

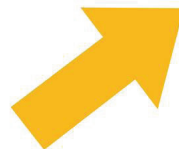
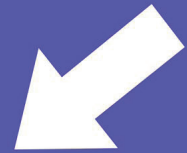
FEARLESS CITIES

MUNICIPALIST MANUAL

About Fearless Cities CEE Summit

**FEARLESS CITIES CEE
INTERNATIONAL MUNICIPALIST SUMMIT
13-15 JULY, WARSAW**

**FEARLESS CITIES CEE
MIĘDZYNARODOWY KONGRES MIEJSKI
13-15 LIPCA, WARSZAWA**



The first Fearless Cities Summit for Central and Eastern Europe Countries took place in Warsaw, 12-15 July 2018. The leading theme of this conference was "Cities in Transformation". The event brought together more than a hundred participants from different countries to debate on common pains of the CEE region and challenges in urban activism. Consequently, conference also set the stage for further cooperation among urban movements. It also provided a platform for participants to exchange experiences on urban activism. During this event we met wonderful colleagues from Sofia (Spasi Sofia), Belgrade (Ne Davimo Beograd), Praha (Praha Sobe), Tbilisi (Iare Pekhit), and many other cities. Fearless Cities CEE initiative is a part of a broader Fearless Cities network. This global municipalist movement met for the first time at the Fearless Cities Summit in Barcelona in June 2017, at the invitation of

Barcelona En Comú, with the goal of radicalizing democracy, feminizing politics and standing up to the far right. "Fearless" towns and cities are standing up to defend human rights, democracy and the common good. Barcelona En Comú gave us the possibility to hold this event in Warsaw. During the meeting in Warsaw we discovered that each of us – no matter if in Sofia, Belgrade, or Tbilisi – is dealing with similar problems related to our history and contemporary political environment. We believe that the connections we have made during the event will help us to change our region and our cities for the better. We want to share our knowledge and use it effectively to change our cities.

**The City is Ours
Hosts of Fearless Cities CEE Summit**

Conference Summary

The summit began with panel discussion on the progressive change in municipal politics, and continued with a number of workshops and plenary sessions. Conference opening panel was attended by Lenka Burgerová, architect and councillor for Development of Urban Planning, Architecture and Public Space of Prague 7, Joseph Alexander Smith, journalist, independent activist, Olivier Schneider, member of Fédération Française des Usagers de la Bicyclette, Tomasz Tosza, deputy director of the Roads and Bridges Authority of Jaworzno, and Justyna Kościńska, vice-president of the City is Ours. During the second day, there were two panel discussions. First included a debate on common pains of CEE region, the second one touched an issue of unequal representation of women in politics.

Author: Michał Kobya



- During three days, participants had the opportunity to choose among various workshops to discuss topics, which included i.a.:
- Participation (citizens' assemblies)
- Digital tools (activism & technology, digital infrastructures)
- Work as an urban activist (objective data-based activism, cooperation with decision makers, empathy, campaign building, communication with mass media)

- Social problems (drug policy at the city level, energy democracy, gender inequalities)
- Urban planning and development (infrastructure, sustainable development, historical influence on present-day cities)

Fearless Cities CEE Summit was hosted and organized by the City is Ours Association, with cooperation of Marzyciele i Rzemieślnicy – dom innowacji społecznych Techsoup, and Otwarty Jazdów Initiative. The conference was funded by Batory Foundation and Open Society Initiative for Europe (OSIFE).

About The City is Ours

The City is Ours is a Warsaw-based non-profit civic association, founded in 2013 by a group of social activists that has become a major urban movement in Poland. It has always relied on the voluntary work of its members who are passionate about improving the city and quality of life of its inhabitants. Currently, it brings together more than a hundred members from all walks of life, with the oldest being born before World War II, and the youngest still in high school.



Author: Konrad Smoczny

Since its beginnings, The City is Ours has been active in identifying and addressing a number of issues in Warsaw such as chaotic urban planning, lack of architectural policies (i.e. related to land ownership problems or uncontrolled advertising) as well as deficiencies of the transportation network and infrastructure. The association publicizes controversial decisions made by the local authorities, brings to light examples of nepotism in city management as well as ensures that citizens' voices are heard in the decision making process. It supports transparency across all city functions as well as civic participation through participatory budgets and public consultations.

The City is Ours champions a more resident-friendly and greener city, highlighting the need for sustainable development. It serves as an active watchdog verifying that all city investments follow environmental principles and regulations. As an example, it was one of the first organizations to point out the problem of heavy air pollution in Warsaw and its harmful effects on human health. The mission of The City is Ours is to build on positive initiatives that bring communities together.

Air Pollution

Warsaw City Hall Behind a Smokescreen

Every person breathing Warsaw's air – and that includes small children - inhales the amount of toxic particles equal to smoking two cigarettes a day. This is the exact amount of carcinogenic benzo(a)pyrene that can be detected in smog that we are breathing in Poland's capital. As revealed by the study of the Cracow's University Hospital, half of the children in Cracow suffer from allergies. The reason for it is most probably the city's polluted air. And what about Warsaw? We don't know because the City Hall does not conduct studies on this issue. And it should. We have the right to know how much our children suffer because of air pollution. Unfortunately, party politicians do not seem to care much about their health.

Politicians love to fight fire but they are helpless when it comes to smoke.. or smog. It has turned out, to their horror, that the problem of smog cannot be solved with one decision. You cannot ban smog and you cannot put an end to it with one regulation. You have to identify the problem first, determine its causes, define solutions and make at least the first step towards implementing them. This is something that the politicians do not like. It is easier to cut another ribbon than to work for many years towards the goal of improving the health of the inhabitants.

But the causes are obvious. We have several thousand of coal boilers in Warsaw. The City Hall has maintained nearly two thousands of them in municipal housing units. Only two years ago coal boilers were still being installed by the city authorities. For the last two years the City Hall has been carrying out a programme of subsidies for boiler exchange which it boasts of a lot. But its results are poor – only 350 persons have applied for the subsidies. It is easy to understand if we consider that the City Hall has spent three times as much on the promotion of its .. New Year's Eve street party than on the promotion of the programme.

At the rate that things are progressing, we can expect cleaner air in Warsaw as soon as in 2081. We cannot wait that long. The negative effects of smog on our health are too strong. There have not yet been invented antismog masks that could be worn by small children – the risk of suffocation is too high. A similar problem concerns the elderly who are particularly vulnerable to the effects of breathing in particulate pollutants. These two weakest groups cannot therefore be protected against smog. And this is why the city authorities have to take responsibility for the problem.

Another reason for the smog are cars – there are more and more of them on our streets and nearly half a million of

them come into Warsaw every day from outside the city limits. We breathe in exhaust fumes produced by the oldest engines as there are no limitations imposed. And it is high time to change this, too. Clean Transport Zone is a solution that we propose to implement. Let us remember that the majority of limitations would not concern the residents but drivers from outside of Warsaw. Our city can no longer be a free of charge parking lot for anyone who wishes to drive into it. This affects our health and the health of our children and determines whether our grandparents will live out their days in health.



Author: Wojciech Radwański

As estimated by the European Commission each year 44 thousand Poles die prematurely due to smog. It is as if a town of the size of Ciechanów were wiped off the map of Poland each year. In Warsaw this number is as high as 3 thousand deaths. It is one district of Śródmieście section or a large residential estate. We should no longer allow our neighbours to poison us with Warsaw air. It does not have to stay this way.

Warsaw should treat the fight against smog as the highest priority. We can afford it. It is enough not to waste money as the former city authorities did. Instead of propaganda posters convincing us that the quality of air is improving (which is not true, the year 2017 was worse than 2016!) we should spend money on effective promotion of the boiler exchange programme. With a view toward exchanging not hundreds but thousands of them – just like Cracow does. We can plan out new bus lanes, put the brakes on illegal parking and make some effort to limit the number of cars driving in the streets – which will reduce traffic jams at the same time. Really, we are not asking for a lot.

The common denominator of CEE – Pains of the region.

Smog Kills. How can we protect ourselves?

What is PM 2.5 and what are its effects on our health?

The dust with particles of a diameter not larger than 2.5 µm (micrometre i.e. 0.0025 mm), the air pollutant with the most harmful effects for human health.

Where does it come from?

In winter, it is a mixture of various toxic substances. In summer, it is mainly exhaust fumes from the cars that cross our city every day.

What is its impact on our health?

Tiny particles with diameter of 2.5 µm or smaller which, when breathed into our lungs, can enter our bloodstream. They can cause different reactions – cough, breathing difficulties and shortness of breath especially during physical exercise, worsening of asthma symptoms etc. Longer exposure to high concentration of PM 2.5 can impact the course of heart diseases (hypertension, infarction) and even increase the risk of cancer, especially the lung cancer. It also adversely affects the health of pregnant women and the developing foetus (resulting in low birth rate, congenital defects, pregnancy-threatening conditions).

Who is the most exposed to its effects?

Smog tends to concentrate locally. Studies conducted on 4 thousand Londoners have shown that people living near busy streets were more exposed to inhaling nitrogen oxides and particulate matter PM 2.5 and their heart ventricles were enlarged.

How should it be counteracted?


For example, in Warsaw we note a record number of 900 cars per 1000 inhabitants. No, this is not about putting a ban on driving cars. We want to encourage a reduction in their use. How can we do it?

We can try out the following solutions:

- investment in rail transport,
- development of the network of biking trails,
- development of the system of bus lanes,
- in the case of Diesel engines – including the analysis of the exhaust fumes composition in the compulsory technical inspection to check its compliance with Euro standard set for a given vehicle,
- higher parking fees in the city centre – used for financing the above investments.


Let us remember: we have real impact on the quality of air breathed by us and our loved ones!

What effect does PM 2.5 have on our health?



What is PM 2.5?
The dust with particles of a diameter not larger than 2.5 µm (micrometre i.e. 0.0025 mm), the air pollutant with the most harmful effects for human health

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In winter, it is a mixture of various toxic substances. In summer, it is mainly exhaust fumes from the cars that cross our city every day




What is its impact on our health?

- worsening of heart disease (hypertension, heart attack)
- an increased risk of cancer
- bad impact on the health of pregnant women and the developing fetus


Who is the most exposed to its effects?
People living closer to the main, busy streets are exposed to inhalation of larger amounts of nitrogen oxides and particulate matter of PM 2.5, which causes the enlargement of the ventricle





How should it be counteracted?

- investment in rail transport
- development of the network of biking trails
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Transport Problems

Bus Lanes are Common Sense and Convenient for Passengers

When we say that we have to promote public transport and limit the number of cars in the city, critics always react with “it is detached from reality” or “ideology!”. These „arguments” are not usually supported by any calculations. We did those. In the rush hour one bus lane is equivalent to four car lanes when it comes to the number of people transported.

We are not guided by anything other than common sense and economic calculation. We want solutions that allow the greatest possible efficiency at the lowest cost for the environment and the health of residents. That’s why we want more bus lanes and fewer lanes for individual cars. Bus lanes simply provide more throughput – as they are used by more people. And it’s probably people, not cars, that the throughput should be counted in, right? Bus lane also makes buses run on time, because they do not get stuck in traffic jams.

Therefore, it is not easy to understand people who state that bus lanes cannot be established on two- or even three-lane streets. Why should a bus carrying up to 200 people have the same amount of space as a car, usually carrying one person

only? On average only every fourth car carries someone other apart from the driver. We will all be better off if we prioritize the possibility of faster travel of 200 bus passengers rather than of a few car drivers, potentially travelling at the same time. It takes a lot of financial resources to expand the metro and tram lines. But this does not apply to bus lanes, the creation of which is relatively simple and inexpensive. As a rule, bus lanes should be designated on streets leading to those areas that trams and metro do not reach today. It must be made clear: maintaining broad streets without bus lanes is simply a waste and mismanagement. In the end, let’s go back 9 years. When in 2009 a bus lane on the Łazienkowska Thoroughfare was opened in Warsaw, a transport cataclysm and a city paralysis were expected to happen. Nothing like that happened, on the contrary – bus lane made life and everyday commuting easier for thousands of Warsaw residents living on both sides of the Vistula river. Bus lanes on the Łazienkowska Thoroughfare have become such an obvious solution that when in 2015 the Łazienkowski Bridge was destroyed in fire, no one even thought of removing them.



Unregulated Landownership

Demons of the Past – Reprivatisation in Post-communist Poland

Right after World War II, partly because of a relatively high level of war destruction, the new communist regime in Poland decided that all properties within boundaries of Warsaw should be nationalised. There were, however, legal procedures which, under certain conditions, allowed former owners to reclaim their property. After the fall of communism in 1989 no one could expect that since these laws had not been comprehensively changed, this would lead to the one of the most iconic fraud scandals in the modern history of Poland.

Since the very beginning of its foundation in 2013 “The City is Ours” has been involved in the fight against so-called “wild reprivatisation”. From a legal point of view, we found ourselves in legal vacuum, where laws passed in mid-40’s were still applicable. Simultaneously, this problem resulted in thousands of tenants being removed from their houses, while some of them condemned to homelessness or living in humiliating conditions. However, there was no political will to implement a new policy. Since one could estimate how high the value of real estate restitution or compensations is, counted in billions of euros, there were too many different interests and stakeholders to be satisfied.

“The City is Ours” began to involve in numerous actions, which aimed to convince politicians to tackle the problem of reprivatisation. We collected data and testimonies from tenants, analysed legal documents and mapped people, who were beneficiaries of this process. The turning-point was in August 2016, when it appeared, that real estate worth approx. 40 million EUR was illegally given back to people, who



The city tour during Fearless Cities CEE Summit – footprints of wild property restitution and tenants’ fights in Warsaw. Author: The City is Ours.

were not righteous heirs of former owners of the property. The scandal broke out.

After elections in Poland in 2015, conservative Law and Justice government announced that the problem of reprivatisation in Warsaw will be resolved once and for all, and all cases of possible fraud and corruption will be prosecuted. Since 2016 numerous lawyers, officials and businessmen were prosecuted or temporarily arrested. Under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice there is now a dedicated so-called “Reprivatisation Commission” which is auditing all administrative decisions regarding reprivatisation issued by the City Hall. On 13th October 2017, during a press conference, the Mayor of Warsaw, Mrs. Gronkiewicz-Waltz admitted that a group of organised crime must have acted in Warsaw City Hall. In spite of the initial declarations, the general act on reprivatisation has not yet been passed and the works were suspended with no information on their resumption.



Map of reprivatisation claims in Warsaw. Author: The City is Ours.

Chmielna – Yesterday and Tomorrow

Pre-war architecture and the layout of Chmielna Street in Warsaw survived to our times in greatly disturbed condition. Many buildings were buried by the war and many more during after-war reconstruction. Today the central section of the street is covered under the Palace of Culture. Eastern end still remains a pedestrian area, cut in half by the so-called Square of Five Corners. On the other hand western part will be dominated in near future by 310-meter Varso Tower*. The upcoming changes require considering both the future and the past of Chmielna street.

Before the war the street was known for its confection trade, shoe and craft workshops. After 1945, despite the hostile political situation, private sector returned to Chmielna recreating its colorful commercial offer. This remains so until nowadays even if local craftsmen find it increasingly difficult to compete with shopping malls and commercial networks. Eastern Chmielna is still characterized by the atmosphere of a low premises street from late 19th century. A great advantage of this street is good location on the city map constituting it as a natural link between City Downtown and the New World Street with its entire Foxal-Pavilion's cultural and commercial offer. Therefore it is not surprising, that thousands of people pass through it every day as there are even more attractions waiting on the way. Coffee in Nero, latest movie premieres in Atlantic Cinema, breakfast in Aioli, warm donut at Pawłowicz's Pastry, elegant exhibition at Kielman's shoe workshop, beer in In Side. This is a kind of street where people want to walk on.

Hence pedestrian space is an optimal solution here, at least in theory. The reality, though, is substantially different - cars swirling among pedestrians or parked contrary to regulations are a common sight in the area. Luckily, the change might come soon due to reconstruction of Plac Pięciu Rogów (Five Corners' Square).

This point of intersection of Chmielna, Zgoda, Szpitalna, Krucza and Bracka streets have kept the décor of the old

Downtown (Śródmieście). Many of aged tenement houses located in this neighbourhood, such as Chmielna 20, Bracka 22, Zgoda 1 or Dom Towarowy Braci Jabłkowski (Jablkowski Brothers' Department Store) have survived to the present day, all of them listed in the municipal register of historical monuments. It is, however, difficult to focus on these gems of architecture when pedestrians are suddenly forced onto a street crossing with no streetlights and car drivers often failing to give way. This leads to dangerous situations and generally does not encourage people to take strolls in the vicinity.

These difficulties were recognized by participants of public consultation regarding reconstruction of the square. They decided by large majority of votes to adapt it to the needs of pedestrians and reduce the intensity of car traffic. The winning design of WXCA Studio puts forward the idea of closing the Zgoda Street for car traffic and integrating it with the pedestrian zone by placing benches and planting trees. The only passage open to busses and bikes is provided along the axis of Krucza and Szpitalna streets. Such a vision is a new trend of turning the city into a space for pedestrians, of which The City is Ours (Miasto Jest Nasze) is one of the main promoters. We will closely watch the implementation of this idea in the case of Five Corners' Square surroundings.



Author: Jan Czempiniński

It won't be the only change on Chmielna street this year. Long-lasting construction of Grycan ice-cream pavilion is supposed to be finalized, luckily new owners of nearby Domy Towarowe „Centrum” (Department Stores „Center”) have pledged to modernize them and upgrade „Wiecha” walkway. This concrete walkway needs revitalisation indeed. But we also stand for a reflection of the patron, Stefan Wiecheccki („Wiech”), who is an absolutely symbolic character for Warsaw culture.

Why shouldn't we design an art installation dedicated to great columnist or commemorate his quotes in the area - if we could create the Walk of Fame with sentences of people not connected with our city, where Penelope Cruz says: „My ambition is to be happy”?

The western section of Chmielna continues as a part of the Wola district, called „Wild West” after World War II,



Author: Jan Czempiniński

Case Studies

because the communist authorities have not invested in restoring it from war damages for many years. Today's image of this part of Chmielna consists of ruined pre-war tenement houses, socialist blocks and free muddy parcels. But in the near future colossal Varso Tower with two shorter office blocks will join them, completely separating the area. On one hand it means a big impetus for economic growth, new workplaces and improvement of neglected urban space, on the other – lots of cars on the narrow street and changes in the housing market and local services. Also the fate of historic buildings will be unclear under this circumstances. Moreover there are three tenement houses (nr 126, 128 and 130) from the end of XIX century, which together survived Warsaw Uprising in 1944 and now might be in danger. After war communists have destroyed decoration of their facades on the ideological

grounds and let them slowly crumble. Current miserable condition of the buildings along with an insufficient preservation efforts, are facilitating a decision of demolition or nonhistorical renovation. But as you all know - our association loves to obstruct wrong decisions, and that is why we have decided to file an application to declare those tenements as historical monuments. Along with that we will continue to appeal for a profound restoration.

Chmielna has an interesting past and its future is still to be written. MJN will continue to act on both issues!

*The date of the Varso Tower's commissioning was scheduled for 2020.

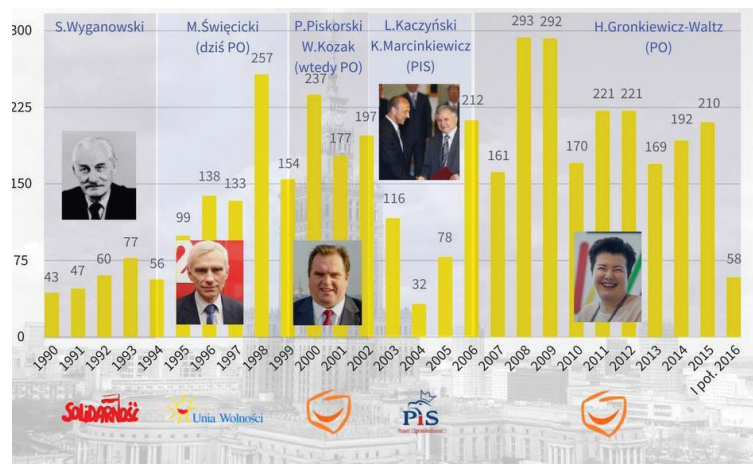
Developing Strategies for Objective Data-Based Activism

For activists one of the most important weapons is to be reliable in the eyes of the citizens, media and politicians. To be reliable, one must be basing judgements on objective data. Data which sometimes prove common sense or that show something contrary to the popular and comfortable views. Sometimes these data can be used as a tool for future battles but sometimes they can make activists rethink some of their concepts. Nevertheless, the activists must ask themselves three basic questions: (1) what data do we need and how to get them, (2) how to work on them and (3) how to make them understandable and interesting to the public.

Idea. Big data are not only a blessing but also (maybe even mostly) a curse. When floating on the vast ocean of information the most challenging issue we encounter is the question of how exactly to define the data that we need and where to dive in this ocean to find them. One can rely on official raw data published or shared by public authorities or in scientific papers, open-source intelligence or can simply carry out a research on one's own. Sometimes it is sufficient to walk through the street and count, for example, the number of parking lots in a district (really, in the Warsaw city centre no one has done this before!).

Working on data themselves is relatively easy. For an ordinary activist it would be sufficient to have some intermediate knowledge of Excel and Canva. That said, to have more advanced competences would be better and to have knowledge of more sophisticated tools much better still. The crucial element of this part is to assess to what extent data given are complete, objective and not influenced by the perspective of the entity that produced them; let alone influenced by ourselves! Or rather by the fact that we want to see the result we want.

The third question. Though nowadays access to data and information is easier than ever, it is worth knowing that it applies to all other "competitors". Competitors for public



Number of reprivatization decisions in Warsaw (1990-2016). Author: The City is Ours.

attention, i.e. not only other activists but, literally, everyone: entertainers, sportsmen, politicians. Currently, most of our, as activists, job is to grab the attention of the audience, whoever it will be – a journalist, our neighbours, an ordinary, random citizen (better to know whom we are addressing). And it may be distracting and discouraging but we must be aware that long hours or even days of our hard work would be assessed within one or two seconds during Facebook or Twitter scrolling. Therefore, preparing data for the final user is the most important part. Its visual lure, a startling result, sometimes contrary to common perception is something that is essential to grab more than these 2 seconds: a few additional seconds necessary to read the whole message and the results. To convince someone to carry out something (e.g. sign a petition) or even to join you.



Workshop during fearless cities summit. Author: Michał Kotyba

Drug Policy at the City Level – What Makes Sense?

According to the international law a group of psychoactive substances is strictly forbidden virtually in the whole world. These substances have not vanished from the market, but criminal groups started to make a profit out of it, sadly with negative effect on the society. The use of psychoactive substances is a very broad topic, not to mention legal drugs at this point.

Because of addiction to psychoactive substances only in 2015 the Polish economy lost about PLN 79,19 million. According to EMCDDA reports, only in 2017 31 008 crimes were committed associated to the drug issues, where of 27 460 due to possession of a substance, and 3 444 due to selling and using drugs. The costs of maintaining the administration of justice in relation to addiction to illegal psychoactive substances amounted to PLN 318.39 million. For comparison, the expenses on health care in relation to drugs amounted to PLN 190.57 million.

For prevention programs, related to the use of alcohol and other psychoactive substances (except tobacco), local government bodies in Poland in 2015 had funds of 773,80 million PLN (last data).

In 2013, the Central Statistical Office (GUS) pointed out that the value of the Polish drug market would amount to PLN 9 billion 840 million (some believe that this is much underestimated data and the value of the cannabis market alone exceeds this sum). Furthermore the Central Statistical Office estimates that about 75 percent or more income from all illegal activities (including prostitution) comes from drug trafficking, representing the main income of criminals. These numbers show the extent of the problem that many local governments have come to face. The responsibility for reducing the drug related damage has been taken over by local governments units in many autonomous regions or countries such as Holland, Germany, Catalonia.

Polish local government bodies have statutory public funds to prevent the damage related to the use of psychoactive substances. Since the beginning of the 1990s Poland has implemented the concept of reduction of the harm associated with substance abuse, which also consists in treating the problem of drug addiction as a field in which specific solutions can be found. In Poland the implementation of this concept, however, remained almost at the pilot level.

What is harm reduction? This concept refers to all programs limiting the harm related to the use of psychoactive substances; including: needle and syringe replacement programs, heroin therapies where heroin addicts receive heroin; coffee shop system in the Netherlands, or cannabis club system established in Catalonia. The harm reduction policy also includes programs such as Anonymous Drug Addicts or stationary therapies run by MONAR which are also so-called 'abstinence-oriented' programs. In Poland, however, over 90 percent

of funds are spent on abstinence programs due to harmful social stereotypes developed around the use of psychoactive substances – as a result, patients are deprived of choice (as in the countries where damage caused by the use of psychoactive substances is systematically reduced). Implementation of harm reduction encounters not only implementation problems caused by social stereotypes but also resistance of the employees of the addiction treatment system itself.



Public domain.

Moving on to the title question – which solutions make sense and which do not – the answer seems to be very simple: those that improve condition of people using psychoactive substances and their loved ones do make sense, and those that harm people, strengthen criminal organizations and increase costs of the system do not. A large part of abstinence policy solutions reduces the harm associated with the use of psychoactive substances, such as abstainer's societies if they are run in line with the standards of abstinent associations developed in various countries, including Poland. It is a good practice to support solutions that have been tested and practiced in neighbouring countries and around the world, for example supporting AA or ADA self-help groups, conducting various types of outreach works, e.g. street working.

On the other hand, all practices aimed at empowering groups or people who are addicted or vulnerable to addiction have a positive effect. These are various types of reintegration programs where people stay on the labour market or get legal remuneration; housing programs allowing people to minimize their costs of living (related mainly to health issues and contacts with the judicial system); low threshold methadone programs or even anti-discrimination education.

Summary

„We are not Copenhagen and never will be, so stop comparing us to them” – how many times have we heard this in our debates on the development of cities in Central and Eastern Europe?



Author: Michał Kotyła

Many times when we talk about the quality of life in our cities, the lack of planning and public transportation, about air pollution, we always hear that it is a long way until we ever reach the status of “western” cities. But this is nothing else than politics – in this case, urban politics – that drives us closer to our goals or stops us from reaching them. In the last few years, citizens of Warsaw, Belgrade, Tblisi, Prague, Sofia understood the main gap that divided them from their western neighbours: the lack of municipal policies that aim to really solve the city problems and raise the quality of life. Because the city is nothing more than a place to live in and we all deserve it meets our desired standards.

That’s why we decided to start close cooperation between activists, councillors and even members of the authorities from Central and Eastern Europe. We call ourselves “municipalists” – because the city, and most of all the well-being of its inhabitants, is the matter of our concern. Our common

experience is growing up in cities which were transforming themselves from communist to post-communist. And what is perhaps the most surprising for our friends from Western Europe, very often what came straight after the fall of the system was worse for our cities than what the system enforced on them. In terms of urban planning, access to public services, green areas or even housing, sometimes we have to defend what was achieved during the previous period of history.

Common problems and challenges can be met thanks to shared knowledge and experience. Our cooperation started in July 2018 with Fearless Cities CEE conference and we already have some plans for next steps. As the Fearless Cities network is expanding, we hope that in visible future our region will be glowing with dots on the world “progressive cities” map. The experience of living in a transforming city is something unique, but not exclusive for our region. So is the knowledge we are sharing in this Municipalist Manual.

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