FT urban ingenuity

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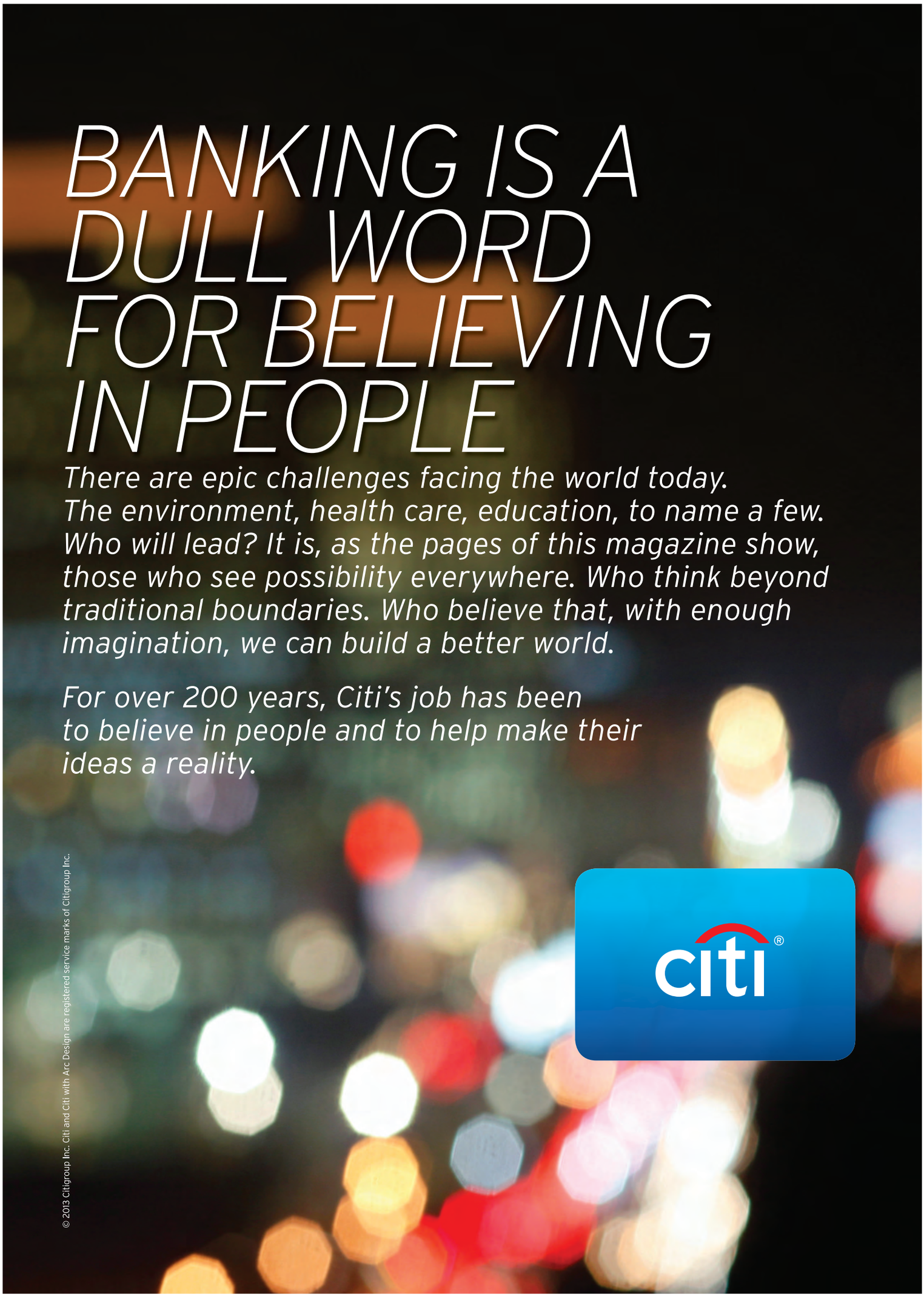
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There are epic challenges facing the world today. The environment, health care, education, to name a few. Who will lead? It is, as the pages of this magazine show, those who see possibility everywhere. Who think beyond traditional boundaries. Who believe that, with enough imagination, we can build a better world.
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Proud winners

FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards: Urban Ideas in Action

AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST
Winner: Sanergy
Runner-up: SDI Alliance
Highly commended: Bicycling Empowerment Network

ASIA-PACIFIC
Winner: Parinaam Foundation
Runner-up: AProCh

EUROPE
Winner: 3Space
Runner-up: BlaBlaCar

LATIN AMERICA
Winner: Fundación Calicanto
Runner-up: Aprenda

NORTH AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
Winner: SeeClickFix
Runner-up: Baltimore Housing

OVERALL WINNER:
Sanergy

As the second year of the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards reaches its climax, the overwhelming feeling we at the Financial Times have is pride in being associated with such a stimulating and worthwhile project. What could be more important than seeking out and recognising those who have found ways of solving the apparently intractable problems of masses of urban dwellers as they search for food, jobs, healthcare, transport and security?

But those we are honouring in this magazine should feel far more pride. They are the ones who have come up with the ideas and succeeded in implementing them in often overwhelmingly difficult circumstances.

As the convenor of the judging panel, I watched its members struggling to decide which of these worthwhile projects should be rewarded above the others.

The judges were unanimous on one point: the finalists from Africa were of the highest quality. Any of the four would have made a worthy winner. In the end, they chose Sanergy, which has created a network of low-cost toilets in Nairobi. They felt that this project satisfied all the criteria they were looking for: it was innovative, it was sustainable, it could be used elsewhere and it solved one of the most important problems that poor urban communities face – the dignified and healthy disposal of human waste.

The Asia-Pacific winner, the Parinaam Foundation, which focuses on employment, financial literacy, health and childcare in Bangalore, showed the virtues of our decision this year to include projects that dealt with several issues at once, rather than just those that fitted the tighter entry categories we used last year. Similarly, in Latin America, Fundación Calicanto imparts basic skills to women and now men in Panama.

The European winner, 3Space, persuades landlords of empty UK buildings to open them to social enterprises on a temporary basis. One of the judges pointed out that underused buildings were a widespread developed-world problem, as is decay of formerly prosperous cities. The judges' choice in the North American and Caribbean category, SeeClickFix, attempts to counter this by allowing residents to alert authorities to problems online.

In naming Sanergy as the overall winner, the judges gave Nairobi its second worldwide award in a row. For the Kenyan capital, that, too, should be a point of pride.

Michael Skapinker
Editor, FT Special Reports

COVER PHOTO: SIEGFRIED MODOLA

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Flawed visions

Rigid planning often creates inhuman cities, but only history decides what makes for a successful city, says **Edwin Heathcote**

In 1593, the Venetians decided to build a new city to celebrate victory over the Ottomans at the Battle of Lepanto. A fortified city in the shape of a nine-pointed star with a piazza at its heart, Palmanova is the most complete realisation of a Renaissance obsession, the ideal city.

This was to be a place of equity, in which every citizen would have equal access to land and knowledge, and a place in which life would be enhanced by beauty and geometry. The dream was of craftsmen, farmers and merchants who would create a city of wealth and culture.

The trouble was, no one wanted to live there. The Venetians were very happy in their poky houses and dark alleyways. Venice was a place of beauty and ugliness, a place that, despite its curious location and liquid streets, remained a capital of culture.

But Palmanova's vast central square has none of the vivacity of even the scrawniest Italian piazza. Instead, it is dead – too big, too sunny, too dull.

Building the ideal city has never been easy. The most successful cities seem to grow haphazardly. Whether it is the incessant transformations of London, the untrammelled upward extrusion of New York or the intimacy and accidental beauty of a Roman square, the cities most able to reinvent themselves have been those where no single vision has confined them.

This is, of course, an oversimplification. All those cities have in place a plethora of regulations and social constructs that govern their growth – they are hardly unplanned – but it is still striking how unsuccessful centrally planned cities have been.

This lack of success is important because the world is urbanising at an exponential rate and many of the cities we are building are effectively new.

PHOTOS: REUTERS; SHUTTERSTOCK

Even if their location has been dictated by the existence of a fishing village or trading post, their form is planned.

Many of the issues addressed by the winners of the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards are most applicable to cities that have grown organically – and their most unplanned extensions, the "informal settlements", or slums. But they have important lessons for their planned counterparts.

The phenomenon of the grand new city tends to be associated with the desire to create a new capital or administrative centre, and the wish of statesmen, architects and planners to imbue the new city with meaning and symbolism.

Perhaps the most famous planned city is Brasília, built in the 1960s as a post-colonial capital to take over from Rio de Janeiro. The architecture of its administrative heart is among the finest design of the 20th century, yet as a city it does not cohere, and politicians and civil servants fly off to Rio or São Paulo as soon as the week finishes.

The city centre is a vast plain dotted with architectural monuments; the suburbs are dormitories with nothing to do. Ironically, the poorest parts of the city are the liveliest, with liveable niches, intimate streets and a human scale.

Scale, of course, is often the problem. In the search for grandeur, city builders often overdo the monumental. Washington's Mall is an impressive space, but it is not really a park, street or square. The monumental concrete architecture of Chandigarh, a 1950s attempt to create a modern northern Indian provincial capital, is impressive but, as a city, not so much. Australia's Canberra has elegant buildings, but it is hardly a destination.

China is planning new cities on a vast scale. Many might appear a little bleak, yet the authorities have been careful in installing infrastructure, transport, green space and often surprisingly fine avenues and ambitious streets. The buildings may be second-rate, but perhaps the next generation of architects will do better. If the bones are good the city can still work.

In condemning planned cities we often do not give them time to take root. The world's favourite cities – London, New York, Rome, Paris, Istanbul, Venice, Rome – have been around for centuries, if not millennia; a city takes time to mature. That planned cities are not doomed to failure is testified by some wonderful successes.

Lisbon, for instance, was entirely rebuilt after an earthquake in 1755. Philadelphia was laid out in a grid in 1682, later expanded by William Penn, who laid the foundations for the wide streets and open spaces that have made it such an enduringly successful city.

The grid, the most seemingly inhuman and rational of town planning systems, has proved to be one of the most adaptable systems for the successful city. In New York it allowed the extraordinary growth of the city into a coherent yet flexible place and the regeneration of many US downtowns after decades of flight to the suburbs has demonstrated its resilience and relevance.

One cannot say the planned city is less successful than the unplanned, as almost all cities are planned in some way. But what is certain is that planning is a fashion based on taste and technology. Suburbs and exurbs on the US model, now almost universally adopted, rely on the ubiquity of personal transport and cheap fuel. Grids depend on contemporary building techniques that might seem hopelessly outdated in a century.

Grand plans gone wrong: Brasília, opposite, and Palmanova, above

> Favelas have often produced streetscapes as intriguing and complex as any in medieval Italy

Some contemporary planners have turned to New Urbanism, a movement that attempts to emulate the picturesque qualities of historic cities with their walkable centres and leafy, winding residential streets. But there is a certain lack of vision in these, a surrendering to the qualities of an imagined history.

The biggest successes are often the most surprising. Take Tokyo. Its architecture is a mess: buildings are almost exclusively short-termist garbage, based on fashion and squeezing maximum floor areas into often tiny sites. Yet the result is a city of almost unparalleled invention and vibrancy.

Or take a hillside Latin American favela. Housing conditions may be execrable, yet in their unplanned growth they have often produced streetscapes as intriguing and complex as any in medieval Italy.

That these are slowly being gentrified (notably in Brazil) under the guise of slum clearance (but actually because they are well-sited and often strikingly beautiful) is an indictment of the planning of big cities such as Brasília or the overscaled chaos of São Paulo.

What we should learn from the historical dialogue between the planned and unplanned is that, extraordinarily, we have learnt nothing. Planning is hit and miss, and often the finest cities emerge from the temporary and extemporised, or the rational and the abstract. We can set out to create a great city, but only history will confirm our success. ■

COMMENT
JANICE
MUTHUI

Fresh approaches

Originality of thinking was one of the most important criteria to occupy the minds of judges this year

Last year the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards judging panel chose Kenya's Community Cooker Foundation as the winner of the Energy category and as the overall winner.

This innovative waste-to-energy technology, invented and developed in Nairobi, is an initiative of the architects at Planning Systems Services and solves many problems associated with poor waste management in developing countries.

The award has propelled the foundation into new territory, where local and international organisations are showing real interest in installing its cookers in areas of need.

This year there was a profound difference in the judging process. In 2012, there were four categories: health, energy, education and infrastructure. Though I was not on that panel, I imagine it must have been a harrowing task whittling the entries down to one. It must have been difficult to measure entries by the same yardstick when some had much larger budgets and financial backing, and some benefited from better marketing mechanisms.

But then, as with this year, the most important factor was ingenuity. Was the idea fresh and transformative, and did it make a positive impact on people? The award for the Community Cooker Foundation came as a humbling yet profound stamp on what we had been trying to achieve since the idea was born in the early 1990s.

This year, entries were judged regionally. A reason for this change was that 2012's categories were very broad and each sector covered so many areas where innovation was rife. An example is the growth of digital technology in Africa, where more and more people are carrying virtual banks and hospitals on their mobile phones to avoid the problems of inadequate fixed infrastructure.

> There needs to be a more concerted effort to encourage ideas from far-flung places

This year, while we thought some regions had stronger entries than others, some ideas were not as fresh as others. It was a pleasant surprise that those considered the freshest were from the so-called poorer regions, but why were there not more entries of this nature?

There needs to be more of a concerted effort to encourage ideas from far-flung places. On urban streets and in small shops people are seeking solutions to their problems with very rudimentary technical expertise but great enthusiasm and courage.

These people need encouragement through local forums and workshops, as well as connections to funding opportunities for further research and development to bring the ideas to the international stage.

Prestigious schemes such as the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards can create a platform for the exchange of innovative ideas from people of very diverse backgrounds. One idea in need of tweaking may find a solution from the other side of the world.

Such schemes also offer an opportunity for people to showcase the innovative ways in which they have been able to affect communities, using locally sourced materials and labour.

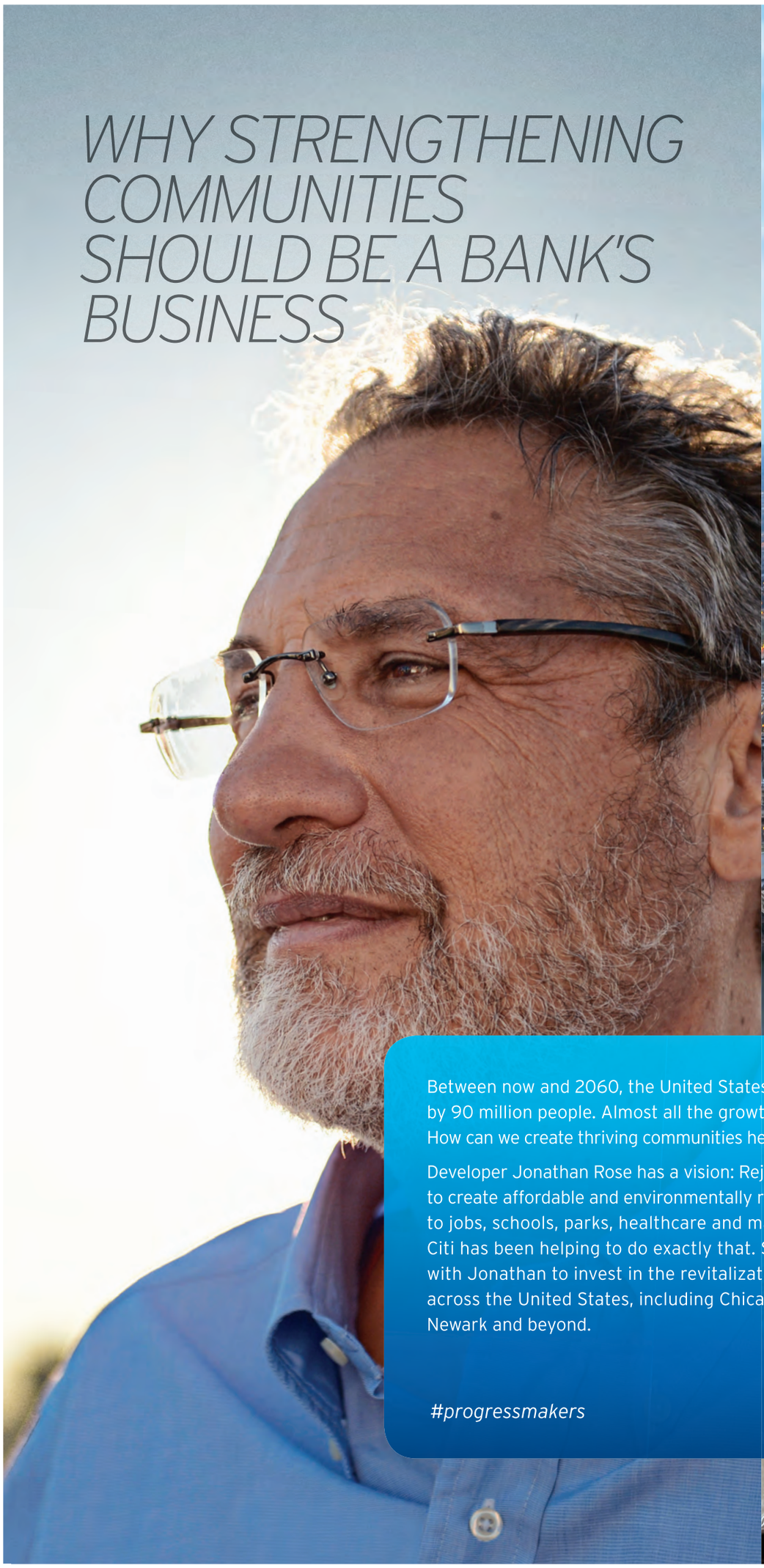
The real prize is that those with a good idea, no matter how small, will gain the encouragement and the motivation to create the next great thing. ■

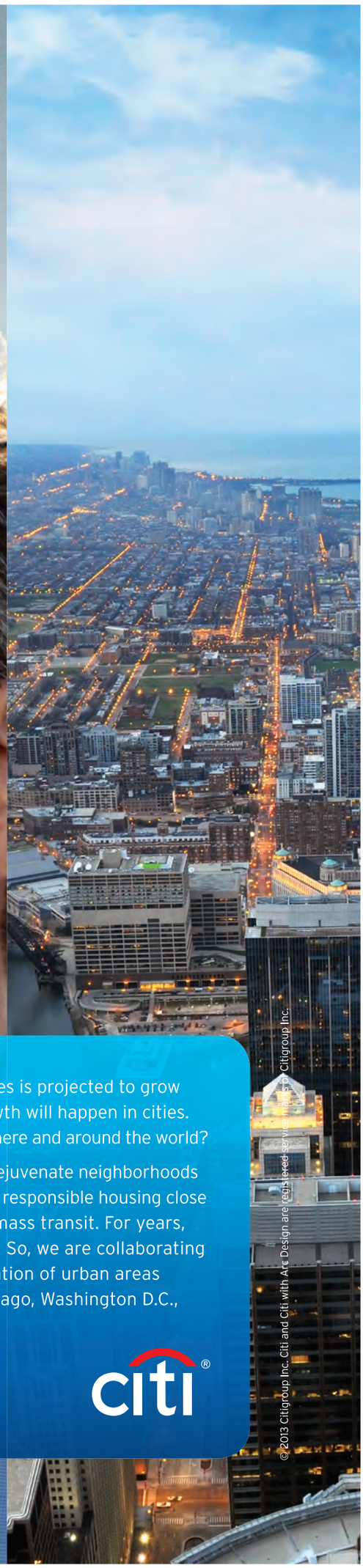
Janice Muthui is foundation manager at the Community Cooker Foundation

Pulling together: the Community Cooker Foundation found multiple solutions to waste management problems

PHOTO: GEORGINA GOODWIN

WHY STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES SHOULD BE A BANK'S BUSINESS





Between now and 2060, the United States is projected to grow by 90 million people. Almost all the growth will happen in cities. How can we create thriving communities here and around the world?

Developer Jonathan Rose has a vision: Rejuvenate neighborhoods to create affordable and environmentally responsible housing close to jobs, schools, parks, healthcare and mass transit. For years, Citi has been helping to do exactly that. So, we are collaborating with Jonathan to invest in the revitalization of urban areas across the United States, including Chicago, Washington D.C., Newark and beyond.

#progressmakers

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AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST
REGIONAL AND OVERALL WINNER: SANERGY

Out of the soil

Pay-per-go toilets and their by-products are providing a useful living for residents of Nairobi's slums, writes **Katrina Manson**
Photographs by **Siegfried Modola**

Life changing: Miriam Kwamboka bought two Fresh Life blocks after people joked it was "a digital toilet"

Gladys Ndungwa Ndambuki had never seen a slum before. The 28-year-old grew up in Kenya's bulging capital Nairobi, but only when the insurance company she was employed at did some charity work in the city's industrial area did she come face to face with some of country's worst realities.

"I couldn't comprehend that people live like that, especially the sanitation, the pit latrines," she says.

But in fast-growing Nairobi, most people live like that. An estimated two-thirds of the city's 3.5m people make their homes in its 200 informal settlements. Poor sanitation is among their biggest difficulties: every year, 4m tonnes of waste from Kenya's slums are dumped into waterways and the soil. Along the waterlogged dirt paths of the Mukuru kwa Njenga slum, where lorries compete with cows for road space, mud and detritus produce an unhealthy stench and pit latrines regularly overflow.

At first, Ndambuki went back to work enthused that her task must be to craft an insurance product to help some of Kenya's poorest people. But soon her newfound dedication needed a bigger outlet.

"These people don't need good insurance; good sanitation is the least we can give back to society," said Ndambuki. So she quit her job, took a 30 per cent pay cut and joined Sanergy, a social enterprise start-up founded by US high-flyers dedicated to fixing the problem that so distressed her.

Sanergy's 115-strong team, most of whom are drawn from the slum, dedicates itself to improving sanitation in the city by trying to, in the words of ➤

AFRICA AND MIDDLE EAST
SANERGY

the team, "turn shit into gold". Sanergy's "Fresh Life" squat toilets, operated by slum residents, replace unhygienic alternatives such as pit latrines and open defecation, and are part of a broader effort to tackle poverty.

"Really changing urban communities means giving people the services they need and ensuring people are living good healthy lives," says David Auerbach, one of Sanergy's founders.

The Fresh Life system operates on a pay-per-use basis, run by – so far – 150 resident micro-entrepreneurs in the slum. Sanergy team members then collect the waste daily with a view to transforming it into organic fertiliser for sale to farmers.

> "You have to understand the complexity of the community you are working in"

So far, the company has sold 290 toilet blocks to residents at cost price, generating 1,400 tonnes of waste a year, with much more to come – more than 12,000 people use the toilets every day.

"The big challenge is guaranteed supply," says Auerbach, who is still negotiating waste disposal contracts with several flower farms and other agriculture businesses throughout Kenya. "We need to increase capacity three or four times. We need to do 5,000 tonnes a year, build out the units and improve the technology."

For 35-year-old Miriam Kwamboka, a water vendor who lives in the slum, Sanergy has been life-changing. While most of Sanergy's toilet blocks are at communal sites such as market places, street corners and outside schools, she bought two blocks for her own residence – 12 rooms that she rents out for less than $10 a week.

"The toilet used to fill up very quickly and sometimes I didn't have money to pay the men to collect the waste, so it used to stay there and smell a lot; it used to leak and overflow," says Kwamboka.

Sitting on a sofa in her parlour – a small sheet-metal construction with net curtains for wallpaper and inflatable beach balloons for ceiling decorations – Kwamboka explains how she first came across the Fresh Life toilet. She says people told her it was so modern they joked it was "a digital toilet".

Kwamboka bought two toilets on credit at a discount, and Sanergy created a repayment plan. She upped her tenants' rent by Ks500 ($5.80) a month to help her repay the loan, but she says it is worth it.

"People have seen a lot of difference with the new toilets, especially when it rains, because the smells used to overflow. It's good because it helps people; the tenants are happy."

Sanitary successes: Miriam Kwamboka, above, and Gladys Ndungwa Ndambuki, below

The residential model is one of several innovations by Sanergy, which is expanding into new slums but is most interested in increasing the density of its network in existing areas, putting more blocks outside schools as well as in residential plots.

"You have to understand the complexity of the community you are working in," says Auerbach. "At night you want people to have safe places to go that are not very far."

The group is also encouraging unemployed under-25s who might otherwise be tempted into crime or prostitution to become Fresh Life operators, supporting them with training, business skills and subsidies to get going.

Alongside mounds of rubbish and mud, the toilet blocks stand out as beacons, painted in blue with a yellow sunburst. Sanergy creates incentives for maintaining high standards: it bolts them shut if they are not kept spotless. As a result, residents are prepared to pay – Ks5 ($0.06) on average for adults and Ks2 ($0.02) for children. "Join our movement," says an entreaty painted on the side of the toilet units.

Sanergy's commitment to employees and slum-dwellers is another part of its movement. Auerbach, like some of Sanergy's other co-founders, is informed by his MBA from Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Sanergy's management approach relies on morale-boosting practices and an embrace of ambition, targets, community service and career progression.

One day Sanergy wants to have thousands of toilet blocks throughout the city.

As area sales manager, Ndambuki has targets to expand the network that are critical to

her job. She keeps a business self-help book on her desk and, as she strives to surpass Sanergy targets, she expects her salary will soon outstrip that of her previous job, all the while hoping to change permanently the underprivileged world that first jolted her into action.

"I look at the impact it has on the people. I'm really grateful to give back to society and also create a career for myself," she says.

The team practises constant staff evaluation; celebrates an employee of the month, posting pictures of star staff on a communal noticeboard; and holds regular prize ceremonies for the best toilet attendants to magnify a sense of social standing in the community – the prizes are gift-wrapped and speeches adopt a solemn note to underline the importance of the work.

For Ricky Ojwang, a job at Sanergy has been a lifeline. Sitting on his bed in the room that is his home, the 21-year-old says he came to the city last year in search of work but found nothing, so he joined his father in the slum, finding only occasional manual labour.

He joined Sanergy following a recruitment drive, and has been promoted to assistant supervisor of logistics. His job is to ensure the collection teams remove the waste safely and on time.

"In these areas you can't just find a very free path to these toilets," he says, explaining how muddy pools and filth make it impossible even for a wheelbarrow to pass, so team members often carry out the waste in sealed units by hand. Ojwang hopes one day to take an electrical engineering course so that he can rejoin Sanergy at a more senior level.

Auerbach says: "A lot of our team used to rely on day-to-day labour, but now they have steady incomes and get the benefits of health insurance, pensions for the first time and guaranteed enforceable contracts. When you think about how you really lift people out of poverty, this is it." ■

Launch pad: Ricky Ojwang, above, hopes his job with Sanergy will boost his chances of studying engineering

'Yuk' factor

Farming with waste

Farmers taking delivery of the organic fertiliser made from human waste are beginning to join the movement too. Komaza, a social enterprise based on Kenya's coast that works with 6,000 farmers, has found the Sanergy fertiliser works much better than expected.

"The results were quite phenomenal," says Patricia Griffin, director of operations at Komaza, of an April trial that showed the Sanergy fertiliser boosted sorghum yields by a third. She hopes the organisation, which is planting 1m trees, will have the same effect on tree growth. She is negotiating rates of sale with Sanergy despite initial misgivings from the farmers.

"Its raw form just looks like dirt chewed on and chomped on by the worms, but you can imagine the stigma you have to overcome when people realise it is made from human poo – it has a yuk factor to it," says Griffin. "My staff didn't really want to touch it, so I had to do the trial and prove to them it worked."

Back to basics

A project to help Bangalore's poorest slum dwellers targets what they say are their most pressing concerns, reports James Crabtree
Photographs by **Ayush Ranka**

Elaine Ghosh spent much of her life worrying about the poorest families in Bangalore's most deprived slums. But towards the end of her life – she died in November – she had concerns about wealthier groups too: the funders of the urban "ultra-poor" programme (UUPP) she ran with her foundation, Parinaam.

The UUPP was Ghosh's passion – an intensive combination of social projects established in 2009 that has helped about 750 severely deprived families in eight of the southern Indian city's grimmest slums. Financial support for the programme had been difficult to come by, however, with an initial grant provided by the Michael and Susan Dell foundation due to run out in November.

"We were a bit panicked," she said in an interview in October. "We knew the programme worked, but we couldn't find a way to convince people to give us money."

The problem stemmed from the UUPP's approach. Big international donors often warm to anti-poverty programmes that are cheap to operate and quick to scale up. These tend to focus on single issues, such as healthcare, or on so-called "livelihood" projects, which can involve teaching basic skills such as sewing to help people find jobs.

Ghosh had different ideas, however, having become disillusioned with the results of an earlier Parinaam venture. This ran temporary health camps in some of the same Bangalore slums, bringing in doctors to provide basic check-ups and employing health workers to persuade poorer residents to seek medical help, especially for their children.

Stuck in the sprawl: the UUPP accepts poverty will persist, so it addresses everyday needs such as health or finding work

"The whole programme had little long-term impact, and I realised that however much I might think these people needed healthcare, clearly they didn't agree," she said, recalling that the camp effort typically failed to change entrenched habits – in child nutrition, for instance.

"It changed my whole vision of how we look at the poor," she explained. "We stopped the

ASIA-PACIFIC REGIONAL WINNER: PARINAAM FOUNDATION

health camps. It was a waste of money. It became like a mantra for us: you have to step into the shoes of the poor; you have to talk to them and ask them what they think they need."

This approach became the focus of the UUPP, which begins its work in each slum by surveying residents – many of whom live in awful conditions, in tumbledown shacks with tarpaulin roofs – to ask what help they feel they need.

In some areas, the surveys reveal childcare or particular health worries as dominant concerns. In others, it is finding work. Whatever the outcome, the programme begins by trying to provide a service that will help.

The result is an intensive and relatively expensive programme that works in particular with groups of women in each slum, providing a host of different services in areas ranging from children's education to basic financial literacy.

Having struggled for much of this year to convince numerous potential donors of the merits of her approach this summer, Ghosh secured new funding from a private benefactor, with more funds likely to follow from an international bank.

The extra income will not only secure the UUPP's future, she said, but also allow the programme to expand, potentially nearly doubling the 500 or so families it helps at any one time over the next few years.

Where once Ghosh thought about expanding the effort to some of India's other sprawling metropolises, including Calcutta and New Delhi, she revised the plans to stick closer to home in Bangalore. "Why go into another city when there are so many poor people here who still need our help?" she said.

The programme remains a family affair: Ghosh ran it alongside her daughter Mallika, while the wider Parinaam foundation has close links to a large microfinance business, Ujjivan, founded by her husband Samit.

> "You have to step into the shoes of the poor and ask them what they think they need"

Despite its new funding and wider ambitions, the UUPP's approach will not change, beginning in new project areas by first listening, and then attempting to understand the problems faced by local residents. Ghosh illustrated this approach with work the UUPP was undertaking in a slum predominantly inhabited by Muslims.

"In that area, the women told us their husbands wouldn't let them go out and find work," she said, explaining that this restricts their ability to earn and provide for their families. In response Ghosh and her team focused on helping the women learn basic skills they can use at home, such as candle making or sewing quilts.

Elsewhere, she hoped to build up Parinaam's other programmes, including a much larger operation that focuses on teaching basic financial literacy, and a smaller scheme based around the same slums in Bangalore, in which she finds donors to fund the education of young children whose mothers are helped by the UUPP.

"We have to admit that the adults in these slums are never going to be lifted entirely out of poverty," Ghosh said, although the programmes help the very poorest move upwards to the point where they are no longer destitute.

"It is only the children who will truly lift their parents, so we need to focus on them too."

In the last months of her life, Ghosh was preparing her foundation to take on the challenge. "That is the most important thing about any project like this," she said. "If you start something you have to finish it." ■

EUROPE
REGIONAL WINNER:
3SPACE

Filling the cracks

A charity that brokers empty offices aids tenants and landlords, says **James Pickford**
Photographs by **Charlie Bibby**

Above a red-brick government office in Wimbledon, a new model of business is taking shape. In the unadorned open-plan space, plain white tables are occupied by an assortment of workers on laptops or tablets. There is light, heat, WiFi, tea and coffee, but little else.

The reason for its austere appearance? It is free. The southwest London space – and others like it – are run by 3Space, a company set up in 2010 by Andrew Cribb and Henry Mason to match unoccupied premises with deserving but impecunious social enterprises.

3Space moves into commercial properties that are temporarily empty and brings them back to life by offering the space rent-free to charities and other non-profit organisations. The agreements it strikes with landlords and leaseholders – who may be awaiting planning permission, a funding deal or the right moment to redevelop – typically last six to 18 months. "We wedge ourselves into those cracks," says Mason, a former KPMG accountant.

> If a building is occupied by social enterprises, business rates are halved

Since 3Space started, some 165 companies have passed through its premises. The number of offices on its books varies: it is running five buildings in the UK at the moment – in London, Cardiff, Blackpool and Wigan – but has had as many as 30 active at one time.

Why would property owners go to the trouble of inviting unknown businesses into their buildings? Aside from altruism, there are solid commercial reasons for giving away their space for a time: if it is occupied by charities or social enterprises, the business rates bill is halved and there are reductions in insurance and security costs. But tenants must be ready to move out quickly – sometimes with as little notice as a week.

For consumer-related business there are also potential marketing advantages. "We make it worth their while through business rate savings,

but when working with commercial partners there is also a brand value," says Mason, who says 3Space is looking to take over some empty branches of a UK bank, which would use the deal in its marketing.

Where the Wimbledon office is distinct from 3Space's other venues is that it offers space to both charities and for-profit companies, as part of a government programme to use idle sites for start-ups. The local Merton Chamber of Commerce has also been heavily involved in the Wimbledon initiative in its efforts to boost employment.

A Cabinet Office spokesman says the Space for Growth scheme – for which Wimbledon was a pilot – encourages entrepreneurs "to move on from their kitchens, living rooms and cafés, and benefit from a professional address, the company of other workers and the potential of networking".

For some charities, flexibility is the main attraction. The Moroccan Children's Trust is a charity based in Tooting, south London, in an office it shares – and pays for – with a sister charity. It uses Wimbledon as a place to hold weekly meetings off-site, in an uncrowded and WiFi-enabled site that allows staff to Skype with their colleagues in Morocco.

> Tenants have saved funds and made some productive contacts

"For us the main thing about this space is not having the distractions of the other activities," says Sarah Sibley, a project co-ordinator with the charity.

Another occupant is Sale Servant, a digital marketing company that helps small and medium-sized fashion brands drum up sales by increasing traffic to their websites. Lenka Gourdie, chief executive, says she and her business partner and husband Allan, who started the business six months ago, initially tried hubs such as Google's Campus London or simply worked on a table in Starbucks, the coffee chain. But the latter is not always the best place to hold a business meeting with potential clients or to network with other entrepreneurs.

Fully booked: there is a long waiting list for one of 3Space's London venues in Oxford Street

"For us it is the convenience of the place and having premises to bring other people," she says.

The floor upstairs is kept empty for workshops and meetings, which has allowed John Bickell to launch Trepisphere, his social enterprise that coaches groups of jobseekers and others in starting a business. "Without 3Space, it is possible I wouldn't have started at all. But with it, it is an absolute no-brainer."

To the dismay of its tenants, the Wimbledon space was set to close at the end of November. There is a long waiting list for 3Space's other London venue in Oxford Street. But even if they have had only six months in Wimbledon, the tenants have saved funds and made some productive contacts. Sale Servant is talking to another occupant, online exercise advice brand SNS Nutrition, about sharing a paid-for office space, for instance.

Mason says 3Space's goal is to form a long-term partnership with a big property group – but such a partner would have to view the relationship as more than a short-term financial fix.

He says the business model could go from helping landlords struggling in a recession to revitalising whole neighbourhoods.

"As we have evolved we have started to see ourselves more as part of a wider movement for greater efficiency, along with companies such as Hailo [the black cab app] and Airbnb [an online marketplace for flat or room rentals]," Mason says.

"We see this as a new model for the property industry." ■

LATIN AMERICA
REGIONAL WINNER: FUNDACIÓN CALICANTO

Class action

A programme in Panama provides a route out of poverty and gang violence, reports **Andres Schipani**

When former gang leader Luzkeira Pérez last spoke to the Financial Times four months ago, she was full of dreams and energy but still hesitant about how her life would be after the six-week educational programme provided by the Fundación Calicanto women's group.

PHOTOS: EYEVINE; TITO HERRERA

After her graduation in October, she is far less worried. She has developed a plan and is on her way to securing funds to expand her business of selling coffee and *empanadas* (stuffed bread) into a catering business. And she was on the verge of being offered a job at a five-star hotel about to open in a former gang headquarters in Panama City's old town.

"I can say the programme changed my life, I am even now recruiting women to the programme, because I know it will be life-changing for them," she says. "I am confident I can achieve what I want and, finally, contribute to society."

That was the overall feeling during the very emotional graduation ceremony at the Panama Canal museum in the historic seafront district. This class was undoubtedly a success – out of 19 women, 17 had secured a job, mostly in the country's expanding tourism sector.

Calicanto is part of a community-wide effort to ensure marginalised residents can seize the opportunities in fast-growing Panama. The group's initial aim was to maintain a sustainable, inclusive and lively neighbourhood in the old town where rich and poor could rub shoulders.

"I am in love with this programme," says Peter Reiling, executive vice-president for leadership and seminar programmes at the Aspen Institute, a US-based leadership and policy organisation. "Not only does it provide these women with the 'hard' skills to find gainful employment – and in a very practical, market-driven way – but it also provides those additional, equally essential 'soft' skills for a whole life."

According to Calicanto's founder, Hildegard Vásquez, a US-trained architect, the high employment rates are a result of the scheme's good name. Hoteliers and other employers in Panama are now aware of what a Calicanto diploma involves. "This is now considered the Harvard for disadvantaged poor women," she says.

What started in the old town has percolated to other neighbourhoods. Copa Airlines, Panama's national carrier, has asked Calicanto to provide it with reliable workers by setting up a branch of the programme near Tocumen airport.

But demand is not restricted to Panama. Vásquez recently prepared educational manuals, detailing every step of the Calicanto programme, called Capta, to implement the scheme in other Latin American cities. She has received calls from Mexico City, but the first overseas venture will be in violence-ridden Guatemala City.

New horizons: After completing the Calicanto programme, Luzkeira Pérez is now recruiting other women herself

Violence was a theme during the graduation ceremony in Panama, when the women, using skills learned in their drama lessons, performed a sketch mocking violent partners or husbands.

Mockery aside, Calicanto is also focusing on violent men. The foundation recently helped to set up an offshoot programme called Esperanza San Felipe where male gang members from the old town went through a similar learning process in the same abandoned school that has become the home of Calicanto.

As with the women, the scheme included basic life and work skills but added an element of unarmed self-defence to help the men build the self-confidence they needed to put down their guns and knives for good.

"The underlying philosophy is the same as with the women, but with the men we had to build the emotional skills before technical skills," says Gilberto Toro, the programme's technical director.

A dozen tattooed youngsters who until a few months ago were selling drugs on the streets graduated in October and nine already have jobs.

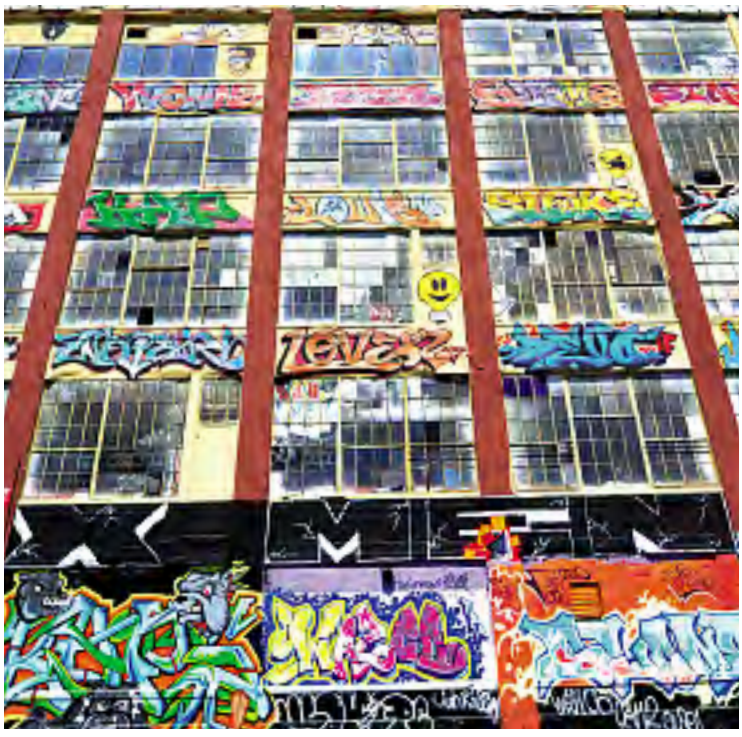
"With the men we had to build the emotional skills before technical skills"

One of them is Humberto Ovalle, a 20-year-old former gang member who also had to conquer learning disabilities. He is now a concierge trainee at a guest house and confirms the faith shown in him. "I am really happy with what I am doing," he says. "I don't ever want to go back to the streets."

For Calicanto founder Vásquez, one has to "believe" in people. "None of these women or men were born on an equal footing," she says. "We cannot provide that equal footing, but we can give them tools so they can find opportunities." ■

Clean streets

The website and app to report urban blight is gaining in popularity among citizens around the world, reports **Shannon Bond**



Writing on the wall: work by artist Banksy draws viewers in New York, above, but graffiti, left, is on the decline. Opposite: refuse removal in Utah

The annoyances of urban life are familiar to any city dweller: rubbish, unlit street lamps, potholes, graffiti. Cleaning up such eyesores has become the basis for an entire trend in policing – the "broken windows" theory, used to great effect in 1990s New York, which asserts that dealing with petty crimes makes big crimes less likely. In many cities, though, it can still be difficult for conscientious citizens to report problems.

Enter SeeClickFix. Dreamt up as a quick way to report graffiti, the website and mobile app allow residents of cities around the world to flag problems on a map. In many cases, that alerts officials and agencies, which fix the problem and respond to the person who reported it.

PHOTOS: REUTERS; GETTY

NORTH AMERICA AND CARIBBEAN
REGIONAL WINNER: SEECLICKFIX

Founded in 2008 in New Haven, Connecticut, SeeClickFix has contracts with more than 160 cities to provide reporting tools and software to mayors' offices, sanitation departments and public works agencies. To date, more than 350,000 users have reported some 800,000 issues. While the company has not yet turned a profit, this year it expects to book $1.2m in annual recurring revenues, mainly from government contracts. SeeClickFix recently signed up its first city in the Middle East and inked its first contract with a state department of transportation, in Utah.

For residents, the site promises to eliminate red tape and endless phone transfers when they report an issue, and allows them to see the city's progress in solving problems. It also allows them to follow local "watch areas" to see what is happening where they live.

"The value of SeeClickFix has been creating new connections among people who live really close to each other, or interact in the same public space, where they wouldn't have interacted before," says Ben Berkowitz, SeeClickFix founder.

He tells of how one New Haven man used the site to organise a group of people to remove an abandoned boat from a city park.

What makes SeeClickFix different from Facebook or Twitter, which also foster communities that can extend offline, is the government side of the site, where officials respond to and resolve issues.

"It has to have a resolution. A tweet does not have a resolution," Berkowitz says, adding that this is important for residents, who feel their voices are being heard, and for cash-strapped cities looking to provide better public services at lower cost.

SeeClickFix sells itself as a tool for the era of shrinking government spending at city, state and federal levels. Annual contracts can total as little as $30,000 for many cities, Berkowitz says – far less than the hundreds of thousands of dollars often charged for such software.

Stacy Donohue, director of investments at Omidyar Network, the philanthropic investment company started by Pierre Omidyar, founder of eBay, the auction site, says: "They are using technology to allow citizens to interact with government in a positive way that helps them contribute to the solution instead of just complaining about the problems." ON was an early financial backer of SeeClickFix, investing in 2011. Berkowitz raised $1.5m in venture capital funding that year but has not sought new investment since.

Donohue says the company was a "pioneer" as a civic-focused start-up and experimented with a range of revenue models, from municipal contracts to partnerships with local media outlets, to find a sustainable one.

One challenge "inhibiting" the growth of public service-focused start-ups similar to SeeClickFix, Donohue says, is the difficulty of breaking into the byzantine world of government procurement.

Government contractors are having their (perhaps unwanted) moment in the limelight with the error-plagued launch of HealthCare.gov, the Obama administration's insurance website – drawing scrutiny to the process of awarding such projects. "The silver lining of HealthCare.gov is that what was a completely geeky issue six weeks ago is on every front page," she says.

> "[SeeClickFix] has to have a resolution. A tweet does not have a resolution"

For companies not scared off by the recriminations over that rollout, she holds up SeeClickFix as an example because of its experience in "how to sell to governments as a small start-up... [It has] been through a lot of permutations and experimentation with what works and what doesn't."

The company itself is also embracing its role as a model. In November it announced a fellowship for aspiring New Haven entrepreneurs, who will work at SeeClickFix for six months while developing their business ideas. ■

Going places

Projects around the world are changing lives, improving surroundings and fostering people's entrepreneurial spirit

Highly commended
Bicycle Empowerment Network

The Bicycle Empowerment Network is an expanding chain of sale and repair shops across Namibia that have tapped western donations to create local enterprises designed to be sustainable, aid social projects and promote environmentally friendly transport.

Each of more than 30 outlets is supervised by a local community organisation. One faith-based group has used surplus money from its shop to help families with HIV, pay school fees and train women.

Michael Linke, founder of BEN Namibia, says the value to local people has been wider than he thought it would. "It might be someone who has created a business selling fresh meat from their bicycle, or another who no longer needs blood-pressure medication because they keep fit by cycling," he says. But he says the hardest thing to teach the shop managers is "not how to fix a bike but how to run a business".

The scheme relies on donated bikes – last year it received more than 7,000 from Canada, Australia and Europe. Linke is exploring expanding the network into Madagascar, Kenya, Zambia and Botswana.

Advantage Africa: the Bicycle Empowerment Network, above, and the SDI Alliance, below

Regional runners-up
Africa and Middle East: SDI Alliance

Lack of space, running water and sanitation are endemic problems for the informal settlements of South Africa. But Ikhayalama and other non-governmental organisations working under the umbrella of the SDI (Shack/Slum Dwellers International) South African Alliance, a network of community organisations, are trying to change that through a process known as "blocking out".

The idea is that living conditions can be improved if homes are reorganised in a more structured way. Courtyards provide safe play areas, while improving security and access. The process also encourages local authorities to provide services such as toilets.

The upgraded shacks have zinc-aluminium walls, which are thicker and more fire-resistant than traditional materials, and the community is involved in the planning. People living in the shacks are expected to contribute 20 per cent of the cost – up to $500 depending on the size of the shack.

Andy Bolnick, founder of Ikhayalami, says: "This is an affordable, realistic, practical way to deal with a compounding problem, not just in Cape Town but throughout Africa."

Asia-Pacific: aProCh

The Indian aProCh network has set out to make Ahmedabad, a fast-growing urban agglomeration, into a "child-friendly" city through activities catering to kids from across the country's economic spectrum.

The network, whose name means "a protagonist for every child", was started by Kiran Bir Sethi, a designer and school founder. She was dismayed at the indifferent attitudes towards children in the business-oriented urban spaces. "Children were not given time, space or respect," she says. The initiative began in 2007, when Sethi and her students persuaded the police and municipal authorities to close the city's busiest shopping street to cars for a day and turn it into a vast play area. Today, the

PHOTOS: ANDY AUSTIN; SAMANTHA REINDERS; AMIT DAVE; MAX CABELLO; JONATHAN HANSON; GETTY

The women at Aprenda are asked to voice their dreams and recognise their talents

city closes a main thoroughfare six times a year for a street party organised by aProCh. The organisation also organises activities for children in parks twice a month.

Children who attend come from all social classes, including many brought from the slums by non-governmental organisations. Students from private schools often act as buddies to the slum children. The organisation aims to expand to a national level, says Kirti Zala, a co-ordinator.

Opportunities: (clockwise from below) children at aProCh; Aprenda graduate Pilar Pucllas; a carpenter renovating a vacant house; "old school" hitchhiking

Europe: BlaBlaCar

Ride-sharing is fast becoming a business. One of the outfits seeking to make money out of digital hitchhiking is Paris-based BlaBlaCar. Founded in 2009, it claims to have 3m users across 10 countries.

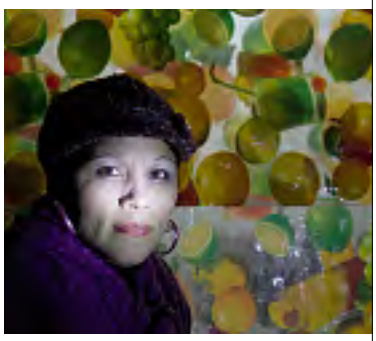
"Our ambition ultimately is to have tens of millions of members," says Nicolas Brusson, one of the three founders. The original idea came from Frédéric Mazzella, a former classmate of Brusson's at Insead, the business school. Francis Nappez was the third founder.

Car owners and ride-seekers sign up as members, posting details not only of planned journeys but also about themselves, much like a social network – BlaBlaCar emphasises how it is promoting social interaction. Potential passengers sign up for a ride via an online booking system, and drivers recoup costs rather than making a profit. The company makes its money by levying a €2 fee per transaction.

BlaBlaCar claims to be booking 600,000 rides a month, and plays up the environmental benefits – Brusson says the average car occupancy of 2.8 compares with a European average of 1.7.

As for the name, each member is asked to rate themselves on how much they like to talk. One bla means you want to keep to yourself; blablabla means you can't stop yakking.

Reports by Andrew Jack, Andrew England and Sam Mkokoli, Amy Kazmin, Hugh Carnegy, Naomi Mapstone and Anna Fifield. Editing by Veronica Morrow



Latin America: Aprenda

Pilar Pucllas grew up in the Santa Clara district of Lima, Peru, and for most of her life has sold food to passing motorists. But for the past year she has been the proprietor of a hole-in-the-wall *cevicheria* (raw-fish restaurant) in the district's central market.

She is a graduate of a course run by Aprenda, the education and training arm of Peruvian microlender Grupo ACP, with the support of the Inter-American Development Bank, Australian government aid agency AusAID and the US Thunderbird School of Global Management.

Aprenda travels around Peru to deliver its course to entrepreneurial but under-educated women. The course, which aims to give students the tools to manage a small business, is taught using a television drama serial, *El Gran Salto* (*The Big Leap*). A typical course runs for two or three hours, interspersing episodes of the drama with lighthearted guidance. The women are asked to voice their dreams and recognise their talents, and are taught about finance.

Graduates have started a range of businesses, from tailoring shops to restaurants. And, according to research, they tend to share their new confidence and knowledge with friends and family.

North America and Caribbean: Baltimore Housing

Baltimore, a US east coast city that has been struck by the kind of urban decay that has blighted other cities such as Detroit, is rehabilitating neighbourhoods through its Vacants to Value programme. The city has lost more than a third of its population since 1950 as shipyards and steel mills closed. That has left about 16,000 vacant and uninhabitable properties.

Baltimore's strategy involves facilitating private investment, offering incentives to homebuyers and demolishing buildings in severely distressed areas. It has teamed up with Philadelphia-based TRF Development Partners, a non-profit housing affiliate, and homed in on "middle-market neighbourhoods". It compulsorily purchases derelict buildings, then sells them at auction to investors such as TRF that fix them up and sell them on.

In three years the programme has rehabilitated more than 1,300 vacant homes. ■

WHY A BANK SHOULD BE IN THE BUSINESS OF SCHOOL SUPPLIES

Close to 600,000 students rely on Puerto Rico's Department of Education. From pencils to hearing aids, they are the country's biggest buyer of education equipment. But school administrators were frustrated by a cumbersome purchasing process that made students wait months for critical supplies.

With 95 years of experience in Puerto Rico, Citi was in an ideal position to help. By working with government officials to create a purchasing card program, Citi provided schools with better buying flexibility and offered an easier way to track funds. Local vendors now get paid on time and students receive materials faster than ever before.

#progressmakers

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Safe haven

Amman has long welcomed new arrivals but Syrian refugees are testing the city's resources to the limit, reports **John Reed**

Jordan has a world of problems, all visible in its expanding capital, Amman: too many unemployed young people, rising food and energy prices, political upheaval across the region and a war in Syria that has landed the country with more than 600,000 refugees.

Since the Arab revolts began two years ago, the city of 2.5m has come to be seen as an epitome of the issues facing urban areas in the Middle East.

But the top-of-mind topic for Fawzi Masad, Amman's city manager, is the capital's mounting piles of rubbish. "The streets of Amman are getting dirtier," he says. While Amman's population is growing at 3-4 per cent a year, the refuse produced by its inhabitants has been increasing at 9 per cent. The city has had to hire 350 more sanitation workers and will need to tender for a new landfill site soon because its existing one is filling up.

Masad blames the Syrians for the mess: "When immigrants come, they are not as committed as the [indigenous] people ... in the city," he says. "They are just coming for a short while and don't care about cleanliness."

The city has absorbed wave after wave of refugees, most of whom have stayed and put down roots: Palestinians from Israel and the lands it occupied in 1948 and 1967, still more Palestinians Kuwait expelled in 1991 for their leaders having sided with Saddam Hussein when he invaded; Iraqis after the US toppled Saddam in 2003; and, since 2011, the Syrians.

The Za'atari refugee camp, north of Amman nearer the Syrian border, has more than 100,000 people living in it, and is now described as Jordan's fourth-largest city. But most of the people fleeing Syria have chosen to live in Jordan's real cities, blending into the landscape – though not always gracefully.

But how is Amman, which accounts for about a third of Jordan's population, coping with an influx that in most other countries would cause unbearable social strains?

> The influx of Syrian refugees has coincided with an economic slowdown

In Amman's old centre, gone to seed over the past decade as more commerce has decamped to the bourgeois precincts and malls of west Amman, I speak to Walid Haddad, a 52-year-old clothes shop owner who describes himself as "Jordanian" to distinguish himself from the more than half of the country's inhabitants who are Palestinian.

He complains of Syrians willing to work for JD150 ($212) a month – half the subsistence wage a Jordanian would expect. "They should not allow anyone to enter," he says. "The country is suffering – we don't have any water and we have a high unemployment rate."

Nabil Muhtaseb, a Palestinian who runs a nearby bookshop, tells me his landlord wanted to evict him and his wife from their flat in northeast Amman, where they pay JD200 a month rent, to accommodate Syrians willing to pay JD500. This is happening a lot around Amman – I am told that many of the Syrians, some of whom benefit from charity money, are willing to live two or three families to a flat built for one. "We used to sympathise with them, but then we noticed they were getting more money than us," Muhtaseb says.

It used to be rare to hear such sentiments expressed by the famously hospitable and soft-hearted Jordanians. But the influx has coincided with an economic slowdown, caused by the chaos in the region, one of whose effects was a disruption of cheap Egyptian natural gas on which its economy relied.

"Jordan is a small country, and we are happy to do our humanitarian responsibility and shoulder that responsibility," says Umayya Toukan, Jordan's minister of finance. However, he adds, "The international community should really contribute... much more than they are today."

Jordan has received $400m in direct foreign aid to deal with the Syrians, according to its finance minister, but has paid out much more for public services such as education, healthcare and water provision. The UN last month put the cost to Jordan of hosting Syrian refugees at $2.1bn this year and $3.2bn in 2014.

The International Monetary Fund stepped in last year with a $2bn loan, but asked the kingdom to cut its subsidies ➤

Packed out: Amman's infrastructure, especially housing and transport, is struggling to cope with the growing population

PHOTO: GETTY

for essentials such as energy and basic foodstuffs, worth JD1bn-JD1.5bn a year. When the government raised petrol prices in November 2012, riots ensued in Amman, with some rarely heard chants of "Down with the king!"

Amman as such has received no aid for its share of the burden of hosting the Syrians. The city is struggling in areas such as housing, solid waste – the extra population is causing growing problems with sewage – and transport. Many Ammanis get around the capital on Toyota Coaster minibuses, and poor people are typically the casualties in their many accidents.

Planners' response to the rising demands on transport infrastructure has been to build more roads, but traffic has grown too – most days there is congestion and, at busy times such as Ramadan, gridlock.

Three years ago the city started work on a bus rapid transit system with dedicated lanes, of the type that has transformed traffic and daily life in other burgeoning cities around the world, but construction was halted after MPs and the press raised angry questions over the scheme's suitability and stewardship.

However, according to Masad the project is back on track, with advice from a Spanish consulting group, and is seeking parliamentary approval to proceed.

Ammanis offer a more cynical view of their leaders' competence and goodwill, They also point to the glassy new office towers rising, with scant regard for planning protocols, to punctuate (or disfigure, say many) the traditional stone architecture of their skyline, as evidence of a city grown beyond its means and its governors' abilities.

Munqeth Mehyar, who heads the Middle East office in Amman of Friends of the Earth, the environmental group, says many of the solutions to the city's challenges lie within easy reach.

> Glassy new office towers rise with scant regard for planning protocols

But rather than only blaming public officials he also faults a populace trained to believe "government will do everything", and says they need to learn to get involved.

There is also the matter of Amman sitting at the centre of a region in what looks like chronic conflict. "We are a safe haven for everyone around us," he says. "I call Jordan the eye of the hurricane."

The city, known as Philadelphia ("the city of brotherly love") in Roman times, has always built its fortunes on new arrivals. Muslim Circassians fleeing the Russians in the Caucasus were among modern Amman's first immigrants, arriving from the 1860s. They settled mostly in the valleys, and their descendants now own some of the city's prime properties.

Jordan's original tribal inhabitants have alternatively chafed at and welcomed the Palestinians, Iraqis and others, but they acknowledge that the refugees built modern Amman too. Even the Syrians, for all the friction they are creating, are contributing to Jordan more than they cost in the goods and services they demand and new jobs they create, observers such as the contrarian economist Yusuf Mansur have argued.

Some residents do not come across as rosy optimists as they discuss regional topics, ranging from the stalled Israeli-Palestinian peace talks to the war in Syria. But when it comes to Amman they soften, urging me to focus not on the problems, but the extent to which the city is coping with aplomb, even grace.

The city's strengths are most evident in the counterfactuals: it has coped with stress and change without the political upheaval seen in Tunis, Cairo or Damascus. It is even, arguably, profiting from its neighbours' distress.

Amman, a safe haven for the Middle East, offers some hope for struggling cities across the region. ■

Speaking out: Syrian refugees in Amman, above and top, protest against their president, Bashar al-Assad

PHOTOS: REUTERS; MIKAELA BURSTOW

COMMENT

ELIAS AND YOUSEF ANASTAS

Back to nature

Palestinians are showing how traditional rural design can be reinterpreted to create secure modern urban spaces

The traditions of the Palestinian city, from social systems to the type of housing, are built around nature. The nodal point of the city, where people live, is concentrated and withdrawn but gives way to open landscapes. But this direct relationship with nature has been subverted, first under the Ottoman Empire and now during the conflict with Israel.

Before and during the Ottoman Empire, urban development was influenced by three factors: *harrat* ("big families" to which every inhabitant is linked); *hosh* (a common shared space in the heart of a series of houses); and the typical city surroundings of olive orchards and terraced landscapes.

At that time, urban strategies were regulated between the *moukhtar*, or chief, of each *harrat*. This self-managed urbanism – which matches many of today's western criteria of a successful city – has been progressively disappearing. The dense nucleus is no longer as much a centre of interest as the surroundings, where cities boom.

The British mandate put in place urban planning. Power rather than nature took precedence. Palestinian cities today have very complex boundaries. The Oslo agreement, the Israeli settlements, the barrier and wall separating Israel from the West Bank and excess urbanism have disrupted the traditional model. The process is a vicious circle: the settlements break up Palestinian lands and are linked to Israeli territory by bypass routes. In response, Palestinian cities have broken with their domestic scale, and their boundaries are being dictated by the wall.

The unstable political situation leads to a lack of trust in public space.

We had an opportunity to address the question of public space in the city of Bethlehem. Our architectural practice's design for the Edward Said National Music Conservatory plays on the *hosh*, aided by the development of a commercial project on a neighbouring plot. We battled to extend the space into a public pedestrian thoroughfare. The result is an area that embodies urban social power and artisanal skills, and helps build an inclusive city.

Also in Bethlehem, we have built an experimental stone pavilion, Stonesourcing Space, that adapts traditional techniques. Ottoman laws transformed the use of stone from a natural choice to an imposed material for everything. This law is still applied despite the almost universal use of reinforced concrete in construction –but stone has been relegated to a cladding, a top dressing to satisfy an obsolete law.

The pavilion combines stone, and its virtues in thermal efficiency and plentiful supply, with innovative technologies. The building – a contemporary interpretation of the *mountar*, a traditional shelter found in the Palestinian countryside – aims to mark property as an act of resistance to the path of the wall.

As Palestinian architects, our challenge is to develop urban forms that can develop under those conditions into becoming the fabric of cities. Construction procedures, local materials and their relation to public space can provide inspiration. This creative process gathers architects, engineers, artisans, bricklayers and mayors who together can develop the Palestinian city of the future. ■

Elias and Yousef Anastas are principals in the Palestinian architecture and engineering practice AAU Anastas

The unstable political situation leads to a lack of trust in public space

In line with tradition: the Stonesourcing Space aims to mark property as an act of resistance to the path of the wall

Murky worlds

Among the biggest obstacles to improving the lives of people in India's megacities are bureaucracy and corruption, says **Victor Mallet**

PHOTO: REUTERS

ASIA-PACIFIC ANALYSIS

It took weeks for Anita Bhargava, a former executive at online payment service PayPal turned urban governance activist, to find out what was going on with one of Delhi's neglected parks – municipal officials were puzzlingly reluctant to let sponsors from the local Sikh temple pay for the cleaning, refurbishment and management of the park.

The officials in Punjabi Bagh, it turned out, were unwilling to approve the restoration of the Herbal Garden because they were earning a few thousand rupees a month selling wood from the overgrown park to a local crematorium and ferns to nearby florists for their flower arrangements.

The saga of the park, which is finally on its way to beautification after the necessary "no objection" certificate was issued, is just one example of how ingenious bureaucrats in cities such as Delhi apply their minds to making money for themselves, rather than serving the interests of residents.

Roadside fruit-sellers in Indian cities must typically pay protection money to police officers, while the poor are often forced to hand over hundreds of rupees in bribes to officials to secure everything from ration cards for subsidised food to voter identification cards. Many children finish primary school without being able to read or write in Hindi or English, or do simple arithmetic. Builders and householders pay to get permits for illegal constructions that are at risk of collapse in an earthquake.

Yet there are also countless ways in which municipalities, charities, companies and residents are improving, or trying to improve, the lives of Asia's hundreds of millions of city-dwellers.

To an inhabitant of Tokyo or Singapore, the word "ingenuity" in the title of this report might suggest high-technology urban solutions involving computerised metro rail systems, waste recycling, solar panels or energy-efficient lighting.

All these are beneficial (and used) in the poorer megacities of Asia-Pacific. But by far the most effective way to improve urban life is to ensure municipalities and local governments fulfil their commitments to provide basic services such as low-cost housing, schools, transport, sanitation and electricity.

"The lack of bureaucratic will is the largest reason India is the way it is," says Bhargava, who has identified politics and governance, rather than technology, as the key issues that need to be tackled if she is to achieve her ambitious goal of ridding Delhi of its slums in three years.

> "The lack of bureaucratic will is the largest reason India is the way it is"

"This is not rocket science," she says as she surveys a typical Delhi scene: a shanty village of ramshackle buildings next to a fetid open drain choked with rubbish, across the road from some of the most palatial apartments in the capital. The air is thick with dust and traffic fumes. "It's the lack of bureaucratic will and we keep coming back to that," she says.

Bhargava's strategy has been to find a willing councillor – in this case Satvinder Kaur Sirsa in Delhi's Ward 103 for Punjabi Bagh and Madipur – and become that person's appointed "shadow councillor", a position that allows her to apply management solutions from business to apparently intractable ➤

urban problems. The idea is to start in this ward of 150,000 inhabitants, and then apply the solutions that work to the whole of Delhi. "We want people who have good solutions to use this ward like a laboratory. We will make sure it is replicable."

Corruption and inefficiency are rampant largely because officials and workers are neither penalised for failure nor rewarded for real successes, she believes. One answer is to persuade residents to ensure they receive the services they are due.

To that end she has extracted from the bureaucracy a list of municipal projects – a common source of corruption – and is asking residents to report (for example) on whether a contractor has indeed repaired a section of pavement for which it was paid Rs500,000 ($8,000).

It is not easy to overturn a system of entrenched corruption, especially in the face of ingenious opponents seeking to defend their turf. Ward 103 introduced a system of public reporting on refuse collection, rewarding drivers and workers who scored well and eventually succeeding in re-establishing the daily rounds provided for in the sanitation contact.

Indeed, the new system worked so well that it was extended to 18 wards, but Bhargava says it was impossible to apply to all 274 wards in Delhi because the refuse collection companies had been serving the 18 districts by cutting back on the rest. The companies, she says, have only about 60 per cent of the trucks they need to provide the contracted daily service across the city.

The view that what matters is not fancy technology but a way of solving basic problems is shared by many from Bill Gates, co-founder of Microsoft, to the social workers who are trying to make life better in India's cities.

"I certainly love the information technology thing," Gates, who now dedicates himself to philanthropy, said in a recent FT interview. "But when we want to improve lives, you've got to deal with more basic things, like child survival, child nutrition." He compares the high-tech Infosys offices in Bangalore to homes nearby where people live without toilets or running water. Technology, he says, is amazing, but "it doesn't get down to the people most in need in anything near the timeframe we should want it to".

Mean streets: food vendors in India are often forced to hand over protection money to corrupt police officers

"Government officials promise this and that but hardly ever deliver anything"

The winner and runner-up in the Asia-Pacific category of this year's FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards are both Indian projects that apply this basic formula: meeting an urgent need with the resources available.

"There are hundreds of non-governmental organisations that walk in [to slums] every day, and government officials promising this and that, but hardly ever delivering anything. If you want to make a dent in poverty you have to take a multidimensional approach," said Elaine Ghosh, who with her husband set up Parinaam, the regional award winner (profiled on page 14).

Indian cities teem with good ideas. The country's IT groups provide services to the world, and its bureaucrats sit on countless committees formed to help the poor and develop the nation.

The problem is that not enough people actually do anything. For that reason alone, the work of people such as Bhargava, Ghosh and, yes, Gates deserves the support of Indians and the rest of the world. ■

PHOTO: REUTERS

COMMENT
PETER
ELLIS

Natural harmony

In India an entirely new city is being built, providing a template for energy efficiency and recycling resources

Our cities have been shaped by the industrial revolution. They are complex machines that bring together people to facilitate the production and movement of goods and ideas. But they are highly reactive mechanisms that grow rapidly and chaotically, all too often without a guiding strategic vision. In addition, much of the technology that supports them is obsolete, unsustainable and a significant contributor to global warming.

The industrial city evolved in opposition to nature. Now, we are able to create the city in harmony with nature.

We can design cities that consume significantly less water and energy than our present urban habitats. We can make them completely regenerative organisms, creating and recycling all their resources.

In India, where hundreds of millions of people are migrating from rural to urban areas, an entirely new city for 1m people is being designed. Jaypee Sports City, 50km south of New Delhi, provides an opportunity to make a living, breathing metropolis that harvests and recycles its resources. Owned entirely by the Jaypee Group, an engineering to hospitality conglomerate, it is a unique example of private enterprise developing an entire city without government support.

India is running out of water and is becoming hotter. The glaciers of the Himalayas, a life source for India, are diminishing year by year. We therefore created a vast network of parks as an urban reservoir to collect as much monsoon rainwater as the city consumes and feed it into the depleted aquifers. To cool the city, we designed the parks and streets to channel the prevailing winds. And all buildings are orientated so to avoid the worst of the sun's heat. These simple but effective techniques, long forgotten in the industrial city, contribute to a more liveable urban climate.

The parks also provide pedestrian and bicycle paths as well as public transit routes. Buses run through the parks, avoiding traffic hold-ups on the roads. As the city grows, bus routes will be supplemented by a metro. All schools, retail centres and civic amenities connect to transit routes in the green net.

In every neighbourhood, we draw water from aquifers and purify, distribute and recycle it after treatment in a plant that converts human and organic waste to methane gas. The gas powers the city, reducing the amount of electricity required from the grid. Coupled with efficient building techniques, we can reduce urban energy and water use by 50 per cent.

With Jaypee Sports City we had a clean slate and a single owner, allowing us to integrate many systems into one structure that harnesses the forces of nature. But how do we restructure existing cities where much of our infrastructure already exists? We cannot do it overnight. But over 50 years, say, all infrastructure will have to be replaced due to wear and tear. As that takes place we can systematically upgrade our water, waste, energy and information networks with advanced sustainable systems.

> We can make cities that are completely regenerative organisms

Several cities are experimenting with converting all forms of waste to energy. Solar and wind power are also becoming increasingly viable. We can bring nature back into our cities, not only for its beauty but also to clean and cool our air, and to assist in capturing storm water. This is already happening. Many cities are building green infrastructure, tearing up asphalt for bioswales – organic landscape features that capture and filter water – while creating networks of pedestrian and bicycle paths. Such elements can be stitched together to make a green net that will provide a new organic shape for cities.

But all this requires a strategic vision which understands that all urban systems are interdependent and that, when in harmony with nature, the result of those systems can be so much greater than the sum of their parts. ■

Peter Ellis is the architect of Jaypee Sports City and leads Cannon Design's urban and city design practice

Green net: Jaypee Sports City is designed to harness resources such as rain and wind

Growing pains

The continent's cities continue to struggle with the integration of the ancient and modern, and with migration-related ethnic tensions, writes **Tony Barber**

From Nîmes to Naples, from Aachen to Athens, Europe's modern cities are proud protectors of an extraordinary cultural and architectural heritage from the ancient Greek, Roman and medieval worlds. Yet in 1968, nothing prepared a communist Bulgarian army construction corps for what they discovered in Plovdiv, the nation's second city, when they started hollowing out a hill to expand a municipal sports field.

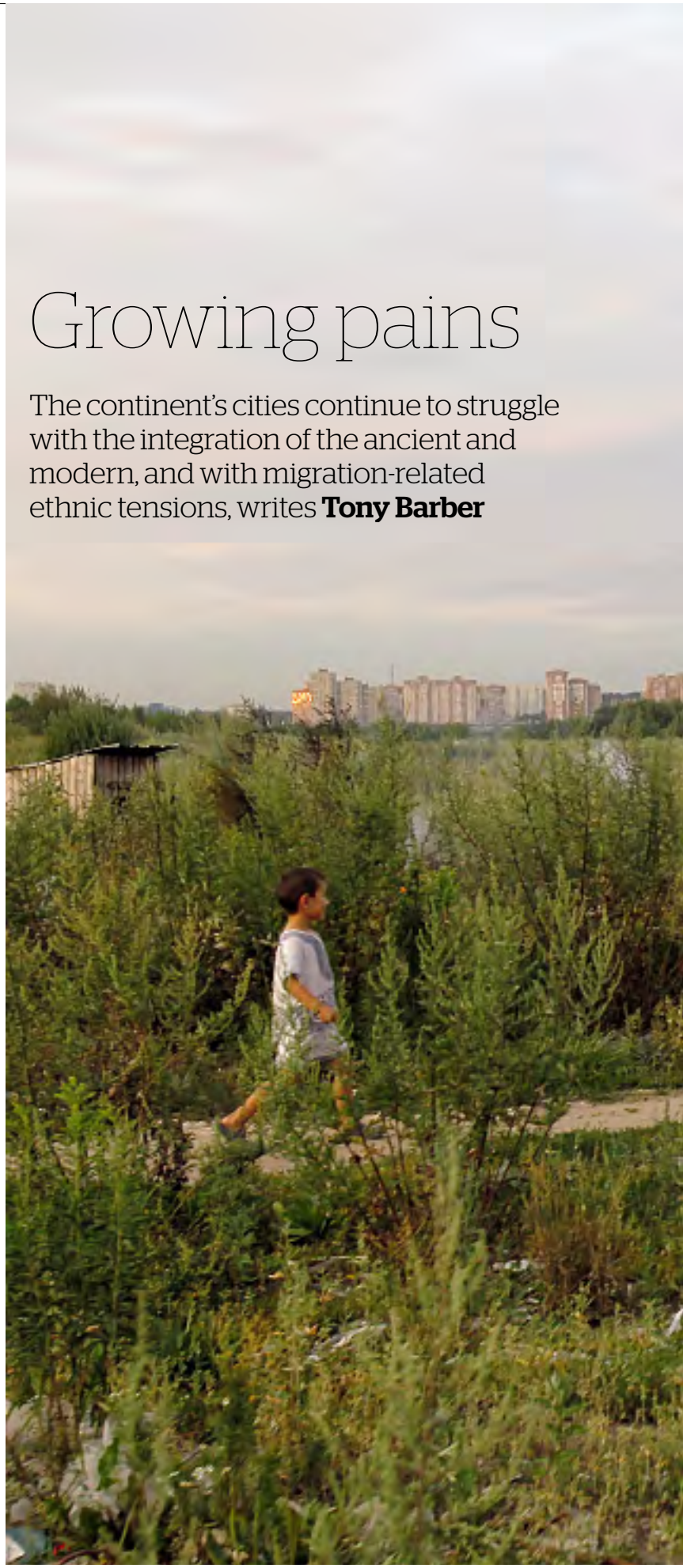
It was nothing less than one of Europe's most perfectly preserved Roman amphitheatres, dating from the second century AD, an era when there were no south Slavs in the region – let alone communists – and Plovdiv was known as Philippopolis.

Since the late 1960s archaeologists have made more and more discoveries in Plovdiv, unearthing treasures from Roman, Thracian, Byzantine and Ottoman times. But only now, after Bulgaria's entry into the EU in 2007, can Plovdiv draw on the financial resources and planning capacity needed to integrate conservation projects with the desperately needed modernisation of a city that is home to 340,000 people.

> Across Europe, urban districts seethe with competition for jobs, housing and welfare

Similar challenges face municipal authorities in London, Rome and other European cities of ancient origin as they clear land for housing, offices and transport infrastructure. But in comparison with Plovdiv these cities are dripping in wealth.

Plovdiv's urban renewal owes almost everything to carefully evaluated financial grants from the EU, in the form of regional aid funds, and from other international sponsors, including ➤



Life on the edge: migrant workers make their home on the outskirts of Moscow

PHOTO: REUTERS

the governments of Iceland, Japan, Norway and Switzerland.

It is a work in progress, but the results to date are impressive. Away from the amphitheatre, Plovdiv's architectural riches are buried so deep and packed so densely in the city centre that planners and engineers came up with the arresting idea of creating a system of underground, museum-like spaces, lying directly beneath a busy pedestrian shopping avenue and easily accessible to the public. Among the most attractive sites is the Trakart cultural centre, which boasts a magnificent collection of ancient floor mosaics and is used for intimate jazz concerts at night.

Undeniably, the overall quality of life in Plovdiv still leaves something to be desired. Average incomes are low and much of the housing stock is decrepit. According to a study published in October by the European Environment Agency, the city has the EU's second highest air pollution levels after Pernik, a smaller Bulgarian city 180km to the west.

Fundamentally, however, these problems are the legacy of the communist era. They would be instantly recognisable to any post-communist politician or business executive in Kraków, Poland's second city, which epitomises the glory and grace of the central European Renaissance but which, during the era of harebrained communist industrialisation, began also to suffer from alarmingly high levels of pollution.

Plovdiv and Kraków differ from other, larger European cities, however, in that their social and administrative fabric appears to be under less strain from fast-changing population profiles. In both western and eastern Europe, many urban districts seethe with competition for jobs, housing, education and welfare between less well-off native residents and hard-pressed recent settlers, some from the lands of vanished European empires but others from farther afield.

> Fundamentally the problems of cities such as Plovdiv are the legacy of the communist era

Such tensions flared in October in Biryulyovo, one of Moscow's most economically deprived suburbs, after the murder of a 25-year-old ethnic Russian man by an assailant whom the victim's girlfriend described as coming from the Caucasus. This murder sparked a riot in which hundreds of Russians smashed up the neighbourhood's huge vegetable warehouse, a facility that employs numerous workers from the former Soviet regions of the Caucasus and central Asia.

The incidents highlighted many of the economic, social and political ills of contemporary Moscow. According to Ilya Budraitskis, a Moscow-based historian and cultural activist, unregistered migrants from the Caucasus, central Asia and southeast Asia account for 1m-2m of the Russian capital's 15m population.

"They are engaged in all sectors of the city's economy – building, housing infrastructure, transport, retail and wholesale trade," he wrote in an analysis for the LeftEast website.

Biryulyovo, where many of the migrants live and work, lies far from central Moscow, has no metro line and suffers from environmental degradation and crowded, poor-quality housing. Alcoholism and drug abuse are rife. In the words of Budraitskis, "the whole district resembles a ghetto, where migrants and mar-

Bulgarian challenges: a restored Roman stadium in Plovdiv, right, and traffic gridlock in Sofia, below

PHOTOS: CORBIS; REUTERS

ginalised local residents have been accumulating grievances against each other."

The situation cries out for prompt action both to integrate the migrants more effectively into their local community and to channel some of central Moscow's prosperity towards Biryulyovo. Unfortunately, an ideal opportunity to present such arguments was thrown away during this year's mayoral election campaign in Moscow.

Sergei Sobyanin, the pro-Kremlin incumbent and eventual winner, blamed the city's economic and ethnic troubles squarely on the migrants. But so too did Alexei Navalny, a standard-bearer of the democratic opposition to Vladimir Putin, Russia's president, but a strident Russian nationalist nonetheless.

On the opposite edge of Europe, the initiatives of municipal authorities and civic groups in Dublin provide a promising, if not yet entirely successful example of how to tame nativist prejudices. The city council of the Irish capital has operated an anti-racism campaign on its transport system every year since 2010, and it supports annual cultural festivals that embrace diversity such as the Chinese New Year and Diwali, the Hindu festival of lights.

Such actions reflect the impact of the astonishing 143 per cent growth in Ireland's non-native population from 224,000 in 2002 to 544,000 in 2011 – about one in eight of the republic's total number of inhabitants.

Well over 100 different nationalities now live in the capital, and the disgust with which many Dubliners reacted to one well-publicised racist incident gives grounds for encouragement.

It involved Úna-Minh Kavanagh, a Vietnam-born woman who was adopted in Ireland as a baby, grew up fluent in the Irish language as well as English and now works as a journalist and blogger.

After a group of teenage boys insulted and spat at her outside a central Dublin hotel, she wrote in The Irish Times: "This is far from the first time I've been racially abused … I don't believe Ireland is a racist society, but racists live among us." Her article drew expressions of shame, support and sympathy in online comments.

As in Dublin, the financial crisis and recession of the past five years have plunged the southern Spanish city of Seville into a host of problems involving its migrant communities for which it was scarcely prepared.

In both cities the collapse of the construction and property industries, and of parts of the banking sector, threw migrants out of work, threatened their ability to pay rents and mortgages, and triggered a slump in the tax revenues that pay for urban services.

> In Seville thousands live a subterranean existence without official documents

In Seville, where Romanians, Moroccans and Bolivians form the largest migrant groups, thousands have sunk into a subterranean existence, without official documents, that increases their vulnerability.

Although no recent incident in Seville compares with the riot in suburban Moscow, the undocumented status of migrants in each city illustrates how some urban policy challenges are common to east and west. The same goes for the struggle to clean the air citizens breathe – and for the effort to synthesise architectural conservation with the demands of modern life in a continent still in search of unity. ■

Great divides: homes for the well-off and the poor are clearly demarcated in São Paulo, Brazil

PHOTO: EYEVINE

Bridging the gap

Enlightened planners are trying to reverse the trend towards the segregation of rich and poor, writes **John Paul Rathbone**

It was a cold winter evening in Bogotá. Drizzle was falling on the well-tended garden of a comfortable house in the city's prosperous northern suburb. Inside, a gathering of Colombian professionals had finished dinner and, flush with good food and wine, retired to sit by a roaring log fire.

They were successful, well-heeled and all old friends. As servants brought coffee and drinks, they discussed their summer holidays in Europe, especially a Madonna concert they had been to in London's Hyde Park.

"It was such fun!" chirped one, a mother of three in her early 40s as she flicked her blonde hair over her shoulder. "We had a picnic on the grass amid the crowd. We'd bought tickets months before – I *so* wanted to see Madonna," she said.

"What was best, though, was how everyone was mingling. That's what I call economic development. There was no sense of rich or poor, of privileged people getting the best seats as they do here. It was just a crowd who had come out one night to have fun, safely, together."

It was a revealing comment by a member of a social class better known for its snobbery and self-absorption than its self-knowledge. It was also a reflection of how Latin America is one of the most urbanised regions on the globe – and one of the most unequal, a place where the well-off and the poor rarely mingle.

There are many reasons for this unfortunate segregation, but it has a particularly pernicious effect: it creates unfamiliarity and ignorance across the social classes, and with that a breeding ground for that most divisive of human emotions – fear.

In many ways, Latin America has had a banner decade. To take just one metric, more than 70m people have risen out of poverty to become part of an emergent middle class. Yet, at the same time, this prosperity has not been matched by an increase in shared public spaces.

More than ever, the rich tend to live in gated enclaves protected by bodyguards – for some, perversely, a status symbol – in a kind of fur-lined rut. The less well-off, or the downright poor, live apart and rarely the twain shall meet – or at least not happily.

Such divisions are not a new feature of urban geography. Plato wrote: "Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one the city of the poor, the other of the rich." But in Latin America these divisions are exacerbated by crime and violence that can turn many neighbourhoods – not just the poorest ones, although they suffer the most by far – into places of terror and fear rather than opportunity.

Such segregation is morally undesirable, in that it limits the richness of human interaction. It also stunts "agglomeration economics", the positive spillovers associated with the greater ➤

"If you build a beautiful library in a poor neighbourhood it gives people a sense of importance"

population densities of cities. Thankfully, it is also a problem planners and even entrepreneurs are turning their attention to.

Colombia, by dint of its long history of violence, has pioneered some of the most innovative schemes. One example is the "social urbanism" of Sergio Fajardo, a PhD mathematician and former mayor of Medellín. While in office between 2003 and 2007, he built a series of striking buildings abutting some of the city's most desperate slums, rather than in Medellín's prosperous neighbourhoods.

"If you build a beautiful library in a poor neighbourhood it gives people a sense of importance. It raises their dignity and gives them access to goods such as education," he says. "It also brings visitors from other parts of the city, which encourages social integration."

As with Fajardo's, some of the best schemes to foster social integration take imaginative forms.

Antanas Mockus, a former mayor of Bogotá (and, oddly, another mathematician) hired mime artists to make fun of traffic violators after he realised Colombians feared ridicule more than being fined. The results were startling. Traffic fatalities dropped by half.

Marcelo Ebrard, the former mayor of Mexico City, is another example. I once asked him about the underlying rationale that linked his apparently disparate initiatives to improve public transport, legalise gay marriage and decriminalise personal possession of drugs.

"It's all about reducing fear," he told me. "If people feel safe – from police persecution or stigmas about their sexuality – it changes the tone of a city, and increases social integration." During his term as mayor, violence fell notably too.

An obvious way to increase social integration is through better public transport. Again, this is about more than providing better infrastructure. It is also about changing public attitudes.

Take the rise of shared bicycle schemes. This is a worldwide phenomenon, but in Latin America it comes with a difference. In London, for example, almost two-thirds of scheme users have a household income of more than £50,000 a year.

In Latin America, by contrast, cycling is associated with being poor; the very rich prefer helicopters or chauffeured cars. As Enrique Peñalosa, another former mayor of Bogotá, once said: "The mark of a truly advanced city is not one where the poor use cars but one where the rich use public transport."

New directions: a Cali fashion show, above, and cycling is being encouraged in Bogotá, below, but there is still some way to go before the rich abandon their cars

Not all successful urban schemes are wacky. Some involve the profit motive too. One of the best I have seen is the project to regenerate Panama's City's colonial district, the Casco Viejo, run by Fundación Calicanto, regional winner in the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards, profiled on page 18. It is part funded by a former Wall Street attorney and his Panamanian business partner whose property brokerage's charity arm is seeking to redevelop Panama City's crumbling and sometimes slummy colonial centre, while maintaining its social fabric by providing renovated social housing and jobs. The aim is to create a culturally lively neighbourhood where rich and poor can live together. Other colonial cities in the region, such as Cartagena in Colombia, where gentrification threatens to rob the port of its special character, should take note.

The only fear for the Casco is that it is about to be encircled by a hideous six-lane ring road. This is fiercely opposed by the Casco community. Akin to putting a bridge across the Grand Canyon, it will sap the Casco's special character and imperil its Unesco World Heritage status.

It seems criminal that enlightened capitalism is rejuvenating the Casco, while the most crass kind of development is working in the opposite direction. Some say the ring road, which will connect Panama City to outlying suburbs, is the price of progress.

But given how much has already been achieved in the Casco – the construction of a vibrant and socially mixed community – the cost of that progress is high. With a little imagination – a tunnel, say, instead of a ring road – it is a price that need not be paid. ■

PHOTOS: REUTERS; GETTY

COMMENT
JURIJ
PARASZCZAK

Information future

Cities can run more efficiently by analysing data they already generate and applying that knowledge better

Storm damage: using its data-analysis models, Rio can allocate resources effectively to deal with infrastructure problems

Big cities could cut their operating costs by up to 50 per cent if they were able to provide the agencies and companies that run their infrastructure access to data the city itself generates.

That figure is based on an estimate by IBM, the computer services group, of the 50 largest cities in the world. It found that cities lack information and the tools to exchange it between managers and citizens.

As an example, a road agency may give construction permits to the water department and a private cable company without suggesting that they work together to dig up a road at the same time to reduce costs and traffic disruption.

Stories like this stem from the fact that cities do not co-ordinate activities in a common calendar, using a common map. Every department collects and keeps its own data.

Cities can do a much better job of maintaining their infrastructure if they monitor assets such as roads, pipes and buildings. Through the use of what academics call "spatio-temporal information", modern data-analysis techniques can highlight problem areas and predict breakdowns.

These techniques identify common patterns of response and behaviour. Using weather forecasts, power cuts of above-ground power lines can be predicted through statistical analysis. Rio de Janeiro has built an emergency management system that relies heavily on weather and flood prediction. The city uses those models to assign emergency crews to specific locations.

This coupling of physical and statistical models by location and time is becoming an academic discipline.

Dublin City University is launching a masters in computing focusing on data analytics. The Center for Urban Science and Progress, an amalgamation of universities, companies and city agencies based in Brooklyn, is now offering an urban systems masters degree.

The University of Chicago, working with Skidmore, Owings & Merrill, the architects, and the university's Argonne National Laboratory, has created the Urban Center for Computation and Data, while Carnegie Mellon University has launched a Smarter Infrastructure Laboratory to study the effects of urban infrastructure on cities.

Creating and managing spatio-temporal data replaces a jumble of information with measurements that can be acted upon. In Dubuque, Istanbul and Dublin planners have optimised bus schedules and investigated new routes based on usage and housing patterns.

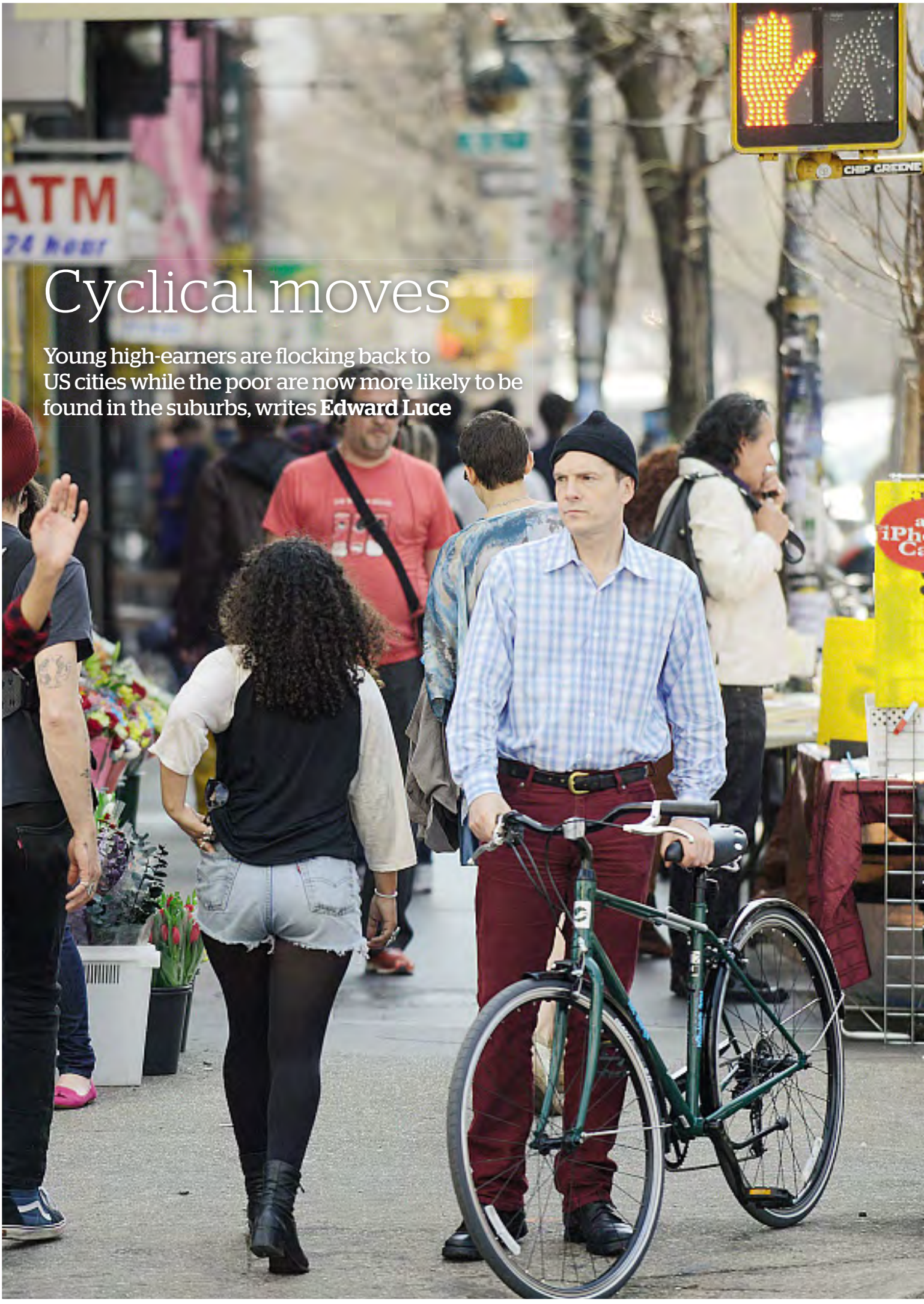
In Cambridge, Ontario, multiple agencies now plan long-term maintenance budgets co-operatively using this data rather than competing for funds every year.

Without data, financial resources are allocated based on historical precedent and notions of equality. With data, a city might see it is better to spend $5m on subway repairs now, rather than dividing the repair budget evenly, because delaying the subway repairs would cost $10m in two years and affect the livelihood of passengers.

IBM's experience from roughly five years of work has shown that the best way is to focus on one domain and expand from that point. Often infrastructure analytics are a promising start. Data analytics lets cities start small and produce measurable returns on investment in a relatively short time.

Urban analytics hold the promise of making cities more manageable. Adopting these measures will enable leaders to plan the wellbeing of their cities, citizens and companies intelligently into the future. ■

Jurij Paraszczak is director of Research Industry Solutions and leader of the Research Smarter Cities programme at IBM



Cyclical moves

Young high-earners are flocking back to US cities while the poor are now more likely to be found in the suburbs, writes **Edward Luce**

Hip hangout: Williamsburg, a neighbourhood of Brooklyn, New York, renowned for its increasing gentrification

Bill de Blasio's landslide election as mayor of New York in early November has raised hopes among US liberals of a new era of "urban progressivism".

De Blasio's campaign focused on New York's sharp income divide. The wilder supporters on the left hope his victory will usher in a new era in US city politics, much like the reformers 100 years ago did by applying their zeal to the fire-prone sweatshops of Brooklyn and the rotting stockyards of Chicago.

The new mayor's "tale of two New Yorks" might find an echo in other exorbitantly priced cities around the world, such as London. But his victory also highlights a growing tension within US liberalism: the most progressive parts of the US, such as New York and San Francisco, are also its most unequal.

The urban revival in the US is to a large extent driven by the growing shift of young, educated and mostly liberal-minded people to the cities. Whether they work in technology, design or finance, they tend to be high-earners. They are the reason places like New York do well. They are also largely why the middle class can no longer afford to live there.

> The most progressive parts of the US, such as New York, are also its most unequal

Any peek into the future of US cities has to identify the structural forces driving their resurgence. In 2011, population growth in the cities outstripped that in their suburbs for the first time since 1920, according to the US census. Cities also grew more than five times faster than their exurbs, which spread so rapidly in the two decades prior to the 2008 financial meltdown.

The pattern is common to many, but by no means all, cities across the Midwest and south as well as on the two coasts. Even Detroit, which earlier this year went into bankruptcy – the largest city failure in history – is witnessing a downtown boom.

All the signs are that the revitalisation will continue. As a rule, the denser the city, the more economically successful it is. Arguably the biggest factor driving US cities' renaissance is their lifestyle allure to the millennial generation (young people born in the 1980s or 1990s).

In ways never hinted at by their elders, young Americans are rejecting the trappings of suburbia. What their parents and grandparents found safe and spacious, millennials see as stifling and dull. Most educated young Americans would happily opt for an urban bike share over a tank-sized car. In the past four years, Americans have been driving 1,200 miles a year less on average – the first ever decline in US car usage.

Falling vehicle use is no doubt mirrored by the growth in micro-breweries, yoga centres and boutique cafés. US urban revival has a lot to do with changing tastes.

It is also about economics. In his book *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Richard Florida, one of the leading scholars of the "new urbanism", shows that the more diverse and tolerant a city, the more likely it is to attract educated and enterprising people, and to post higher rates of economic growth. That in turn is likely to spur inequality and push property prices beyond the reach of the less creative classes.

Urban patterns are unfolding just as Florida predicted. ➤

PHOTO: EYEVINE

The change in manufacturing technology – and the rise in 3D printing – is giving rise to more small-scale and capital-intensive production, which can more easily take place in cities.

The shift is still in its infancy, but the days of large suburban factories employing thousands of high-school leavers are waning. The production unit of the future will be staffed by graduates in their downtown milieu.

The same applies to the information technology sector, which increasingly is moving from the suburbs to the city. Most of the recent social media start-ups in California, such as Twitter, Zynga and Pinterest, have chosen San Francisco rather than Silicon Valley as their headquarters. The big Silicon Valley employers, such as Google, lay on buses to and from San Francisco, where a growing proportion of their employees prefer to live.

According to Florida, venture capital going to urban start-ups has overtaken that for suburban businesses for the first time.

Though we live in an age of telecommuting, entrepreneurs prefer to congregate. The city is where serendipity is most likely to strike.

If the city is increasingly the future of US growth – and research by the Brookings Metropolitan Policy Program, a Washington think-tank, shows the urban growth bias in the US is intensifying – the suburbs are becoming its back-office dormitories. The bus taking those educated 20-somethings each morning from San Francisco to Google's headquarters in Mountain View crosses traffic bringing the cleaners, waiters, domestic helpers and shop assistants the other way.

> The great white flight of the 1960s and 1970s is turning into a "great inversion"

In 2011, for the first time, a majority of Americans living in poverty were located in the suburbs rather than the city. The great white flight of the middle classes from the cities in the 1960s and 1970s is turning into a "great inversion", in which the poor are priced further and further from the city by its spreading gentrification.

The reversal is not as racially uniform as the original exodus – there are far more educated black or Hispanic people today than a generation ago. They also head for the city. But the class effect is more plainly visible.

What will become of the losers? The danger is that a divide based on differences in education will only be reinforced by the effect of property prices. The further low-end service workers are priced away from the city, the worse the quality of the school district, and the longer the daily commute to work.

The car on the open road – that symbol of American freedom – has morphed into a form of mobile incarceration for millions of US commuters. Their economic banishment in turn will reduce the likelihood that their children will be able to break into a better zip code.

De Blasio's tale of two cities is better viewed as a national tale of downtowns versus their environs. His plans to reduce the divide between rich and poor will confront forces far larger than those affecting New York. Most big cities in the US, including Rahm Emanuel's Chicago and Eric Garcetti's Los Angeles, are doing better than they were 10 or 20 years ago. Like New York, they are also increasingly beyond the reach of people lower down the economic ladder.

In the absence of decent federal government from Washington – which plays host, ironically, to another thriving downtown – urban politicians such as de Blasio are likely to keep cropping up. A rising share of the economic action in the US is heading to its cities. The same looks like being true of its politics. ■

Bridging the gap: New York mayor Bill de Blasio wants to close the divide between rich and poor

PHOTOS: EYEVINE; GETTY

COMMENT
AMY
KENYON

Road to ruin

How the suburbs accelerated Detroit's downfall

Cars put Detroit on the map, but cars meant roads, and most of those led away from the Motor City.

To make better sense of the city's economic decline, we might head out to the suburbs. As this is also a drive back into history, we might choose a Model T, Henry Ford's affordable car for the masses, produced from 1908.

The Model T was immediately popular with farmers who made their living outside the city, and travelling salesmen. Ford himself predicted: "We shall solve the city problem by leaving the city."

I propose we go 20 miles west, passing through Dearborn, site of Ford's headquarters, to my childhood home, Garden City.

Like much US suburban development, Garden City's growth was a product of the automotive revolution. During the 1920s, car registrations in the US rose 150 per cent, while the suburbs of its largest cities grew twice as fast as the urban centres.

With the cost of property accessible only by car lower than in areas served by public transport, the great interwar era of suburban developers had arrived.

Taking flight: when the suburbs were able to raise their own taxes, the city's fate was sealed

When Garden City incorporated as a home-rule city in 1933, its separation from Detroit was complete – it could keep the gains of its growing tax base in local coffers. By the end of the 1950s, the decade of the next suburban boom, an additional 22 suburban municipalities had incorporated themselves around Detroit.

Industrial suburbanisation gathered pace during the same period, with Ford, Chrysler and General Motors building 25 plants in suburban areas between 1947 and 1958. There was a corresponding drop in Detroit's share of the region's manufacturing employment.

Follow the money, they say. Supermarkets, filling stations, fast-food restaurants and indoor shopping centres began to appear along the suburban strip roads, while Kern's, Detroit's second-largest department store, closed in 1959, removing almost an entire commercial block from the city tax rolls.

> We were using the city and claiming its successes even as we withdrew from it

By the late 1950s, suburbanites had less and less direct contact with Detroit, yet when we went on holiday, we continued to tell people we were Detroiters, partly because we retained a nostalgic attachment to the city, expressing pride in the automotive dream, our sports teams and Motown music.

We were using the city and claiming its successes even as we withdrew from it. In what Detroit's radical geographer, William Bunge, called "the great American tax dodge", suburbanisation was part of the shift of people, resources, industry and commerce from the city to surrounding areas, all of which were busily separating through incorporation. Separating and segregating – suburban Detroit was, and largely remains, closed to black residence.

In July 2013, watching the Twitter feeds in the hours following Detroit's bankruptcy announcement, it was easy to note the suburbanites, many of whom reiterated racially biased interpretations. Suburbanites have blamed black Detroit for the city's problems since before the disorders of 1967. As a child of Garden City, I recognise our failure to see the violence embedded in the segregated suburban spaces that were so close to Detroit and yet so far.

Time to turn around. I propose we abandon the Model T and return to Detroit in a new, post-bailout car, perhaps a Ford Fusion Hybrid, to show Henry Ford history is not bunk; we can acknowledge our part in the historical disinvestment of Detroit, and we aim to solve the city problem by returning to the city. ■

Amy Kenyon is a historian and visiting lecturer at Goldsmiths, University of London, and the author of Dreaming Suburbia *and the novel* Ford Road

JUDGES PANEL

Profiles of the judges

The judges for the second year of the FT/Citi Ingenuity Awards cover the broad spectrum of issues that affect cities all around the world. Co-chaired by Edwin Heathcote and Bruno Lanvin, the panel was bolstered this year by the addition of two members.

Janice Muthui represented the Community Cooker Foundation, which won the overall award as well as the energy category last year. She has extensive experience working with refugees and in development law. Anne-Marie Slaughter, head of a public policy institute and an academic, has recently been prominent in the debate on obstacles to full gender equality.

Abhijit Banerjee

India-born Abhijit Banerjee is the Ford Foundation International Professor of Economics at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He is one of the most important contributors to the field of development economics and co-founded the Poverty Action Lab. His ideas are outlined in his award-winning best-seller *Poor Economics*.

John Bowis OBE

A former UK member of parliament and member of the European parliament, John Bowis served as both a health and a transport minister in the Conservative government in the 1990s. He is currently honorary president of Health First Europe, a non-profit alliance that seeks equitable access to healthcare.

Sir Terry Farrell

One of the world's most respected architects, Sir Terry Farrell is responsible for an array of highly recognisable buildings. His practice has huge experience in infrastructure as well as transport and in setting out the frameworks for the way cities will grow.

Edwin Heathcote

Edwin Heathcote is the FT's architecture and design critic. He is also an architect, a writer, designer and co-founder of architectural hardware manufacturer izé. He is a contributor to international architectural journals and has written numerous books.

Bruno Lanvin

The executive director of the Insead business school's European Competitiveness Initiative is a former senior executive at the World Bank and the UN. He has been a commissioner of the Broadband Commission and a member of the World Economic Forum's Global Advisory Council on the Future of Government.

Janice Muthui

Janice Muthui is foundation manager of the Kenya-based Community Cooker Foundation, overall winner of last year's awards, and has worked with the refugee agency UNHCR.

Prof Carlo Ratti

Prof Ratti is an architect and engineer practicing in his native Italy and teaching in the US, where he set up MIT's Senseable City Lab. He holds a number of patents and has co-authored more than 200 publications. His work with Senseable is based around the study of the urban environment and transforming our understanding of cities.

Anne-Marie Slaughter

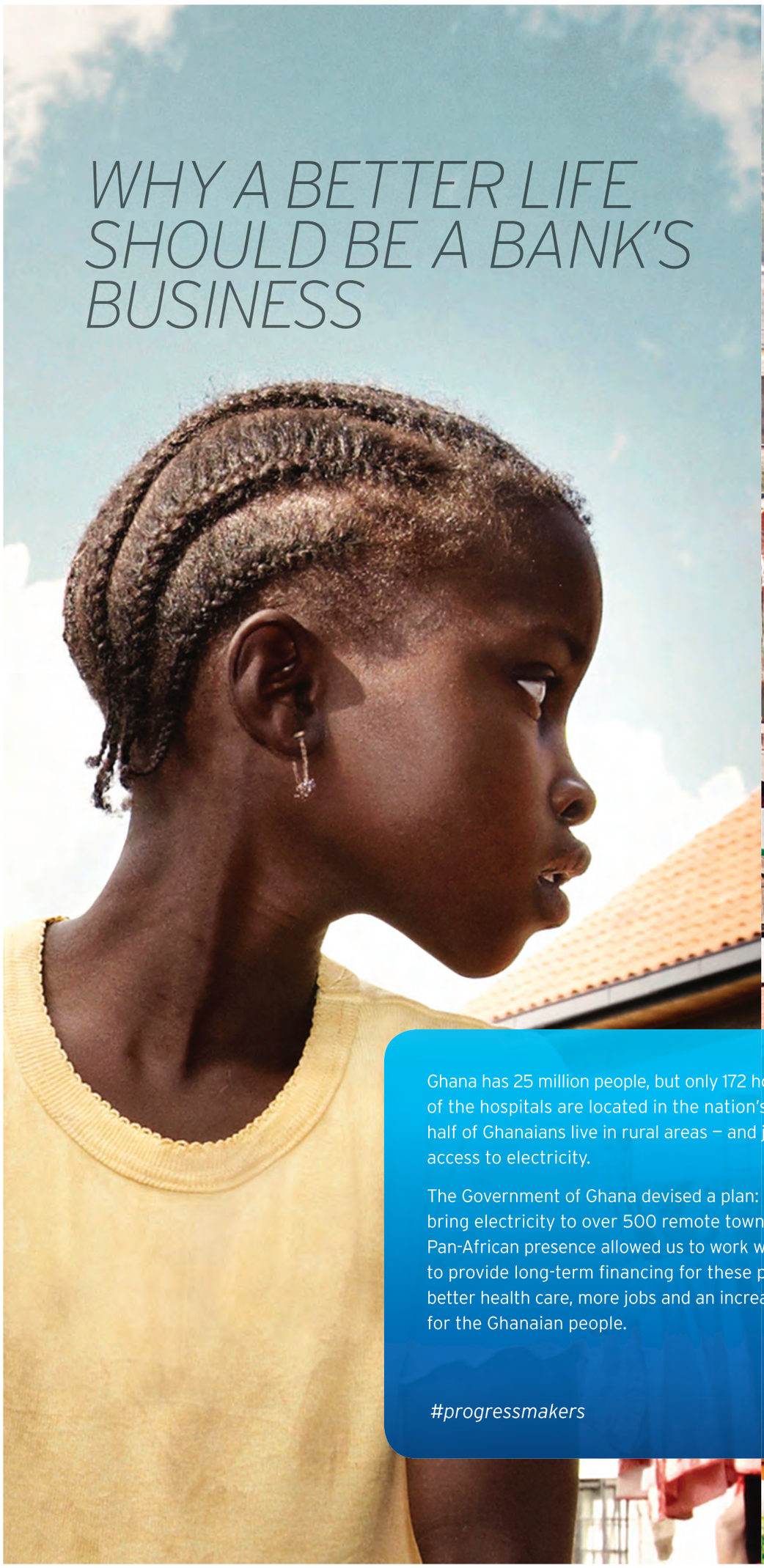
Anne-Marie Slaughter heads the New America Foundation, a US public policy institute, and is a professor emeritus of politics and international affairs at Princeton University. From 2009 to 2011 she was director of policy planning for the US Department of State, the first woman to hold that position.

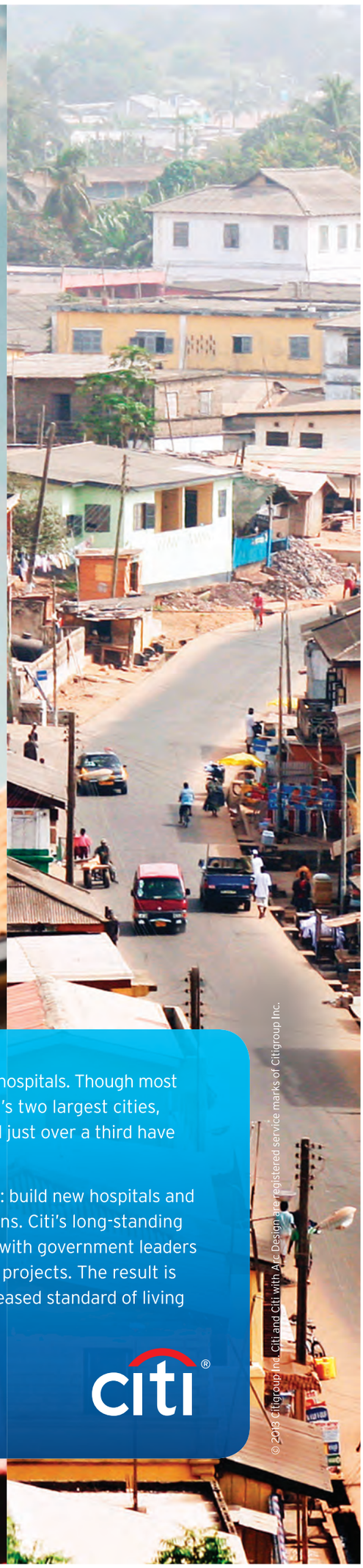
Luanne Zurlo

After a career as a Wall Street securities analyst, Luanne Zurlo founded the non-profit Worldfund in 2002, aimed at using education to fight poverty in Latin America. With a network of partnerships, it has launched innovative teacher training programmes and literacy, numeracy and arts projects across the continent.

PHOTOS: GETTY; CHARLIE BIBBY; JAMES ROYALL

WHY A BETTER LIFE SHOULD BE A BANK'S BUSINESS





Ghana has 25 million people, but only 172 hospitals. Though most of the hospitals are located in the nation's two largest cities, half of Ghanaians live in rural areas – and just over a third have access to electricity.

The Government of Ghana devised a plan: build new hospitals and bring electricity to over 500 remote towns. Citi's long-standing Pan-African presence allowed us to work with government leaders to provide long-term financing for these projects. The result is better health care, more jobs and an increased standard of living for the Ghanaian people.

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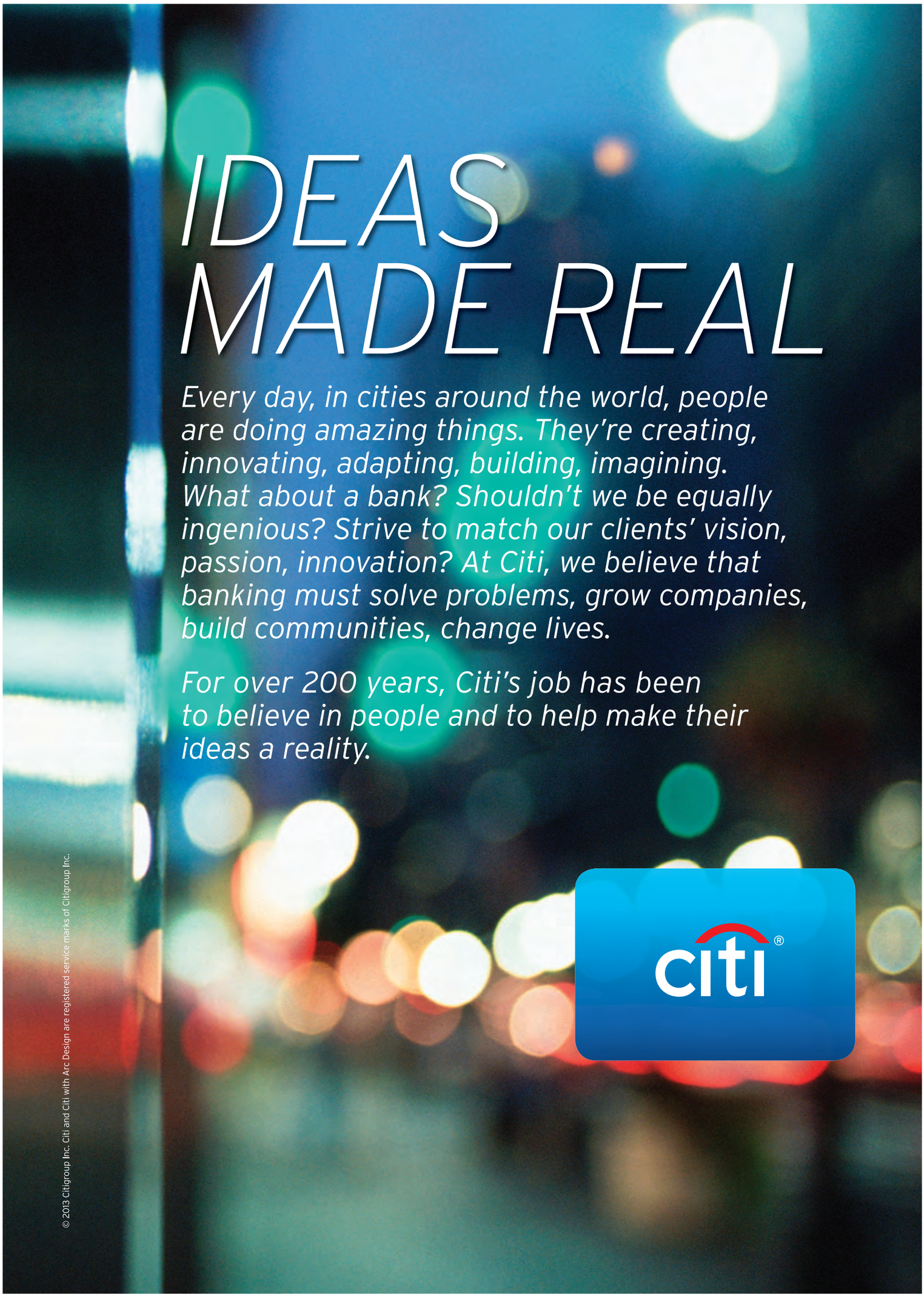
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