gradually tipped me towards the novel – before that, my first story was very autobiographical.

But this shift had an unexpected effect: it imposed a space on me. As I intentionally moved away from more familiar territories, I suddenly had to increase my documentation, verifying details, the effects of reality, images. I discovered, at the heart of fiction, at the heart of its fabrication, a complex entanglement of reality and words: I needed the displacement that the foreign city offered me, but as soon as the story was situated, I needed reality to feed it. Not brute reality – otherwise I would have remained in Paris, at home – but mediatized reality, images, symbols, fragments, words. Starting from memories, but also from testimonies, photos, stories, novels and films, maps, I had to recompose a space, make it “real”, give back this city its circus life.

## Blind to each other

I have the greatest admiration for writers whose imaginations unfold in the great natural spaces, like Cormac McCarthy, but I had other reasons, for myself, to prefer the space of the city to move my novels in. This is because I also had the idea that modern fiction must account for our blind journeys and our anonymity. Today in Paris, I live in a building where people greet each other by lowering their heads when they meet in the elevator. In the Metro, most of the time, they scarcely dare to look each other in the face.

*The ephemeral world of fairgrounds, as seen by French artist Cyrille Weiner. Untitled No. 9, from the Jour de Fêtes (Holiday) series, 2016.*



It is rare to be able to make an entire trip around the city without coming across at least one person who is talking to himself in a disturbing way, one or two beggars, a visibly sociopathic and perhaps psychotic individual, and at some stations, a drug addict at the end of the platform, smoking crack. Sometimes, someone you've seen before. A person we may have come across in the neighbourhood or on the Metro at the same time. But we'll never know what her name is, or what she does for a living, or why she looks happy that day. This beggar who speaks loudly and chooses his words, with his slight foreign accent, where does he come from and how did he find his way here? These young people who appear disguised, are they going to a party? To a concert? What are they studying? Who do they dream of becoming and will they make it? These are the modern fictions.

We are an anonymous people, advancing in our minuscule lives, blind to each other. Our existences timed by the schedules of the suburban trains, still resist a little, deep in our hearts, the city-machine, but we must admit that a simple encounter has become a miracle. We can no longer write the lives of Julien Sorel, Frédéric Moreau or Bel-Ami<sup>1</sup> today.

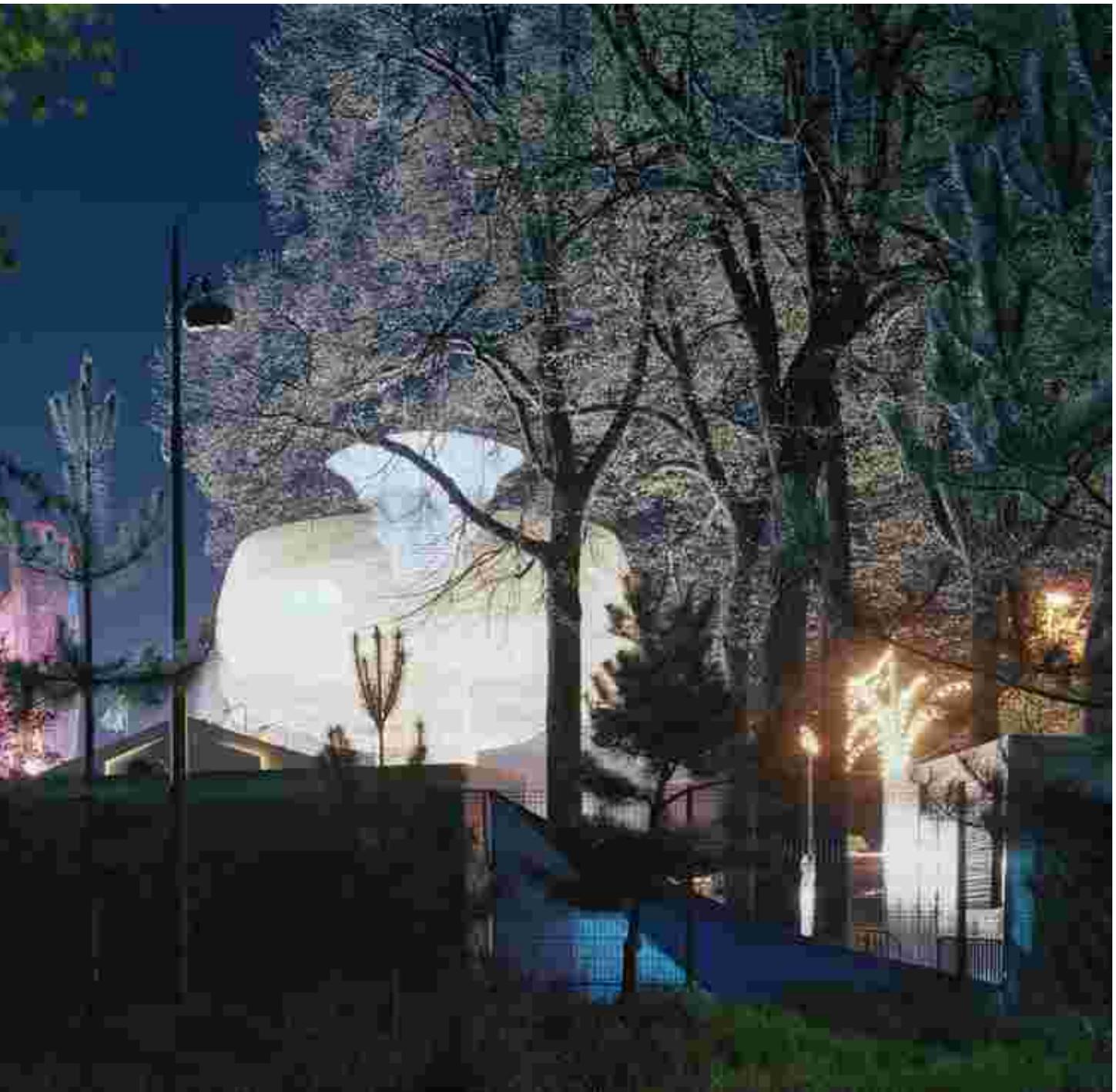
There were the terrorist attacks, too. It may perhaps be because of that. September 11<sup>2</sup>. All the names engraved since in black stone, to give a name to the nameless. Today's heroes are anonymous.

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1. Names of the protagonists of French novels: Julien Sorel in *The Red and the Black* (1830) by Stendhal; Frédéric Moreau in *Sentimental Education* (1869) by Gustave Flaubert; Bel-Ami is the nickname of the main character of Guy de Maupassant's novel of the same name (1885).

2. Reference to the terrorist attacks on 11 September 2001 that targeted symbolic buildings in the United States.

“Cities make it possible to be everywhere, both at home and abroad”





## Fragile, like a human memory

I returned to New York in 2008 to write *L'Envers du monde* (Towards the World). The action is set in the crater of Ground Zero, in 2003. A racist murder is committed, at least it is assumed that it is racist. We follow the characters who revolve around this story as if around an empty centre, an incomprehensible absence, and it is obviously the shadow of the twin towers that looms. The city here offers another of its characteristics, which could be called its geology: the city is made up of strata. It forgets them in its use, but the places bear the traces.

The city makes History part of our daily lives. 2003 was the time when the United States was transitioning from the punitive war in Afghanistan to the preventive war in Iraq. It was also the year that Daniel Libeskind's magnificent project was accepted. The Ground Zero crater, historic and symbolic, where the towers of the World Trade Center had turned inside out like a glove in the ground, this place laden with meaning became a strange and transient place – it was no longer the esplanade of the Twin Towers and it was not yet the Freedom Tower. A place of memory as fragile as a human memory. It seemed to me it was the work of art today, to establish this kind of place that is also a moment. The work of Libeskind, admirable in its intelligence, also says this in its own way by digging, at the site of the vanished towers, those endless shafts of shadows that imprint, in the space, the place of the absent towers.

Because that's what mourning is, like memory, like ruin, and the cursed material of the writer, or of any artist, this is what it is: the unbearable presence of absence.

I started tracking it. In Japan, post-Fukushima<sup>3</sup>, where I lived to write *Les Evaporés* (The Evaporated), in which a man who deliberately disappears crosses the path of the damned uprooted by the disaster. I tracked it down to Detroit, Michigan, where an entire metropolis was sinking into bankruptcy, two-thirds of its inhabitants fleeing, swept away by the economic and financial crisis of 2008. Detroit, the machine city, the city of Ford and General Motors (GM), the *Metropolis*<sup>4</sup> of the American dream that devoured its children. Detroit that was suffocating without inhabitants, the first city of this size to experience this, like the canary in the coal mine, warned those who accused banks and the business community of being irresponsible. Detroit, whose ruins, like those of another distant civilization, of factories, supermarkets, schools and theatres, invaded by vegetation, resembled a sort of tragic *Planet of the Apes*<sup>5</sup>.

3. Reference to the catastrophic nuclear accident in Fukushima, Japan, in March 2011.

4. *Metropolis* is a sci-fi film by Austrian-born German-American director Fritz Lang, made in 1927 and inscribed on UNESCO's Memory of the World register. A dystopian vision of the twenty-first-century city.

5. *The Planet of the Apes* is a science-fiction novel (1963) by the French writer Pierre Boulle, which inspired American director Tim Burton's film of the same name in 2001, and also series of films produced by Twentieth Century Fox, the US film studio. The American media franchise also covers television series, books, comics, and video games.

The anguished and prophetic dream of a planet rid of us.

I didn't go to Detroit while I was writing the novel. There were countless photos, stories by journalists like Charlie LeDuff of the *Detroit Free Press*, and others. Getting information, knowing what was happening, where to place things, was not a problem. On the contrary, Detroit was documented to saturation. The problem was getting out.

## Resisting the charm of the Pied Piper

One of my ideas was the analogy of this automobile crisis with the German medieval tale of *The Pied Piper of Hamelin* – a village in the throes of the plague calls in a magic flute player, who takes the rats far away from the village and drowns them in the river. But when he comes back, they refuse to pay him: they don't have the money. The ruthless Pied Piper then casts a spell on all the children of the village and takes them away with him. He drowns them in the river.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Pied Piper of industrial capitalism attracted all the poor workers in the rural south of the US, many of them blacks, to Detroit, with the promise of a bright future. At that time, the Pied Piper sold houses and cars on credit.



© Silvana Reggiardo

*Panoramic photomontage from the Les présences désagrégées (Disaggregated attendances) series, Paris 1998-2000, by Italian artist Silvana Reggiardo.*

But when people did not want to pay the price, when they rebelled during the 1967 Detroit riots, the Pied Piper was offended. He left for China with the jobs, and in Detroit people fell back into poverty little by little. In spite of its cruelty, this tale appealed to a child's imagination. One of the stories in the novel, therefore, is about a group of runaway children who take advantage of the disorganization of public transport and schools in the city, to live a kind of adventure, in a vacant lot, an abandoned school. Something that was a little bit like *Treasure Island*<sup>6</sup>.

But I had a problem with reality. My story was set between two bankruptcies: that of Lehman Brothers, 15 September 2008, and that of General Motors<sup>7</sup>, 1 June 2009. These were historical and objective milestones. However, the kids couldn't survive all that time. I started following them on the eve of All Saints' Day, on Devil's Night<sup>8</sup>: they were setting fire to an abandoned house. A few days later, they run away. It's early November.

6. *Treasure Island* (1883) is an adventure novel by the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson.

7. Lehman Brothers was a multinational investment bank that collapsed, in its 158th year, in September 2008, triggering a global financial crisis. General Motors is a US carmaker, which was placed under US bankruptcy protection in June 2009.

8. Devil's Night, 30 October, is the night before Halloween.

“ At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Pied Piper of industrial capitalism attracted all the poor workers in the rural south of the US, many of them blacks, to Detroit, with the promise of a bright future ”

I finally decide they can hold on until Christmas. It's a reasonable maximum. But that forces me to twist the whole reality.

In the novel, GM is no longer GM, it becomes “the Company”. The chronology is disrupted. I have all my documentation in two months. And suddenly, everything is clear. The logic of fiction imposes itself on reality. If my story of dystopia, bankruptcy and urban jungle runs until Christmas, then I go into the winter. It's cold in Detroit in the winter. And suddenly, this city of which I had seen a thousand images becomes a bit more than a backdrop. It comes alive in an organic way. I mentally observe the snow falling on the lawns, muffling the sound of footsteps. I see the wind rushing through the empty windows of vacant buildings, whistling as it turns around the abandoned houses. I can feel the cold with its metallic taste creeping into humid clothes that nothing can warm up again. I see the halos of street lighting go out, replaced by the mysterious glitter of the snow under the silvery moon. And this Detroit of phantasmagoria, of fiction, is no more real than the real one – in the real Detroit at that time, people were dying every day. But it becomes communicable, representable. In the machine city, we can once again imagine human destinies. Tiny resistances. If the story runs until Christmas, it's because it's a tale, which doesn't have to be cruel. Maybe the kids will make it.

And the city becomes a circus once again, where the destinies of anonymous acrobats play out, without a net, sliding from trapeze to trapeze, brushing each other without seeing each other, catching each other in flight, in the hope of a rest, of an encounter, like a miracle at the height of man, under the starlit tent.



French author **Thomas B. Reverdy** has received numerous awards for his novels, notably for *Les Derniers Feux* (The Last Fires, 2008), *L'Envers du monde* (Towards the World, 2010), *Les Évaporés* (The Evaporated, 2013), *Il était une ville* (There was a City, 2015) and *L'Hiver du mécontentement* (The Winter of Discontent, 2018).

### Names mentioned

- Baudelaire, Charles (1821-1867), French poet
- LeDuff, Charlie (1966-), American journalist
- Libeskind, Daniel (1946-), Polish-American architect
- McCarthy, Cormac (1933-), American writer
- More, Thomas (1478-1535), English philosopher, theologian, jurist and politician, author of *Utopia*
- Rimbaud, Arthur (1854-1891), French poet



# Reviving the spirit of Mosul

In February 2018, UNESCO launched the "Revive the Spirit of Mosul" initiative at the International Conference for the Reconstruction of Iraq in Kuwait. It brought the international community together under its aegis, to participate in the reconstruction of this city, which has been decimated by war, looting and destruction. This reconstruction must be part of Mosul's history – a plural history, at the crossroads of the cultures and religions of the Middle East.

Mosul has seen its heritage ransacked, its identity bruised, at the hands of ISIL. The destruction targeted places of worship (mosques and churches), the shrine of Nabi Yunus and the Assyrian and Parthian statues and frescoes of the Mosul Museum. The city's library, with its several thousand ancient texts, was deliberately set aflame. Antiquities were trafficked.

The ISIL occupation completely devastated Iraq's education system, from pre-primary to higher education. When subjects such as history or the arts were replaced with content designed to incite hate, the vast majority of families decided to take their children out of school. Those who remained were subjected to systematic indoctrination, mainly by teachers who were forced to relay the group's extremist ideology.

Considering these observations, it is not just the cultural heritage that needs to be restored, but also dignity and memory. UNESCO therefore decided to mobilize the international community, to propose an initiative that would combine heritage, culture and education.

It is being deployed in collaboration with the Government of Iraq, along these three lines, and involves multiple actors – neighbouring countries, international organizations and the European Union (EU). The initiative aims to give a new perspective, a new impetus, to Mosul.

In addition to the restoration of monuments and the rehabilitation of Mosul's historic urban fabric, a project to rebuild houses in the old city (Mosul and Basra), and to train cultural heritage professionals, will be implemented with the support of the EU. This is based on a participatory approach that focuses on skills development and job creation to promote social cohesion and community reconciliation.



© Zaid AL-OBEDI / AFP



Along the same lines, the inventory of religious sites damaged by ISIL has resulted in a publication that will serve as a support for interfaith dialogue workshops, permitting the recreation of links between communities. An emergency plan for the safeguarding of intangible heritage in danger and the creation of “cultural mobile spaces” for displaced persons and host communities is being prepared.

At the same time, the Iraqi government has called on UNESCO to develop a national education strategy for the period 2020-2030, in order to rebuild the foundations of an education system that meets the needs of its population. Simultaneously, educational projects are being implemented with the purpose of preventing the resurgence of extremism and recreating the conditions for living together.

*Iraqi cellist Karim Wasfi performs with an orchestra in Mosul's war-ravaged Old City, on 10 November 2018.*



Two projects will aim to ensure that the primary schools in the Old City of Mosul are safe places where students can flourish, learn and interact with others with respect, thus contributing to tolerance and peaceful coexistence in the long term.

These projects, supported by Japan and the Netherlands, are based on a holistic approach that involves children, but also teachers, communities, parents and educational staff in the prevention of extremism. The upgrading of higher education will also be a key action in rebuilding the country and its system of production. Beyond a purely economic approach, it is a matter of enabling institutions such as Mosul's university library to once again become the cultural and intellectual epicentres they used to be.

These different projects pursue the same goals: to protect, rebuild and educate. Because culture and education are the only long-term responses against the violence of extremism and its destructiveness. This approach is aligned with the vision of the Iraqi government, as it is up to the Iraqi authorities to conduct this initiative locally, while UNESCO continues its coordinating role.

**Stefania Giannini and Ernesto Ottone Ramirez, Assistant Directors-General for Education and for Culture, UNESCO.**

## Learning in cities

The UNESCO Global Network of Learning Cities (GNLC) is an international policy-oriented network that provides inspiration, know-how and best practice. Based on the sharing of ideas and solutions between cities, the network has a two-fold objective – to ensure quality education that is inclusive and equitable, with lifelong learning opportunities for all; and to make cities open to all, safe, resilient and sustainable.

An international conference on Learning Cities is held every two years, providing a platform for policy dialogue and the exchange of best practices. The UNESCO Learning City Awards are presented on this occasion. At the fourth International Conference on Learning Cities in Medellín, Colombia, in 2019, ten cities are being awarded for their exemplary commitment. They include Aswan (Egypt), Chengdu (China), Heraklion (Greece), Ibadan (Nigeria), Medellín (Colombia), Melitopol (Ukraine), Petaling Jaya (Malaysia), Santiago (Mexico), Seodaemun-gu (Republic of Korea), and Sønderborg (Denmark).

To highlight just a few examples: Chengdu has combined learning with thematic city walks; Medellín has reintegrated over 4,500 school drop-outs into the education system by focusing on each individual; Petaling Jaya provides free bus services on four city routes, which also disseminate information through onboard screens.

## Culture: the DNA of cities

Crafts and popular arts, digital arts, design, film, gastronomy, literature, music. These are the keys that open the doors to UNESCO's Creative Cities.

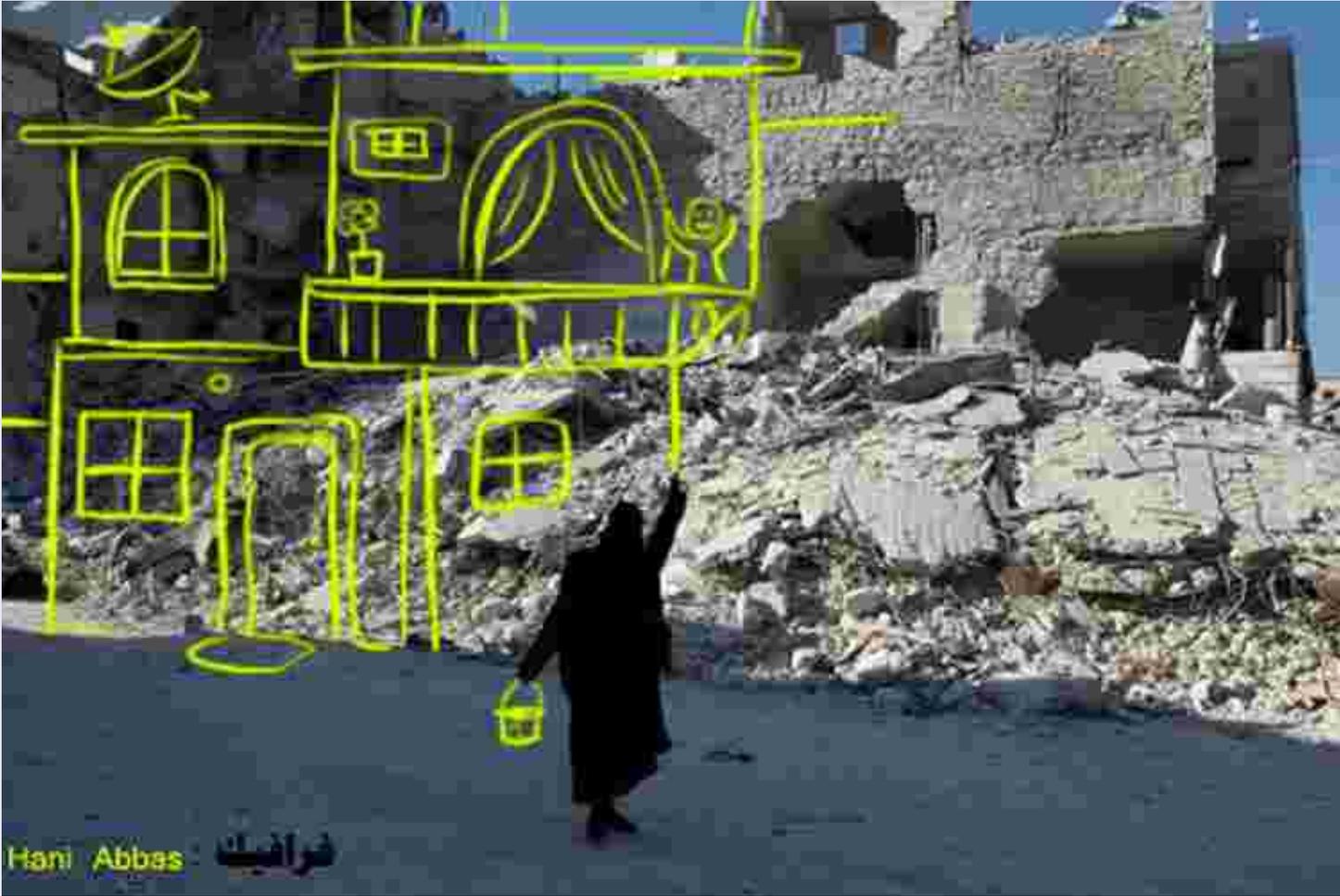
Linked through an ever-expanding network since 2004, these cities rely on creativity and the cultural industries, considered strategic factors for sustainable development – whether economic, social, cultural or environmental. The network currently includes 180 member cities in seventy-two countries. It serves as a platform for action for the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development at the city level.

Indeed, among the seventeen objectives of the 2030 Programme, the eleventh – “ensuring that cities and human settlements are inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable” – affirms the essential role of culture in urban areas. This is why UNESCO launched an international initiative in 2015, which resulted in *Culture: Urban Future*, the UNESCO Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development (2016). It provides a global overview of the safeguarding, conservation and management of urban heritage, and the promotion of cultural and creative industries.

According to British author Charles Landry, who has popularized the concept of creative cities since the 1980s, culture is the DNA of cities. “It is who we are, where we are, where we've come from, and where we might go,” he says.



# Aleppo: A first step towards healing



© Hani Abbas (Palestine/Syrie) / Cartooning for peace

Hani Abbas

Challenge of mass, Aleppo, Syria 2013, from the collection of *Cartooning for Peace*, the international network of editorial cartoonists, supported by UNESCO.

The conflict in Syria has caused heavy loss of life and extensive damage to cities and infrastructure, devastating the economic and social life of the Syrian people and their cultural heritage. Once hailed as an example of best practice in urban conservation, the Ancient City of Aleppo, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1986, was added to the List of World Heritage in Danger in 2013. Heavily affected by the conflict, the city has been reduced to ruins in many places.

Over 500 damaged properties – from the Citadel of Aleppo to markets, museums, places of worship, and other historical buildings – have recently been identified in a study\* conducted by UNESCO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR).

This is the first comprehensive inventory of the material damage and memory loss suffered by this ancient city between 2013 and 2017. The capital of the Amorite kingdom of Yamhad, Aleppo experienced a tremendous boom at the beginning of 2000 BC. It was considered the seat of the storm god, Halab, according to the authors of the book, Ruba Kasmó, a Syrian architect from Aleppo, and Jean-Claude David, a French geographer.

Twenty cultural heritage experts, historians, archaeologists, architects and satellite imagery analysts participated in this project, which began as soon as the shelling of the city stopped in December 2016.



“It is not just the stones that have been destroyed. The soul of the city has been shattered”

Illustrated with photos of the city and its buildings before and after the conflict began, and providing QR codes with which to access satellite images and 3D documentation, the study offers a solid technical basis for the planning of the restoration and rehabilitation of Aleppo. It reveals that more than ten per cent of Aleppo's historic buildings have been destroyed and that more than half the buildings assessed showed moderate to severe damage.

But it is not just the stones that have been destroyed. The soul of the city has been shattered. The restoration of memory is as, if not more, important, than reconstructing buildings. The Great Mosque of Aleppo, for example, was a jewel of Seljuk civilization. It was unique not only for its minaret and exceptional decoration, but also for its social role. This place of worship has been a fundamental element of Syrian culture, with generations of Syrians gathering here over the course of nine hundred years. Its devastation strikes at the very essence of this community.

The inhabitants of Aleppo are the custodians of the history and memory of their city. It will be up to them to revive its cultural, social and economic life. The authors have dedicated this book to them, to help them overcome the trauma of war.

**Chantal Connaughton, British writer, editor and communications specialist.**

\* *Five Years of Conflict: The State of Cultural Heritage in the Ancient City of Aleppo*, published by UNESCO and the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR). The study was conducted in partnership with the Syrian government's Directorate-General for Antiquities and Museums (DGAM) and EAMENA (Endangered Archaeology in the Middle East & North Africa), based in the United Kingdom. It was funded by the Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the UNESCO Heritage Emergency Fund. 143 pages, December 2018.

## Welcoming cities

13 November 2015. The French capital is in the grip of a series of suicide attacks, the deadliest the country has seen in recent history – stirring up emotions all around the world. Meanwhile, far from the commotion in Paris, six cameras closely follow the daily lives of a father and his daughter in Bologna, Italy; a family in Seville, Spain; a couple in love in Riga, Latvia; a lonely young man in Hamburg, Germany; a determined teenager in Toulouse, France; a couple getting together in Loures, Portugal. Scattered all over Europe, these people have nothing in common except that they are all migrants. A group that will pay the high price for increased security and border controls in the aftermath of the Paris bombings.

Their story is told in *13.11*, a six-episode TV mini-series (fiction), produced in 2017 by Elenfant Film, an Italian video and film production company. It aims to show the human face of migration, and to prompt us not to forget that every minute, twenty people are displaced from their homes in our world today.

The city of Bologna was the driving force behind this project. The city is leader of the European Coalition of Cities Against Racism (ECCAR), launched at the end of the fourth European Conference of Cities for Human Rights in 2004.

The same year, UNESCO created a vast global network of cities united around the fight against racism, discrimination, xenophobia and exclusion in urban areas. The International Coalition of Inclusive and Sustainable Cities (ICCAR) brings together the regional coalitions created in Europe (2004), Africa (2006), Latin America and the Caribbean (2006), Asia and the Pacific (2007), Canada (2007), Arab States (2008) and North America (2013).

Mobilizing cities to adopt a culture of solidarity and cooperation takes place through a variety of channels, including regular meetings of mayors, international conferences, and publications. In May 2016, for example, UNESCO and the foundation of its Goodwill Ambassador, Marianna V. Vardinoyannis, launched the Welcoming Cities for Refugees: Promoting Inclusion and Protecting Rights initiative. Conducted in partnership with ECCAR, the initiative resulted in the 2016 publication of the same name. It provides the first thorough international mapping and analysis of city and migration issues, with a focus on Europe. The publication also reviews perspectives of international networks on cities and migration, and identifies a set of common principles, guidelines and actions to be carried out in the field of urban governance.

## Towards smart cities

Water security, sanitation, urban violence, inequality, discrimination, pollution, unemployment. In a world where urbanization is burgeoning, these are some of the critical challenges that cities will have to face. Home to half the world's population today, cities are expected to shelter two-thirds of it by 2050.

Born in the early 2000s, the concept of the smart city seeks to provide answers to these challenges by combining new technologies with humanist ideals. Through innovative urban systems, smart cities promote socio-economic development while enhancing the quality of life.

Huge opportunities are opening up with smart cities. But to be effective, this “smartness” must adopt a humanistic approach, and leave no one behind. This is the key message of the new publication *Smart Cities: Shaping Societies for 2030*, co-edited by UNESCO and the Netexplo Observatory, and presented at the 12th Annual Netexplo Forum, 17 to 19 April 2019, at UNESCO Headquarters in Paris.

To evaluate the contribution of smart cities to sustainable growth, UNESCO and the World Technopolis Association (WTA) jointly organized the 15th WTA H-Tech Fair and the 2018 Global Innovation Forum in Binh Duong New City, Viet Nam, in October 2018. Under the theme “Towards a better place to live: Smart City”, sustainable development strategies and policies were discussed, and technological solutions to various urban problems were proposed.



# Yazd:

## Living in symbiosis with the desert

Modern cities and cultural traditions may be perceived as contradictory notions. Synonymous with modernity, new ways of life and multiple opportunities, we always imagine that cities look to the future. Entrenched in the past, traditions, on the other hand, are thought to obstruct progress. The preservation of heritage is often viewed as costly and time-consuming for a relatively low return on the investment, and is therefore accorded less attention than infrastructure development.

Even so, traditions continue to have a life of their own, and cities would be empty shells without them. These customs are passed on from generation to generation and are constantly evolving – allowing communities to respond to new needs and to adapt to changes in their environment. More than we can imagine, they are able to provide tailor-made solutions to current problems.

### The qanats of Iran

In the heart of Iran, for example, the old town of Yazd has greatly benefited from the ingenuity of its inhabitants, who over the centuries, have developed the art and technologies necessary to live in symbiosis with the desert. They have harnessed the harsh nature of their environment to make it a source of artistic creation. This is expressed through their architecture, and especially through innovative urban planning.

Yazd's elegant earthen architecture has thus been able to withstand the ravages of time and extreme climate, leading the historic city to be listed on the World Heritage List in 2017. In spite of the aridity of the climate, agriculture employs a significant proportion of the inhabitants of the city and the surrounding region. This is mainly due to the preservation of an infrastructure that dates back a thousand years – the qanats.

The ingenious system of qanats is designed to capture groundwater. Devised in Iran centuries ago, it has been adopted in many parts of the Middle East and the Mediterranean Basin.



CC BY-SA 4.0 photo: Bernard Gagnon

Gently sloping underground channels, or tunnels, collect water from aquifers with the help of gravity, transferring it downhill for drinking and agricultural purposes. A series of vertical well shafts are drilled at regular intervals along the route, communicating with the surface of the ground. This assists the construction and maintenance of the qanat, providing ventilation and access for workers, equipment and debris. The technology of these underground aqueducts has stood the test of time and is now a model for sustainable groundwater use.

Today, 37,000 qanats are still operational in Iran, supplying eleven per cent of the country's water. They have been used mainly for irrigation since the installation of a water distribution network in 1961.

Farmers maintain a sustainable balance between the water flow and cultivated areas by adjusting – depending on their reserves – the water distribution between water-intensive farms and low-consumption orchards. The core concept of the qanats is that it is up to humans to adjust to available water resources, not the other way around.

Qanats are not just examples of well-preserved ancient infrastructure. The search and control of water are so vital for life in the desert, that considerable efforts have been made by communities to maintain and improve this essential know-how from generation to generation – and to adapt it to current realities.



*The historical garden of Dolat Abad in Yazd, Iran, with its fountains and ornamental pools.*



The social fabric has largely been woven around the principles of sharing, ownership and distribution of water resources. These days, however, an elected qanat council has replaced the traditional public gatherings of the past, to facilitate decision-making processes.

## Perpetuating know-how

The trade of the *moqannis*, the well-diggers or geo-hydrological experts who maintain the qanats, has also evolved. In the past, the wide range of skills needed – to find underground water, deciding on the best location for the wells, mastering the techniques of excavation, cleaning and repair of wells and tunnels, and the wisdom of managing the water – were passed down from father to son.

## Cities and living heritage

Every spring, the city of Recife, in the far east of Brazil, dons its carnival clothes. It's time for music, dance, optimism and euphoria. At the heart of the festivities is the Frevo. In this frenetic carnival dance music, we recognize the regular cadence of military marching music, the marked beats of the Brazilian tango, the harmonic patterns of the Caribbean quadrille, the lively tempo of polka and the polyrhythm of jazz – a mélange of musical genres of diverse origins, but all typically urban.

You need athletic skills to dance to the sounds of the Frevo! The *Passo*, the accompanying dance, has more than a hundred rigorously structured steps – its high jumps and other acrobatics give it an air of extraordinary joy and freedom.

The Carnival lasts only a week, but its spirit lingers in the city all year round. The residents of Recife, across all social classes and generations, gather together in their spare time to prepare for the next festival. Everyone contributes their skills, talents and knowledge. New pieces of music are composed, new dance feats are invented, new costumes and disguises are made – all competing in imagination.

If the inhabitants of Recife have something in common, it is the Frevo – it nurtures their sense of belonging to the same culture, and strengthens community values and social cohesion. It is these values that led to the inscription of the Frevo on UNESCO's List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2012.

Intangible cultural heritage is a bridge between traditional and contemporary cultural values. It is the living expression of oral traditions, craft skills, artistic, social or ritual customs, knowledge and know-how handed down to us by previous generations.

In urban areas, this living heritage is a creative force that binds and strengthens communities.

To ensure that this ancestral occupation flourishes, the International Centre on Qanats and Historic Hydraulic Structure (ICQHS), affiliated to UNESCO, and the Faculty of Qanat in Taft, provide education in the field. Located about twenty kilometres south of Yazd, the Taft college has been offering a two-year apprenticeship since 2005. Students are trained by traditional masters in theory and practice, in the Yazd desert. The profession has also received additional recognition – master *moqannis* can now be licensed by the Ministry of Justice to settle qanat disputes.

Of course, water management in a country with many desert areas such as Iran is extremely complex. In recent decades, new technologies for the exploitation and sharing of water resources have been developed to meet the needs of a growing population and economic imperatives. This modern infrastructure sometimes competes with traditional systems, leading to water shortages in extreme cases.

Nevertheless, the qanats and the resulting know-how remain a pillar of Yazd's urban planning and an integral part of its future projects. This is why institutional management and safeguard mechanisms have been adopted to complement the customary system. Three government agencies oversee qanat management, while the ICQHS carries out research and capacity-building activities.

## The cultural backgrounds of inhabitants

Yazd is living proof that intangible cultural heritage can provide or inspire ingenious solutions, adapted to local conditions. By basing their strategies on local practices and making the most of their cultural resources, cities are more likely to mobilize their populations to participate in their development projects. This requires, of course, that living heritage is valued through appropriate safeguarding measures and the active participation of the holders of traditional knowledge.

Cities vibrate and prosper to the rhythm of the activities and exchanges of their inhabitants. Whether they have been settled for a long time or have arrived only recently, they all bring their own cultural backgrounds with them. Their knowledge, beliefs, traditions, customs and worldviews shape their identities and relationships with others – and, consequently, their cities.

**Vanessa Achilles (France),  
independent researcher and writer.**



# Saving urban landscapes: the Island of Mozambique

*Ilha de Moçambique*, which gives the country its name, is a crescent-shaped coral island four kilometres from the coast of the northern Mozambique mainland, at the entrance to the Indian Ocean's Mossuril Bay.

of paradise is a cultural melting pot of Bantu, Swahili, Arab, Persian, Indian and European influences. The island's rich architecture reflects its dramatic and colourful history. Inhabited by Bantu speakers in the year 200 and recorded on navigation routes of the Indian Ocean since the first millennium, the Island of Mozambique was dominated by Arabian trading between the eighth and sixteenth centuries.

*Beyond the decay of its built heritage, the town of Macuti faces the challenges of overpopulation and poverty.*

© Peter Hess

Barely three kilometres long and 200 to 500 metres wide, with an urban area of about one square kilometre, this little slice





Then, for four centuries (1507 to 1898), this fortified town was the capital and trading post of Portuguese East Africa, at the centre of Portuguese maritime routes between Western Europe and the Indian subcontinent, and later, Asia.

The island's incredible architectural unity is derived from the consistent use – since the sixteenth century – of the same building techniques with the same materials and decorative principles. Recognizing its international historic importance, its exceptional urban fabric, fortifications and other examples of architecture, the Island of Mozambique was inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1991.

Two different types of dwellings and urban systems co-exist here – the city of stone and lime, and the city with palm leaf roofs.

The Stone Town, with its houses made of limestone and wood, has Swahili roots, with Arab and Portuguese influences, and dominates the island's northern half. It is a living museum, with religious, administrative, commercial and military buildings testifying to its role as the first seat of Portuguese colonial government. Occupying two-thirds of the island, it is inhabited by a relatively small part of the population.

The city of Macuti, named after the original palm leaf roofing (*macuti*) of the houses, hosts many variations of the vernacular Swahili architecture, and lies to the south. Organized into seven *bairros* or districts, which are the densest settlements on the island, it is not surprising that Macuti suffers from an acute water shortage, a lack of sanitation and a serious threat of seasonal flooding.

The island's outstanding universal value has borne the brunt of multi-faceted threats, such as uncontrolled development and the impacts of a globalized culture. A lack of financial resources, inadequate infrastructure, a low awareness of conservation among the local population and a weak institutional capacity for conservation management have all contributed to the degradation and poor upkeep of the island's built heritage. For example, an evaluation of the condition of the buildings in the Stone Town has shown that they have deteriorated by fifteen per cent between 1983 and 2012.

## Water and megacities

More than half the world's people live in cities and by 2050, it is expected that sixty-eight per cent of the world's population will live in urban areas. In Latin America, this threshold has already been reached. Migration is a major force in urbanization, with over a third of the world's 68.5 million displaced people living in cities. In 1970, three cities had over ten million inhabitants. Twenty years later, there were ten such megacities. By 2014, there were already twenty-eight, and according to estimates, there will be forty-one by 2030.

Launched in 2015, The Megacities Alliance for Water and Climate (MAWaC) is a forum for international collaboration and dialogue to help megacities adapt to, and mitigate the effects of climate change. With a secretariat provided by UNESCO, the forum brings together all stakeholders in the water sector, allowing megacities to learn from each other's experience, collaborate with the appropriate technical, academic and financial institutions and implement responses to the challenges of climate change and urban growth.

In 2016, UNESCO studied fifteen megacities in collaboration with the French non-profit, ARCEAU IdF, releasing a joint publication, *Water, Megacities and Global Change: Portraits of 15 Emblematic Cities of the World*. In particular, it reveals the common challenges these cities face – from their gigantic size to their social disparities, to access to water and sanitation, and the sustainable management of natural resources.

Indeed, these densely-populated human settlements face new threats every day due to population growth, climate change and the deterioration of urban infrastructure. This is especially true in Asia's developing countries, where more than twenty per cent of the GDP comes from megacities. Managing and providing water and safe, affordable and sustainable services in these cities can prove challenging.

This was the main theme of the seminar, *Building Urban Resilience*, organized by UNESCO in February 2018, during the 9th World Urban Forum in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. The discussions focused on ways to adapt water management to the impacts of climate change in megacities, and the need to raise public awareness and train people in this area. Various management initiatives and practices were also presented, enabling cities to improve basic services, including access to fresh water and sanitation.

Planning and managing cities, making them resilient and equipping them to provide water security for residents is key to a city's success. This is the mission of the Urban Water Management Programme (UWMP), which helps UNESCO Member States to solve the problems they face in this field – through training support, the sharing of scientific knowledge and guidelines, and the exchange of information on different approaches, solutions and management tools.

For more than ten years, UNESCO's International Hydrological Programme (IHP) has published the Urban Water Series, which informs the work of practitioners, policymakers and educators, working in the field of urban water management around the world.

This has prompted UNESCO-driven initiatives on the island to focus on two major areas: the condition of life and habitation in the *bairros* of Macuti and the general degradation of the built heritage of the Stone Town.

Following the adoption of the UNESCO Recommendation on the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) in 2011, it was decided to apply the HUL approach to the island. As part of the UNESCO World Heritage Cities Programme, HUL provides technical assistance and helps World Heritage cities across the globe to better reconcile urban heritage conservation into strategies of socio-economic development.

These new strategies have helped strengthen the governance mechanism for the sustainable management and development of the Island of Mozambique.

**Albino Jopela, programme manager, African World Heritage Fund (AWHF), South Africa.**



# Zoom



*María Magdalena Carmen Mendoza at her home in Guerrero state, Mexico, makes panela, unrefined cane sugar derived from the boiling and evaporation of sugarcane juice. A third of the world's population rely on solid biomass to cook their meals (2017). About 1.4 hours are spent each day collecting firewood – a burden borne mostly by women.*

# Lighting up **the world!**



**Photos: Rubén Salgado Escudero**

**Text: Katerina Markelova**

This photo essay is being published to mark the International Day of Light, celebrated on 16 May.

*Digging a household latrine in Kayah state, Myanmar. In South-East Asia, 65 million people live without electricity, ninety-five per cent of them in four countries – Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar and the Philippines.*

“Do I even have a right to be here?” On more than one occasion, Rubén Salgado Escudero asked himself this question as he travelled through rural Myanmar with his expensive photographic equipment. The Spanish photographer, who visited this country in 2014 on behalf of a humanitarian organization, was amazed by the glaring lack of access to electricity. “Most of the villages I went to, didn’t have electricity,” he explains.

Out of more than 53 million people in Myanmar, 22 million are deprived of this commodity, which until now had been so commonplace in his eyes. While seventy-nine per cent of urban dwellers are supplied with power, this rate drops dramatically in rural areas – where only

forty-three per cent of the population can light their homes at nightfall.

Once his mission was completed, Salgado continued on his path as a freelance photographer. He decided that he would earn the right to be there. He didn’t know how yet, but he wanted to draw attention to the problem. The idea of *Solar Portraits* came to mind when he met villagers equipped with solar panels. “The quality of life of these people was so vastly different from everyone else’s around them,” he recalls.

Energy is indeed “essential for humanity to develop and thrive”, as highlighted in the 2017 Report of the International Energy Agency (IEA). It is essential for the

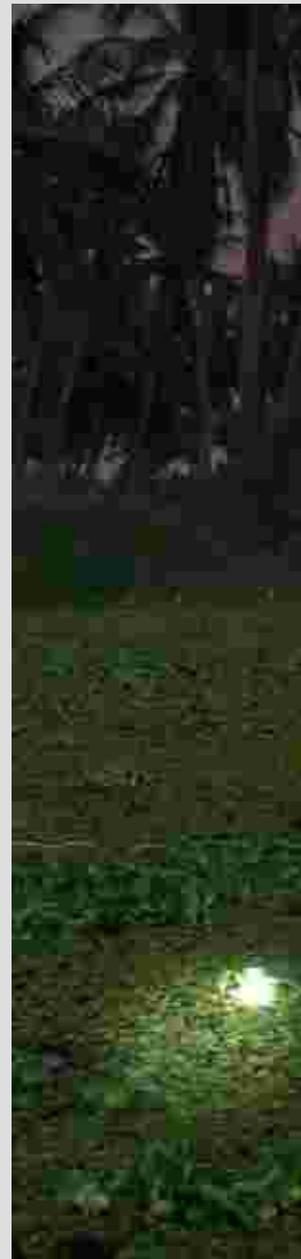
achievement of many of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out by the United Nations in its 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, which includes poverty eradication (SDG1), universal access to quality education (SDG4) and gender equality (SDG5). Clean and affordable energy for all is, in itself, one of these objectives (SDG7). This is the first time that the fundamental role of energy has been recognized on this scale, according to the report.

Yet, “having access to electricity is still a privilege in many countries and not a right,” the photographer says indignantly. In 2017, there were nearly one billion people in the world without electricity.



*Guru Deen Shukla pumps water for his grandson outside his home in India, 2015. Delivering on a high-priority commitment, the Indian government completed the electrification of all villages in early 2018.*

*Faustina Flores Carranza and Juan Astudillo Jesus in their home in Guerrero, Mexico, recently lit by solar energy. This is the first time the couple, married forty-eight years, have been able to look into each others' eyes after dark.*





*Cristóbal Céspedes Lorenzo and his young associate, Francisco Manzanares Cagua, carry freshly-picked coconuts across the river to Copala, Mexico, which they will sell to a company which makes coconut butter and oil.*

But how do we attract the attention of the public, who are increasingly jaded by the negative news that reaches them every day? "By finding new creative ways to tell stories, to capture people's attention," Salgado responds.

He takes his photos with only the light of LED bulbs powered by solar panels. This light, which gives them an air of Rembrandt portraits – and undoubtedly the positive energy that emanates from it – aroused an interest that the photographer did not anticipate. Published in *Time*, the American weekly, and the German monthly, *GEO*, the Myanmar portraits were enthusiastically received by the public. So much so that the photographer, with the help of an Austrian reader, launched a crowdfunding campaign, *Let there be light Myanmar*.

The funds collected were used to equip three villages with solar panels in 2016, benefiting 400 inhabitants.

Since then, the project has continued to expand. The novice photographer was noticed by the American magazine *National Geographic*, which sent him to Uganda in sub-Saharan Africa in 2015, to complete the series. It is estimated that by 2030, this region will be home to 600 million of the world's 674 million people living without electricity.

In the same year, Salgado visited India, which is currently performing one of the greatest feats in the history of electrification. Half a billion Indians have been connected to the power grid since 2000, giving the country hope that it will reach its goal of universal access to electricity by the early 2020s.

In 2017, the photographer travelled all over Mexico. In 2019, he plans to visit the Navajo in New Mexico (United States), Guatemala, Colombia and the Philippines.

Nowadays, Salgado organizes workshops in the schools of each community he encounters in the course of his work. Through practical experiments with solar bulbs, students are introduced to the concept of renewable energy, which is, according to the IEA, the cheapest solution for three-quarters of the new connections needed in the world. "The sooner we can make children conscious of the importance of this issue, the more leaders we will have in future who will care, and take us in the right direction," he explains.

## An innovative photovoltaic film to aid education in Togo

On 21 February 2019, a cargo ship left the port of Saint-Nazaire, France. On board: sixty-five kits, which included portable rechargeable LED lamps and solar chargers in the form of pouches. These pouches are equipped with a flexible, ultra-thin and organic photovoltaic film, with minimal environmental impact. The shipper: ARMOR, a French company which developed this innovative photovoltaic technology in 2016. Its target audience: 212 students from Agou Akplolo, a non-electrified village north of Lomé, Togo. Only thirty-five per cent of the 7.7 million inhabitants in this sub-Saharan country have access to electricity. The project is the result of a partnership that UNESCO signed with ARMOR in December 2018. Its objective is to provide light for children, so they can study after sunset.



*Students do their homework in a solar-powered after-school community centre in Yangon, Myanmar. Studies have shown the pivotal role of electricity in promoting literacy and improving the quality of education. In 2017, only twenty-seven per cent of schools in the country had electricity.*





*In India's Odisha state, villagers trap fish using cone-shaped baskets and solar lighting. According to the government, 9.6 million households in the state have electricity.*



*Daw Mu Nan, a Padaung farmer in Kayah state, Myanmar. Solar panels have become cheaper and more efficient, making them a viable and instant source of energy.*

*After a day of fishing on Lake Victoria, Ugandan Lukwago Kaliste spends the evening breaking rocks into small pieces, which he sells for use in building foundations. It takes him three hours to fill a small truck with rocks, which earns him \$10. Only nineteen per cent of Uganda's population had access to electricity in 2016.*





*Thanks to solar energy, Ugandan mechanics Ibrahim Kalungi and Godfrey Mteza can work longer hours and earn more money. The electrification rate in sub-Saharan Africa is currently forty-three per cent.*

*Too Lei, an oozie or elephant handler, poses on his elephant in Myanmar's Bago region. For 300 years, oozies have worked with elephants to ensure sustainable logging.*





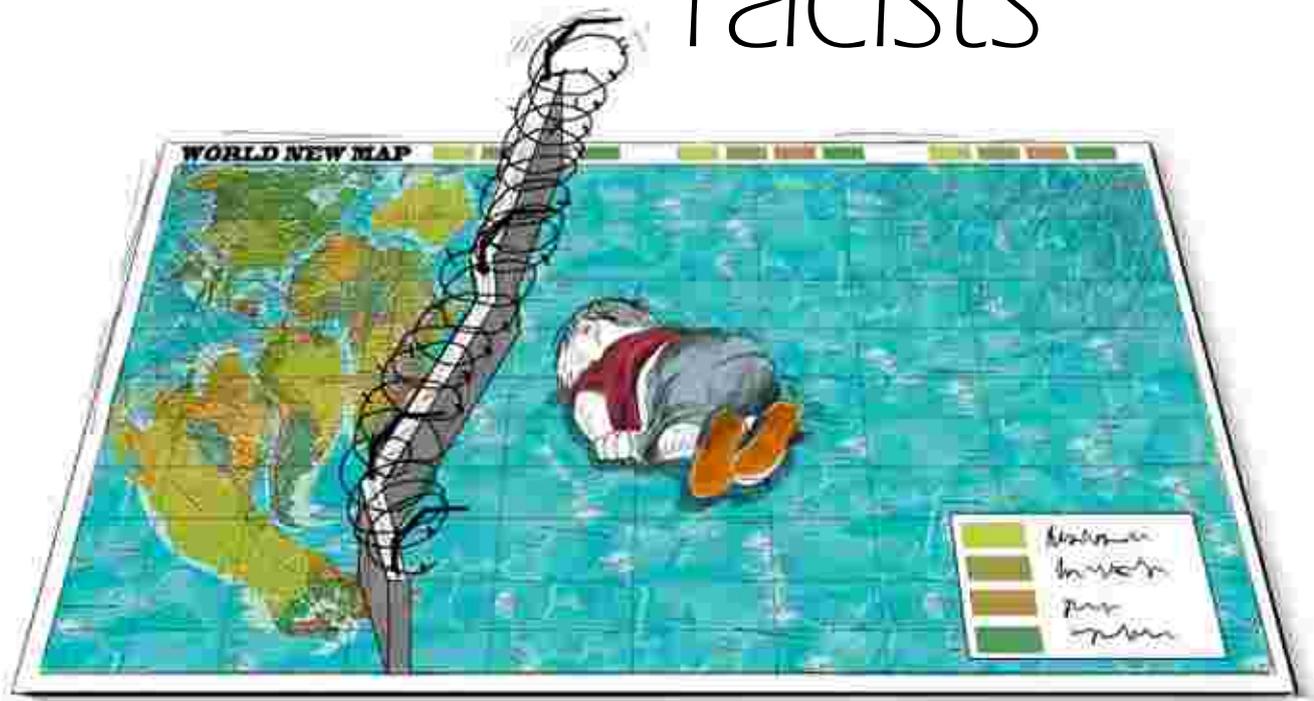
Ideas

**We are all migrants**

*Poster by American graphic  
designer, Valerie Pettis,  
part of the Freedom of  
Movement campaign run by  
Poster for Tomorrow in 2017.*

© posterfortomorrow / Valerie Pettis

# Racism does not need racists



New world map, drawing by Rafat Alkhateeb, Jordan.

© Rafat Alkhateeb / Cartoon Movement

## Jorge Majfud

The debate on what we call a “migration crisis” has a racial component. It is a pattern which consistently repeats itself in laws, narratives and practices, like it has done over centuries, according to Uruguayan-American writer Jorge Majfud. Taking us on an instructive detour through history, he points out the total absence – in this same heated debate – of any mention of half a million European immigrants who live illegally in the United States and another million Americans living illegally in Mexico.

On the occasion of World Refugee Day, June 20, we dedicate the Ideas section to displaced people around the world. According to the latest figures published by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), the number of forcibly displaced people worldwide reached a record 68.5 million in 2017.

In my classes, I always try to make clear the difference between opinions and facts. It is a fundamental rule, a very simple intellectual exercise that we owe ourselves to undertake in the post-Enlightenment era. I started becoming obsessed with such obvious matters when I found out, in 2005, that some students were arguing that something “is true because I believe it”, and they weren’t joking. Since then, I’ve suspected that such intellectual conditioning, such a conflation of physics with metaphysics (cleared up by Averroes almost a thousand years ago) – which year by year becomes increasingly dominant (faith as the supreme criterion, regardless of all evidence to the contrary) – has its origins in the majestic churches of the southern United States.

But critical thinking involves so much more than just distinguishing facts from opinions. Trying to define what a fact is would suffice. The very idea of objectivity itself paradoxically originates from a single perspective, from one lens. And anyone knows that with the lens of one photographic or video camera, only one part of reality is captured, which quite often is subjective or used to distort reality in the supposed interest of objectivity.

For some reason, students tend to be more interested in opinions than facts. Maybe because of the superstitious idea that an informed opinion is derived from the synthesis of thousands of facts. This is a dangerous idea, but we can’t run away from our responsibility to give our opinion when it’s required. All that we can and should do is take note that an informed opinion continues to be an opinion which must be tested or challenged.

## An opinion

On a certain day, students discussed the caravan of 5,000 Central Americans (at least 1,000 of whom were children) fleeing violence and heading for the Mexican border with the US. President Donald Trump had ordered the border closed and called those looking for refuge “invaders”. On 29 October 2018, he tweeted: “This is an invasion of our Country and our Military is waiting for you!”. The military deployment to the border alone cost the US about \$200 million.

Since one of my students insisted on knowing my opinion, I started off with the most controversial side of the issue. I observed that this country, the US, was founded upon the fear of invasion, and only a select few have always known how to exploit this weakness, with tragic consequences. Maybe this paranoia came about with the English invasion of 1812, but if history tells us anything, it's that the US has practically never suffered an invasion of its territory – if we exclude the 9/11 attacks in 2001; the one on Pearl Harbor, which at the time was a military base in foreign territory; and, prior to that, at the very beginning of the twentieth century, the brief incursion of a Mexican named Pancho Villa mounted upon a horse. But the US has indeed specialized in invading other countries from the time of its founding – it took over the Indian territories, then half of Mexico, from Texas, to reinstall slavery, to California; it intervened directly in Latin American affairs, to repress popular protests and support bloody dictatorships – all in the name of defence and security. And always with tragic consequences.

*Missing home, by students of the Colegio Americano Anáhuac in San Nicolás de los Garza, Mexico. It received second prize in the Primary School category of the UNESCO Associated Schools Network global art contest, "Opening Hearts and Minds to Refugees"; 2017.*

Therefore, the idea that a few thousand poor people on foot are going to invade the most powerful country in the world is simply a joke in poor taste. And it's likewise in bad taste for some Mexicans on the other side to adopt this same xenophobic talk that's been directed at them – inflicting on others the same abuse they've suffered.

### A critical view

In the course of the conversation, I mentioned in passing that in addition to the foundational paranoia, there was a racial component to the argument. "You don't need to be a racist to defend the borders," said one student.

True, I noted. You don't need to be a racist to defend borders or laws. At first glance, the statement is irrefutable. However, if we take history and the wider current context into consideration, an openly racist pattern jumps out at us right away.

At the end of the nineteenth century, the French novelist Anatole France wrote: "The law, in its majestic equality, forbids rich and poor alike to sleep under bridges, to beg in the streets, and to steal their bread." You don't need to be an elitist to support an economically stratified culture. You don't need to be sexist to spread the most rampant type of sexism. Thoughtlessly engaging in

certain cultural practices and voicing your support for some law or another is quite often all it takes.

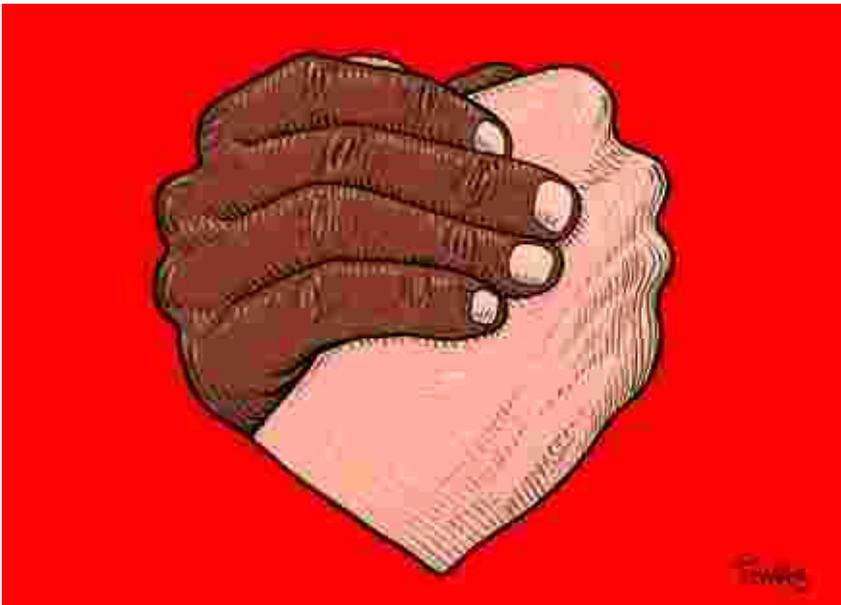
I drew a geometric figure on the board and asked students what they saw there. Everyone said they saw a cube or a box. The most creative variations didn't depart from the idea of tri-dimensionality, when in reality what I drew was nothing more than three rhombuses forming a hexagon. Some tribes in Australia don't see that same image in 3D, but rather in 2D. We see what we think and that's what we call objectivity.

### Double standards

When President Abraham Lincoln emerged victorious from the American Civil War (1861-1865), he put an end to a hundred-year dictatorship that, up to this day, everyone calls "democracy." By the eighteenth century, black slaves had come to make up more than fifty per cent of the population in states like South Carolina – but they weren't even citizens of the US, nor did they enjoy even minimal human rights.

Many years before Lincoln, both racists and anti-racists proposed a solution to the "negro problem" by sending them "back" to Haiti or Africa, where many of them ended up founding the nation of Liberia (one of my students, Adja, is from a family which comes from that African country).





Stop the racism,  
by Italian cartoonist Tomas.

The English did the same thing to “rid” England of its blacks. But under Lincoln, blacks became citizens, and one way to reduce them down to a minority was not only by making it difficult for them to vote (such as by imposing a poll tax) but also by opening the nation’s borders to immigration.

The Statue of Liberty, a gift from the French people to the American people to commemorate the centenary of the 1776 Declaration of Independence, still cries with silent lips: “Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free...” In this way, the US opened its arms to waves of impoverished immigrants. Of course, the overwhelming majority were poor whites. Many were opposed to the Italians and the Irish because they were red-headed Catholics. But in any case, they were seen as being better than blacks. Blacks weren’t able to immigrate from Africa, not just because they were much farther away than Europeans were, but also because they were much poorer, and there were hardly any shipping routes to connect them to New York. The Chinese had more opportunities to reach the west coast, and perhaps for that reason a law was passed in 1882 that prohibited them from coming in, just for being Chinese.

I understand that this was a subtle and powerful way to reshape demographics, which is to say the political, social and racial make-up of the US. The current nervousness about a change to that make-up is nothing more than the continuation of that same old logic. Were that not the case, what could be wrong with being part of a minority group or being different from others?

### You don’t need to be racist...

Clearly, if you’re a good person and you’re in favour of properly enforcing laws, it doesn’t make you a racist. You don’t need to be racist when the law and the culture already are. In the US, nobody protests Canadian or European immigrants. The same is true in Europe and even in the Southern Cone of South America [the southernmost region of Latin America, populated mainly by descendants of Europeans]. But everyone is worried about the blacks and the hybrid, mixed-race people from the south. Because they’re not white and “good”, but poor and “bad”. Currently, almost half a million European immigrants are living illegally in the US. Nobody talks about them, just like nobody talks about how one million US citizens are living in Mexico, many illegally.

With communism discarded as an excuse (none of those chronically failing states where migrants come from are communist), let’s once again consider the racial and cultural excuses common to the century prior to the Cold War. Every dark-skinned worker is seen as a criminal, not an opportunity for mutual development. The immigration laws are themselves filled with panic at the sight of poor workers.

It’s true that you don’t need to be racist to support laws and more secure borders. You don’t need to be racist to spread and shore up an old racist and class-based paradigm, while we fill our mouths with platitudes about compassion and the fight for freedom and human dignity.

“You don’t need to be racist to spread and shore up an old racist and class-based paradigm, while we fill our mouths with platitudes about compassion and the fight for freedom and human dignity”



Professor of Latin American Literature and International Studies at Jacksonville University in Florida, in the United States, **Jorge Majfud** is a renowned Uruguayan-American writer, who regularly contributes to the international media. He is the author of many novels including *The Queen of America*, *Crisis*, *Tequila*, and books of essays such as *A Theory of Semantic Fields*.

# The other side of the coin

Katherine Levine Einstein

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**A recent survey – covering over a hundred mayors in the United States – illustrates that a lot depends on whether these officials are willing to demand equal rights for their newest entrants, and to affect change in the face of a more stringent federal immigration policy.**

In June 2018, a bipartisan delegation of mayors – including the president of the United States Conference of Mayors, Steve Benjamin – travelled to Tornillo, Texas, to protest the family separation policy of President Trump's administration. America's mayors have also stretched across party lines, in April 2017, to call for immigration reform and to protest the proposed expansion of public charge rules in October 2018, which penalized "lower-income immigrant families by denying them visas and green cards because they have received vital non-cash benefits to which they are legally entitled." This bipartisan action contrasts sharply with the rancorous partisan polarization that defines the current national political conversations surrounding immigration.

Yet, in spite of this mayoral public activism, there are many obstacles to locally-driven immigration reform. Indeed, these public actions belie stark internal divisions among American mayors. In the 2017 and 2018 Menino Survey of Mayors, our team at Boston University's Initiative on Cities asked over a hundred mayors of cities – with populations of over 75,000 – their views on immigration, race, and racism, among other issues. In contrast with the partisan unity adopted by the US Conference of Mayors, mayors appear to be sharply divided on these issues. Eighty-six per cent of Democratic mayors believe that immigrants should receive local government services, regardless of their legal status, in contrast to a mere twenty-nine per cent of Republicans.

What's more, even those mayors who do support fighting the Trump administration's immigration policies are not quite sure about their capacity to do so. Only thirty-one per cent of mayors believed that they could do a lot to counteract or oppose federal immigration policy. In comparison, when it came to federal policing initiatives, seventy-four per cent felt they could do a lot to countermand or revoke them. These disparities make sense. While many American public policies have been devolved to the state and local levels, immigration firmly remains in federal hands.

State laws may further limit the policy autonomy of cities in this arena. Multiple states are considering legislation prohibiting sanctuary cities,\* though some, notably, are pursuing policies that explicitly permit sanctuary jurisdictions. In Texas – a state that has been demographically transformed in recent decades by immigration – the governor signed a state law banning sanctuary cities; the law made police officials and local leaders subject to misdemeanour charges if they failed to honour requests from immigration agents to hold non-citizen inmates who are subject to deportation.

Moreover, even in those American cities where the state governments are more permissive, cities face important constraints. They are often cash-strapped, and limited from raising additional resources by onerous tax and expenditure limits imposed by their state governments.

That said, there remain many local policies at the disposal of mayors that could appreciably affect conditions on the ground for immigrants – perhaps most notably in the realm of policing.

Local governments can opt, in many states, not to enforce some aspects of national immigration law – becoming sanctuary cities. As the US Conference of Mayors noted in a statement issued on 25 January 2017: "Local police departments work hard to build and preserve trust with all of the communities they serve, including immigrant communities. Immigrants residing in our cities must be able to trust the police and all of city government."

Cities can also make government itself more welcoming. They can create offices of immigrant inclusion; provide city services in multiple languages; conduct outreach in immigrant communities; hire staff from diverse backgrounds.

## Starkly separated communities

Mayors and cities might also promulgate policies promoting equal access to quality local government services across immigrant and non-immigrant communities. America's cities are highly segregated, with white people and people of colour – those of African descent, Asians and Hispanics – starkly separated into different neighbourhoods. In Boston, for example, sixty per cent of Hispanics would need to move from their current neighbourhood of residence in order to be evenly spread across the metropolitan area.

This racial and ethnic segregation leads to concentrated poverty – in which socio-economic deprivation is clustered in one place. Concentrated poverty is associated with a whole host of negative social and economic outcomes, including fewer job opportunities and higher crime. These areas, on average, have lower-quality government services.

This neglect of disadvantaged communities has a myriad of causes. Residents in these communities are less likely to make demands of their government. They are less apt to have time to contact their government or trust that their government will take action if asked.

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\* Sanctuary cities are those that are committed to protecting the rights of all its citizens, including undocumented immigrants, and providing basic services to them. In the US, these cities also ensure that undocumented immigrants who are not otherwise engaged in criminal activity are prevented from being detained or deported by the federal authorities.

Moreover, politicians are, on average, more responsive to affluent constituents; so, even when asked to take action by these communities, they are less likely to do so. The effect of historic disinvestment in these communities is cumulative, and challenging to overcome.

What's more, many mayors are reluctant to acknowledge local discrimination and inequities in public services. Only nineteen per cent of mayors believed that immigrants faced a lot of discrimination in their cities. Over eighty per cent of mayors of both political parties viewed the quality of their mass transit, street maintenance, and parks as equal for white people and people of colour. Acknowledging inequality and discrimination are key prerequisites to taking concrete policy actions that tackle these issues.

This is not to say that all mayors eschew acknowledging and addressing racial inequality. Here, again – as with views on immigrants receiving public services – the partisan divide was substantial. Democratic mayors were twenty

percentage points more likely than Republicans to perceive discrimination against immigrants in their cities. Depending upon the policy area, Democrats were between twenty and fifty percentage points more apt than Republicans to believe that access to social and public goods like jobs, health care, and fair treatment by the courts was better for white people than for people of colour. While mayors across party lines have taken symbolic action against Trump's immigration policies, Democratic mayors are substantially more likely to provide vocal support for undocumented immigrants, acknowledge local discrimination against immigrants, and admit that access to key public, social, and economic goods are racially unequal.

Immigrants thus face an uneven patchwork of services to navigate, as some (largely Democratic) local governments aggressively promulgate initiatives to welcome immigrants and redress disparities, and others – due to limitations or local prejudices against newcomers – choose not to.



Assistant professor of political science at Boston University, **Katherine Levine Einstein** received her Ph.D. in Government and Social Policy from Harvard University. Her work on local politics and policy, racial and ethnic politics, and American public policy has appeared in multiple academic journals.

*Giant picnic organized at the United States-Mexico border in 2017, by French artist JR.*

© JR-ART-NET





# Our Guest

*Alain Mabanckou,  
French-Congolese writer.*  
© Nico Therin



# The mobile Africas of Alain Mabanckou

**Alain Mabanckou, interviewed by Ariane Poissonnier, French journalist**

**Alain Mabanckou browses through a “tri-continental attic”, searching the past to shed light on the present. How should colonial history be read? What meaning should be given to the restoration of African cultural heritage? And what is the role of the novelist in all this? The French-Congolese writer discusses these issues, in all simplicity.**

With this interview, the *Courier* participates in the celebration of World Africa Day, 25 May.



© Collection privée A. Mabanckou

*The young Alain Mabanckou with his mother, Pauline and father, Roger.*

**You divide your time between three countries – the Congo, France, and the United States. How does this arrangement work out for you?**

As an advantage! This tri-continental culture has allowed me to encounter the variety of the world and to discover what I call mobile Africas. First of all, a mobile Africa within the continent. When I lived in the Congo, I came across West Africans, and that made me aware of Africa’s diversity. When I came to France, I discovered the Western world, but also the Africans who had settled there through migration, travel, the history of slavery and colonization – a mobile Africa in Europe. And then, when I am in the United States, I perceive my continent through a distant magnifying glass that allows me to discern the floating shadows of yet another mobile Africa, deported by slavery and the slave trade.

I got acquainted with this African-American world in New York, through Richard Wright, Chester Himes and James Baldwin, writers of the Harlem Renaissance – a movement they launched in the first half of the twentieth century, that revolutionized so-called Black thinking.

So, it’s a kind of tri-continental attic that I sneak into, to retrieve whatever might help to explain tomorrow’s world. The world of tomorrow is the sum of different cultures.

**Some say that today the neo-liberal system is such a hegemony that we no longer even have the words to criticize it...**

Frankly, I can’t identify with that! That would mean that all the tools for criticism have been corrupted by the neo-liberal system – I am not that pessimistic. There are always ways to thwart a system, and it is sometimes by entering into the vocabulary of that system, by deconstructing it and demonstrating how empty it is, that a new way of thinking can emerge. Just because the peanut has a shell doesn’t mean I won’t break it to see what’s inside, and eat it!

Take the example of African civilizations. They have used Western thought to establish African thought. The Negritude movement was born in Europe, in the minds of the Black and Caribbean students who came to study in France. One of them, the Senegalese [poet and statesman] Léopold Sédar Senghor, entered the Académie Française.

And who would question the universality of *Return To My Native Land* by Martinique’s Aimé Césaire? Who can doubt the power of analyses of another Martinican, Frantz Fanon, in *Black Skin, White Masks*? These writers have attacked the colonial system and its corollaries from within, using the tools that the system provided them.

**“The Belgians are trying to recount their colonial history”, you commented recently on Instagram, after visiting the AfricaMuseum in Belgium. Why did you say that?**

A museum is like an individual, who sends out a message by the choice of his clothes, which can be honest or biased. Some wear a wig. You may fall in love with this beautiful hair and be deeply disappointed when you discover it’s fake! Similarly, when you enter this museum, you say to yourself that it’s very beautiful and finally... nothing. I went around in circles, but I didn’t see the arms that were cut off during the time of Léopold II.

Admittedly, this [recently renovated] museum has given some African descendants an opportunity to tell their stories – it is good to have thought about this. That is not necessarily the case in France where, as soon as there is any mention of colonial history, everyone rears up and takes refuge behind Jules Ferry, who apparently brought us the alphabet!

But if you gave this same museum to Africans to build – indeed, from the front door to the back door, they would have shown the White man whipping the Black man, putting him in the holds, plundering the continent, building a railroad where people die. Know that I would also have written about them on Instagram, that they “are trying to write their colonial history”.

The colonized will present the apocalyptic version of colonization, the Westerner, its supposedly civilizing version. All this must be synthesized. For now, we have only subjective interpretations.

***Do you believe it is important for countries to start returning cultural heritage to African countries, such as France is currently undertaking?***

I like Felwine Sarr and Bénédicte Savoy’s report on the restitution of African cultural heritage [submitted to the French Elysée on 23 November 2018], but let us wait to see what happens in practice.

Restitution raises the same question – how do we reread our colonial history? Why are these looted objects never mentioned in French and European history books? The colonizer made a big mistake in thinking that what we produced artistically was junk. Today, these are the missing elements in the explanation of the global imagination.

Africans simply want us to recognize that the world’s imagination also includes those elements of African culture that have been plundered – and that there would not have been a Surrealist movement, for example, if these painters had not had the exposure to African art. Going beyond restitution, there is the question of the recognition of Africa as an artistic power.



© Finbarr O'Reilly

***Does African literature occupy its rightful place in world literature?***

African literature in French is still young, it’s not even a hundred years old, and needs time to become established. What is interesting is that it has been able to follow the path of globalization – it takes into account the fragmented dimension of the world and enters into the great dialogue that is taking place here and there, about the current social challenges.

***Do you sometimes feel like the voice of Africa?***

That would be pretentious. It’s true that I am always flattered to see that more and more Africans, including English speakers, read what I write, identify with it, and are enthusiastic about it. All I do is reciprocate, through stories that speak of their world. I would like people not

to think of me as a spokesperson – that would be too Christ-like a destiny – but to think instead that we are writing the books I write, together.

***You could have become a lawyer. In 1989, you won a scholarship and left your modest family in Pointe-Noire to study law in France.***

My parents wanted me to become a judge or a lawyer. The University of Nantes offered me a place – I studied private law for a year and then came to Paris to obtain a postgraduate degree in business and social law at the Paris Dauphine University.

But writing took precedence over law. It’s a jealous activity that doesn’t like competition. And then, when my parents died, I had the feeling that I had no one left that I needed to make proud of me.



**Was there a day when you said to yourself: "I want to write"?**

I started writing poems in high school, and, basically, I only wanted to write poetry. I wasn't aware then that writing could be a main activity. For me, it served to calm my anxieties, to control my loneliness. It became a confession for me, as an only child – a way of refusing the world as it was written, in the present, so that I could invent my own version of the world.

Maybe that's where the writing began, even if I can't put a date on the moment when I became aware that this was what I had to do. I continued to write, telling myself that I would work, and, in parallel, from time to time, I would write. By doing it on a regular basis, I was building up my strength for what would become my principal activity – and an obsession.

*The new Museum of Black Civilizations in Dakar, Senegal, retraces the cultural contributions of Africa around the world. Shown here, a Bamoun statue from Cameroon, left, and a 2018 painting, Redresseurs, from the Cuban art collective, The Merger.*

**Before you published your first novel, *Bleu Blanc Rouge (Blue White Red)* in 1998, you had published four collections of poems. How do novels and poetry work together?**

Poetry corresponds to the romantic soul of teenagers – it is the place of first loves, the moment one describes one's disappointments, or falls in love with Lamartine, Hugo, Vigny, or some other romantic poet. And also, poetry was highly regarded in my country, with great national authors like Tchicaya U Tam'si.

We really only discovered the novel in 1979, with the publication of *La vie et demie* [Life and a Half] by Sony Labou Tansi, whom I consider to be the greatest writer in Congo. There, we realized that we could also recount something that was not necessarily about personal pain. In the novel, the state of mind no longer belongs to the novelist – it belongs to the character.

**Your friend, the Haitian writer Dany Laferrière, says that when it comes to creation, "talent is important, but the most important thing is courage". Do we have to dare, to create?**

Courage is everything that you do not see in a literary work. A novel or a collection of poems is the finished product. We do not see in it all the author's tribulations, his anguish, his living conditions, his cracks. If you do not have the courage, if you do not have the obstinacy, if you do not have the obsession, then talent is worth nothing!

Writing a novel means polishing each sentence and coming back to it as many times as necessary, to really express the feeling it is meant to. The courage that Dany Laferrière speaks of is synonymous with obsession and strength. The writer is obsessed with the aesthetic project he bears, and he uses all his strength to defend it within his imaginary universe.

**When you write, do you expose yourself?**

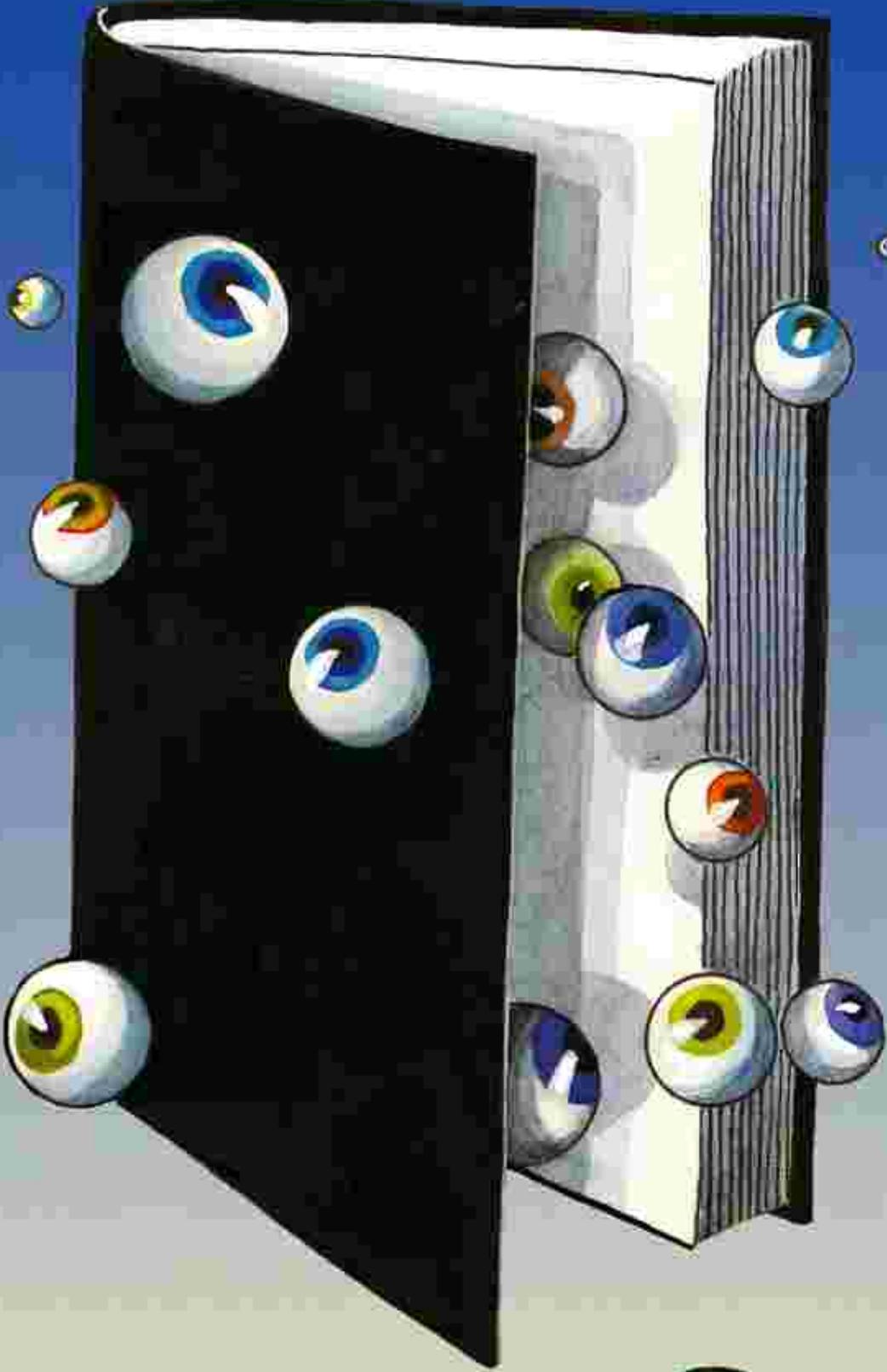
Yes! There is also the political courage, the recklessness to expose one's self. Writing is not a walk in the park, it is rather a steep road, with potholes, mud, rainwater, stones. Those who don't have the courage, wear boots. The writer, he walks barefoot and makes it to the end of the road, even if he's covered with wounds. He has accomplished the project that was within him, the force of the world that he wanted to give birth to. He did it!



A novelist, journalist, poet and academic, **Alain Mabanckou** is among the most recognized writers in French contemporary literature. Born in 1966 in Pointe-Noire, the economic capital of Congo, he currently teaches literature and creative writing in the Department of French and Francophone Studies at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Mabanckou has held the Artistic Creation chair at the Collège de France in 2015 and 2016, and has received numerous international prizes. His work has been translated into thirty languages. His twelfth novel, *Les Cigognes sont immortelles* (The Storks are Immortal), was published in France in 2018.



# Current Affairs



S E L Ç U K

# Open books, open minds

**Ghalia Khoja**

The city of Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE) became the World Book Capital for the year, starting in April 2019. It invites the public to embark on the bridge of knowledge to discover the diversity of the world's cultures and peoples.

With this article, the *Courier* participates in the celebration of World Book and Copyright Day, 23 April.

"The book is, in all circumstances, the best of companions." This quote from Al-Mutanabbi, the illustrious tenth-century Arab poet, has become an adage that lovers of literature, poetry and knowledge in general, take pleasure in repeating – even today, when social networks and audio-visual media have considerably overshadowed the role of books.

The book remains a privileged medium for promoting the values of tolerance, coexistence and peace, for defending freedom of expression and fighting extremism and obscurantism – all common denominators of the events that begin in Sharjah on 23 April 2019, World Book and Copyright Day, and continue for twelve months, as part of its nomination as World Book Capital 2019.

Sharjah is the first city in the Persian Gulf and the third city in the Arab world to receive this designation.

It was in Sharjah that the first school and the first library were opened in the UAE. And it is in this city that, since 1982, the annual Sharjah International Book Fair, has exhorted the public with "Read – you're in Sharjah!", its catchy slogan. Now the third-largest book fair in the world, it welcomed 2.7 million visitors in 2018, and 1,874 exhibitors from seventy-seven countries. It offered over 1.6 million titles and a programme of 1,800 events.

The emirate of Sharjah has given books a special place in its cultural policy, with projects such as "A library in every home", mobile libraries, national, regional and



*The Sharjah International Book Fair, 2018.*

© Sharjah International Book Fair

even international prizes, including the UNESCO-Sharjah Prize for Arab Culture, the Sharjah Award for Arabic Poetry, the Sharjah Award for Translation and the Sharjah Award for an Emirati Book.

The emirate also boasts of the Sharjah Publishing City (SPC), which it describes as the world's first free zone dedicated exclusively to serving the global publishing and printing industry. Spread over 19,000 square metres, the facility offers state-of-the-art services and infrastructure for the entire chain of book-publishing – from writing and designing, to printing and distributing books – for a range of budgets. For its part, the Emirates Publishers Association helps to promote books and reading among all sections of society and different generations of readers. This has earned the non-profit organization the recognition of its peers – its president, Sheikha Bodour Bint Sultan Al Qasimi, was elected vice-president of the International Publishers Association in 2018.

"The book is the means by which every society can progress, surpass itself and engage in dialogue. It is a bridge between all the countries of the world," Sheikha Bodour said, taking up her post as head of the Sharjah World Book Capital 2019 office.

In partnership with twenty representatives of the public, private and civil society sectors, the secretariat is organizing a series of cultural and artistic events throughout the year, not only in the Emirates but also in other countries in the region. The event aims to contribute to the development and support of publishing in the UAE and throughout the Arab world, by providing access to books for everyone, especially children and teenagers; introducing promising authors; increasing the readership of printed and digital books, and encouraging their translation. All genres of books are represented – poetry, fiction, non-fiction, social and scientific publications, and even comic books.

At the end of the event, Sharjah will pass on the baton to the city of Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, which has already been designated by UNESCO as the World Book Capital, 2020.



A writer and literary critic, **Ghalia Khoja** (Syria) is the author of twenty-five books, including collections of poetry, novels and essays. A journalist for the *Al-Ittihad* Arabic daily, she has been living in the United Arab Emirates since 2004.

# Artificial intelligence, at Africa's door

**Tshilidzi Marwala, interviewed by Edwin Naidu, South African journalist**

**African leaders must embrace technology and use the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) to drive the continent out of poverty and into a better future, argues leading South African scientist and artificial intelligence (AI) expert Tshilidzi Marwala.**

This interview is published on the occasion of World Africa Day, celebrated at UNESCO on 25 May.

***In the late 1980s, the Chinese government invested in the economy, and has since lifted 800 million people out of poverty. Do you see the South African government being able to achieve similar results, albeit with a smaller population, through investment in 4IR\*?***

It is thought that China may be the last country to manage to make money out of cheap labour to lift people out of poverty. If robots are used in the manufacturing process, it will probably be even cheaper than it has traditionally been in the past. Therefore, I am afraid 4IR may mark the cost of labour as a deterrent to employers, with the complete automation of the production process.

Undoubtedly, 4IR will change the world of work with artificially intelligent machines performing tasks that were traditionally performed by humans. As a result, the world of work is already shrinking, with factories employing fewer people than before. There will be a marked increase in inequality.

Those with adequate capital to buy industrial robots will produce more with fewer resources and will become very wealthy, while the rest will be relegated to the margins of society.

South Africa, and the African Continent, have no choice but to embrace 4IR and use it to find solutions to the plethora of problems facing us.

***Are all African governments investing in 4IR?***

I don't think that is the case, even though there are some pockets of excellence to be found in Mozambique, Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, and South Africa, to some extent. Mobilizing on an issue like 4IR in a continent with fifty-four countries is a lot more complicated than handling one country, even if it is as big as China. Considering that the countries are at different stages of development makes the situation even more complex.

I believe that 4IR is going to be about data – whether it is the data of people, genetic data, or the data that drives 4IR itself. The question we must ask is, are African countries obtaining data? The answer, I am afraid, is no. The biggest data capturers in Africa are United States multinationals. When it comes to data collection or management, Africa would score three, on a scale of one to ten. This figure is alarming.

One of the big problems with 4IR is that the winner takes all. In South Africa, we had a local search engine, called Anansi, which aggressively gathered local data, but it was no match for Google – it has since folded, in 2011. Few people can name the world's number two search engine – the answer is Microsoft's Bing, but even they're struggling. There is no room for a number two – the fact that Google is not available in China is a huge advantage for Chinese companies.

However, the web giants, like most corporations, don't spend a lot of time dealing with local issues. For instance, Google Maps does not pronounce the names on our local routes well. If we produced our own domestic maps with the right pronunciations, we would have an edge over Google. The key to competition is to address challenges locally.

***How far are African countries from becoming producers of 4IR technology?***

I think we produce a lot of technology, to be honest. I hear a lot about Elon Musk, and his Tesla car, but South Africa had the Joule [an electric five-seater passenger car], which was shelved because it would have had to sell a million units to be viable. We register a lot of patents, but our markets are just not big enough, so our products are dying in laboratories. The economics dictate that you need to sell huge amounts to survive. It's not just creating the technology that matters. We need to create new markets and build an effective export strategy.

\*The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) – being built on the widespread availability of digital technologies brought to us by the Third Industrial (or digital) Revolution – is driven by emerging technologies, based on a combination of digital, biological and physical innovations. These latest technologies, that are changing the way we live and work, include artificial intelligence (AI) and robotics, the Internet of Things (IoT), augmented reality, quantum computing, 3D printing, blockchain, additive manufacturing, neurotechnologies, geoengineering, and genome editing.

***Should corporations be playing a bigger role through public-private partnerships (PPPs) with governments on 4IR?***

Absolutely, corporations must play a big role. What I have observed, and this is a controversial view, is that there is a culture that does not consider Africa as a place to produce. For example, there is no plant in Africa making Apple products. Companies that have production in nations they operate in, are much easier to partner with than those merely bringing their products manufactured elsewhere into the country.

What are some of the mechanisms that we need to put in place for multinationals to invest in production on the continent? In South Africa, the motor industry is a good example, where it is government policy to subsidize automobile companies who produce here.

Currently, we do not have similar policies for companies participating in 4IR; we need to do that as we move forward.

Creating special economic zones with 4IR in mind is a good idea, with governments providing companies with tax incentives that would promote production, job creation and help grow the economy.

These incentives should not just be for foreign companies, but local businesses should be able to benefit from them too.

***This means that political leaders need to play an essential role in the process of introducing new technologies.***

One of the first things Africa needs to do is to start having leaders who understand technology. In Rwanda, the high-speed internet makes it obvious that President Paul Kagame understands technology.

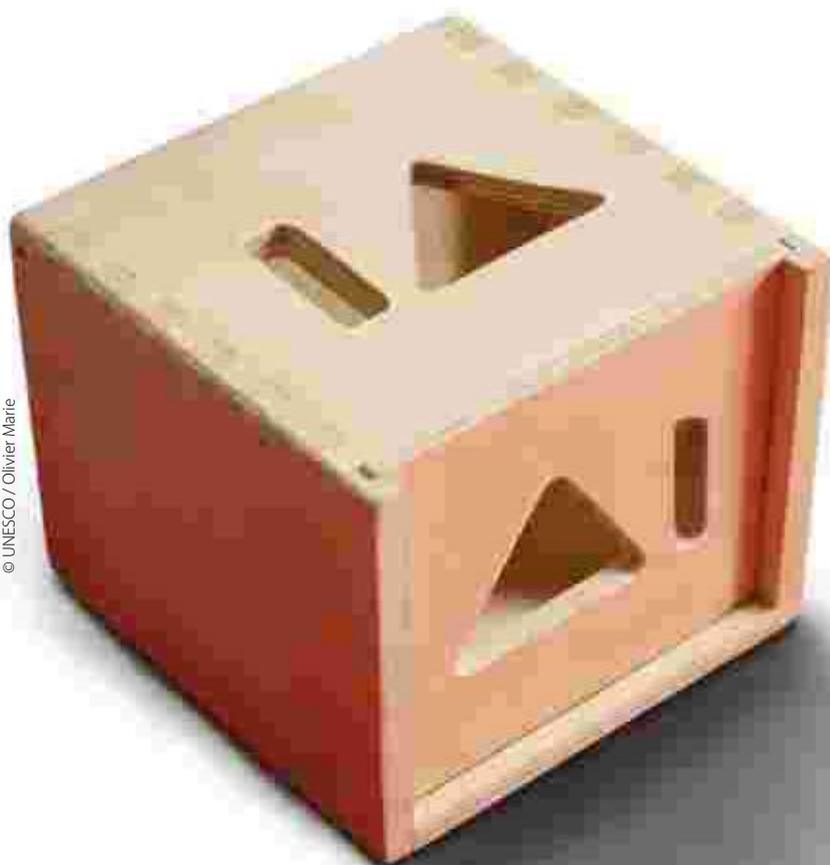
In Kenya, the number of 4IR startups and the launching of digital currency makes it clear that President Uhuru Kenyatta understands technology.

In South Africa, President Cyril Ramaphosa is the first leader who has placed 4IR at the forefront of his strategy, and he is a big advocate for science and technology. In his State of the Nation address in February 2018, he talked about the digital industrial revolution, and has committed to the launch of a commission of experts on 4IR to drive strategy. We need a national strategy, like India's National Strategy for AI or the Made in China 2025 strategic manufacturing plan to transform itself into an innovative hi-tech powerhouse. Hopefully the commission driven by President Ramaphosa will create a strategy, mobilizing political, economic and social forces to put the economy on a good trajectory.

The African continent now has 1.3 billion people and is still growing – it is the fastest-growing continent in terms of population. You are not going to be able to deal with the issues of population explosion, food security or urbanization without 4IR technology.

Our leaders must understand technology – they must be developmental in their outlook. And this necessarily means that moving forward, we must start identifying new leaders with these qualities.

© UNESCO / Olivier Marie



One of South Africa's leading experts on artificial intelligence, **Tshilidzi Marwala** is Vice-Chancellor of the University of Johannesburg. His extensive research on AI has been published in journals across the world, and he has won many awards both nationally and internationally.

# The Rwandan miracle

Alphonse Nkusi

A quarter of a century after the terrible genocide of 1994, Rwanda is turning a new page in its history. Following a long period of national unification and reconciliation, it is investing in economic growth and focusing on new technologies, with the hope of becoming an ICT hub in Africa.

With this article, the *Courier* participates in the International Day of Reflection on the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, on 7 April.

Twenty-five years ago, the bloodiest chapter in the contemporary history of Africa was written in Rwanda. In a hundred days, a million people lost their lives, leaving behind a million orphans, not counting the widows and widowers.

I was in Uganda when this drama was being played out in my country. The neighbour to the north had welcomed me as a refugee in 1962, when I was a young man of 17. I studied there, at Makerere University, started my family and lived there until 2008. But since 1994, I have divided my time between Uganda and Rwanda, to take care of my family's orphans and also to contribute to the reconstruction of my homeland.

Everything had to be redone in this wounded country. The first concern of the Rwandan Patriotic Front, RPF-Inkotanyi, the political party led at the time by the current Rwandan President Paul Kagame, was to stop the genocide and restore peace and security. "We have learned lessons that should inform us how to build our future," he recently told a gathering of business leaders in Charlotte, North Carolina, in the United States.

To build the future, we began by relearning to conjugate the verb "to be" in the plural and to tell ourselves that we are all Banyarwanda. Forget who is Tutsi, who is Hutu, who is Twa. Overcome hatred.

## Tradition to the rescue

Priority was given to unity and reconciliation. To this end, the *gacaca*, the traditional system of justice, was revived, allowing the community to try the perpetrators and accept their request for forgiveness. Through these traditional courts, survivors were able to learn more about the deaths of their relatives, but also about the criminals who confessed their actions and admitted their guilt. Different sentences were handed down, depending on the seriousness of the crimes committed. Some were sentenced to community service, others to prison terms. In ten years, the *gacaca* courts judged 1.9 million cases, before they were officially closed in May 2012.

At the same time, public judicial institutions were rehabilitated in order to judge the most serious cases. Internationally, the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR), established on 8 November 1994, recognized that "genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes were perpetrated on a horrific scale", reaching "a rate of killing four times greater than at the height of the Nazi Holocaust". To date, the ICTR has indicted ninety-three individuals, considered to be planners and perpetrators of the genocide. Eighty of them have been tried, out of which twenty-three have served their sentences.

In the aftermath of the genocide, another traditional method was used to enable citizens to participate in public affairs. It consists of a commitment to planned activities in a management system that provides for contracts called *imihigo*. In the past they were oral and endorsed by a ceremony, today they are written and signed, but their function remains the same: they engage the individual to carry out a number of tasks during a year, at the end of which their performance is evaluated by the community.

This method has contributed significantly to the improvement of public services in present-day Rwanda, which has opted for consensual democracy and power-sharing.

## The priorities

With an average growth rate of more than seven per cent per year since 2000, Rwanda is now one of the leading African countries in economic growth. According to official figures, its investments in agriculture, energy, infrastructure, mining and tourism have lifted more than one million people out of poverty.

This development is accompanied by the country's increased integration into regional economic structures, but also by its greater participation in the international community. With 6,550 personnel, Rwanda is now the fourth-largest contributor to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

But the country wants to invest first and foremost in people to achieve all-inclusive development. That is why it places women at the forefront of public life. They paid a high price during the black spring in Rwanda: between 100,000 and 250,000 women were victims of rape and sexual assault, these appalling weapons of war, recognized by the ICTR as acts of genocide. Since then, many of them have died of AIDS contracted during the attacks.

In order to ensure women's protection, a Law on the Prevention and Punishment of Gender-based Violence was adopted in 2008. Other laws ensure their full participation in political and social life: at least thirty per cent of positions are reserved for women in all state bodies at all levels. This strategy has bridged the gap between men and women at a faster rate. Today, sixty-two per cent of parliamentarians, fifty per cent of ministers and forty-four per cent of officials in the judiciary are women.

Education and health are two other priority sectors, which have absorbed thirty per cent of the annual national budget for several years. The rate of school attendance in the twelve years of compulsory education is ninety per cent and health insurance coverage is eighty-seven per cent.

Health services have improved considerably in remote areas since the arrival of Zipline drones, which, according to the chief executive officer of the American startup, made more than 4,000 deliveries of blood and medicine between October 2016 and April 2018.

Education, too, is slowly but surely changing as a result of new information and communication technologies (ICTs), particularly since the launch of the “One laptop per child” initiative in June 2008. Over 600,000 laptops have been distributed and pupils have adopted to share their usage on a daily basis. The project, however, has faced challenges, notably lack of electricity coverage in rural areas for charging the laptops and a lack of resources to distribute them to over 2.3 million schoolchildren. Nevertheless, ICTs are developing at full speed: 4,000 kilometres of fibre-optic cables have already been rolled out in the country, which has a surface area just exceeding 26,000 square kilometres. This year it is expected that wireless internet and fibre-optic will cover ninety-five per cent of the country.

The vast majority of the population already has access to mobile phones and out of roughly 13 million inhabitants, more than 4 million can now shop and pay their bills, taxes, and even police fines, using mobile applications. The same applies to administrative procedures. Simply go to the portal *Irembo* (the word means access in Kinyarwanda) to find most government services online.

## Looking to the future

Rwanda is focusing on technology development to ensure a better future. Banking transactions are facilitated through mobile services. Business leaders have access to e-commerce through the Electronic World Trade Platform (eWRP), launched in October 2018 by China’s e-commerce giant Alibaba. Urban transport is facilitated by car and motorcycle services controlled via mobile applications.



© Marie Moroni

*Celestial Eye, a brooch from the Ibaba series by French designer Céleste Mogador, created in the Ibaba Rwanda embroidery workshop in rural Rwanda, where women have finally returned to work after an interruption of nineteen years.*

Among the latter, SafeMotos, nicknamed “the Uber of motorcycle taxis” was born at kLab, a technology innovation hub considered to be the most dynamic in the country. Since 2012, it has trained thousands of young people free of charge, helping to launch sixty companies, four of which have become leaders in their field of activity and two of which have expanded internationally. It is one of a number of innovation centres that have developed, particularly in Kigali, the capital, with a view to offering young Rwandans new professional opportunities.

The City of Innovation to be built as part of Africa50, the infrastructure development platform of the African Development Bank (AfDB), also promises a bright technological future for Rwanda, which is now well positioned to become a regional ICT platform. Especially since in September 2018, artificial intelligence

(AI) officially entered the university curriculum, thanks to a master’s degree launched by the Senegalese expert Moustapha Cissé, head of Google’s AI research centre in Ghana, and by the African Institute of Mathematical Sciences (AIMS) in Kigali.

A quarter of a century after the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, the divided, devastated, dilapidated nation, in need of reconstruction and rehabilitation, is today resolutely looking to the future and preparing the ground for what may one day be called the Rwandan miracle.



**Alphonse Nkusi** (Rwanda) has held posts including senior media analyst at the Rwanda Governance Council, editor of *New Vision*, one of Uganda’s two leading daily newspapers, and lecturer in social communication at Makerere University, Uganda.

# Gran Pajatén, “our geographical fortress”

**Roldán Rojas Paredes,**  
interviewed by William Navarrete

It was a region devastated by intensive rubber production in the nineteenth century, and occupied by drug cartels and guerrillas – who made it a lawless zone overrun by coca plants, where the trafficking of cocaine was routine – in the 1980s. But today thousands of people live off mixed agroforestry here, planting cacao and other crops. In this area of the Central Cordillera of Peru, UNESCO designated the Gran Pajatén Biosphere Reserve in 2016. Roldán Rojas Paredes was at the heart of the project.

With this interview, the *Courier* participates in the celebration of the International Day for Biological Diversity, 22 May.



*Fish farming in the village of Santa Rosa, Peru.*

© PUR Projet / Christian Lamontagne

**How would you describe the Gran Pajatén Biosphere Reserve to someone who has never heard of it?**

It is an extraordinary place, characterized by a great natural and cultural diversity, because it brings together two totally different habitats – the Andes and the Amazon. Spread over some 2.5 million hectares, the reserve is home to 5,000 plant species and more than 900 animal species, about thirty of which are endemic. It also encompasses the Río Abiseo National Park, inscribed on UNESCO's World Heritage List in 1990, which has an abundance of archaeological remains. Since the mid-1980s, thirty-six pre-Columbian sites have been discovered here, at altitudes ranging from 2,500 to 4,000 metres.

For those of us who were born here, all this constitutes a unique legacy, for which we feel responsible and which obliges us to think in the long term.

I see this reserve as our geographical fortress, offering us ideal conditions for a better quality of life and providing great opportunities for future generations.

Personally, I have always been attached to working on the land, to our primary forests, to their impressive greenery and the direct energy you receive from them when you live here. My life has always been intimately linked to the cultural richness, legends, imagination, music and gastronomy of this place. This is why I left to study in Lima, the capital, with every intention of returning to devote myself to promoting this exceptional heritage. Which is what I have done.

**What does the designation of Gran Pajatén as a UNESCO biosphere reserve mean for the region's 170,000 inhabitants?**

The local population has suffered greatly in the past, plagued by rubber and drug cartels, and even guerrillas. But in the early 2000s, the revival of cacao farming enabled thousands of people to escape poverty and exclusion. Over time,

we have developed mixed agroforestry, which is particularly well adapted to the production of cocoa, because cacao trees flourish in the shade of other trees.

The inscription of our region in UNESCO's World Network of Biosphere Reserves (WNBR) in 2016 gave us a tremendous boost. We saw it as a sign of recognition of the efforts we have put into becoming the leading organic cocoa-producing region in Peru.

This international recognition has opened up new opportunities for the Amazonia Viva Foundation (FUNDAVI), which works to conserve the Gran Pajatén ecosystem. Now, companies that were once sceptical and snubbed us are taking an interest in us. Poderosa, the precious metal mining company, for example, is investing in archaeological research (it has just published an excellent handbook), agricultural research (it has launched a study on potatoes) and has provided us with teaching materials for primary schools.

We are also receiving offers from new foreign investors, such as Chanel, the French fashion house, which has signed a collaboration agreement with our Biocorridor Martín Sagrado REDD + project, for reducing greenhouse gas emissions.

#### **Could you tell us more about that project?**

It provides for the conservation and development of 300,000 hectares of primary forests managed by local communities in the Alto Huayabamba, which is adjacent to the Abiseo National Park. Launched in 2010 for a period of eighty years, it is funded by PUR Projet, the French social business enterprise, and the Jubilación Segura (secure retirement) project. The latter is a forty-year project which implements agroforestry models designed to create a new sustainable rural economy, through a reforestation and carbon sequestration plan that helps revalue the land, to break the cycle of poverty for farmers who do not have a retirement pension.

#### **What are the next steps planned by FUNDAVI?**

We are beginning to share experiences between the different members within our biosphere reserve, such as the creation of botanical gardens or beekeeping farms. We also intend to forge alliances with other biosphere reserves in Peru and elsewhere in the world.

We are not interested in competition. We want to combine strategies, to present and improve our activities, and to become a source of inspiration for all – in terms of the excellence of our work and teaching.

We are also keen to involve more universities, companies, civil society, the State and to strive for more international cooperation, to take advantage of this fabulous “brand” of biosphere reserve – to ensure that the farmer, who toils on his plot of land day after day, feels connected to the whole world.



Born in Tarapoto, 136 kilometres from Juanjuí, the capital of Mariscal Cáceres province in north-west Peru, **Roldán Rojas Paredes** was the driving force behind the creation of the Gran Pajatén Biosphere Reserve. He is currently Executive Director of the Amazonia Viva Foundation (FUNDAVI), which works to conserve the reserve’s ecosystem, and was a member of the first management committee of the Río Abiseo National Park in 2001.

“We want to become a source of inspiration for all, in terms of the excellence of our work and teaching.”

*Joel Diaz plants a tree as part of the PUR Projet reforestation project in the Gran Pajatén biosphere reserve in Peru.*

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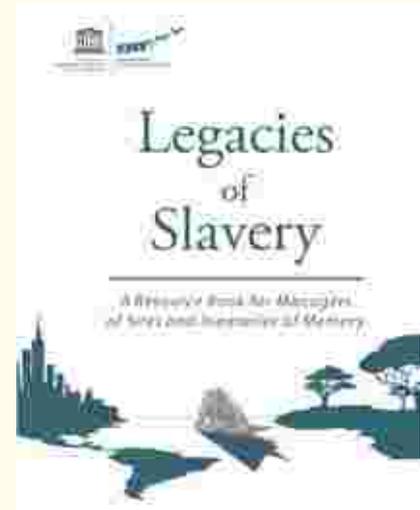


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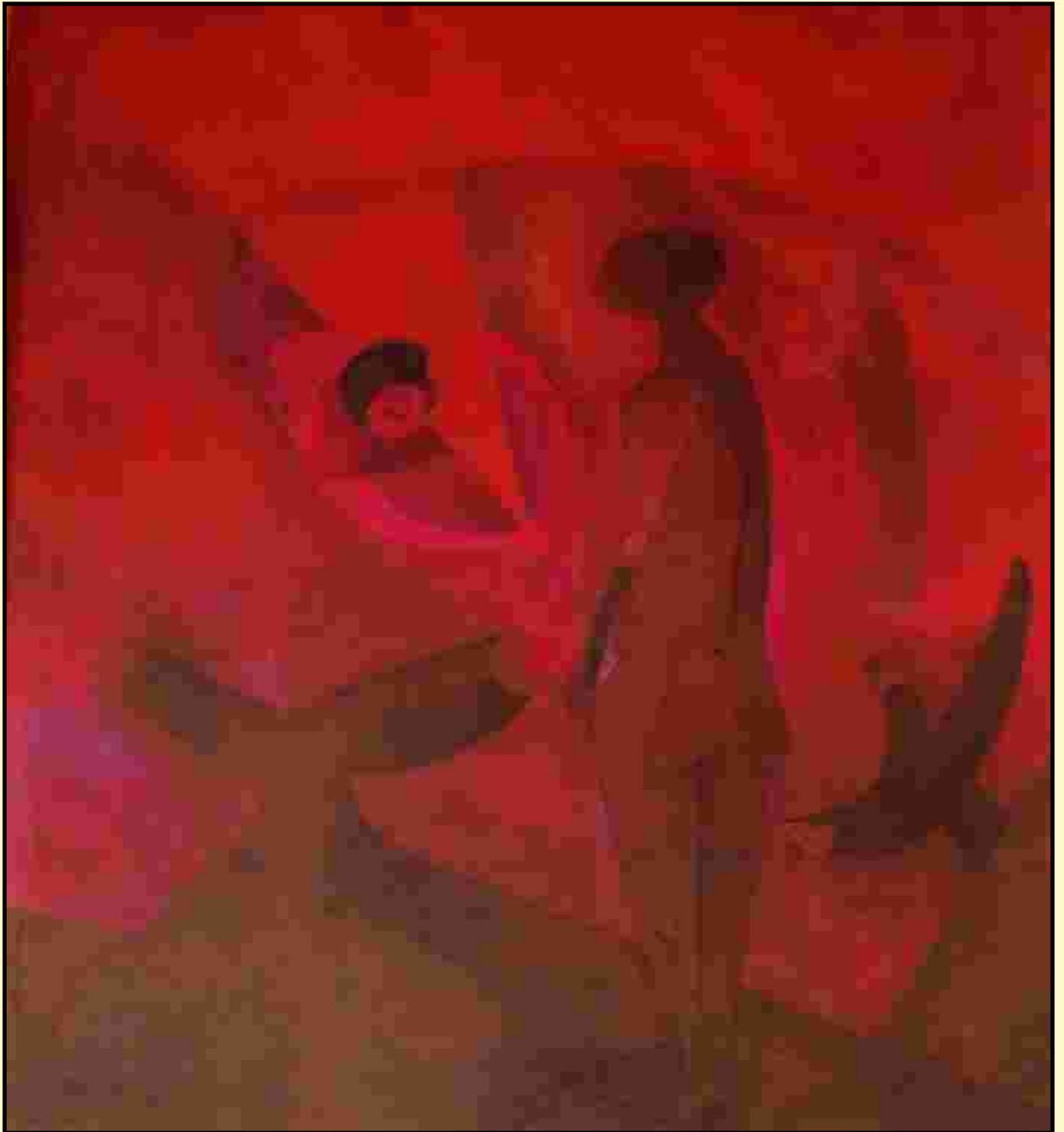
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# Many voices, one world

The *UNESCO Courier* is published in the six official languages of the Organization, and also in Portuguese, Esperanto, Sicilian and Korean. Read it and share it widely across the globe.





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Prometheus Bringing Fire to Mankind, by Rufino Tamayo (1899-1991), Mexico.  
Signed and dated "Tamayo 9-58" (500 x 450 cm),  
this fresco has been part of the UNESCO art collection since 1958.