



## URBAN TRANSITIONS FORUM REPORT

ICLEI WORLD CONGRESS 2018

19-22 June

Montréal, Canada

Industrial legacy cities from Europe, China and the US convened at the Urban Transitions Forum during the [ICLEI World Congress](#) in Montréal from 19 – 22 June 2018. The Forum was the second global gathering of the Urban Transitions Alliance, a network focused on transnational collaboration and knowledge exchange on sustainable urban transitions. The participating cities are facing critical environmental, social and economic challenges due to their industrial heritage, but are also using this identity in their ambitious transition visions.

The Urban Transitions Alliance members were eager to reconnect with their peers to further their collaborative efforts after initially meeting at the UN Climate Change Conference [COP23 in Bonn](#) in 2017. The Forum comprised of transition-focused thematic sessions as well as working meetings and networking opportunities created key moments for the cities to discuss their current challenges and learn from one another. A capacity building workshop on transition management strategies broadened the perspective on the cities' individual transition actions and sparked new ideas on how to look beyond thematic silos and jointly accelerate integrated urban development.



From left to right: Grant Ervin, City of Pittsburgh; Klaus Kordowski, Stiftung Mercator; Julie Laernoës, Nantes Metropolis; William Peduto, Mayor of Pittsburgh; Izabela Pawlaczyk, City of Katowice; Mariusz Skiba, Deputy Mayor of Katowice; Qingmin Bian, Shijiazhuang Yuhua District; Roman Mendle, ICLEI World Secretariat; Michael Leischner, City of Dortmund; Oluwole McFoy, City of Buffalo; Wolfgang Jung, Science Park Gelsenkirchen; Oliver Kroner, City of Cincinnati; Sebastian Schlecht, City of Essen; Alex Zhang, Eco Forum Global; Shu Zhu, ICLEI East Asia.

## PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

### High-Level Forum Opening

Transition actions can speed up sustainable development momentum if there is strong support from local political representatives. Political leaders from the Alliance cities including Pittsburgh Mayor William Peduto and Katowice Deputy Mayor Mariusz Skiba discussed how they can jointly provide leadership in their regions to raise the profile and ambition of industrial legacy cities. Along with Nantes Metropolis' Vice President Julie Laernos, the Forum opening highlighted the achievements and future challenges around of the growth of service-based economies, digitalization and employment opportunities.

For Chinese members of the Alliance, science and technology innovation paves the way to improve local air quality as well as urban economic development. Qingmin Bian, Head of the Science and Technology Bureau of Shijiazhuang's Yuhua District, emphasized the important role of energy saving and environmental protection practices. He was strongly supported by Alex Zhang from Eco Forum Global, who made clear that if we take sustainable development seriously, we will need to reconsider the growth paradigm and promote lifestyle changes. Industrial legacy cities have great potential to be the drivers of this change when (re-)shaping their economies and urban systems.



Find thematic transition knowledge and case studies in the "Transition Insights from Industrial Legacy Cities" at: [www.urbantransitions.org](http://www.urbantransitions.org)



Qingmin Bian, Head of Science & Technology Bureau, Yuhua District, Shijiazhuang, China, and Alex Zhang, ED Eco Forum Global.

**"These cities are reinventing themselves, reinventing their energy and transport systems, their infrastructure and urban fabric, their social systems and identity. We hope to learn a lot from these cities, and to enable them to share their experiences and knowledge with other cities following in their footsteps."**

Gino Van Begin, ICLEI Secretary General

### Social Transition

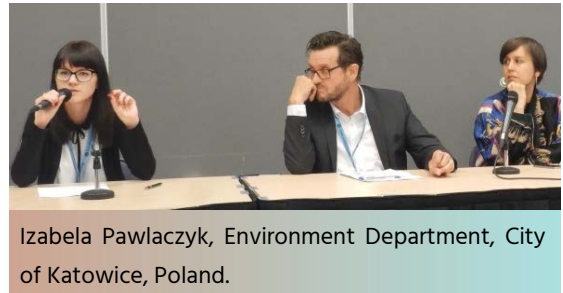


Michael Leischner, Department Head of Climate, Air and Noise, City of Dortmund, Germany.

A key component of a well-managed urban transition towards sustainability is to ensure that no citizens are left behind. Izabela Pawlaczyk from the City of Katowice and Michael Leischner from the City of Dortmund highlighted district-specific social transition challenges that arose from the decline of heavy industry. Examples of local revitalization programs showcased how their cities overcame critical social challenges – by working with their citizens to institutionalize participation, strengthen social bonds and support community action.



Frederic Ximeno Roca, Ecology Commissioner from the City of Barcelona, explained how his city values social justice and equity as guiding principles while conjointly pursuing green development and right to the city policies. Ania Rok shared her experience as Governance and Social Innovation Coordinator at the ICLEI European Secretariat by illustrating the multiple benefits local authorities can gain from increasing citizen participation in decision-making processes. She advocated for open, eye-level conversations with diverse local actors. Throughout the discussion, the panelists and audience agreed that sustainable urban development can only be strengthened when there is growing awareness and consideration of the social transition.



## Energy Transition



Solar housing in former miner's district Gelsenkirchen Bismarck.

Taking ownership of their energy transitions with bold visions and ambitious actions, city governments are tackling entrenched challenges including the rising urgency of aging infrastructure, investment shortages, inefficient energy systems and high energy burdens on their citizens. To illustrate this, Wolfgang Jung, CEO of the Science Park in Gelsenkirchen, Germany, explained how transition challenges shifted Gelsenkirchen's energy transition vision from one focused on economic opportunities in solar manufacturing to one that emphasizes quality of life for citizens. Grant Ervin highlighted how Pittsburgh's District Energy Project equally includes a strong citizen focus as it provides integrated climate and community planning. The city hopes that its upcoming 2020 procurement round will open up new opportunities to pursue innovative partnerships and accelerate renewable action.



Grant Ervin, Chief Resilience Officer, City of Pittsburgh, USA.

Dan McDougall from the Climate & Clean Air Coalition and George Berbari from DC PRO Engineering completed the panel which highlighted strategies and good practice examples for reducing urban energy use by modernizing infrastructure and increasing efficiency. Upcoming challenges will include energy storage from a technical perspective but also questions around public awareness and behavioral changes in order to reduce overall energy consumption at the urban level.

## Mobility Transition

Leveraging walking, cycling and public transport as well as renewable energy-based electric vehicles in cities will be crucial to reduce emissions, meet renewable energy targets and improve the equitability of urban mobility systems. For industrial legacy cities, these efforts are part of a larger structural transition towards sustainability that leverages existing infrastructure and redefines their local identity.



Oliver Kroner, Sustainability  
Coordinator, City of Cincinnati, USA.

Oliver Kroner from Cincinnati and Sebastian Schlecht from Essen, the European Green Capital 2017, assessed the legacy-grown mobility systems in their cities and shared how on-the-ground projects and broader strategies have initiated the transition process. Both speakers agreed that a major challenge apart from infrastructure investment and adopting cleaner technologies is to encourage residents to use more sustainable mobility options. This aspect is exactly what the City of Mannheim focused on in their “Spare your car” campaign: Agnes Schönfelder from Mannheim’s Climate Change Strategic Office explained how their social innovation and communication initiative has successfully resulted in five families giving up their private cars.

Still, many industrial legacy cities are built for cars. Urban highways often segregate neighborhoods and pose a major barrier to cross-district mobility. Mark Brostrom from the City of Edmonton and Guillaume Longchamps from ICLEI World Congress host city Montréal joined the discussion and contributed valuable ideas how to achieve the shift from car-centered to people-centered planning. A great example of increased urban connectivity was given by the City of Montreal: The city covered a downtown expressway with a walkable public square and congress center and redirected vehicle traffic underground.



“Spare your car” campaign in the  
City of Mannheim, Germany.

## Infrastructure Transition



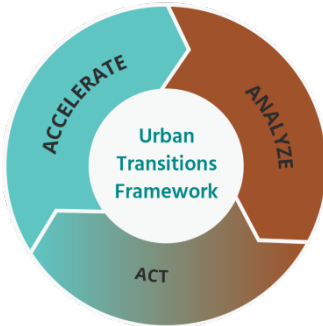
Kirstin Miller, Executive Director, Ecocity  
Builders, Oakland, USA.

Old factories, disused railway tracks and abandoned mining sites constitute relics of a formerly flourishing industrial past. Oluwole McFoy and Michael Leischner from the US-German sister cities of Buffalo and Dortmund showed how innovative cleanup and repurposing measures have successfully leveraged legacy infrastructure and created community spaces for recreation and investment. In addition, Alex Chapman from the Climate Change Office in the Canadian City of Guelph, presented how the conversion of industrial buildings into multi-unit residential houses and mixed-use facilities has sparked downtown development in Guelph.

Kirstin Miller from Ecocity Builders acknowledged how these cities have strategically turned brownfields and industrial areas into opportunities for neighborhood revitalization, green economy development, biodiversity conservation and climate change adaptation. However, she also emphasized potential side effects of those interventions on social equity and inclusion.

## UNDERSTANDING URBAN TRANSITIONS

How can industrial legacy cities decide where and when to act? Who are the stakeholders they need to include in the conversation? During the Forum, Alliance cities also had the opportunity to dive deeper into Urban Transition Management and learn how to apply this methodology in their visioning and planning for local sustainability initiatives. The cities were able to discuss the potential and pitfalls of the Urban Transitions methodology and share their views on how this approach could be implemented to achieve a more integrated transition process. The local government representatives stressed the importance of on-the-ground projects and direct community engagement.



The Forum program was completed by a transition site visit to the [Young Project](#) that works towards creating accessible and affordable transitory spaces for all in Montréal's abandoned buildings. This experience provided the opportunity for Alliance members to spark new ideas how to identify niches for innovation - looking with fresh eyes at their cities in transition.

Together, industrial legacy cities are learning to guide their ongoing transitions in an integrated way. The Alliance provides a sharing platform that has a reflective, comprehensive view on the complex urban landscape and provides opportunities for exchange and the co-creation of new ideas. Through this, cities are empowered with the knowledge and tools they need to accelerate change and build on their sustainable transition momentum.

