States of mind

Chris Murray on the importance of creating psychologically resilient places

Jonathan Metzl explores how people can be manipulated to vote against their best interests

Elizabeth Anderson discusses identity and how we can create an egalitarian society

RSA JOURNAL

21st century enlightenment

Matthew Taylor

"Change is unpredictable. Leaders – whether of nations or cities – need to be able to experiment"

Welcome to the latest edition of *RSA Journal*, which this quarter focuses on cities and place. Colleagues Ed Cox and Becca Antink have written on the RSA's work on cities and the importance of heritage in defining how people experience place. Leading thinkers on urbanism, such as Chris Murray and Nicola Bacon, address the psycho-social aspects of cities and belonging. The edition also includes powerful perspectives on some of the political systems shaping the world today from Jonathan Metzl, Takis Pappas and – from the front line – Geoff Little. Rather than summarise their arguments, here is my own take on the issues at the heart of this journal.

The OECD refers to our biggest problems as the 'three Ps': cultural polarisation, political populism and social pessimism. At the RSA, we believe that to tackle these, we need transformational change. Without it, conflict, failure and, ultimately, chaos are likely.

But history teaches us that periods of threat and confusion like ours can lead to renewal. We have seen this in the American Progressive Era and western Europe's post-war 'les Trente Glorieuses'. Whether we suffer chaos or achieve renewal depends on how we respond to two imperatives: first, a profound shift in our sense of purpose; and second, the radical reform of our institutions. Or, to put it more simply, we must think differently, and we must act differently.

Take, for example, education systems here and around the world. Despite the great work of dedicated teachers, these systems are largely failing to overcome inequality, enhance wellbeing (among either learners or educators) or adequately prepare people for the future. The most innovative education institutions are the ones that judge themselves not merely by academic attainment but by their ability genuinely to enable young people to be rounded, engaged and confident citizens. They see themselves not as separate entities competing with others to succeed according to narrowly defined national criteria, but as integral parts of local learning ecologies deeply embedded in, and accountable to, the communities they serve.

There are two different renewal paradigms in play right now for government. Both are having some impact, but neither is doing enough to reverse our current alarming trajectory. The first focuses on politics and democracy and looks for ways to reform and renew the legitimacy of collective action and decision-making. The second focuses on provision provided or funded by the state. The aim here is a more effective, entrepreneurial, agile state.

The folks driving these two types of strategy do not often engage with one another. The former are fond of concepts, questions and deliberations, the latter stick to products, solutions and data. But the problem is deeper than a failure to join up these two groups.

Change is unpredictable. Leaders – whether of nations or cities – need to be able to experiment and adapt. At the RSA we advocate 'thinking like a system and acting like an entrepreneur'. Change can come from anywhere in a system but transformation means the ability to continuously experiment and adapt.

To have a chance of building and maintaining momentum, public institutions need not only to be renewing their legitimacy and their operating methods but seeing how advances in one domain make possible, indeed demand, advances in the other.

This says something crucial about leadership. Dynamic change on this scale is unpredictable and risky. Leadership that relies on a predetermined plan, much less fixed outputs, simply will not deliver.

We need leaders whose understanding of our crisis and whose determination to make a difference is such that they will openly embark on a journey without knowing where it will end. Any leader who claims to be doing this without often feeling disorientated and vulnerable is deluding themselves. Ultimately, however, aiming for transformation is less of a risk than hoping it can be avoided. ∎

Matthew Taylor is Chief Executive of the RSA

ISSUE 2 2019

Short read

Periscope

Work

FOUR FUTURES OF WORK

A creative vision of what our working future might look like

Following on from its *The Four Futures of Work* report, the RSA has commissioned four award-winning authors to write original stories based around the question of what the world of work will look like in 2035.

Darren McGarvey, also known as rapper Loki, Delia Jarrett-Macauley, Stephen Armstrong and Preti Taneja, author of *We That Are Young*, were all chosen to develop responses to ideas generated by the Future Work Centre's report.

The authors joined RSA Director of Economy Asheem Singh at the Barbican's Ministry of Plenty exhibit in June to discuss the RSA's work and their responses to the report.

The four futures have already prompted much discussion. The Big Tech Economy, where large companies dominate, the Precision Economy, where surveillance is the norm, the Empathy Economy, where feeling is commodified, and the Exodus Economy, where technology is repudiated, are fast becoming industry standard terms when discussing the future of work.

"The four futures are not predictions, but they are warnings, perhaps, of what might happen without big shifts in our politics and society. With these stories, we hope to take this conversation beyond the realm of the intellect and into the realm of the imagination, where creativity and change find their moment," said Asheem.

Four Futures: Love, Labour, and Language in 2035 is available to download at https://bit.ly/2ZoeME8
Keep up with the work of the RSA Future Work Centre at https://bit.ly/2Pw4bWM

Images from iStock

Awards

DESIGNERS OF THE FUTURE

The 2018/19 Student Design Awards Ceremony was held at RSA House in June. The briefs challenged entrants to find solutions to some of the most pressing social issues, from emergency healthcare to loneliness and democratic engagement. The competition aims to develop creative thinking and encourage effective, original answers to problems that may seem intractable. Katy Minshall, Head of UK Government, Public Policy and Philanthropy at Twitter, was one of this year's judges. "We were incredibly impressed by the quality and creativity across all entries," she said.

This year, more than £32,000 in prizes was awarded, with winning entries including innovations that promote inclusivity and sustainability. Máire Kane and Hannah Grogan of the National College of Art and Design, Dublin, won for their Personal Patient Pack, a packaging solution that means medical devices can be reused by a patient, reducing waste by 67%. Lucy Davidson, who is studying graphic design at Kingston University, received an award for Buoy, her service that aims to give homeless people a democratic voice.

You can find the full list of this year's winners at www.thersa.org/sda

RSA insights

2,158 miles

This was the distance cycled by 24 researchers working for the RSA's Food, Farming and Countryside Commission. During the seven-month UK-wide bicycle tour, the researchers met more than 300 people, groups and businesses to discuss the reality of living and working in the countryside. Some of the rich, often overlooked, stories they heard are told in their limited-edition book, *Fork in the Road*.

To download a copy of the book visit: https://bit.ly/2GOl8Rs

£4,800

The figure per year per working-age person that would eliminate destitution and reduce relative household poverty by 28% in Fife, according to *A Basic Income for Scotland*, a new report by the RSA. As part of its research, the RSA listened to people's stories about the challenges they currently face in their day-to-day lives, and was inspired by their hopes for the future that a basic income would enable. The report also details ways in which this could be funded in Scotland.

You can find the report at https://bit.ly/2LAMOln

PARRABBOLA THEATRE
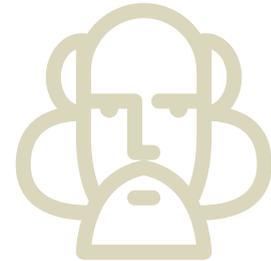
Parrabbola, a theatre project run by Philip Parr FRSA, focuses on creating community plays by working with people in their own localities. The project encourages participants to celebrate where they are from and helps to break down societal barriers. Parrabbola next goes to Ireland as part of a Creative Europe collaboration, touring a production of *The Winter's Tale*.

To find out more, contact Philip on philip@parrabbola.co.uk or visit www.shakingthewalls.eu

On a recent episode of *Polarised*, the RSA's podcast about the big divides in our politics and culture, Matthew Taylor outlines three possible scenarios for what the new prime minister might do next on Brexit. Plus, a new theory of the paths to political polarisation.

Listen for free on Apple Podcasts and Spotify

Agenda

CITIES OF LEARNING

This September, the RSA's award-winning lifelong-learning and skills programme, Cities of Learning, will run a London-wide competition to identify three 'boroughs of learning'. The competition is supported by A New Direction, a non-profit that generates creative opportunities for young people. Boroughs and collaborative partnerships are invited to demonstrate how they could use the Cities of Learning model to connect young people in their area with creative and cultural learning and work opportunities using Digital Open Badges. The winners will be offered support from the RSA and Digitalme to develop their plans.

To find out how you can encourage or support boroughs or collaborative partnerships entering the competition, contact Olivia Finn on olivia.finn@rsa.org.uk

MAKE FASHION CIRCULAR

Thanks to support from the People's Postcode Lottery Dream Trust, the RSA is partnering with the Ellen MacArthur Foundation to explore design for a circular economy within fashion. In September, the RSA will launch two Student Design Award briefs on the subject.

If you are a design educator or student interested in participating in the Student Design Awards, please contact sdaenquiries@rsa.org.uk

Fellowship

New Fellows

Dan Dubowitz is reader in architecture at Manchester School of Architecture and heads up the undergraduate programme. In 2002, he set up Civic Works, which specialises in regeneration projects and cultural masterplanning. His current focus is on developing 'collaborative urbanism'; a citizen-led approach to city-making that aims to democratise urbanism.

Professor **Özlem Er** specialises in design management and strategic design and currently works at Istanbul Bilgi University. She has directed a government-funded project – Design for SMEs – with the aim of matching newly graduated industrial designers with small and medium-sized enterprises. She is a member of the executive committee of the European Academy of Design and an editorial board member of *The Design Journal*.

Make the most of your Fellowship by connecting online and sharing your skills. Search the Fellowship at *www.thersa.org/ fellowship*. While you're there, don't forget to update your own profile: *www.thersa.org/my-rsa.*

Follow us on Twitter @theRSAorg Our Instagram is www.instagram.com/thersaorg Join the Fellows' LinkedIn group www.linkedin.com/groups/3391

Meet other Fellows in person at Fellowship events and network meetings, which take place all over the world and are publicised on our website *www.thersa.org/events.*

Grow your idea through RSA Catalyst, which offers grants and crowdfunding for Fellow-led and new or early-stage projects with a social goal.

Find out more at our online Project Support page www.thersa.org/fellowship/ project-support

CATCH UP ON THE CONVERSATION

Unmissable online highlights from a packed public events season, selected by the curating team for your viewing pleasure.

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Subscribe to our YouTube channel and 'like' us on Facebook to catch up on the latest content, direct from the RSA stage to a screen near you.

youtube.com/theRSAorg

facebook.com/rsaeventsofficial

Award-winning journalist, author and hit podcaster **Elizabeth Day** talks to writer and columnist **Charlotte Edwardes** about how valuable life lessons can be learned from things going wrong. Speaking candidly about her own experiences of failure, Elizabeth shows how we are more likely to live fuller, richer lives if we can let go of pursuing a perfect future and embrace the present and all its messiness.

Watch now: youtu.be/IcNpC7t5Q2w
#RSAFailure

One of the most influential scholars working today, Harvard Law School professor **Cass Sunstein** discusses the many ways in which change can happen on both an individual and a social scale – ranging from gradual nudges to movements to sudden cascades – with RSA Chief Executive **Matthew Taylor.**

Watch now:
youtu.be/JINJsTsMIAg
#RSAChange

Renowned psychologist **Dr Jennifer Eberhardt** shares powerful insights into how unconscious bias operates in subtle ways, but with profound effects. Only by acknowledging sometimes uncomfortable truths about the way we perceive the world and each other, she argues, can we make progress towards racial justice.

Watch now:
youtu.be/YMX0QzHbSOU
#RSABias

How can we navigate our current crisis of knowledge? The answer might lie in admitting how much we do not know. Writer and broadcaster **Michael Blastland** argues that by adapting our thinking and accepting the limits of our understanding, we can become wiser and better equipped to make sense of the world.

Watch now:
youtu.be/vZJ1armeogU
#RSASecrets

STATES OF MIND

We need to understand how cities shape us psychologically if we are to improve inhabitants' wellbeing and create more efficient, sustainable ways of urban living

by Chris Murray

Chris Murray is Director of Core Cities UK. His most recent book is *Psychology & the City: The Hidden Dimension*, co-authored with Charles Landry

If Jacob Bronowski's *The Ascent of Man* had a sequel, it would be an urban edition. The global rise in city living is so staggering that we must now accept one simple point with myriad, complex implications: the future success of our species is intimately linked to that of our cities. Yet, as Danish architect Jan Gehl put it, "We definitely know more about good habitats for mountain gorillas, Siberian tigers or panda bears than we do about a good urban habitat for Homo sapiens." This is particularly the case for the emotional and mental health impacts of city living.

Moving to the city

The figures tell the story: according to the UN, more than half the world now live in urban areas. This will rise to 70% by 2050, and in the UK about 80% of the population already live in cities. But, in evolutionary terms, cities are very new. Modern humans have been around for 200,000 years or so, cities at most 10,000. So, of the estimated 108 billion people that have ever existed (according to the Population Reference Bureau), only a small percentage have lived in a city, and those only recently.

While we are a highly adaptable species, there are limits. We have evolved to best suit our environments over millennia, but the rapid pace of change of the past few centuries has placed strains on our adaptability. For example, living in cities promotes a linear, sped up experience of time. German philosopher and psychiatrist Thomas Fuchs linked this with depression and anxiety, suggesting that it is out of step not only with the cyclical and circadian rhythms of the body, but also an older, deeply ingrained experience of time that is linked to seasonal cycles.

The city places constant calls on our attention, when we also need quiet and areas away from constant visual stimulation. Cities are increasingly recognising this, creating spaces for calm reflection and trying to address some of the factors deemed to drive over-stimulation. São Paolo took the lead in banning billboards, with Chennai, Grenoble and Tehran following suit. And in Italy, the Slow Cities movement puts an emphasis on traditional ways of living, promoting healthier habits and environments, and encouraging local craftsmanship.

But much more experimentation with this agenda is needed. We know, for example, that access to greenery or water can be limited or challenging in some cities, although it is known to lower blood pressure and have other health benefits. High-quality green spaces also increase pro-social behaviour; our ability to empathise, see things from another's perspective and participate in community life.

The overwhelming population sizes of cities can also challenge our 'hardwiring'. Anthropologist Robin Dunbar suggested that humans could maintain relationships with around 150 people, although it has since been posited that this number could reach 200. Dunbar suggests that this is the likely size of early hunter-gatherer groups; it also resembles the population of a small village. Perhaps, as I have suggested elsewhere, we still have "the mind of a village living in the body of a city".

Mental health has been described as the 'hidden disability' and, according to a study by Lydia Krabbendam and Jim van Os, levels of serious mental ▶

"Psychological impact should become a core concept for local and national policymakers"

health problems can be twice as bad in cities as non-urban areas. Another study, by a group of researchers headed by Jaap Peen, concluded that those living in cities were 21% more likely to experience an anxiety disorder; mood disorders were even higher, at 39%. It is clear that we need to examine far more closely mental and emotional wellbeing in cities, at the same time as we continue to tackle more outwardly evident challenges, such as climate change, social cohesion and inequality; all of which, it should be recognised, have a strongly psychological component to both cause and solution.

Of course, city living is not all negative. Urban life can also encourage psychological robustness and have positive impacts on emotional health, challenging us as it does to live alongside difference with tolerance and to relate to others. In its 2005 report, the American Psychological Association's Task Force on Urban Psychology suggested that, although segregation between communities could lead to tension in urban environments, cities also "offer heightened interaction among intercultural and interracial groups that leads

to the development of intercultural harmony and sensitivity". Cities can enable us to enjoy freedom of expression and levels of anonymity not generally found in smaller communities. As the report concluded, cities can be the solution to many problems, but at present we simply know too little about the interplay between cities and human psychology to be able to harness their positive effects.

What is abundantly clear to anyone who has ever visited a city is that cities are emotional as well as physical experiences. Why is it then that psychology is almost absent from urban policy?

In June this year, psychologists, psychiatrists, economists and urbanists from the UK, US and Europe gathered to address this issue at Europe's first Urban Psychology Summit. We posed the question of whether we need an 'urban psychology', exploring the links between urban renewal policy choices and serious mental and physical health impacts. How does the experience of 'place' shape individuals and communities? Do dominant personality types in an area help to determine economic success, and what

can neuroscience tell us about urban living? What might localised health and care, and national NHS strategies for urban mental health, look like? We wanted to examine these questions in thinking about how we might design cities to better help people from birth onwards. Four key findings emerged.

People and place
Experience of place determines much of our development and wellbeing, and we should not separate the policies for one from the other. They must be seen as interconnected. Place attachment theory suggests that we internalise our connection to community and place in the same way we do our connections to family, and that if our attachment is weak or negative, this will have detrimental consequences down the line. Medical studies have shown that the adverse effects of deprivation in childhood can lead to irreversible changes in brain structure and chemistry, and the immune system. Deprivation is also a place-based issue. It tends to be geographically concentrated in cities, in places with a poor quality of urban fabric, limited connectivity or access to amenities and services, and poor housing, which, as acknowledged by mental health charity Mind, is closely linked to poor mental health.

Mindy Thompson Fullilove, an American psychiatrist, spoke at the summit about the profound detrimental consequences that getting urban renewal and economic policy wrong can have on deprived communities. In her work, Fullilove has described how urban renewal policy in the US has resulted in the "serial forced displacement" of vulnerable and deprived communities due to federal, state and local policies.

Understanding the potentially adverse impacts of urban policymaking is of great importance to the future of cities. The summit concluded that it is possible to go further; we can actively create places that have profoundly positive effects, helping us to find meaning and purpose and develop. Professor Tim Kendall, NHS England's National Clinical Director for Mental Health, spoke about 'therapeutic communities', whereby we should be looking to create places that could have a positive therapeutic effect. Instead of 'care in the community', we might create 'communities of care', places and people that understand and help support one another's mental wellbeing, backed up by placemaking policy that is psychologically enlightened.

In the book I co-wrote with Charles Landry, *Psychology & the City*, we began to develop a toolkit for psychologically resilient cities. This has six dimensions that cities need to create or set in motion

in order that their citizens can benefit. These are based on psychologist Carol Ryff's six factors that contribute to psychological resilience: personal growth, positive relationships, autonomy, environmental mastery, life purpose and self-acceptance. A city should be designed and built with the aim of fulfilling all six of these areas, in order that it can meet the psychological needs of its inhabitants.

Developing a different urban future relies on a deep understanding of the psychological impact of urban policy and planning. Psychological impact should become a core concept for local and national policymakers, with planning and design decisions assessed under this remit as standard, in the same way our regulatory framework assesses impacts for the local environment and economy.

Jon Rouse, Chief Officer of the Greater Manchester Health and Social Care Partnership, set out compelling ways in which this can be practically achieved. These included an increased understanding of the spatial nature of health inequalities and their connections to place, as described above in terms of deprivation; and the fact that life expectancy can decrease by as much as 10 years as one travels from one side of a city to another. He also showed how health should be aligned far more closely with other services that shape people and place, from planning to transport, culture to education.

Sharing tools and evidence
We are in the process of developing an inter-disciplinary approach to cities, but psychology is still a missing component. As well as work that focuses directly on place, psychology offers ideas based on the 'person' that can be usefully reframed to look at 'place', which will give us new tools and insights. One such example is the City Personality Test. In writing our book, Charles Landry and I wondered what would happen if a city could take such a test; would it be introvert or extrovert, agreeable or disagreeable? So, we wrote one. It has been trialled by many cities internationally and the results have been fascinating. The questions asked in the test aim to find out how people perceive and think about where they live, drawing on the innate human tendency to humanise everything around us. It is based on standard psychometric tests that use between four and seven scales; introvert–extrovert would be one such scale. So, for instance, we found that Adelaide has suffered from a lack of confidence, but is slowly regaining it, and is aware that, although it is not a flashy city, it is paced and purposeful. Bilbao is proud and confident in its identity, ambitious but realistic in its plans. Plymouth has an adventurous spirit; often ▶

collaborative, it is open to working with others but would sometimes just like to be told what to do.

Another example of an important area of research that can be applied to cities is the work of economic geographer Ron Martin. A few years ago, the BBC carried out a simple personality test across all local authority areas in England. Martin overlaid data related to the economic performance of each place on the results and found a strong correlation between those areas with a significant proportion of personality types that could be described as entrepreneurial and those areas with stronger economic performance. This poses more questions than it answers. Are entrepreneurs attracted to places where the assets they need already exist; are people moving to clusters alongside other entrepreneurs; is there something about these places that helps people born there to succeed; and what are the implications for places that do not have strong entrepreneurial profiles? It is, however, a fascinating insight that would not have been possible through any other kind of analysis.

Where the evidence exists that a psychologically informed approach will create better outcomes, it is largely unknown by policymakers working on the ground, who due to budget cuts are operating with decreasing capacity. Even if there is awareness, the evidence can be difficult to access or turn into action. We need to find ways of sharing data across disciplines, in order to increase the research and evidence available to planners, policymakers, politicians, citizens and others.

Ego systems
Too often, we still see cities through a mechanical rather than a human lens. We view them as machines to be fixed, instead of living entities that, first and foremost, are made by, and consist of, people, and which often develop organically based on their inhabitants' needs. Cities are ego systems as well as ecosystems, and both viewpoints must be taken into account if we are to create flourishing city spaces.

The city provides an interactive social space that people can closely connect with. It is a space where complex, multi-layered sets of identities can find coherence and common cause, resulting perhaps in a 'shared individuality'. Supporting a positive shared identity is something nation-states are manifestly failing to do. They have much to learn from cities in this respect.

Yet it seems that urbanisation may also drive greater individualism. American psychologist and researcher Patricia Greenfield analysed 1.2 million books published over a 200-year period in the US and unearthed a direct correlation between urbanisation

in the country and a move towards more materialistic language. Her findings suggest a fundamental shift away from deference to authority and a collaborative way of thinking to a more individualistic and materialistic mindset. She discovered that we have moved from an interdependent way of existing to being one of a crowd of individuals. The changes correlate precisely to rising levels of urbanisation.

It is critical therefore that positive civic engagement is encouraged. The philosopher Hannah Arendt said that active civic life was the antidote to totalitarianism. An engaged citizenship immersed in activity and human contact that looks out from the individual towards the collective fosters a sense of shared endeavour alongside a lived experience of difference.

This is what the US psychologist and urbanist James Hillman meant when he said "to find yourself, you must enter the crowd". Human nature is deeply, innately communal and nowhere more so than in the city.

A psychological approach
It is imperative that, given rapidly rising urbanisation and worsening mental health, a stronger focus should be urgently placed on understanding more about the psychological impact of place upon us and us upon place. We need to explore how we can create psychologically resilient places; what the psychological impacts of urban deprivation are; how to unlock community assets; how we can understand what really makes for 'good' engagement across different groups; and the mental and emotional impacts of increasing inequality.

A new platform is needed to bring all of these aspects together. A research bid is likely, more publications and a further summit focusing on the 'global south'. Participants at the summit are working on a manifesto for change with which to engage key influencers.

To enable a focus on the above four areas, two other things need to happen.

First, psychology needs to engage more with the political and democratic spheres, in order to create widespread awareness of the ways in which it can help policymakers and influencers achieve shared goals. Sociology has always done this, having as it does its roots in the urban dimension. Psychology, concerned at least initially mainly with looking inward to the person rather than outward to the wider environment, is beginning to establish itself in this way as well. The development of a stronger urban psychology movement will do much to strengthen and reaffirm the credentials of psychology as a means for change beyond the individual.

"We need our cities to be emotionally intelligent places that organise around people first, structures second"

Second, we have to recognise the unique roles and abilities of cities, and empower them to do more. This is particularly the case in the UK, which is still one of the most centralised states in the developed world, despite some good progress on devolution. Empowered cities are critical to enabling place-based policy, aligning all relevant services, agencies and funds at the most meaningful level for a particular issue.

But increased levels of autonomy are also incredibly important to mental wellbeing. This is explored in self-determination theory, conceived by Edward L Deci and Richard Ryan, which demonstrates that we have three overriding psychological needs: autonomy, or the need to exercise self-determination; competence, or the need to experience mastery; and relatedness, or the need to interact, be connected to and experience caring for others. It is not much of a stretch to see how devolving power to local people could enhance this while increasing the democratic health of a nation at the same time.

Some of the biggest issues we face, such as climate change, social cohesion and inequality, have deeply psychological components that need to be properly understood in order that we can tackle them. Understanding the 'other' instead of projecting blame

and fear; being willing to make small sacrifices for larger collective gains; or simply accepting a sense of shared responsibility are all vital for a country's wellbeing and that of its population. Cities are the level at which these challenges play out, and they must be empowered to address them. In the UK, this means greater devolution from the centre, but it also means a broadening out of the current toolkit with which cities equip themselves to include psychology.

The smart cities agenda has made staggering advances that will benefit urban quality of life and indeed the global environment more broadly. We need smart cities to succeed, but we also need our cities to be emotionally intelligent places that organise around people first, structures second.

Hillman also said: "To improve yourself, improve your city". We are intimately linked to our environment; the better that is, the healthier and happier we are. ∎

Illustrations by Carlo Cadenas

LIVING IN CLOSE QUARTERS

The UN estimates that there are around 4.2 billion people living in urban areas worldwide and that this figure will rise to 5 billion by 2030. By 2050, some 70% of the global population will live in cities. This enormous expansion of some cities means that infrastructure cannot keep up with the needs of their populations. And, as urban populations rise, so do the number of people living in slums, commonly described as home-grown, insecure settlements reliant on the informal economy.

UN-HABITAT defines a slum as a group of people living under the same roof in an urban area who lack one or more of the following: durable housing; sufficient living space (not more than three people sharing a room); easy access to safe water; access to adequate sanitation; and security of tenure.

Since 2000, slum populations have grown by 6 million a year. Currently, more than 1 billion people live in slums (a quarter of the global urban population). If current growth rates continue, by 2030 this figure will have doubled and by 2050 it will reach 3 billion. This growing population is particularly vulnerable to many risks, including those caused by climate change. Slums are often located close to polluted areas and along rivers, in areas prone to flooding and landslides, and the accommodation within slums is often unstable.

Of course, there are inherent difficulties in measuring slum populations. Census data is often used, but this can undercount marginalised urban populations. Similarly, household surveys are also likely to under-represent urban poverty. ∎

Manila, Philippines
Total population: 13.5 million
One-third of the population live in slums

4,500,000
living in slums

9,000,000 living in
standard housing

Photography by Pixeleyes
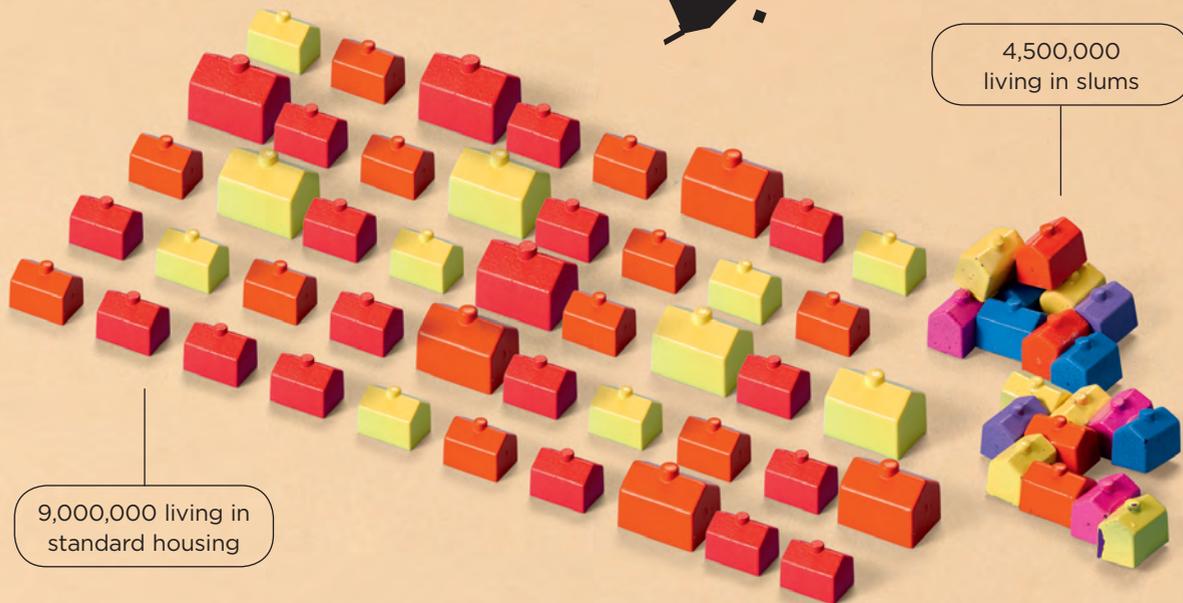
Mumbai, India
Total population: 20 million
41.3% of Mumbai's population
live in slums
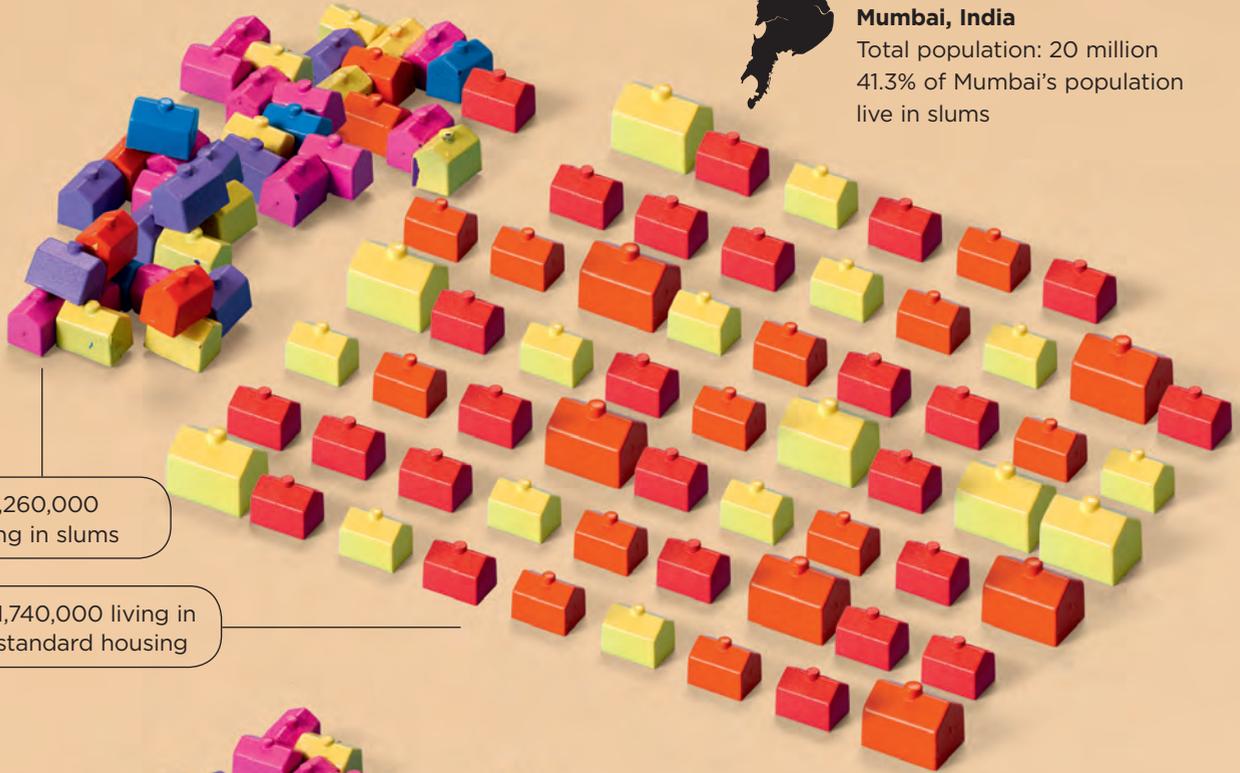
8,260,000
living in slums

11,740,000 living in
standard housing
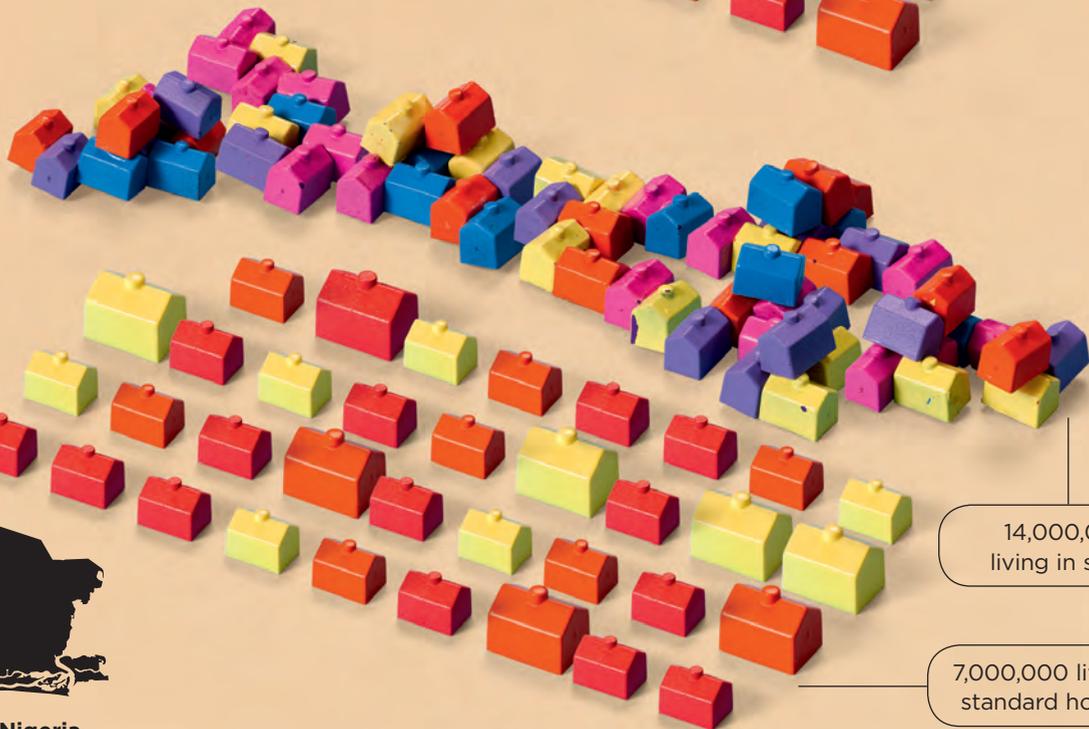
14,000,000
living in slums

7,000,000 living in
standard housing

Lagos, Nigeria
Total population: 21 million (although Lagos's population
is disputed)
Two-thirds of Lagos residents live in slums

Sources: UN, World Bank and World Population Review

Key

= 200,000
population

"Rising inequality demonstrates how elites are behaving badly and have failed large segments of the population"

Matthew Taylor speaks with American philosopher Elizabeth Anderson about how we can reconcile identity and hierarchy, and the paths to achieving a truly egalitarian society

Elizabeth Anderson is a philosophy and women's studies professor at the University of Michigan

Matthew Taylor: Your work encourages us to move from abstract notions of freedom and equality, to think more about how real people feel they're being treated in particular contexts. This feels characteristic of the world we're in now where a lot of people feel hurt.

How do you interpret this moment of political polarisation and anger?

Elizabeth Anderson: The anger is a response to rising inequality and a backlash to movements that are attempting to reduce inequality. There are two dimensions to this. One has to do with rising, fundamentally economic, inequality; the increasing concentration of wealth at the very top at the expense of ordinary people, especially working-class people without a college education. But there is a parallel trend in the cultural stream, and there you see both rising social movements on behalf of people of colour and women that are making progress, but provoking a backlash. These two trends are interacting in important ways because the principal group that feels beleaguered at both ends is working-class men. They feel that they're losing out both economically and on the cultural front, and the current populist revolt is channelling those backlash sentiments.

We're in a very challenging period because populist politics is founded on attacks on democracy itself. Ultimately, this will be to the disadvantage of everyone, because the so-called "deconstruction of the administrative state" undermines the capacity of the state to deliver goods to ordinary people. You have massive deregulation that favours plutocrats and will have destructive effects, but it takes a long time for people to recognise that.

Taylor: This is something that you've explored in your work: how do you have a society that provides people with the status and dignity they want as an individual, but at the same time how do you deal with the sense of hierarchy that comes along with this?

Anderson: I don't think dignity is inherently bound up with hierarchy. The egalitarian aspiration has always been to create a society and a set of social norms in which everyone has respect and recognises that. That is the ideal, for instance, of human rights. What we have to get away from is the notion, any notion, of identity that requires as a condition for seeing oneself as respected that one gets to trample on other people. That's the current moment we're

in: getting people who've been used to positions of domination and being able to hold other groups in contempt as a way to shore up their own sense of self-esteem to learn how to live as equals.

We live in a modern, high-tech society where the delivery of extremely important goods such as medical care, mass communications, mass education and so forth requires large-scale complex organisation. In order for complex organisations to deliver goods effectively, there has to be a hierarchy of offices. The critical thing for egalitarian aspiration is to tightly curtail the powers of office. We have to ensure that who occupies higher office isn't determined by arbitrary identities such as race, gender, sexual orientation or religion. Critical to doing that is democratisation. If we don't have strong and stable democracies, where

those in power are held accountable to those who are governed, then there's no prospect for a society of equals.

Taylor: Why is hierarchy everywhere losing legitimacy? From government to big business and even charities, leadership seems to be in crisis.

Anderson: There are two factors. Rising inequality demonstrates how elites are behaving badly and have failed large segments of the population. State capture is a big part of the story. States' neoliberal policies since the 1970s have consistently redistributed income from the middle to the top and we're experiencing a backlash. But added to that is the rise of a right-wing, propagandistic press, which is stirring up conspiracy ▶

theories and attacks on knowledge-forming institutions including the mainstream press, science and universities. This results in the rise of irrational distrust; for instance, anti-vaccination movements based on clear medical fraud. We are experiencing a serious breakdown of trust.

One of the reasons we need hierarchy is that complex decisions have to be made that require a lot of knowledge, skill and sensitivity. Ironically, at the same time as corporate hierarchy has intensified, with rising inequality and outsize pay packages for CEOs, we see that their decision-making has been radically simplified not to serve all stakeholders in a firm but to serve shareholders alone. If there's only one interest to be served then you don't actually need very complicated decision-making. So, right at the moment when we're claiming leadership is challenging and difficult, we're simplifying it.

Taylor: You encourage us to understand the history of ideas. Do you think we have futile arguments about ideas because we abstract them from their original context?

"All political thinking tends to be much sharper in critique than it is in imagining positive alternatives"

Anderson: Yes, absolutely. All political thinking tends to be much sharper in critique than it is in imagining positive alternatives. This is certainly true for egalitarians, who are vividly aware and have brilliant arguments against social hierarchy. But then actually designing egalitarian institutions is an incredibly difficult project. The egalitarians of the 18th century knew very well what they were opposed to – things like monopoly and oligarchy and the stranglehold of power that the idle rich, and especially landowners, had on the way their societies were operating. Hence Adam Smith's vision that the key to bringing about a more equal society would be to break up monopolies just seemed natural.

It's of vital importance to recognise that Smith did not oppose regulation of markets across the board. Principally what he was opposed to was state regulations that entrenched monopoly. He even had the view that under free-market competition, the most efficient producer would be a self-employed individual who owns and works his own capital. That didn't work out because the industrial revolution intervened and brought about a system in which the most efficient producer was actually a large industrial corporation with huge capital. His prediction that markets would deliver a society of equals, of basically self-employed people, did not pan out. His theory wasn't able to contend with the difficulties that arise with large-scale industrial

organisations that consign most people to a condition of wage labour for life.

Taylor: Do you share an excitement about the possibility that technological change could liberate us from some of the more oppressive aspects of capitalism?

Anderson: My own studies of thinkers around the industrial revolution show that every person who tried to predict the future was wrong, so I'm a little bit reluctant to make predictions about where our high-tech revolution will send us.

Let's keep in mind that John Maynard Keynes back in 1930 imagined that in about 10 years from now people would only have to work 15 hours a week and enjoy a leisure society. I'm sceptical that's going to happen. For one thing we have the mass catastrophe of global climate change. That's going to require lots of people to be installing radically different infrastructure and adopting emergency adaptation strategies. The nature of jobs will certainly change quite dramatically; we've seen this several times before. I expect that's more likely than a leisure society.

Taylor: Governance at the city level is more adaptive and less polarised; also, what might be called 'hyphenated identities' are more possible at the local level. Do you think that some of these challenges to do with freedom and equality and status are easier to solve on a smaller scale?

Anderson: There are certain virtues of urban settings. It's precisely by living in heterogeneous cities that we learn how to be cosmopolitans, we learn how to encounter diversity and not get afraid or upset about it. That's what cities do and, in countries with dynamic economies, they're spectacularly successful at doing that with respect to immigrants. The real challenges that we see are actually in less densely populated areas, where people are not used to encountering diversity. It's not really so much a matter of scale but the kind of cultural habituation to encountering diversity, and I think that we can work together and cooperate in highly heterogeneous environments.

There are also many positive opportunities – commercial opportunities, educational opportunities – that come from encountering diversity.

Taylor: You're progressive, you're a feminist, yet you're also interested in ideas that come from people who might situate themselves on the conservative end of the philosophical spectrum. We hear a lot about American campuses and the ideological and intellectual polarisation there. Is that overstated?

Anderson: It is true that American campuses tend to lean left. But there's a lot of diversity even within that generalisation. Within my campus we have about 30,000–40,000 students and there's still a critical mass of conservative students. I find that very important for helping students to engage in constructive dialogue. The idea that conservative ideas cannot be expressed is preposterous. Conservative texts are routine subjects of study and assigned in many classes. It's easy to get these dialogues going if you have sufficient diversity of ideology among the student body.

Taylor: Are you optimistic or pessimistic right now? Will we move beyond our current polarisations and find a new form of progressivism fit for the 21st century, or do you think that the danger of breakdown, of authoritarianism, is continuing to grow?

Anderson: I can tell both an optimistic and a pessimistic story. Let me start with the optimistic one, which is very US-centred. Populism in the United States is currently driven by hysteria over immigration. Yet America is founded on immigration and always has been and always will be. We've seen this before. Every time there is a local peak in the percentage of foreign born you see panic break out. Then Americans get used to the new immigrants. Even during the Trump era, public opinion shows that American attitudes towards immigrants have got steadily warmer.

Here's the negative story though. What we've discovered is that the institutions of democracy are fragile; the American constitution itself is a brittle institution in the face of highly polarised partisan conflict. The structural features of the US constitution are heading for a situation in which Republicans may well keep a majority in the Senate, even though they'll only be representing a small fraction of the population. It's hard to see how such a system is sustainable. The other difficulty with our constitution is that it's almost impossible to change. This is a recipe for constitutional crisis and possibly democratic breakdown, and I'm not sure exactly which way we're going to swing. That's really the challenge the United States faces. ∎

PLACE, POWER AND PIONEERS

Our conception of cities must be broader, create a new account of power and learn from urban experiments

by Ed Cox
🐦 @edcox_rsa

Ed Cox is Director of Public Services and Communities at the RSA

Globally, roughly 200,000 people move to a city every day, justifying predictions that the 21st century will be characterised as an urban age and that humanity will evolve to become what some are calling '*homo urbanus*'. For many, cities represent excitement, dynamism and opportunity; places where people encounter diversity of people, places and products, connections and culture, and apparently endless enterprise and innovation.

Although cities' reputations are mostly built on past achievements, they are fuelled by being portents of the future. For example, Toronto-based Sidewalk Labs is using big data and technology to redesign congested streets and support 'micromobility'. Meanwhile, Biobot Analytics is sampling the city's sewers to help tackle public health issues. In January 2019, Madrid City Council passed a regulation establishing the City Observatory as a standing assembly of randomly selected citizens who – alongside the elected council – review city regulations and debate popular initiatives proposed through an online platform. Whether it is climate change, tech, ageing or democratic reform, cities worldwide are locked in friendly competition to solve today's biggest challenges.

But even if the future is apparently urban, the urban path is by no means linear or straightforward. Dominant narratives about cities are increasingly contested and both evidence and practice suggest that *homo urbanus* has some way to evolve. There

are three key ways in which this needs to happen: our current concept of the city needs to broaden; city leadership needs a new account of power; and our urban experiments need to spread.

Inclusive and sustainable city-systems

So often, we think of 'the city' as a single phenomenon, but the urban economy is far more variegated than many commentators or textbooks would care to acknowledge.

A lot of attention has been given to some of the world's biggest cities, where the rates of urbanisation were exceptionally high until the early 2000s and where economic productivity appeared to be shooting up as fast as the skyscrapers on their respective horizons. London, Tokyo, New York, Shanghai, Mumbai, Lagos, Rio; these global megacities have dominated nations and their economies as well as our narratives about our urban age.

Similarly, in the Anglosphere, the great American city has become something of an archetype for the urban imagination. Literature and film have evoked images of dense central business districts, the beating heart of the city, surrounded by sprawling suburbia then rolling savannah. Generations of geography students have been indoctrinated with the ideas of the Chicago School theory of urban planning and its concentric rings of development, and the subsequent persuasive accounts of urban living laid ▶
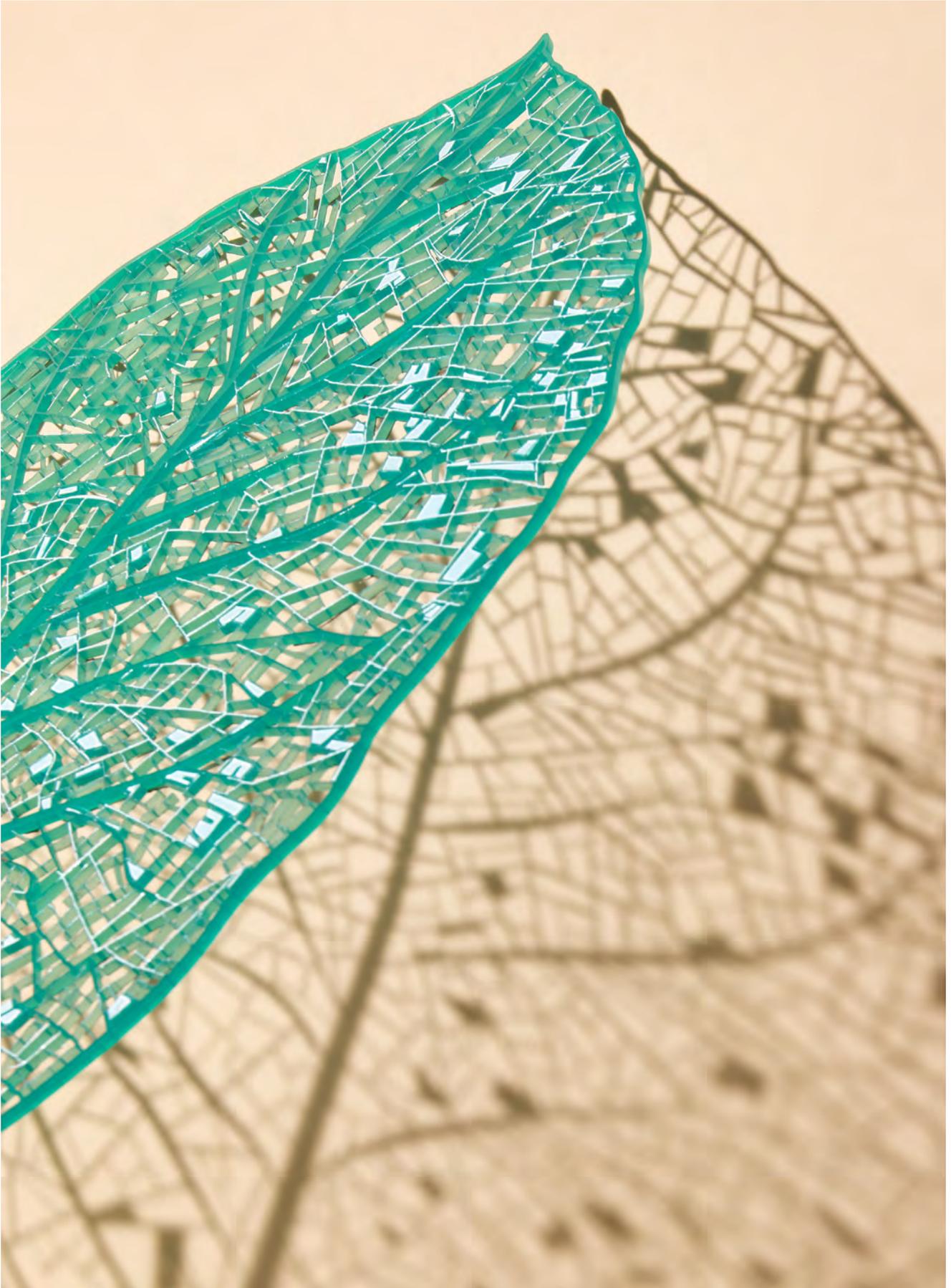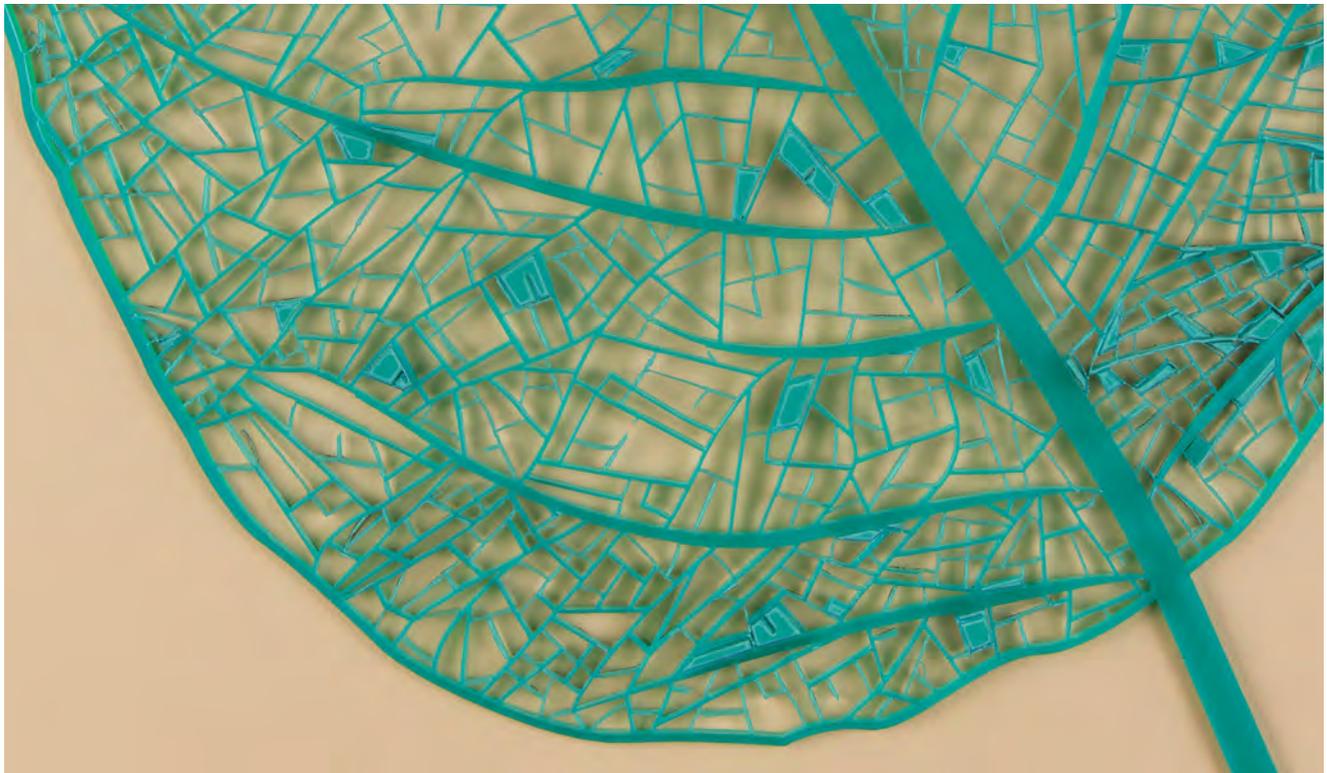
down by the likes of Richard Florida, Ed Glaeser and Bruce Katz.

Few could deny either the economic success of global megacities, or the attraction of the American archetype and the models that have been developed to explain these phenomena. Within these accounts, cities are defined as 'functional urban areas' or 'functional economic areas', measured in terms of the commuter flows to and from the urban centre. Huge store has been set in the idea of agglomeration, where the increasing concentration of people, ideas and firms acts as a key driver of economic dynamism and has beneficial spillover effects for those around the city core. The empirical evidence for many American cities was compelling, and it has been consistent for many global megacities too: the bigger and more concentrated the city, the greater its economic success.

Unfortunately, global megacities have seen a significant slowdown in terms of their economic growth since the turn of the century as increasing congestion has outweighed the advantages of agglomeration. In the UK, we are beginning to notice this. London has outperformed many other megacities, propped up by its unique status in the global financial system and by vast public expenditure on projects such as Crossrail and the Olympic Games. However, there are now signs that it has passed a tipping point, with public

transport patronage falling and evidence of many young families and young professionals moving out. Cities such as Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham are all now experiencing faster rates of growth than the capital, albeit from lower baselines. One wonders how much faster they would be growing were they not constrained by the lack of investment in hard and soft infrastructure relative to London.

Major questions have emerged about how successful these big cities really are. Despite high rates of productivity, there is significant evidence that they are drivers of inequality. Consider the vast differences in income and wealth that exist between different workers in the city, the prevalence and visibility of homelessness, social segregation and violence. It is not to say that these problems do not exist elsewhere, but the bigger the city, the starker the inequality. In the UK, the impact of such dominant cities on the wider economy can be profound: Lord Kerslake's UK2070 Commission recently reported that the scale of regional inequality is now greater than between East and West Germany before reunification.

The reality is – and always has been – that proportionately few urban dwellers live in global megacities, let alone the highly monocentric US archetypes that dominate the urban imagination. Two recent papers published by the OECD suggest that we

"Even if the future is apparently urban, the urban path is by no means linear or straightforward"

need a more nuanced understanding of the shape of cities and urban economies if we are to address the inequalities many have generated.

The first is a 2019 working paper on the classification of metropolitan areas, by Milenko Fadic et al. Recognising that the methods used thus far to categorise urban areas are somewhat unsophisticated, the OECD has proposed a new approach. This distinguishes between larger and smaller cities as well as between different types of non-metropolitan areas and their connectedness to cities. Using this new classification, significant variations between urban systems in different countries become clear. In the UK, roughly one-third of the population lives in larger cities of more than 1.5 million, one-third in smaller cities of 250,000–1.5 million and one-third in non-metropolitan areas. This is markedly different from the US or Japan, where nearly 60% of the population live in large cities, but much more similar to Germany and the Netherlands. It would seem that our patterns of urban development in the UK have more in common with our continental European neighbours than they do with the US and other nations we typically look to as comparators.

A 2018 OECD paper written by Daniela Glocker explores the rise of the megaregion. Responding to the emerging evidence of burgeoning growth in smaller towns and cities in many parts of the world, Glocker outlines how high-speed rail, digital connectivity, spatial planning and other factors are bringing clear economic advantages to groups of towns and cities where politicians and policymakers learn to collaborate effectively over large, interconnected megaregions. She cites successful examples such as the Randstad in the Netherlands (Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam and The Hague, together with the smaller places that lie between them) and the Rhein-Ruhr region of Germany (the cluster of smaller cities around Dortmund, Essen and Cologne, which, economically, is now even extending to Frankfurt).

City-systems are significantly different, in that although they still include important business districts for financial and professional services, they incorporate a much wider range of economic activity including critical assets such as advanced manufacture, energy generation and logistics centres

that require more dispersed development. For growing numbers of people, regular access to a big city, and a more flexible working pattern while living in a smaller town, looks increasingly more attractive than a lengthy daily commute in and out of a busy city. Glocker acknowledges that the notion of the megaregion has yet to receive sufficient academic attention to evidence its long-term benefits. However, there is much to suggest that a city-system of this kind could be less resource-intensive, more economically inclusive and offer major enhancements to individual wellbeing than the megacity model.

Transforming power

In economic terms, at the very least, we need to adapt our thinking away from ideas of monocentric monoliths like London and New York and towards diverse city-systems linking smaller towns and cities. But this new geography also requires fresh thinking about the democratic infrastructure required to support the urban age.

American urbanist Benjamin Barber has perhaps been the greatest champion of the metro mayor, arguing that the nation-state has become too democratically dysfunctional to tackle some of the most divisive and interdependent problems we face, and that city mayors are more effective at addressing them. There is much to be said for this argument. Since Donald Trump announced that he would withdraw the US from the Paris Agreement in 2017, city mayors in America have accelerated their action on climate change.

Inspired by American urbanism, successive governments in the UK have sought to bring a mayoral model to UK cities. The Local Government Act 2000 allowed local authority areas in England to elect city mayors and, to date, 15 have adopted this approach. In a bid to boost the numbers, in 2011 the coalition government required 10 urban local authorities to hold referendums on switching to a city mayor system; only Bristol voted in favour. It is not surprising that the public were not impressed. England's city mayors have been a pale shadow of their overseas counterparts: generally their jurisdictions cover small parts of wider city regions and they have no more powers than any other council leaders.

This changed with the Cities and Local Government Devolution Act 2016, which made provision for metro mayors to oversee larger groupings of local authorities covering whole city regions. There are now metro mayors in Greater London, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the West Midlands and five other city regions, serving over 10 million people in total and gaining increasing public support. Most have ▶

powers over some aspects of economic development, planning and local transport as part of devolution deals. Metro mayors have similar geographical footprints to those of their American and European counterparts but very few direct powers and, with no ability to raise tax revenue, have few financial resources.

Despite this, they can use their soft powers to great effect and there is a growing interest in place-based leadership and the role that mayors and other local leaders can play in shaping the city. Whether through planning powers and smart procurement or through convening groups of public, private and voluntary agencies, the art of city governance is an increasingly sophisticated and interesting one. As public-entrepreneur-in-chief, the city mayor can be the custodian and facilitator of a city's knowledge, capability and assets if properly empowered to do so.

However, power in the city comes from multiple sources and, in what remains an over-centralised system, metro mayors in England are functioning with one hand tied behind their backs. Central government must learn to trust mayors with much greater powers over both economic and social policy: education, health and welfare are just as important as innovation, planning and transport in supporting inclusive and sustainable urban growth.

Power must also be granted from the bottom up. As Matthew Taylor argues elsewhere in this edition of *RSA Journal*, we need to "reform and renew the legitimacy of collective action and decision-making". For city mayors, democratic innovation must start with more participatory approaches to public service reform and urban design, like those seen in Toronto. But for more contentious and intractable issues, mayors should be at the vanguard of deliberative democracy; this is already happening in Barcelona and cities across Canada and Australia. As we are seeing in Madrid, the time has come for the idea of a standing citizens' assembly as a counterweight or second chamber to the traditional elected government.

And, if we are to see more inclusive city-systems flourish, power must also be exercised horizontally. In many nations, there are significant divides in political attitudes between big cities and other areas. In the UK, this was very visible in the EU referendum vote and in attitudes towards Brexit since: by and large, the bigger the city, the higher the vote to remain. There are different explanations for this pattern, but it is hard to deny the level of resentment found in so-called 'left behind' places over the attention lavished by many national governments on their biggest cities, including the introduction of metro mayors.

While mayors may be a good solution for our larger cities, they are not necessarily the answer in every place. Devolution in England is essential but it cannot be tied to a single model of governance, nor withheld from smaller towns and non-metropolitan areas. As with other city matters, American urbanism is not our only model. Regional assemblies and different types of combined authority may be necessary to transcend the parochialism that bedevils local government. Central government should use devolution as the lubricant to oil the wheels of reform.

The temptation to pit towns against cities or to placate left-behind places with ad hoc grants is to ignore the new geography of city-systems. In the UK, of the 32% of the population that live in non-metropolitan areas, the OECD calculates that about three-quarters live within an hour of the nearest big city. Although the governance and institutional arrangements of England currently mitigate against the effective interaction between towns and cities,

political leaders – led by metro mayors – would be wise to ride the regional wave as it grows.

Urban pioneers

As we develop a broader understanding of the economy of wider city-systems and regions, and as we enhance and embed new forms of governance and power, the case for institutional reform becomes obvious. In England and the devolved nations, we have destroyed the kind of regional institutions that exist in almost every other developed economy and where they play a critical role in supporting city-systems. Currently, our local government is a messy patchwork of hollowed-out counties, unitary authorities, districts and parishes.

The good news is that, in the UK, regions are slowly being restored from the bottom-up through collaboration between local enterprise partnerships and strategic transport bodies. It is now high time for the government to properly ordain and support a new geography of four or five English regional powerhouses. The RSA has a long tradition of work in this vein. In the second half of the 18th century, it was instrumental in giving premiums to those producing high-quality county maps detailing the economic geography of England. Today, our One Powerhouse project has produced spatial economic blueprints for each of the four English megaregions: the North, the Midlands, the South East and the South West, with more detailed plans due later this year.

At the more local level, we must grasp the nettle of reform and rationalise local government into a coherent set of combined authorities with appropriate forms of leadership for each, with a clear expectation that they, in turn, will push power downwards to unlock the potential of neighbourhood action. Such a multi-tiered system of governance will require political courage, but – as we have seen with other institutional reforms – once established, the public soon comes to recognise and value the change. For example, trying to abolish the office of the Mayor of London or Greater Manchester now could not be done without a public outcry.

That said, very few city-dwellers have any interest in the systems of urban governance. Indeed, *homo urbanus* seems adept at working around and within whatever institutional systems prevail, and so to be preoccupied by institutional reform is perhaps to overlook the very lifeblood of cities. Almost in spite of our antiquated systems of urban governance and our over-centralised nation, our cities flourish as the petri dishes of social experimentation and economic innovation.

At the RSA, we are championing such urban experiments. Our Cities of Making project explores the role of manufacturing in the cities of London, Rotterdam and Brussels. As traditional manufacturing has been slowly squeezed out of big cities, we are exploring how micro and small manufacturing businesses are innovating to support a more inclusive and sustainable economy. Rotterdam's Roadmap Next Economy experiment, for example, combines digital technology and data-driven innovation in agro-food production, waste disposal and port-related businesses.

The RSA Cities of Learning project seeks to make the whole city a learning campus. Eschewing traditional top-down approaches to adult education, we are working in a number of cities to bring together diverse agencies to create an array of learning opportunities that are accredited through Digital Open Badges. Our partners include learning institutions as well as business and civil society organisations, including those from the cultural sector. In each place, they are coming together to design different learning pathways for people from a range of backgrounds.

Both of these pioneering projects are examples of what the French philosopher Henri Lefebvre might describe as heterotopias; spaces of possibility in the city where we begin to glimpse how the future might be different. In helping to reshape our city-systems, the RSA is helping to shape the societies in which we live. As *homo urbanus* evolves, broadening the urban imagination is perhaps our greatest task. ∎

BELONGING

Only when we can define, measure and quantify our emotional reactions to place can we design interventions that positively affect how we feel

by Nicola Bacon
🐦 @SL_Cities

The 2016 EU referendum result exposed a crisis of belonging, starkly revealing deep divides about what we felt we belonged to and what it meant to feel at home. This emotion is seen far more widely and deeply than just in attitudes to one political institution. Recent polling for *The Guardian* shows that some of the deepest fissures between leavers and remainers are on culture and identity.

The Collins dictionary defines belongingness as "the human state of being an essential part of something". It is a core element of our quality of life. The organisation I run, Social Life, explores the relationship between people and the places in which they live. Our work is about understanding how people's day-to-day experience of local places is shaped by the built environment – housing, public spaces, parks and local high streets – and how change, through regeneration, new development or small improvements to public spaces, affects the social fabric, opportunities and wellbeing of local areas.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of our psycho-social lives to our experience of the places and spaces where we spend our everyday lives. Beyond Brexit, if we are to address what lies beneath some of these emotional divides and if these concepts are to influence policy and practice, we need to get better at defining what we mean.

Home comforts

Belongingness is a concept that intuitively makes sense. We all recognise the importance of feeling 'at home' in the places and spaces we pass through regularly. It is a human need; it features in Maslow's hierarchy, halfway up the pyramid. Love and belonging are necessities for people to develop self-esteem and confidence, and to be able to self-actualise; to be able to live creatively and maximise our potential. Experience has taught us that it is important to be precise about how we think about the emotional side of place. Too often different concepts – of neighbourliness, belonging and community – are used interchangeably and nebulously, in a way that can cause more, rather than less, confusion. This makes it easier to dismiss these factors, which are at the best of times difficult to describe and define, in favour of tangibles: schools and hospitals, poverty and crime. It also makes it easier to sign up to unproven theories about the pernicious influence of difference, diversity or migration on our sense of belonging and neighbourliness.

Belongingness is complex. We may feel at home in our homes, but not at work or at school, or at home in one part of the town we live but uncomfortable in other areas. People who are new to an area, even new to the UK, may experience belonging (and not belonging) in particular ways, influenced by their individual history and circumstances. We all carry multiple identities within us. Discussions about improving diversity and inclusion in the workplace now recognise that belonging has been the missing ingredient; it is not enough to be included, you must also feel that you belong.

Feedback loops

Nearly 10 years ago, when I was at The Young Foundation (a centre of social innovation and research), we developed a framework of 'belonging feedback loops' to understand the ways that we belong in the different dimensions of our lives: at work, in civil

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society, in sport and in the media. This takes the premise that we all instinctively sense acceptance from family, colleagues, neighbourhoods, people who provide services and our political representatives. Our hunch was that in order to feel like we belong, we all need to experience belongingness in enough of these dimensions. Belonging feedback loops can help to structure conversations and dialogue about belonging, as well as about feelings of exclusion, and can help us to think about how individuals and even groups or communities can feel more secure in their lives. They help us to understand how all the different aspects of our lives reinforce each other, or collude to undermine each other.

The feedback loops give us a tool for conversation but not a metric. To fill this gap, Social Life has analysed data from national surveys and matched this to small local areas to generate predictions of our attitudes towards places. The Understanding Society survey – the UK's largest and best-established longitudinal study – explores different aspects of our everyday experience. Using the Office for National Statistics' Output Area Classifications, we modelled the survey results to local areas. This allows us to predict how people feel about where they live, including perceptions of neighbourliness, wellbeing, feelings about people from different backgrounds, loneliness and belonging.

We can use this data to benchmark small areas, giving us context about how neighbourhoods compare with similar places. This approach can be replicated across the UK, and in other countries that have good local open data.

By comparing actual data with our predicted data we can see if a place is meeting expectations and how it compares with other places. A neighbourhood that fares better will have something going on that is boosting people's perceptions. Where it looks like an area is doing worse than expected, this suggests that something is undermining relationships to that place.

When we map our predicted data we can see that belonging relates to deprivation in most areas, ▶

but not all. For example, in London there is an area of low predicted belonging running from Covent Garden to Marylebone in Westminster, which cannot be explained by poverty.

We used our predictive data on an estate in west London to understand, over time, the social impact of its radical regeneration programme. South Acton Estate is the biggest council estate in Ealing. Before redevelopment began it included over 2,000 homes. The estate is incrementally being demolished and replaced by social and private housing.

In 2015, Social Life's first social sustainability assessment found belonging, local identity and neighbourliness to be higher than expected among people living in the older estate, but lower (although similar to comparable areas) in the new housing. At the time, only 167 of the proposed 2,500 new homes had been built. When we went back to the estate in 2017 (now with 763 new homes built), repeating the same survey, belonging was still high in the older estate and had risen to the same level in the new homes. Around a quarter of people in the new homes in 2017 were long-term residents, rehoused by the council, so are likely to have transferred their attachment to the neighbourhood and neighbours. Our research shows that between 2015 and 2017, this had spilled over to the new

arrivals, and that they had become more strongly identified with the place.

From this, we can deduce that it is not necessarily true that being new to a place stops people feeling that they belong. In 2018, we worked with Canadian psychogeographer Colin Ellard from the University of Waterloo to explore feelings about the area around our office in Walworth in south London. We took 100 people, some local residents, others new to the area, on a five-stop walk around the location asking them to assess each stop on a series of criteria. The places that scored highest for making people feel they belong were the Pullens community garden, an intimate yet accessible place with lush planting and greenery; and Walworth Road, near the McDonalds. People felt most interested and welcome at these two locations. The community garden scored highest for feeling relaxed and Walworth Road scored highest on 'excitement' and on being welcoming and interesting. We can conclude from this that greenness and tranquillity support a sense of belonging. But so do familiarity and dynamism, and the inclusiveness of London's thriving hyper-diverse shopping streets.

The impact of 'outsiders'
Our research has revealed high levels of belonging in many areas that outsiders may perceive as hostile,

> ## "Belonging is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition in a place's resilience"

including some areas that are characterised by high deprivation. Crucially, we have found no evidence that diversity in itself hampers belonging – in places that are comfortable with diversity.

Recent research in the English town of Corby, talking to residents and community groups, throws more light on belonging in places where there are possibly more tensions about diversity. One of the town's assets is its strong sense of local identity, linked to its industrial history and the large numbers of people migrating from Scotland to work in the steelworks 50 years ago. For many residents, this accounts for Corby's distinctive sense of place. In the aftermath of the closure of the steelworks Corby continued to grow; however, new employment became more casualised, mainly in distribution or low-skilled manufacturing, and is now dependent on migration, often from eastern Europe. There are weak links between longer-standing communities and foreign migrants and reports of discrimination and hostility.

There is also nervousness about Corby's future in the face of automation, Brexit and poor-quality work. Belonging is a necessary, but not a sufficient, condition in a place's resilience and while people may feel they belong in an area today, it does not necessarily follow that they feel they will belong in the future.

A fear frequently voiced when we speak to people about their futures is that the place they call home may not be 'for us' in the future. Many who describe feeling at home in their neighbourhoods today – whether they can track their local roots back for generations or have moved in more recently – describe how they are questioning whether they will feel they belong in the same way in the coming years.

People are fast to read the symbolic meanings of new buildings, homes or shops, and quick to decide what these say about change and who is the intended beneficiary. When we feel that change is not working in our best interests, that it is restricting, rather than increasing, our options, then the sense of belonging in the future is threatened. This is compounded by other pressures on everyday life. The cumulative impact of rising housing costs, changes to benefit regimes, immigration policy and the gradual erosion

of services as a result of public-sector austerity are all increasing insecurity.

The American clinical psychiatrist Mindy Thompson Fullilove describes the psychological trauma of displacement as "root shock". It is possible that the fear of displacement and loss of belonging can be pernicious and damaging to wellbeing and quality of life, regardless of whether your home is under immediate threat or not. This seems to be a similar process to the way that fear of crime can affect people independently of their actual experience of crime. It is possible that it is the attack on future belonging that underpins some of our strong feelings about the EU; on being inside or outside of a community.

We all deserve to feel that we belong in the places we call home, and confident of our place in their future. As well as understanding what is happening in our neighbourhoods we are also trying to understand what can be done to support our sense of belonging and security, and how we can all feel at home in the places we live. ∎

RSA Fellowship in action
Breathing Spaces

A £2,000 RSA Catalyst Seed Grant has been awarded to Rebecca Kinge FRSA to go towards Breathing Spaces, which aims to reduce air pollution and improve public health. Breathing Spaces, a community project, has set up several sensors in the St Denys area of Southampton to measure particulate matter and monitor peaks and troughs. The Seed Grant will be used to test out whether a bus shelter can act as an 'air quality hub' in the city. As part of a partnership with Solent Showcase Gallery, the shelter will feature artwork and encourage passers-by to access an online air quality map for the city. Breathing Spaces has also set up several 'Clean Air Cafés' where the local community are invited to get involved and share their worries and ideas for solutions.

As a port city with an airport and surrounded by motorways, Southampton has long had a problem with high air pollution levels. "The way to do something effective about air pollution is to get people from all kinds of backgrounds together. We believe in science and art working together with the community, local people and professionals," says Rebecca. "We're all about driving social change through collective action." The project hopes to inspire people to get involved in Breathing Spaces and/or set up their own scheme to tackle air pollution.

▬ *To find out more about Breathing Spaces, contact Rebecca on rebecca@socollective.org.uk. Rebecca is working with the RSA to organise an event in the autumn for Fellows*

CONTRADICTORY CHOICES

When key political issues are linked with long-held identities, it is hard not to respond emotionally

by Jonathan Metzl

🐦 @JonathanMetzl

I t is said that uncertainty drives voters to support politics that ultimately go against their own interests. What this generally means is that atmospheres of insecurity push voters into backing politicians who play on their fears by offering solutions, not just to pressing real-world issues, but to a perceived loss of status or privilege. These politicians often find 'others' to blame, while promising to help those who feel that the system is no longer working for them. Yet such support represents a double-edged sword: the policies these politicians implement can foment mistrust even further, thereby worsening the very problems they claim to want to fix.

Of late, we have heard a lot about the economically self-destructive nature of policies based on nationalism and xenophobia, and for good reason – isolationism shrinks markets, often to the detriment of workers. Thus in the US, media is replete with stories about how, for instance, farmers in conservative states continue to support President Trump even after his disastrous trade wars threaten their livelihoods. Meanwhile, in the UK, support for Brexit continues unabated, and even grows, in the face of warnings that a no-deal exit could lead to rising interest rates, lower GDP and economic recession.

My research shows that policies based in nativism or isolationism also have profoundly negative biological consequences, even for the populations whose support is needed to gain and hold power in the first place.

I have come to this conclusion after spending the past eight years studying the rise of white 'backlash' politics in Southern and Midwestern US states such as Missouri, Kansas, Kentucky and Tennessee for my recent book, *Dying of Whiteness*. By backlash, I mean anti-government, anti-immigrant, pro-gun politics

that promise to defend or restore the interests of white Americans in the face of changing demographics or cultural norms.

Such themes, which have been part of American political discourse for decades, were given new life with the rise of groups such as the Tea Party during the Obama years. Since then, they have become central refrains of President Trump's rise to power and his increasingly overt claims that immigrants, minorities and liberals present threats to white wellbeing.

American heartlands

A white Midwesterner myself, my research has helped me better understand the complex ways in which Trump speaks to working-class biases and fears, and gives his supporters the sensation of winning in the face of an increasingly diverse world that, as he repeatedly frames it, spins away from their interests. Trump's promises of white defence and restoration remain central to his boasts to make America "great again" and suffuse the US government's approaches to issues including immigration, foreign affairs, tax cuts and healthcare.

But there is a twist: from the perspective of health and longevity, the actual policies that his administration promotes and implements often end up making the lives of working-class Americans – including the lives of his white working-class supporters – far worse. In many instances, the policies at the core of the Trump agenda function in the same way as other man made risk factors such as asbestos or second-hand smoke; shortening the lifespans of the most vulnerable in the Grand Old Party (GOP) base of support.

Take healthcare. On assuming office, the Trump administration inherited the beginnings of a national ▶

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healthcare programme, the Affordable Care Act (ACA). But instead of bolstering healthcare networks, the administration undercut the ACA (and its related Medicaid expansion) at every turn, while presenting no viable alternative for healthcare for poor states and communities.

I researched ACA rejection in Tennessee, a state in which white working-class voters resoundingly supported Trump. There, efforts to undermine the ACA have harmed health across the board for lower-income whites. White working-class Tennesseans saw doctors less often and paid more for visits and prescriptions than they would have done had the ACA gone into full effect. Without adequate coverage, people got sicker before seeking medical attention, and then came in with far more serious symptoms. Aggregated across the population, such a dynamic shortened the lifespans of white working-class Tennesseans by between two and three weeks of life.

Education was another example. Tax cuts in Kansas that became the model for Trump's 2017 tax bill eviscerated budgets at public schools without presenting any strategies for boosting education for children of working-class families. Class sizes rose, and many poor districts eliminated student support services. High school dropout rates rose dramatically and graduation rates fell precipitously for working-class children, including for children in white working-class families. Using data that correlates high school dropout rates with shortened life expectancy, I found that the GOP budget cuts corresponded to the loss of over 7,000 white life years in the first four years of the cuts alone.

Tariffs. Climate change policies. Defunding addiction treatment centres that managed the opioid epidemic in rural counties. Pretty much every Trump initiative or policy position has benefited corporations or the wealthiest at the expense of working-class bodies or communities, including, and at times primarily, the bodies and communities of his white GOP supporters.

I found similar trends when I looked into guns. In Missouri, pro-gun GOP politicians swept into power on the promise of enacting what were once considered extreme pro-gun positions, such as easing regulations that governed how people could purchase, own and carry firearms. The result: while some enjoyed the new freedoms to carry guns pretty much anywhere they wanted, the overall effect was soaring rates of gun-related trauma. From a statistical perspective, the largest numbers of victims in Missouri were not gang members or carjackers, as the popular stereotype suggested. Rather, by far the primary victims of gun

death were white working-class Missourians. This cohort dominated injuries and deaths via gun-related suicides, partner violence and accidental shootings. White men living in rural areas were overwhelmingly the most likely to die from gun suicide. I found that lax gun laws correlate with the loss of over 10,500 years of productive white male life.

Identity politics

Politics are often confounding. People identify with particular politicians for reasons that do not make sense to outsiders who do not share their views. Sometimes one priority overshadows another. Yet several themes emerged from my research that helped me to understand why white American voters continued to support certain politics even after the negative effects of these policies on their lives become clear.

As the title of my book suggests, stereotypes and anxieties about losing racial status topped the list. I will never forget how a man pulling an oxygen tank because of severe lung disease told me that he would rather die (and soon did die) than receive benefits from the ACA because it used "my tax dollars" on "Mexicans and welfare queens". I also often encountered concern that minorities or immigrants were usurping resources, with the perception being that they did not deserve to receive such support. For instance, another man in Tennessee claimed that "the Mexicans, their food stamps, everything they want, we're paying for it".

Such racial resentment occasionally also went hand-in-hand with conflicting thoughts about government services. "I'd be dead without my Medicaid," one man told me, before continuing, "the ACA is socialism in its most evil form".

Framing political and policy issues under the cloak of nativism and racism also made it harder to voice dissent. Indeed, I encountered a number of people who genuinely believed in smaller and more effective government and tried to live their lives as best they could under trying circumstances. But in my focus groups, people who voiced moderate positions ("I can see how a single-payer health system might benefit everyone") were often dismissed by other members.

These instances highlighted how extremist politics function by casting core issues not just as policies but as identities. Being pro-gun or anti-healthcare reform at any cost marked people as being one of 'us' and questioning these positions made you one of 'them'. Compromise coded as treason, even if middle-ground approaches to some issues may have saved lives.

I came to realise the extent to which these forms of self-sacrifice drove the success of Trump's us versus
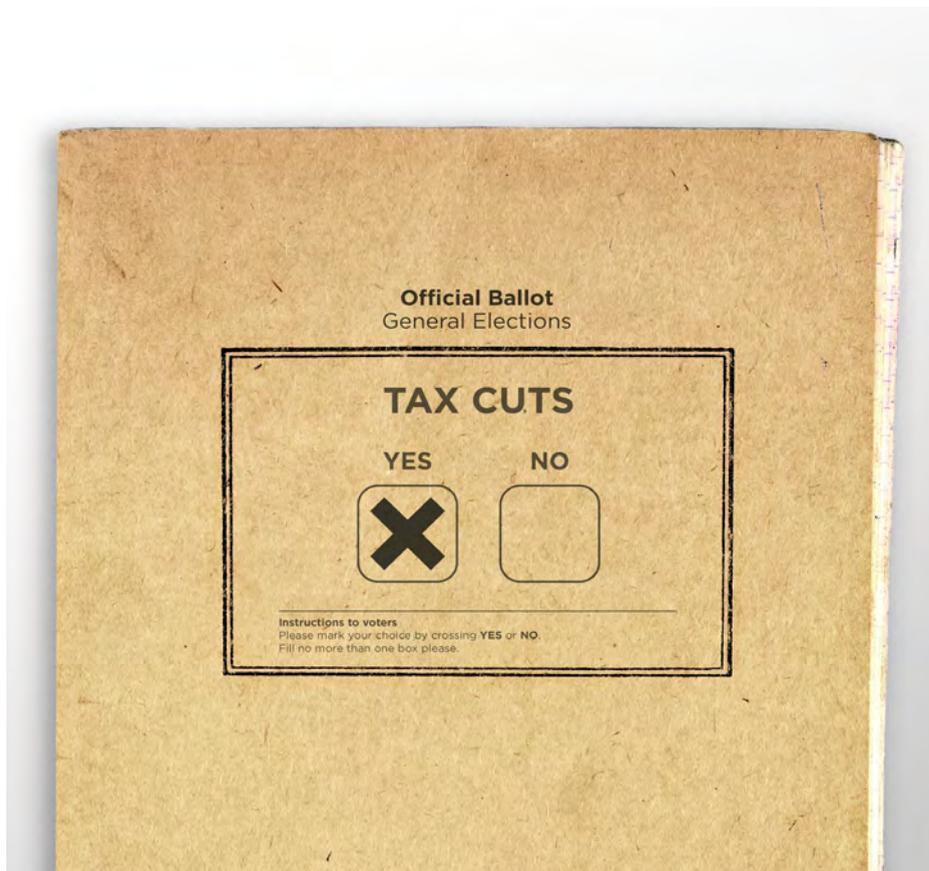
them style of politics. Had conservative white working-class populations demanded better healthcare, roads, bridges or schools in exchange for their support, it would have been much harder for Trump and the GOP to pay for the tax cuts they afforded to the wealthy and corporations.

All the while, an agenda that claimed to be concerned with the encroachment of 'others' enacted policies that rendered working-class lives, including those of its own core supporters, as expendable. Put another way, I found that the material realities of white working-class lives were made worse not by immigrants and citizens of colour – but by GOP policies.

What, then, to do about politics that promise greatness on an emotional level, but deliver the opposite in economic and biological terms?

Part of the strategy needs to start with recognising how, in our current polarised moment, political change is far more complicated than simply telling voters that the people they are electing and the policies they are implementing not only do not help them, but actually hurt them, their families and their communities. Such straightforward appeals might make sense logically. But the examples of healthcare, education and guns in US red states show how deeply hot-button political issues intertwine with far deeper tensions about matters such as race, place, history

and identity. Even the most logical counter-arguments need to take account of – and in some instances, respond to – these more emotionally based biases and fears.

This is not in any way to suggest aligning with racism or xenophobia. Rather, counter-messages need to be able to appeal on the emotional level, as well as being based in fact. Doing so means asking hard questions in an attempt to discover the key underlying issues: what worries you the most about immigration? What does your gun mean to you, and why do you feel you need it? What concerns you the most about a country in which everyone has healthcare?

And it means talking far more directly and honestly about the strengths and limitations of whiteness. This means reflecting on white traditions of generosity and resilience, and not just the anxieties, biases and fears of white communities. It means talking about ways in which white Americans can enhance or thwart American prosperity. And about how, to make America truly great, we need a more communal version of racial justice to emerge.

These deeper issues might seem immutable and impossibly rooted. But then you realise that tapping into and manipulating them is the precise (and increasingly well-honed) method used to divide people. ∎

UNLOCKING HERITAGE

We need to develop a strong understanding of place and how it can affect individual and collective identities

by Becca Antink

Topographical, administrative and cultural factors all delineate a sense of place. These aspects overlap but often do not align, and they do not remain static. One place can have different place identities: a neighbourhood is part of a town, which in turn is part of a county, and then a larger region, and so on. Regardless of these variations, place is one of the foundations of individual and collective identity. And within this, knowing and understanding the heritage and history of a place helps us to understand its present and enables us to guide it to a successful future. It is for these reasons that a place-based, but person-centred, approach to research is key to the RSA's work.

Challenges for policymakers

Shaping policy around different places and their needs poses a challenge for policymakers. This is particularly a problem in England, which has a highly centralised model of government that has the tendency to overlook the importance of place in the distribution of benefits and the costs of policy changes.

In our highly interconnected world it is possible to find and communicate with likeminded people worldwide, and it is easier than ever (if you are from a developed country) to travel and live elsewhere. This has contributed to a growing inclination, among some social scientists, policymakers, politicians and spatial planners, to focus on communities that are formed on the basis of shared interests and identities, with place playing a far less important role. The appeal of this worldview is obvious: if place is unimportant, uniform services can be rolled out at scale and the resulting spatial inequalities (and uneven investment and economic growth) can be overlooked.

The legacy of this thinking can be seen in place-blind policymaking. This is perhaps best exemplified by ongoing austerity measures; in particular, the government's approach to public investment. The Treasury's Green Book adopts a logic that demands that every public pound invested needs to generate the highest possible returns to the Exchequer, whether in transport investment, energy infrastructure or R&D. While apparently place-neutral, this approach has resulted in disproportionate sums being channelled into London and the so-called 'golden triangle', further enhancing the economic productivity of these areas and justifying yet more investment. This self-reinforcing cycle has been instrumental in what Professor Philip McCann of the University of Sheffield has described as the "decoupling" of the UK economy between north and south and increasing levels of public disaffection with the Westminster system outside of the capital city.

Clearly, there is need for centrally led interventions, but it is also vital to take a locally or regionally focused approach that accounts for the ways in which social, economic and environmental issues are experienced in different towns, cities and regions.

An inclusive narrative

It is important to recognise that the differences between places in terms of infrastructure, investment, local economic development and service provision are only part of the picture. These drivers of economic growth are interconnected with deeper narratives about place, history and heritage that are often overlooked by politicians and policymakers alike.

In the past few years, public discourse around place and heritage has become increasingly divisive and politicised. The most prominent example is the narrative that dismisses so many places as 'left behind', and pits the apparently rootless 'metropolitan elite' against those who have remained in these post-industrial coastal towns and rural areas.

Becca Antink is a researcher in the RSA Public Services and Communities team

This narrative offers a neat and tidy description for progressive commentators and far-right activists alike but is a gross simplification of the reality of our relationships with the places in which we live and work.

Place attachment theory shows us that place and heritage are important to everyone. In a recent study of middle-class newcomers to the city of Manchester, it was shown that their elective belonging to the city and some of its most iconic features was stronger than for many long-time residents who had more nostalgic perceptions of the city.

Ideas of place, identity, heritage and belonging are also important for those who are sometimes described as 'rootless', including refugees and migrants. Too often the experiences of minorities and migrants are ignored, as are their vital connections and contributions to place. Instead, these groups are framed as a destabilising force; a dog whistle conceptualisation that positions them at, or even as, the heart of 'the problem'.

This is not to say that place identity is not problematic. Research has shown that it is in those places that have been hardest hit by rapid and poorly managed economic restructuring and deindustrialisation that migrants are more likely to be othered and scapegoated as the cause of the insecurity and lack of opportunity that in reality results from structural economic changes. Boston in Lincolnshire, for example, has been described as 'the most divided place in England' owing to the apparently poor relationships between its settled communities and more recent eastern European migrants.

These are often places where the community predominantly consists of those who have long-standing family ties to a certain place and its industrial heritage, and are proud of this. But the identity, community and economic security associated with this kind of heritage have been rapidly eroded, or completely dismantled, by deindustrialisation and government neglect. It is here that the narrative about the 'haves' and the 'have nots' has a further negative impact, stigmatising the place-based identities of those who live in areas deemed to be left behind. Such stories, emphasising that it is outsiders causing the problems of a place, do not provide a path to developing new collective local identities that can provide meaning, social connection and a sense of belonging.

Of course, economic challenges are not the only factor causing or increasing hostility to migrants or others perceived as outsiders. Many places that have long-standing communities are fairly homogenous in terms of ethnicity and background. Little habituation to encountering diversity has resulted, in some places, in intolerant attitudes towards newcomers. These are entrenched challenges, and there is no quick fix.

RSA heritage programme

The Beamish Museum in County Durham is a fine example of the celebration of an area's rich history, with the preservation of the Leasingthorne Colliery Welfare Hall and Community Centre, as well as cinemas, miners' houses, cafés and other buildings. These are far more than visitor attractions. The community centre is still used for community activities, the restored pub is a training centre for local apprentices in hospitality and catering, and museum staff are working with local housing associations to develop old terraced homes into dementia-friendly housing schemes.

Learning from examples like this and developing a progressive discourse around how place and identity can bring together different groups, rather than divide them, are key drivers behind the RSA's work on the relationships between heritage, place, identity and inclusive growth.

In doing this, the programme is developing a strong theoretical basis for articulating the dynamics between these factors, and will experiment with how this can be applied to shape and evaluate practice on the ground with projects and citizens in their local places. The RSA's programme is designed to increase institutional capacity across the heritage sector, develop a deeper understanding among key policymakers about the wider opportunities that heritage offers, and provide communities with practical approaches to drive social, economic and environmental change.

As part of our new programme, we will produce an updated version of the RSA's Heritage Index, following on from earlier versions in 2015 and 2016, which will provide an overview of the heritage assets and activities in all local authority areas across the UK. This includes tangible heritage such as museums, historic buildings and areas of outstanding natural beauty, as well as intangible heritage such as community events and groups.

This is an exciting piece of work, which we hope will evidence the ways in which we can use place and heritage to create tangible change. ∎

If you are interested in being involved, please join the RSA Heritage Network, which will be collaborating with the project team throughout this piece of work

HAS TOURISM HAD ITS DAY?

Destination overcrowding is unpleasant for tourists and locals alike. We need to rethink our holidays

by Freya Higgins-Desbiolles
🐦 @freyahd

Tourism and tourists are getting bad press. Complaints about the impact of backpackers in Asia, a 'traffic jam' of climbers on Everest, a mega cruise ship slamming into a Venetian wharf, and anti-tourism backlashes in Barcelona and Amsterdam suggest tourism has reached boiling point. But disdain for tourists has a long pedigree, at least as far back as the birth of mass tourism in the 1850s with Thomas Cook Tours in Europe.

With growing anxiety around climate change and mounting social tensions, is it now time to ask whether global tourism has had its day? At the heart of this tension is the number of countries that rely on tourism for their economic development and the sheer volume of tourists that now transit the globe: there were some 1.4 billion international trips in 2018.

Such volumes of tourists are facilitated by a globalised tourism sector featuring powerful corporations that can overwhelm popular destinations, causing 'overtourism', a situation in which a place exceeds its carrying capacity, in physical and/or psychological terms. It results in a deterioration of the tourism experience for visitors and a deterioration in quality of life for locals. Overtourism affects major cities, developing countries and remote, natural environments. Cheap flights, packaged holidays, daytripping, cruise ships and disruptions caused by the likes of Airbnb have all been blamed for these problems. Additional catalysts come from social media apps such as Instagram, where the posting of envy-inducing images has propelled certain destinations into the tourism stratosphere. This all leads to narrow tourism circuits that exacerbate overtourism.

Some destinations are now looking at regulations, tourist taxes, re-zoning, rationing and demarketing as strategies to combat overtourism. For example, Ko Phi Phi in Thailand has shut off access to Maya Bay for an indefinite period in order to allow environmental recovery. But such actions are often resisted by the tourism industry and governments that are hesitant to threaten 'business as usual'.

Conventional wisdom recommends a multi-pronged approach to tackle overtourism. Tourists should be more responsible in their consumer choices, the industry should commit to sustainability, and governments and local councils should enact and enforce responsible approaches. But it can seem that, within the industry, commitment to change is limited. In response to questions on overtourism, travel analysts like Skift now present 'undertourism' as the new concern, working to capitalise on the overtourism scare to promote more places off the beaten track.

Business as usual will not work in a world facing an escalating climate emergency. Phenomena such as 'flygskam' (flight shame) indicate a growing public awareness of the way in which our travel choices impact on the environment. Tourism must adapt if it is to continue with its social licence to operate.

We need a strategy of 'degrowing' tourism that is part of a larger picture of approaching economies based on benchmarks of wellbeing rather than purely profit-driven expansion. As colleagues and I have proposed, we need to redefine and reorient tourism. It must be built around the needs and rights of local communities who reside in popular tourist destinations. We redefine tourism as the process of such communities inviting, receiving and hosting visitors for a limited duration, with the intention of benefiting from such actions. This reconfiguration places local communities at the heart of tourism.

Viewed from the busy streets of Barcelona, contemporary tourism has had its day. We need a new form, guided by locals and focused on wellbeing. ∎

Freya Higgins-Desbiolles is a senior lecturer in the School of Management at the University of South Australia, where she focuses on tourism management

DATA SPACES AND DEMOCRACY

As our cities become increasingly 'smart', are we able to ensure that they remain democratic?

by Dr Igor Calzada

🐦 @icalzada

Dr Igor Calzada is a research fellow, policy adviser and lecturer at the University of Oxford Urban Transformations ESRC and Future Cities programmes

"We are already becoming tiny chips inside a giant system that nobody really understands." So wrote Israeli historian Yuval Noah Harari about our current experience of urban living, which, increasingly, is mediated by AI. AI is now an important component of sectors such as healthcare, agriculture, public administration and transportation, and is helping to address major challenges such as ageing and climate change. However, there is currently a lack of transparency in algorithmic governance systems, and this is worsened when these algorithms are integrated into already opaque governance structures in our cities. Moreover, over the past decade, the propagation of sensors and data collection machines in so-called 'smart cities' by both the public and the private sectors has created democratic challenges around AI, surveillance capitalism, and protecting citizens' digital rights to privacy and ownership.

In 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) came into force in the EU. This regulation harmonised data privacy laws across Europe and is aimed at protecting citizens' data and giving people control over their own data. Against this backdrop, a debate has emerged in European cities and regions about the role of citizens in their cities and how they control and understand their own data.

Data ecosystems are the infrastructure, institutions, analytics and data capture systems that are used to take data and relay it to the system owners, who can then alter their provision of goods and services and marketing accordingly. Little is known about the long-term socio-political effects of these systems, which we are increasingly reliant on. The present momentum around privacy concerns could be seen as a call to action to create democratic digital infrastructures and institutions in Europe. The public sector needs to innovate and to involve a plurality of stakeholders. More radically, the ownership of platforms – currently predominantly in the hands of private companies – as well as data itself could be co-operativised. Such an approach in Europe would trailblaze citizens' digital rights protection and avoid algorithmic extractivism and surveillance.

If we allow data ecosystems and AI to develop with insufficient oversight, algorithmic disruption will have consequences in a wide range of areas, including employment, income and gender equality, privacy, bias, access, machine ethics, weaponisation, social capital and service provision. According to Cisco ISBG, by 2020 facial recognition and individual profiling will be driven through 50 billion connected devices, all feeding data to AI platforms. In theory, this could make our experiences of cities far more tailored and effective as our data is used to provide the most needed services and pinpoint areas where cities are underperforming. AI gets smarter the more data it is fed, but it also learns human and societal biases, thereby creating the conditions where the most vulnerable social groups are marginalised further. For example, a Microsoft chatbot was taught racist phrases by Twitter users. The American political scientist Virginia Eubanks' work shows how the poorest and most in need sections of society are those who are under the most surveillance by automated systems, which can often make mistakes.

If it is to address some of these risks and increase public benefit, governments and the public sector need to embrace AI; unless they take more responsibility for the handling of citizens' data, for-profit companies will dominate the techno-deterministic smart cities agenda. Local and regional authorities need to show citizens that they will protect their data and rights, and that data will be used in responsible ways. Once this trust is established, people may be in turn more willing to agree to the use of AI in various government services. ▶

The European Commission is leading the way in this field. It is developing an expanded network of digital innovation hubs, which could be central to the development of local and regional 'data policy ecosystems', bringing AI training, data, computing and local partnerships together to develop AI solutions that are adapted to local and regional issues.

Digital rights in smart cities

Over the past ten years, working collaboratively on smart cities and the techno-politics of data with local and regional authorities, firms, academics, non-governmental organisations, and (social) entrepreneurs and activists, under several policy and research schemes, I have concluded that the smart city has been built on hubris and the false assumption that just being digitally connected or plugged in means being smart. The advocates of smart cities wrongly still think that real-time data flows can be used to optimise cities' central nervous systems through 'digital twins' (virtual models of real-world processes, products or services) without any democratic cost. They promise big improvements in energy savings, mobility and transport efficiency, replication capacity and sustainable land use. Yet many smart city experiments demonstrate the shortcomings of this point of view.

Valuable lessons about how not to build smart cities from scratch can be drawn from Songdo in South Korea, Masdar in Abu Dhabi (both of which were designed to be smart, eco-friendly cities, but which remain ghost towns) and even Toronto in Canada.

The Sidewalk Labs (which is owned by Google's parent company Alphabet) flagship project in Toronto has triggered a fierce backlash, with critics saying the project infringes on citizens' digital rights and thus subverts democracy. They are concerned that questions about who owns the data collected by Sidewalk Labs' 'digital layer' are not being adequately addressed.

In contrast, since 2015, Barcelona has been pursuing the explicit protection of digital rights through technological sovereignty by emphasising grassroots-led urban experimentation, data commons (platforms where data is considered part of the public infrastructure, or a common asset, and is stored and shared under set principles) and public return. How the Toronto and Barcelona experimental approaches fare in the coming years will inform policymakers around the world.

The demise of democracy is clearly already one of the biggest policy challenges of our time, and the undermining of citizens' digital rights is part of this issue. These include a wide range of complex rights that need to be addressed alongside legal and human rights in a digital world. They include the right to be forgotten on the internet, the right to be unplugged or disconnected, the right to your own digital identity and digital legacy, the right for your personal integrity to be protected from technology, freedom of speech online, the right to the transparent and responsible use of algorithms, the right to have a last human instance in expert-based decision-making processes, the right to equal opportunities in the digital economy, consumer rights in e-commerce, the

right to hold intellectual property on the internet, universal access to the internet, the right to digital literacy, the right to impartiality on the internet and the right to a secure internet.

So how will AI affect cities and, more directly, citizens' digital rights? How can cities control their technologies, infrastructure and provision of services while utilising data in a democratic, citizen-led fashion?

Post-GDPR AI

GDPR is perhaps the first time that the EU has taken the initiative in digital matters and spoken with its own voice, blending data and smart city research and policy formulations. From here onwards, new data policy ecosystems are needed to consolidate a strategy for the protection of citizens' digital rights across Europe. This should entail a call to action, a need to critically map out the techno-political debate on 'dataism' and, ultimately, it should identify the potential requirements for establishing regulatory frameworks to protect digital rights. It is crucial to understand how the concepts of autonomy and identity of individuals, as well as security, safety, privacy and ownership might change under the influence of AI. To build and retain trust in AI and the use of citizens' data requires critical engagement of civil society.

One direct outcome of GDPR is the Cities Coalition for Digital Rights (CCDR) movement. This broad movement already encompasses 30 international cities and has the support of the UN-HABITAT programme. Under the leadership of Barcelona and the joint strategic view of Amsterdam and New York, the network is being extended further. CCDR plans to address two main policy challenges in the short term to better react to the consequences of AI for citizens.

The first policy challenge is to gradually replace the centralised and extractive 'platform-knows-best' capitalist model of the smart city that has taken over many cities. This should be done by enacting sectoral policies in conjunction with experiment-driven 'platform co-operatives'. A platform co-operative is a co-operatively owned, democratically governed business model that establishes a computing platform and uses a website and/or mobile app to facilitate the sale of goods and delivery of services. For example, Fairbnb, a vacation rental platform, gives 50% of its revenue to local community projects; Denver's Green Taxi Cooperative is owned by its workers; and Resonate, a streaming music service, shares profits with various stakeholders.

In Barcelona, three projects on participatory democracy have set the scene for a transition towards platform co-operativism: DECODE, which provides the tools for individuals to be in control of their personal data; Decidim, which helps people, organisations and governments to self-organise in a democratic way; and Metadecidim, the democratic community that manages Decidim projects. Platform co-operatives require a strong alliance between institutional capacity, active civic society and entrepreneurial business ecosystems. They are social and ethical alternatives to existing commercial extractivist platforms.

The second policy challenge is how to consolidate a pan-European post-GDPR AI through data co-operatives. These enable the creation of open data and personal data stores for mutual benefit. The unbridled extractivism of personal data by big tech private 'data-opolies' needs to be stopped. Local and regional authorities should establish data co-operatives in order to empower citizens to have more control over their data and give them more of a say in the services that are built on and informed by this data. This may help to rebalance the relationship between those who create data (citizens) and those who seek to exploit that data, while also creating the environment for fair and democratic exchange. Data co-operatives with fiduciary obligations to members demonstrate a promising direction for the democratic empowerment of citizens through their personal data. Without data co-operatives and their related data policy ecosystems, the EU might lose its opportunity to establish a pan-European post-GDPR AI strategy. Unlike in China or the US – the data governance paradigms of which are driven by either the state or big tech corporations respectively – the debate around data in the EU is currently open, and the EU has the opportunity to lead in this area. City and regional authorities must collaborate further on the ethical and social benefits of data capture and AI for their citizens.

Could an ecosystem of data co-operatives in Europe protect citizens' digital rights and better tailor the design, implementation and assessment of further citizen-centric AI? To ensure European cities and regions employ data democratically, the public sector should take the lead alongside various stakeholders. Debating the techno-politics of data for citizens is not just ethics washing; it should be about ownership and how to rescue democracy. Failing to do so could risk exposing democracies to the stealthy algorithmic manipulation of collective behaviours through social media, resulting in a dystopian populism. ∎

CHARM OFFENSIVE

What is the allure of the charismatic leader?

by Takis S Pappas

🐦 @takisspappas

'Charisma' has alluring intimations, but a vague and continuously drifting significance. In its etymology, the word comes from the ancient Greek noun *charis* (χάρις), meaning grace or beauty. The earliest modern usage of the term is associated with Christian theology, in which *charism* was thought of as a special spiritual gift or power that was divinely conferred from God on a select few individuals. In Middle English, a person with *karisme* was someone gifted with special talents such as healing, prophecy or tongues.

The term entered the lexicon of applied politics only in the early 20th century, in the work of German sociologist Max Weber. He used it to distinguish between 'charismatic' and the other two types of legitimate power: 'traditional', where people obey because of seniority, long-established law, or custom; and 'rational-legal' or 'bureaucratic' authority (best typified by the impersonal modern state administration).

But what do we mean by charismatic leadership today? If you take any of the lexical definitions, or even try to produce a definition of your own, you soon realise that what lies at the core of all efforts to clarify the term is an element of extraordinariness. Above all else, then, charismatic leadership signifies a type of extraordinary leadership. But in thinking about what exactly is extraordinary about charisma-led power relationships, we should first consider what we mean by ordinary leadership.

To borrow a metaphor used by the English philosopher and political theorist Michael Oakeshott, an ordinary democratic leader is like a trimmer in the nautical sense: he or she constantly trims the sails of the vessel of state against changes in the wind and weather, and "disposes his weight so as to keep the ship upon an even keel" in choppy seas. Ordinary leadership entails the impersonality of rule, along with an emphasis on operational rationality, procedural moderation and continuity. It typically involves a hierarchical organisation of interdependent offices regulated by common rules, norms and procedures in a spirit of formalistic institutionalism; continuity is one of its most important characteristics. The impersonal nature of the relationship between leader and followers, and the emphasis on continuity through moderate, rather than radical, political change, are both prerequisites of ordinary leadership.

The extraordinary figure

Extraordinary leaders, in contrast, do not simply trim the sails but turn the rudder hard, setting the path. I suggest two core characteristics of political charisma: the personal character of leadership and the radical nature of its outcomes. As with chemical syntheses, the fusion of these two elements produces 'charismatic leadership'; a distinct type of legitimate leadership that is personal and aims at the radical transformation of an established institutional order. From this definition, and drawing on studies of empirical cases that I have undertaken, it is possible to draw straightforward propositions about the nature, workings and outcomes of charismatic leadership that are pertinent to modern democratic politics.

Ten aspects of charismatic leadership

Charismatic leadership is *highly personal*. It always refers to a single individual leader, never to a collective body of leaders. Charisma cannot be shared, transferred, delegated or inherited. It is based on the unmediated, and often intimate, bond forged between leaders and their followers. These followers ▶

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are animated by complete devotion to the person of the leader and the expectation that this individual will perform exceptional, even heroic, acts.

Charismatic authority is *achieved*. It needs to be attained and cannot be conferred or won. And once attained, it must be demonstrated and successfully performed until it is recognised as charismatic leadership. Even then, it needs to be continuously proven by the leader. If the individual fails their followers and they cease to believe in the worth of their leader, charisma disappears.

Political charisma is *radical* and goes against traditions or customs and seeks to introduce a wholly new political order. Charismatic leaders are true radical forces seeking to destroy traditional patterns and disturb legal-rational and procedural ones. But charismatic leadership does not have only a destructive bent; it also has a second intent, the re-institution of authority, which involves nothing less than the creation of new legitimacy in order to constitute afresh the political system.

Owing to the combination of its personal and radical nature, charismatic leadership has a pronounced *plebiscitary quality*. It not only requires perpetual reaffirmation by the community of followers, but also the implicit acknowledgement that the leader is above institutions and that these can be changed as he or she thinks fit. This is why charismatic leadership also displays a streak of authoritarianism; when not promptly institutionalised, this can and has given rise to despotic, and even tyrannical, political regimes.

It is also largely *irrational* because the charismatic relationship is built upon strong emotions that encourage risk-taking rather than more sensible, risk-averse logic. Charismatic leaders typically promise brave new worlds, but rarely say how such an objective may be achieved. On the other hand, the followers of the charismatic leader display emotions that have a distinctly ethical character. Populaces or sections of society with any kind of grievance or accumulated resentment may thus turn their backs on long-established institutional authorities, and even on technical experts, and instead decide to follow the unjustifiable promise of 'salvation' offered by a charismatic leader.

Modern charismatic leaders, like ancient mystics and prophets, assume a distinctly *missionary* stance towards society and politics in general (as opposed to ordinary leaders, who have a normatively more neutral stance and a more procedural leadership style). They seek to build moral communities of followers who are intent on achieving collective political victories against enemies whom they view as unprincipled or immoral, so redeeming the community from impending catastrophe.

As a consequence of being inimical to tradition and risk-seeking, charisma is a *socially divisive* force. It is typically opposed by established power groups, vested interests and time-honoured allegiances, which are set (whether through deliberate action of their own, or forced into this position by default) against the community of the charismatic leader's followers

Illustrations by Hitandrun

who are calling for radical social and political change, as well as the reorganisation of economic interests. Moreover, the existence of charismatic leadership in a political system may encourage and eventually lead to – through charismatic rivalry – major political system crisis.

Charismatic leadership may be both an effect of large-scale crises and a powerful *crisis generator* in itself. Weber wrote that charisma results from collective "anxiety and enthusiasm" in times of "unusual, especially political or economic, situations". However, history shows that leaders with extraordinary charismatic qualities may emerge and thereafter trigger crisis cycles that undermine traditional institutional structures. Donald Trump serves as the perfect example of this.

Charismatic leadership, although it may endure through time in different guises, is *non-permanent*. Given that charisma must be achieved and demonstrated, it also may diminish, fizzle out or entirely disappear. In some cases, charismatic authority comes to an end when impersonal institutions are built to provide authority. In other cases, the leader is simply unable to prove their charisma any longer and is abandoned by their followers. In still other cases, they attempt to bequeath their charisma to a designated heir, which, unless it happens in despotic and monarchical states, has little chance of success.

And finally, charismatic leadership is *rare*. This is because the combination of sustained personal authority and a credible radical programme is far from easy to achieve. This is even more difficult in the context of modern liberal democracy, which is designed to work on the basis of stable impersonal institutions in a procedural way aimed at producing consensus. In modern democracy, leadership is dependent on the technical expertise of collective bodies for decision-making, rather than on impetuous individual predilection.

Legitimately charismatic

From this last characteristic, three more points emerge that are important if we are to make a conscious effort to use 'charismatic leadership' to help us to understand contemporary democratic politics.

The first point is that, since charisma is a legitimate form of authority, it should not be confused with the power exercised by non-democratic rulers. The personal authority of Hitler (post-1933), Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot and the like was imposed by violence and open coercion rather than persuasion. Nor does the 'charismatic' authority of autocrats have a temporary character; instead, it is permanent for at least as long as they remain alive, so long as their rule is unchallenged. At the end, the most extraordinary things about such leaders are the hecatombs of their victims and the lasting horror of their political acts.

The second point that we should keep in mind is that, even within the context of modern liberal democracy, not just any form of political charisma is desirable. Although occasionally charismatic leaders may emerge to tackle great crises (think of Franklin Roosevelt or Winston Churchill during the Great Depression and the Second World War respectively) or lead their countries in radically new positive directions, many other elected charismatics have led their countries in negative directions, and even created crises of their own. Perhaps the most prominent such examples are the various populist leaders who in recent decades have proliferated in several parts of the democratic world (think of Viktor Orbán in Hungary or Hugo Chávez in Venezuela), promising to solve the problems faced by their countries, invariably through illiberal means.

The third point, closely related to the rarity of charisma in contemporary democratic politics, is that we should be able to distinguish real charismatic leaders from pseudo-charismatic ones. Unlike the former, who attain personal authority over mass parties by promising to carry out radical political change, the latter do not enjoy full control over a party of loyal followers and/or are unable to project a moral, inspirational or salvational radical political programme. In most cases, they are simply colourful demagogues capable of rhetorically exploiting historical prejudices and common misperceptions, and promising impulsive thrills, for personal short-term political gain.

To appreciate the difference, just think of politics in Britain today. As the Brexit saga drags on, national politics has become infested with rabble-rousing narcissists who have absolutely no charisma. Nigel Farage's Brexit Party is not a real party, and Boris Johnson's Conservative Party has only a slim working majority in Parliament but plenty of potential rebels inside it. Neither of these leaders is offering guiding radical ideas, just the promise of Brexit. What they, and also Jeremy Corbyn of the Labour Party, offer British society is reckless gambits, totally devoid of an authentically radical positive plan for the future.

The genuine charismatic leader is an alluring figure, seemingly possessing gifts above the abilities of ordinary leaders. But in contemporary liberal democracies, the charismatic individual is more generally an unattractive option. This is probably the reason why Bertolt Brecht put in the mouth of his fictional Galileo the assertion: "Unhappy is the land that needs a hero." ∎
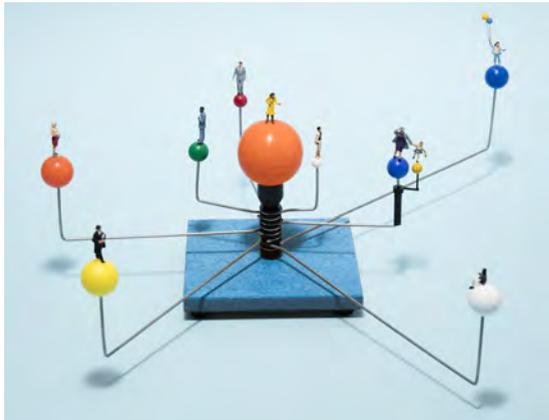
CO-OPERATIVE POWER

Head of the RSA US Alexa Clay talks to Nathan Schneider about how co-operatives could democratise work and cultivate grassroots agency and power

🐦 @alexaclay @ntnsndr

Alexa Clay: Can co-operatives form part of the solution to some of the biggest threats of our time?

Nathan Schneider: Co-ops have often emerged in moments of crisis, especially when broader social contracts are in flux. But the best kind of change comes when people experience their own power, and co-ops can be vital tools for doing that. That's how the Rochdale Pioneers in England in 1844 used their co-op to form the basis of a nationwide alternative to industrial capitalism. That's how the US Populists later that century built an agricultural economy that could stand up to urban elites. Today's generation of co-ops have put the crises of inequality and climate at the heart of their work. They have used tech co-ops to show that a gig economy doesn't need to be based on exploitation; they've helped erode the addiction to fossil fuels by creating a market for renewables when big energy companies wouldn't. This is a long tradition where business and values can go hand-in-hand.

Clay: What are the most common misunderstandings about the co-operative movement?

Nathan Schneider is a journalist and assistant professor of media studies at the University of Colorado Boulder. His most recent book is *Everything for Everyone: The Radical Tradition that is Shaping the Next Economy*

Schneider: The biggest misconception is that you cannot have co-operatives at scale. People often think of co-ops in terms of a small, local grocery store or a housing collective. But in Italy, the two largest grocery chains are co-ops. In the US, we have co-ops that run nuclear power plants, and there's a $130 billion co-operative bank down the road from me in Colorado. Some of the poorest cities spend huge amounts of money to lure investor-owned companies to come and extract value from their people. That kind of money could go a lot further invested in powerful, locally rooted co-operative businesses. A growing number of communities are recognising this.

Clay: You are an advocate for the campaign to encourage Twitter users to take collective ownership of the platform. Can co-operative structures be applied in the tech sector?

Schneider: I'm part of a global community working to bring the co-op legacy into tech. This is an opportunity for a real sharing economy, which shares the value of labour fairly and protects people's personal data. For a long time this has sounded a bit utopian, and ran counter to the venture capital model that is dominant. But now companies like Uber and Airbnb are trying to share equity with their users. Major tech investors are starting to take co-ops seriously. Economic democracy could help to address some of the core problems of accountability and perverse incentives that have been plaguing the big platforms.

Clay: Was co-operative thinking dismissed in the 20th century because it was perceived as too 'socialist'?

Schneider: In the US, co-ops largely went underground after the Second World War. Big brands like Sunkist and Land O'Lakes didn't advertise that they were co-ops. But in the wake of the 2008 crisis, more people are looking for alternatives to corporate capitalism, resulting in some co-ops coming out of the woodwork. Lately, the left has taken up co-ops in a big way but, importantly, some of the largest and most powerful operate in right-leaning rural areas. The co-operative movement is something we can reunite around in polarised times. ■

A GROUND-BREAKING INITIATIVE

A group of Fellows have helped Chelmsford to achieve city status
and are continuing to show the power of community-led projects

by Roger Estop, Stephanie Mills, Malcolm Noble, Nezhapi-Dellé Odeleye,
Leonie Ramondt, Barry Shaw and Professor John Worthington

In 2010, a group of Fellows gathered to explore how we could help Chelmsford realise its civic and cultural potential and find ways for local people to have a greater say in its development. After a summer of public events, we formed a community interest company, Changing Chelmsford. The Academy of Urbanism came on board, as did our county and borough councils, Anglia Ruskin University and Writtle College.

Stephanie Mills FRSA's report *How Bold Is Your Vision?* set the template for our work. A series of workshops culminated in the Changing Chelmsford Town Commons, a place-making session led by the RSA's Chief Executive, Matthew Taylor. In 2012, our project helped to shape Chelmsford's successful bid for city status, and was recognised in the application: "The Changing Chelmsford initiative, led by the RSA, is a ground-breaking initiative, bringing together local people, academics and key businesses to consider the most appropriate future for the town."

Over the decades, Chelmsford's heritage was neglected and it was dismissed as a typical 'clone town'. Not any more. The impact of gaining city status has been transformative. Chelmsford now has a stronger retail centre and key historic buildings have been revitalised. In 2018, *The Sunday Times* named the city as the best place to live in the east of England, saying: "There has been an extra spring in its step since it was granted city status in 2012."

To maintain momentum, we developed initiatives such as an Ideas Festival and an Ideas Hub. Earlier this year, we were a finalist in the Academy of Urbanism's Great Places competition (Paisley won). The judges noted "community groups and cultural development projects stand out" in Chelmsford.

We are now championing a Chelmsford entry for UK City of Culture status in 2025 and developing a new Arts and Culture Festival. The Chelmsford Civic Society has secured the place of heritage in the council's new local plan and next year, Anglia Ruskin University in Chelmsford will host the British Science Festival.

Regeneration is often credited to a powerful individual, such as a city mayor. Our process in Chelmsford shows alternative approaches are possible. Our model requires ongoing community engagement, collaborative working with local stakeholders and institutions such as the RSA and the Academy of Urbanism and, of course, an ability to raise funds.

The RSA continues to have a strong local presence in the city, with regular Fellowship meet-ups. This autumn's Ideas Festival will feature the RSA's deliberative democracy team.

Matthew Taylor returns to Chelmsford in 2020 to lead a one-day seminar on the city's future path. The future looks bright for Chelmsford, and we aim to continue to be a part of making it so. ■

Top tips
- Collaborating with the local community changes the way urban spaces are perceived, created and activated.
- Be ready to seek out funding for projects – and talented project managers – to create momentum.
- Work with public authorities if you can, but do not let them dictate the terms of engagement.
- Effective networks grow slowly and steadily and need time to plan, evolve and build trust.

The provision of services – or not – across the UK is often disparagingly referred to as a 'lottery'. But is this fair?

by Geoff Little

We have all seen headlines about the latest 'postcode lottery' in relation to a key public service or outcome. For me this creates a tension, wearing as I do two 'hats': as well as being Chief Executive of Bury Council, I am also Chief Officer of Bury NHS Clinical Commissioning Group.

With my NHS hat on, the so-called postcode lottery is a worry; what if it is someone in my patch denied a life-saving treatment or drug that they would get if they lived elsewhere? So we have regulators, national standards and assurance processes and we search for variation as evidence of poor performance. All this aims to root out the unfairness of people not getting equal access to good services.

But there is another unfairness: the life chances lottery, where your place of birth affects the opportunities available to you and your chances of social mobility. Although less likely to make national headlines, this is at least as important as the postcode lottery for services. But of course, in practice, our life chances are not a lottery but are in many ways predetermined by the structural economics and the history of a place, as well as its future prospects.

Closing this gap in life chances is the reason I put my local government hat on every day. When wearing this hat, different solutions for different places are the answer, not the problem. Local leadership is integral to shaping the possibilities available to people around the country. The importance of local leaders uniting behind a shared vision of the future for a place and its people, and using their on-the-ground knowledge to spot and take the opportunities for economic and social development, cannot be underestimated. Whether it is shaping the future of a neighbourhood, a town, a city or a city region, the answers are place-specific. This is why the government's devolution deals are so important. Different sets of powers for different places make sense, and Greater Manchester has been at the forefront of such deals.

It is in the integration of services that we primarily find the tension around postcode lotteries. Easing this requires creativity and flexibility to ensure that everyone has the same resources available to them, and that the needs of specific individuals are being best met. We all want services to be uniformly high quality in all places, but for those whose life circumstances mean they have more barriers to overcome, services also need to be integrated into bespoke packages of support. The right services need to be available at the right time and in the right sequence; this approach can sometimes look from the outside like a postcode lottery, as uniformity of individual services is being challenged.

But it works. For example, the Troubled Families programme and the Greater Manchester Working Well programme have shown that a locally integrated approach is better than national schemes at helping people to transform their lives.

I will continue to work hard to avoid a postcode lottery while also pressing for further devolution. The same opportunities must be available to all and this means we must not lose sight of structural inequality or the individual. ∎

Geoff Little is Chief Executive of Bury Council and Chief Officer of Bury NHS Clinical Commissioning Group

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