

CREATIVE  
BUREAUCRACY  
FESTIVAL



R | I | S | E CITIES

A BMW FOUNDATION Herbert Quandt Program

# WALKING THE TALK: ANOTHER CITY IS POSSIBLE

Working together to build  
better cities and bureaucracies



# INTRODUCTION

Cities across the world are confronting an increasingly dire and alarming crisis. The status quo approach will not get us to where we need to be, given that our economic order and way of life are materially expansive, socially divisive, and environmentally hostile. That is why systemic change is on many people's agenda.

Three interconnected initiatives seek to address our overarching dilemmas and urgencies in shaping better places for us all to live, work and exist in harmony with nature: The **Creative Bureaucracy Festival**, the **BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt's RISE Cities program** – where RISE stands for resilient (R), intelligent (I), sustainable (S) and equitable (E) – and the BMW Foundation's wider work to promote **Responsible Leadership**.

The idea of Creative Bureaucracy challenges the traditional notion of bureaucracy as inevitably rigid and rule-bound. It highlights how public administrations need to become more agile in addressing the challenges of our times and that this requires creativity, an entrepreneurial attitude, collaboration, and flexibility for them to deliver for the common good. It also requires incentives and regulations regimes that are fit for today. It places a particular focus on empowering public servants, often to collaborate with others, and to always be creative problem-solvers who find innovative solutions to complex challenges. The annual Creative Bureaucracy Festival was created to shine a light on such individuals, called “creative bureaucrats” and their allies, offering them a stage and emerging community of practice. Those of us promoting creative bureaucracy agree that we need a culture that enables public administrations, at all levels from local to supranational, to be encapsulated by the idea of moving from a “No, because...” culture to a “Yes, if...” culture.

The BMW Foundation's RISE Cities program argues that in order to meet the needs of both people and the planet, future cities must be resilient, intelligent, sustainable and equitable (RISE). This necessitates an integrated approach that empowers individuals by fostering engagement and ensuring that data and new technologies are accessible to all. The RISE Cities program does this by supporting innovative and scalable solutions to help bring such desirable future cities to life. It recognizes that cross-sector collaboration is vital in order to harness the collective intelligence of public, private, civic and research organizations in solving global challenges. To encourage this work, the RISE Cities program facilitates formats for mutual learning and exchange — most notably an annual tandem fellowship for public-private and public-civic actors to support collaborative work to address a concrete problem in their cities.

Responsible Leadership is the central concept that defines and guides the work of the BMW Foundation. It emphasizes the vital role that individuals committed to social responsibility and ethical behaviour play in scaling transformative change. Crucially, Responsible Leaders see

themselves not as protagonists of a hero's journey but rather like threads in a mycelium — a living network with no centre that is constantly regenerating, adapting and evolving based on collective endeavour and the building of trust. It requires a commitment to sustainability, social justice, and transparency, as well as humility and a willingness to listen and learn from diverse perspectives.

Connecting these diverse individuals and organizations and sharing their agendas is catalytic. It enables them to reinforce one another, and it can accelerate change by exploring challenges, opportunities and lessons learned. When these creative bureaucrats and responsible leaders collaborate, the collective force of changemakers has the potential to transform into a larger movement.

All the above trends impact how we govern and manage cities, as well as the priorities we set when addressing complex issues ranging from energy transition, housing affordability, social cohesion, rising levels of inequality, data sovereignty, ethical use of algorithms, outdated mobility systems, the pressing need to retrofit cities for better walkability and more public space, and more.

Addressing the scale of the challenges we face requires the involvement of diverse stakeholders in cities, including those from private, public and civic sectors to feel committed, share common goals, take responsibility, generate resources and to collaborate to seek solutions.

It requires the integration of knowledge and expertise from a multitude of disciplines such as planners, environmentalists, urban designers, architects, anthropologists, historians, social activists, cultural specialists, and even poets.

The process of systemic urban change often begins with reimagining alternative possibilities at both the level of individual localized units (such as parks, libraries and schools) and the broader systems they are a part of (such as transportation, healthcare, childcare, and retail). This in turn requires us to reassess rules and incentive regimes so we can shape the conditions required to transform our envisioned futures into tangible reality.

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## MAKING THE MOST OF SHOCKS AND STRESSES, TOGETHER

**Chloé Pahud, Roland Greifeld, Marine Lesaint**

*Civocracy, Germany*

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**RISE Cities Fellowship** kick-off in the Pyrenees uniting public-private and public-civic tandems from across Europe.



This piece explores the first of the four RISE Cities pillars, asking what it would take to create truly **resilient cities**. Authors Chloé Pahud, Roland Greifeld and Marine Lesaint are three of the key actors behind Civocracy, a Germany/France-based social enterprise which supports governments, organisations and citizens with engagement services and participative solutions to put people at the heart of decision-making processes. CEO and co-founder Chloé Pahud is also a BMW Foundation Responsible Leader and acted as an expert and coach for the first RISE Cities Fellowship cohort in 2022-2023.

*“A RESILIENT CITY’S CULTURE SHOULD BE OPEN AND TRANSPARENT AND PROVIDE PEOPLE WITH AGENCY.”*

Resilience is the capacity to absorb or withstand difficulties, stresses or shocks — to cope with and be able to recover from them. It involves anticipating, planning for, adapting to and working with changing circumstances.

The resilience of individuals, organizations and institutions differs from that of a complex system like a city. For individuals to feel at ease, caring for their physical, mental, emotional and social state is crucial. To cope requires a mindset that is responsive, flexible and malleable with a tolerance for ambiguity, a willingness to learn lessons and especially mistakes, to move out of comfort zones and to shift behaviour. Crucial for organizations is the capacity to accept and adapt to stress without losing focus, and to develop and thrive in altered circumstances. Resilient organizations are forward-looking, anticipating disruption rather than simply reacting, and continuously learning and amending actions based on experience. A precondition is how they assess management, operations, finance, skills and their foresight capacities in order to future-proof themselves. They view problems as opportunities.

## **A RESILIENT CITY**

Everywhere cities face interconnected escalating crises that form a nexus of risks. These risks are rapidly transforming our urban landscapes and placing unprecedented pressure on urban infrastructures, governance, and cities’ capacity to be resilient. A resilient city is not only able to anticipate and adapt to expected and unexpected challenges — it has both the ability to bounce back from shocks and stresses and to bounce forward by seeing the opportunities in crisis and actively capitalize on the changes the situation demands.

The human aspect is crucial in the composition of a city, which consists of people, businesses, civic organizations, and public entities. It is their collective mindsets and attitudes that determine a city’s capacity to be resilient.

There are five dimensions that contribute to a city’s resilience: economy, society, environment, governance and culture. The economy relies on a diverse number of dynamic industries to generate growth, while also creating conditions that promote innovation and provide access to employment, education, services, skills, and training. It needs an inclusive and cohesive society with resources and facilities for citizens to enjoy healthy lives, active communities and safe neighbourhoods. Sustainability principles should be non-negotiable and should focus on carbon emission reduction and nature-based solutions. The governance system should support resilience in everything it does: from vision to strategies and incentives and regulations regimes, with leadership and management who focus on enabling the city to operate holistically. A resilient city’s culture should be open and transparent and provide people with agency.



**Copenhagen** is a city where resilience is evident. The adaptive mindset of responsible leaders committed to citizen participation has helped to create a bicycle-friendly physical activity-focused urban environment that reduces carbon emissions. Another example of resilience in action is the town of **Cascais**, a RISE Cities Fellowship program participant, which is working closely with local fishermen and other inhabitants to involve the whole community in the town's commitment to protecting ocean biodiversity.

These cities became resilience pioneers not through a superior technological ecosystem but through their attitude and spirit — their mindset. By embracing behaviour change and offering agency to different actors, these cities created an environment where progress was possible. This aspect of transformation is a challenging yet integral part of becoming resilient.

### **THE POWER OF CROSS-SECTOR ALLIANCES: A CATALYST TO BECOMING A RESILIENT CITY**

The projects that produce the most holistic and sustainable progress rely on cross-sectoral alliances that build communities and intent around their vision. This visioning process mostly shifts attitudes and behaviour, as the challenges cities face today are complex and multifaceted, ranging from climate change and natural disasters to social and economic disparities. Complex problems cannot be addressed silos or by individual actors, instead, it requires human cooperation and engagement across all sectors of society to produce results.

Cross-sector alliances bring together diverse stakeholders, including government agencies, businesses, community groups, and residents to work together towards shared goals. They enable cities to leverage the strengths and resources of each sector and to harness their collective energy, determination and capacities.

In an alliance, the economic actor extends beyond a mere service provider and citizens are more than passive bystanders. A sense of mutual respect encourages everyone involved to become a change agent themselves. This active involvement triggers behaviour change not only among those directly involved — citizens, economic actors, and bureaucrats — but also for those who may have heard about the project. With time positive outcomes may result from this new collaborative approach and can become embedded in the city's culture, making it more adaptive, ready for change and therefore resilient.

Still, there is a catch. Cross-sectoral alliances are not yet the norm, especially for the public sector. It can be laborious for city administrations used to silo working to switch perspectives and to picture themselves with other societal actors as peers. Progressive creative bureaucrats can lead that change and influence their colleagues as well as the actors from other sectors to collaborate more closely.

The **RISE Cities Fellowship** has generated several stories of good practices which serve as a solid argument for cross-sectoral alliances and encouraging a shift in mindsets.

The **Cornerstone Measures project in Västerås, Sweden** aims at defining an indicator framework for the well-being of citizens in their local communities. The idea is to develop a jointly created and easily adaptable system that can be used in multiple small to mid-scale locations. The project combines scientific rigour with citizen engagement and a co-creation process to generate measures which serve four main goals: breaking obstacles to mobilizing knowledge; assessing well-being in context; embedding well-being outcomes into city decision-making; and improving the usability of well-being measurements. This adaptable participatory approach reflects an attempt to rethink policy making in service of a more resilient city ecosystem.

Another is the **LJ Works project, a community hub project in Lambeth, London**. It aims to redevelop a former brownfield site into a space for local people to work, create, and thrive. Guided by a steering group made up of key local stakeholders, it takes an urban commons approach, working with locals to address their needs and secure ownership of the land for the community. The project includes a range of affordable workspaces, a community farm, a community kitchen, and a coffee roastery that supports and trains people without housing. By bringing together community members and local government, the LJ Works project creates a cross-sectoral alliance. It helps to build resilience by enabling local people to try out new ideas and launch businesses and creative projects in a supportive and low-risk environment.

What connects these two cases — beyond the cross-sector alliances, a prerequisite for all cities involved in the RISE Cities Fellowship — is a holistic approach, creativity and mindsets open to change.

These real-life projects show that the core of a resilient city is a culture of resilience — an attitude and behaviour of all city actors, whose goal is to be adaptive and flexible towards change, seize opportunities, and handle threats. A resilient culture starts in the heads of its inhabitants.

To successfully influence attitudes and behaviour, it is essential to empower and involve all members and sectors of society, granting them agency and actively engaging them in the process of change. Structured programmes that support the emergence of cross-sectoral alliances can be a helpful step towards making this a reality in more cities.



# 2

## AI'S UNTAPPED PROMISE FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT

**Colin van Noordt, Eden Sicat**

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This piece explores the second of the four RISE Cities pillars, asking what it would take to create truly **intelligent cities**. Authors Colin van Noordt and Eden Sicat are both researchers at the Ragnar Nurkse Department of Innovation and Governance at Tallinn University of Technology (TalTech) in Estonia. Their work focuses on the application of Artificial Intelligence (AI) within public services to create public value. Van Noordt is also program director for AI at digital change advisory Digital Nation and a regular contributor to European Commission activities around AI. Sicat's research focuses on the development and deployment of effective AI strategies at the local government level.

*“UNTOLD PROMISES AND OPPORTUNITIES TO IMPROVE OUR QUALITY OF LIFE ARE POSSIBLE IN A DATA-DRENCHED WORLD.”*

An intelligent city is a place where citizens are empowered to make the most of themselves, their capabilities, and their potential with an ability to actively shape both their future and city. For this they need access to multiple resources: from a stimulating and safe environment to education and lifelong learning opportunities, as well as access to vast oceans of data, information, and knowledge. In this way the city's people can become a community of active minds, with the city's tangible and intangible infrastructures serving to harness collective community intelligence for the common good.

The question is, how can rapidly advancing technologies like Artificial Intelligence (AI) be harnessed in service of this wider understanding of intelligence? This is what we will explore, with a particular focus on AI adoption in local government.

### **PROMISES AND DANGERS OF EVOLVING TECHNOLOGIES**

The digitizing age has moved at escalating speed over the last decade. Its impact and influence are vast and recently reached a crescendo in popular imagination when OpenAI launched ChatGPT, the natural language processing tool driven by AI technology that allows users to get answers to their questions and requests via humanlike conversational dialogue. Although in its infancy, the technology is already disruptive and its breadth of influence will only grow.

AI is a subset of digital transformation that involves deploying algorithms and machine learning to automate tasks that traditionally require human intelligence. This can include speech and image recognition, natural language processing, and uncovering insights from large data sets, as well as automating routine tasks, such as data entry or customer service inquiries.

Undeniably, untold promises and opportunities to improve our quality of life are possible in a data-drenched world. Abundant data has the potential to make life more citizen-centric and to create smart solutions that curtail energy overuse. Filling the city with self-regulating sensors brings an opportunity for real-time feedback loops that can help to solve problems from potholes to impending risks.

Yet these positives also mesh with dangers. What happens when software systems and algorithms can mimic and perform tasks that normally require human intelligence or the ability to predict behaviours? Here pressing fears include being controlled by algorithms and so losing human sovereignty, the ever-watchful eye of surveillance and unemployment created by the power of intelligent robots.

Continuing technological advances are inevitable, but the direction they are steered in and how they get applied is not. To ensure AI is harnessed for the common good, we need stronger public leadership in this domain.

## **THE UNTAPPED POTENTIAL OF AI IN GOVERNMENT**

In the face of the cross-cutting challenges faced by modern cities, AI holds huge promise to bring about significant enhancements to public services and advances to social equity. As public services everywhere come under exacerbating human resource pressures, the use of AI is increasingly a necessity rather than a luxury. Yet despite AI's rapid development, its translation to useful application within government organizations remains at an early stage.

As of now, there are only six cities with formulated and published AI strategies: Amsterdam, Barcelona, Buenos Aires, New York, London, and Singapore. Others may not have an AI strategy in place due to a lack of human and financial resources or expertise. Another reason is a lack of understanding of potential benefits or negative impacts on their communities or how to implement an AI strategy.

Potential negative impacts weigh heavily. A key priority for local government as public interest institutions is to ensure AI systems align with human rights values. Before deployment, they must insist on data protection frameworks to ensure AI systems are ethical, transparent, and trustworthy. There must be solid technical foundations, and especially a secure and safe data governance and sharing mechanism. This is essential as more all-encompassing data sets minimize bias and discrimination. Lacking the appropriate knowledge, many city leaders opt for leaving the "black box" of AI untouched.

Yet, while the use of AI in governments is still in its early stages, ever more experiences demonstrate potential application areas that could inspire other cities. Here are a few:

## **EMERGING EXAMPLES OF AI IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

### **1. Automatic public services for citizens**

AI can open the door to more proactive public service delivery, whereby public services are automatically brought to citizens or businesses without having to actively request these services themselves. For example, Estonia has instituted a 'life events' programme where different data services needed, for say birth, marriage or death, are automatically grouped together into one smooth service where citizens' data is reused by public services to assist citizens and businesses.[1] In the Netherlands, an estimated quarter of students entitled to additional scholarships do not use them. AI-driven proactive service delivery turns this around automatically, assigning students supplementary grants without them having to claim them.[2]

### **2. Reduced, more meaningful workloads for civil servants**

Digitized processes and the use of AI in particular can significantly reduce the workload of civil servants, giving them more time to spend on more intricate and complex matters where a 'human touch' or creativity is needed. Long waiting times due to staff shortages will increase without automating routine tasks, for instance asylum applications, as seen in the Netherlands.[3] In the Swedish municipality of Trelleborg, AI has automated a vast number of services, reducing average waiting times by 90%.[4] Of course, not all tasks and processes can be automated, but AI can reduce the workload of many.

### 3. Better support of vulnerable citizens

Digitalisation can bring challenges to vulnerable citizens, yet AI offers opportunities to make government services more inclusive. Many government websites remain difficult to access for citizens with disabilities. AI technology can help to automatically rewrite government texts, evaluate whether government websites meet accessibility requirements, translate between languages and more. In Flanders, there are experiments using AI to translate sign language for civil servants to make services more accessible to the deaf. Virtual assistants can pore through government websites allowing citizens to get information in a low-threshold manner, such as chatbots now offered by several countries' local government websites. More ambitious is BüroKratt in Estonia, where information on all government services, national and local, can be easily accessed via voice and chat.

## SCALING THE USE OF AI IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

For AI to be used effectively in public organisations, additional governance and structural changes are needed since digital transformation is not only about developing new technical applications but also organisational transformation. This requires changes in work processes, organisational structures, management tasks and perhaps the creation of new dedicated AI Teams with skills to assess whether AI applications are legal and ethical.

Supranational decision-making bodies at the European level are trying to accelerate the more widespread adoption of comprehensive local AI strategies. The European Commission emphasizes the importance of governments acting as “pioneers” in this space to inspire the rest of society to responsibly, ethically and effectively use AI to improve quality of life. The emerging European AI Regulation will soon make it mandatory to meet such requirements.

Crucially, this will force cities to address the shortage of staff with ICT and AI-related knowledge and overall competencies to develop and implement AI. When government organisations rely on external parties to develop and maintain AI applications it weakens their capacities and risks emerge. Public organisations need to develop appropriate digital and AI skills in-house so they can develop applications themselves, collaborate more effectively with external parties, and ensure the quality of AI applications. Ideally, every public servant should have basic knowledge of how digitization and AI work, how they can potentially be applied in operations, and how to detect errors.

If local governments get this right, these AI strategies could be used as competitive tools to position their cities as leaders in growth and development, including to attract talent and generate start-ups and jobs enabled by partnerships with industry and academia. Crucially, they could also help to address inequities and drive a form of sustainable development that leaves no-one behind.

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# 3

## ADAPTING TO CLIMATE CHANGE IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH: THE FREETOWN APPROACH

**Eric Hubbard, Eugenia Kargbo**

*City Of Freetown, Sierra Leone*

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**Urban design to cool the city** – Congo Market’s new shading technologies.



**#FreetownTheTreeTown** – reforestation co-designed and co-managed by the community and city government.

This piece explores the third of the four RISE Cities pillars, asking what it would take to create truly **sustainable cities**. Authors Eric Hubbard and Eugenia Kargbo are part of the globally pioneering team at the City of Freetown in Sierra Leone who are taking bold steps to advance climate adaptation work. Hubbard has served as senior advisor to the Mayor of Freetown since 2019, guiding the design and implementation of several projects including the #FreetownTheTreeTown campaign to plant, grow and digitally track 1 million urban trees. Kargbo is Freetown’s Chief Heat Officer — a post created in 2021 as the first of its kind in Africa — where she oversees a portfolio of work that stretches from expanding the city’s nature-based green infrastructure to improving its sanitation policies.

“ I BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF LOCAL ACTION AS WE ENABLE FREETOWN TO BE GREENER, COOLER AND CLIMATE RESILIENT FOR ALL. ”

**Eugenia Kargbo**

*Africa's First Chief Heat Officer*

In the past 60 years, every decade has become hotter than the last, and 2020 was the hottest year to date. Growing greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) are leading to increased global warming. Despite contributing minimal emissions, cities in the Global South face the greatest vulnerability to climate change and are already grappling with climate-related challenges, including social, economic, health and environmental issues.

In Freetown, we are responding imaginatively to the crisis and aiming to be an inspirational example. The capital of Sierra Leone, Freetown is located at the seaward tip of a heavily forested mountainous peninsula in West Africa which dominates the country's urban, socio-economic, and natural landscape.

Freetown is exposed to extreme climate vulnerabilities due to uncontrolled deforestation and rapid urban expansion. Over the past 50 years, Freetown's population increased almost 10-fold while natural populations declined by 70%. Between 2011 to 2018, 500,000 trees yearly — or 12% of the total tree cover — were lost. This tree loss is threatening bio-diversity and exacerbates climate risks such as coastal erosion, flooding, landslides, and extreme and frequent heat waves.

The city's average daily temperature and annual rainfall patterns are likely to increase as global emissions rise which will likely result in more frequent and intense heat waves and heavy rainfall with the associated risk of flash floods and landslides. The 2017 landslide caused over 1000 deaths.

If global emissions peak around 2030 and subsequently decline in accordance with the Paris Agreement, Freetown's average daily temperature is projected to rise by 2°C by 2100. However, if global emissions continue to rise throughout the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Freetown can expect an over 2°C increase by 2060 and over 4°C by 2100. The trends are similar for rainfall. Up to 10% more rainfall by 2060 if Paris Agreements are met, and a 20% rise by 2060 if not. The IPCC also indicates high confidence in increasing seasonal rainfall variability, as well as an increase in heavy precipitation events by 2060 (from a 1960 baseline).

### **#FREETOWNTHETREETOWN**

The #FreetownTheTreeTown initiative uses a “community growing model”, where reforestation is co-designed and co-managed by the community and the city government. Freetown residents are

incentivised through payments to plant, grow and digitally track trees on a mobile TreeTracker app. Each tree is geo-tagged, verified and assigned an investment value upon planting. Investors purchase impact tokens wholesale from the city as their carbon offsets, through a third-party fund manager. The revenue is ringfenced for funding further reforestation and nature-based solutions, ultimately creating a self-sustaining model.

The digital system creates a unique geotagged record for each tree planted. Growers revisit each tree periodically to water and maintain it, and to verify and document its survival, receiving micro-payments via mobile money every two months over the first three to five years of the tree's life when trees need the most maintenance. Growers' financial compensation is tied to continued tracking. Seedlings have also been procured from local nurseries to maximise the benefits to the local economy. The model has enabled 80% of the total resources leveraged for the project to be injected into local communities.

Attaching value (a 'token') to each tree has enabled Freetown to create a market for reforestation to fund the trees' growth and support further planting. The tokens offer impact investment opportunities and are sold to corporations and institutions with climate and/or corporate social responsibility (CSR) targets.

Our approach to re-value nature within climate-vulnerable landscapes through a "pay to grow" model is creating up to 1,000 green jobs and more economic value is generated than those practices that initially fuelled deforestation.

Between 2020-23 700,000 trees were planted and tagged resulting in numerous ecosystem benefits with nearly 700 hectares of urban land in and around Freetown restored. The goal is to increase tree and vegetation cover in Freetown by 50% by 2030, reduce the intensity of disasters by 50%, protect water catchment areas, and reduce heat stress by 35% through a natural capital carbon investment strategy ensuring all Freetonians benefit.

## **AFRICA'S FIRST CHIEF HEAT OFFICER**

Freetown is used to extreme heat events, with average maximum temperatures regularly over 100 degrees Celsius. Freetown's Heat Action Agenda, developed in collaboration with communities, aims to address vulnerability related to heat stress. As part of this initiative, Africa's first Chief Heat Officer was appointed. The agenda utilizes an integrated systemic cooling design process, using both natural cooling and passive cooling techniques to build community resilience and save the lives of vulnerable groups and communities.

60% of Freetown's population live and work in informal settlements. These are the most vulnerable spaces where climate-induced risks intensify the impact of extreme heat and problems are exacerbated by inadequate and unequal distribution of green space, poor housing and working conditions with high levels of informality.

The agony of extreme heat is profoundly unequal. The most heat-exposed and vulnerable populations in Freetown and most cities across Africa and the Global South include outdoor workers and people living in informal settlements — the majority of spaces where most Freetonians and Africans in urban landscapes live and work. Women are disproportionately affected and highly vulnerable.

Day and night, there is no running away from heat. Heat-vulnerable communities suffer in the day from prolonged exposure to heat as most are outdoor workers with little to no access to respite from the heat. Freetown's markets, known to house thousands of women, are mostly open-air without any shade structures or heat protection. Ye-Alimamy Kamara, Chairlady of Congo Market, shared her experience of heat exposure:

*"I feel trapped by heat when I work at the market - there is no shade or trees to protect me and my goods. When I cannot breathe and my head starts to ache, I'm forcing myself to find protection and leave my goods on the street unattended. That's when they are crushed by cars or stolen. After work, back home me and my children don't have any shelter from the heat. It's so hot inside at night that we often prefer to sleep outside on the ground."*

Among vendors and shoppers in all open-air markets in Freetown, heat can cause diseases including heart-related illnesses, headaches, heat rashes and dehydration which can lead to kidney failure. Most market women use cheap low-quality heat absorbing umbrellas to protect themselves and their goods from heat. Excess heat makes produce go bad quickly, increasing food waste while limiting the time for commercial activity.

### **URBAN DESIGN TO COOL THE CITY**

Freetown has integrated shading technologies and nature-based solutions to cool the city. With support from the Arsht-Rock Center, Freetown has installed shade covers in three of its major open-air markets. Community stakeholders and market women co-designed these ensuring they protected women from the physical, health, economic, and social risks of extreme heat as well as heavy rains. The shade structures expand the daily window for safe and comfortable selling and shopping, giving an estimated 2,300 market women improved working conditions and economic opportunities. "With the shade covers, I have more time to sell my goods, away from the sun and heat. Even though we still experience high temperatures the situation is much cooler and less stressful," said Ye-Alimamy.



**Before** – Congo Market prior to the installation of the new shade covers



**After** – Congo Market with its new shade covers installed

Designed to be inexpensive and durable during the rainy season, these covers are also semi-translucent, providing shade but enough light for traders to conduct work. The solar panel covers store energy during the day and power the lights at night, allowing market women to expand their working hours and opportunities for commercial activity.

Freetown is also testing technology to cool residences in its most heat-vulnerable communities. Kroobay community, one of the most at-risk and largest informal settlements with over 18,000 households, is applying mirror reflective sheets on the rooftops of corrugated roofing in partnership with MEER Foundations. The results are already proving successful with a cooling effect of over 15 degrees and extreme heat reflectiveness.

Our approach of using passive cooling designs and natural shade has helped to protect people and the planet. By implementing locally-led adaptation projects, designed to achieve Freetown's Climate Action Plan goals, our city is addressing the unequal and gendered impacts of climate change. We are protecting the heat-health of women and climate-vulnerable communities while creating green jobs and attracting financing and partnerships to scale our green infrastructure approach and build the city's absorptive capacity.



# 4

## FROM NOBODY TO SOMEBODY: FOUR ENGAGEMENT PRACTICES FOR EQUITABLE CITIES

**Tommi Laitio**

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**Amsterdam's new neighbourhood right in action:**  
Gardens of Brasa at Brasapark.

**Public space program Rebuild:** City officials and residents open the renovated Nelson playground in Philadelphia.



This piece explores the fourth and final RISE Cities pillar, asking what it would take to create truly **equitable cities**. Author Tommi Laitio is an inaugural Bloomberg Public Innovation Fellow at the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation at Johns Hopkins University. He leads an international research project on the skills and practices local governments need for partnerships for parks and libraries. Before his fellowship, Laitio acted as the City of Helsinki's Executive Director for Culture and Leisure, overseeing arts and culture, sports, public libraries and youth work. He is also a BMW Foundation Responsible Leader and member of the RISE Cities Sounding Board.

“ I WISH TO BE A SUBJECT, NOT AN OBJECT... I WISH TO BE A SOMEBODY, NOT NOBODY. ”

**Isaiah Berlin**

Feeling like a somebody is having a story of yourself that is different from others and having the capabilities to live that story out. A story is more than a list of contributions and achievements. It is where you come from, who you are, and where you hope to be heading. Our stories are conditioned by the institutions and environments around us. Exchange with others helps us understand our story better.

Cities contain incredible potential for building our stories, but they are also tough and unequal environments for crafting stories. Too many people in cities have their storytelling hijacked or silenced. It is a struggle to hold on to a sense of self if you are fighting for survival or if the world is telling you that your story has no place. Too many urban dwellers are treated by fellow people and institutions as a nobody, not a somebody.

During the last one and a half years as a fellow at the Bloomberg Center for Public Innovation, I have had hundreds of conversations and interviews on skills of co-existence with city leaders, staff, and partners across Europe, North America, and Latin America. I have met committed and hardworking public sector workers struggling with rising aggression, polarization, and inequity in the public realm. This fellowship and a decade of public service leadership have convinced me that equity requires designing institutional practices on the recognition of friction. We need to equip individuals and institutions with the skills to broaden the space between harmony and open conflict. While harmony feels nice for the people inside the circle, that comfort is always created at the cost of excluding others. On the other hand, an open conflict prevents us from getting things done. Starting from friction is a way to recognize inequities in assets and rights while developing practical solutions in a world of diversity and division.

Inspired by my fieldwork in the Brazilian city of Fortaleza, I have come to call this space between harmony and conflict the space of *convivência*. The Portuguese word refers to the capacity to live together. Choosing the Portuguese word instead of the English word (conviviality) is intentional. While conviviality carries an association with happiness and festivity, *convivência* refers more to constant practice and negotiation. Many of my interviewees talked about “the need to *conviver*”. They acknowledged that when we “rub together,” that is bound to create heat.

While *convivência* in many ways comes down to interaction between people, we need well functioning institutions to *conviver* better. We need institutions, which equip us with the capabilities to live out our story even in a world of division and divides. Based on my experience, these four principles are a good start for public organizations to build capacities for *convivência*:



## 1. EXPLAIN WHAT CONSTITUTES PUBLIC VALUE

*“Ensuring that Toronto Public Library spaces and services provide freedom of expression to all, without censorship, ensures that all voices can be heard, including and especially the voices of equity-deserving groups. At the same time, it means that individuals who may utilize the library’s services may come across information or ideas they find offensive.”*

### Toronto Public Library’s Intellectual Freedom Statement

Today’s urban governance requires balancing agility and predictability. While the government needs to remain open to seize opportunities, a level of predictability is needed for other actors to be able to plan their lives and actions. Too often the government forgets to write their guiding principles in publicly available documents. Having politically approved policies elaborating how the government defines public value and exercises discretion creates trust and predictability.

### Example:

In 2022, the Toronto Public Library, the largest public library system in North America, introduced an intellectual freedom statement and an equity statement in response to many library systems having to face increasing censorship challenges targeting equity-deserving groups. The statements explain how the library sees intellectual freedom and equity as mutually reinforcing but recognizes their friction. The documents include directions for challenging the library’s decisions. Challenges are reported annually to the board.



**Book Sanctuary** of challenged, censored or removed books at the Toronto Reference Library.

## 2. UNDERSTAND EXPERIENCE BEFORE DEVELOPING SOLUTIONS

Creating a space for learning before ideating solutions is easier said than done. Especially when working with groups that are justifiably skeptical towards the government, recognizing that you have heard and documented their views is an invaluable start. Repeating, documenting, and inviting corrections fosters a learning culture.

In general, allowing groups to learn from each other is a way to form a shared understanding and build trust. Creating a space for learning requires a mindset shift from government officials. To earn trust and encourage sharing, officials should offer their professional experience, early drafts, restrictions, and research data for collective use, even when objections arise. This approach demonstrates respect.

**Example:**

In 2015, the City of Helsinki and the We Foundation sought innovative approaches to address the integration of migrant youth. A year of intensive listening to teenagers, parents, researchers and frontline staff and reflecting the findings with youth changed our challenge from “how we can help these young people” to “how young migrants can use their skills for the benefit of themselves and others.” This asset-based approach led to the development of Job’d, a program employing young migrants for short-term tasks in senior care and community organizations. The program was designed in partnership with the youth themselves, youth clubs, nonprofits, senior care services, and a local technology startup. Since its start, the program has provided nearly 100,000 hours of vital working experience for more than 3,000 young migrants, serving as an equity investment that reduces obstacles from their employability in the open labor market.



Young Job’d employees and senior citizens on a walk in Helsinki.

**3. RESOURCE FRICTION**

Disagreements and tensions are inherent in cross-sector collaboration. Agreeing on a dispute resolution process at the outset is wiser than relying solely on good intentions. Resourcing mediation and facilitation is more sustainable than relying on good intent.

A trusted broker, unbiased and accountable, ensures process quality. A liaison prevents power imbalance and promotes inclusive decision-making. Especially in situations with a lot of emotion, the ability to talk through a facilitator is a way to build mutual respect and trust in the process.

**Example:**

Amsterdam’s new neighborhood right gives nonprofits the right to challenge the city as a service provider, bid for public land and submit a plan for their neighborhood. In Brasapark, the city has entered an agreement with a non-profit handing them the maintenance budget for the urban garden and the right to develop the area as a public park in perpetuity. As one city official coined the recipe for success: “They can run this space really well if we commit to collaboration.” The success of the collaboration has been dependent on separating the role of the project manager and that of a park maker, a city employee whose task is to help residents create greening projects and help the city and residents to find practical solutions.

#### **4. PROVIDE TO EVERYONE BUT NOT EQUALLY**

Equity is about resources. One strategy to build support for equity investments while avoiding alienating the rest of the electorate is building programs around public policy goals that resonate with most residents while openly directing more resources to those in need. Universally relevant goals contain the potential for building collective, cross-sector movements. They allow individual residents, community groups, businesses and philanthropies to join a movement while recognizing that some communities need more support than others to start from an equal footing. Cities across the world have built successful programs around themes such as public safety, public spaces, physical activity, children's wellbeing, care and economic mobility.

##### **Example:**

In 2017, the City of Philadelphia passed the Philadelphia Beverage Tax, an additional tax on sugary drinks. The revenue is directed to early education and renovation of parks, recreation centers, and libraries. The concrete impact on communities was vital for the support for the tax. While all districts have projects within the public space program Rebuild, the 72 sites were prioritized based on an assessment of socio-economic and repair needs. The city council has set ambitious goals for the percentage of women and minority-owned vendors.

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As Nobel-awarded economist Amartya Sen has stated, a good life is being able to live a life one has reason to value. A good life is being able to live out your story. Being the leading character in your story is never purely an outcome of even the best government program or a solely individual achievement. It means knowing what is available, having the rights and resources to craft a life that feels like yours, and being accepted into your community as a valuable member – being treated like a somebody.

# THE STORIES WE TELL OURSELVES SHAPE OUR WORLD

Stories build worlds and define world views. Yet many people find themselves caged in by stories that prevent them from seeing, believing in, or acting on the possibilities for change. So, when it comes to cries for a new economic paradigm, revitalised governance models, and wider societal transformation, we need new stories capable of helping to push forward desired alternative futures. Stories that paint a vivid picture of what is possible, show what others are already doing to drive change, and provide more people with lightbulb moments where they suddenly feel empowered to see, believe and act differently.

The concepts **Creative Bureaucracy** and **RISE Cities** were created to help spread such stories. Each year our communities of practice are growing with individuals who understand what is possible, who add their fuel to the fire, and who collectively pave the way forward through shared ambition and a belief in the power of their actions.

We welcome you to add your fuel to the fire and join us on this journey!

## WHY CREATIVE BUREAUCRACY?

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Creative Bureaucracy is a term coined by Charles Landry in 2003. It is a deliberate oxymoron that invites a playful critical reflection on the current state of our public institutions and their place in our collective imagination, and a constructive reimagining of what bureaucracy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century could look like.

The **Creative Bureaucracy Festival** is now the main manifestation of this idea. It takes the form of an annual, bilingual (English-German) event in Berlin that unites roughly 1,000 public changemakers — known as creative bureaucrats and their allies — to take their place in the spotlight, share experiences and connect. The sixth edition takes place on the 15 June, 2023. Further programming and collaborative interventions take place throughout the year.

## WHY RISE CITIES?

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The BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt launched the **RISE Cities program** in 2020 to advance Responsible Leadership in cities and global knowledge of resilient, intelligent, sustainable, and equitable (RISE) cities. The program identifies urban challenges and facilitates mutual learning to support the development of local solutions to global challenges, with a particular focus on cross-sectoral exchange.

## WHY RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP?

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The BMW Foundation Herbert Quandt promotes Responsible Leadership and inspires leaders worldwide to work towards a peaceful, just, and regenerative future. Since its beginnings in 1970, the BMW Foundation has sought to address challenges, both global and local, by breaking sectoral silos and working with leaders to strengthen cross-sectoral dialogue. Their purpose has always been to bring people of different cultures together, exchange ideas across borders, and build mutual trust and international understanding in the search for sustainable solutions to complex global challenges.

Through over fifty years in philanthropy, the BMW Foundation has come to see the commitment of leaders as a unique lever for positive change. Their guiding vision is **a new inclusive leadership paradigm — RESPONSIBLE LEADERSHIP —** in which leaders across the world enable the transformation toward a peaceful, just, and regenerative future. Through this work and within diverse communities across sectors, the foundation encourages and empowers people to pursue this vision.

## 4 DIMENSIONS FOR LIVEABLE CITIES

### →|| RESILIENT

The city, its systems and services, have enough resilience to cope with current and upcoming challenges such as population growth, climate change, pandemics, or financial crises.

### ||| INTELLIGENT

An intelligent city uses high-end technology such as digitalization to enhance livability for its residents – for example, by improving city services. The intelligent city also drives science and innovation to serve the common good and promote a positive future for the next generations.

### ♻ SUSTAINABLE

A sustainable city implements successful solutions to create systems with a neutral to positive environmental impact. Urban energy systems are based on renewable sources and sustainable concepts – such as natural cooling models or circular economy concepts.

### ⌌ EQUITABLE

In an equitable city, all citizens are equal, regardless of their gender, origin, status, ethnicity or religion. This includes an awareness of and fight against systemic problems such as structural racism.



RISE Cities Fellowship kick-off in the Pyrenees, September 2022

## PHOTO CREDITS

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## CREATIVE BUREAUCRACY FESTIVAL



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**SAVE THE DATE!**

**CREATIVE BUREAUCRACY FESTIVAL**  
**13 JUNE 2024**

**BERLIN**



A BMW FOUNDATION Herbert Quandt Program