

TACKLING CLIMATE CHANGE

A JOB FOR CITIES

AN INTERVIEW WITH
ANNE HIDALGO
& **EDWIN M. LEE**

We are entering a phase of unprecedented global cooperation between cities, with mayors from all corners of the globe, of many and varied political stripes, rallying together. C40 Cities is one of the platforms fostering this approach, underpinned by a sense of global solidarity and responsibility. Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo and Mayor of San Francisco Edwin M. Lee are both strong advocates of the potential of such networks to promote practical and sustainable solutions to some of the most pressing problems facing the world today.

GREEN EUROPEAN JOURNAL: Today cities are the principal carbon dioxide (CO₂) emitters and energy consumers in the world. They have the opportunity and responsibility to take defining action on climate change. With Trump's withdrawal from the Paris Climate Agreement, and bearing in mind their limited powers, what can cities do in the fight against climate change?

ANNE HIDALGO: When we see political divisions felt and voiced more passionately than ever, I am reminded of my friend, the philosopher, activist, and urban theorist Benjamin Barber, author of *If Mayors Ruled the World*, who sadly died this year. His favourite quote was from former New York Mayor Fiorello La Guardia: "There is no Democratic or Republican way of fixing a sewer." When mayors from the C40 network¹ meet and consider the impacts of climate change our cities are already facing, there is no place for ideological division. We are focused only on delivering the ambitious goals of the Paris Agreement and creating prosperous cities for our citizens. Through the C40 network of 91 cities concretely tackling climate change, you can

see the exchange of ideas and innovation, and healthy ‘coopetition’ [cooperative competition] constantly driving fellow mayors to be even more ambitious in our climate plans.

The Paris Agreement was an incredible diplomatic achievement, which could not have been secured without the decisive role of the United States of America. And I am convinced that, with or without the White House, the US will get the job done anyway. The response from over 370 cities across the US, pledging their support for the Paris Agreement, is proof of this commitment. Regardless of President Trump’s final decision, the most important cities of the world, united in the C40 network, assume their responsibilities. We know there is no alternative.

In September 2017, with a pioneering group of the mayors of Boston, Durban, London, Los Angeles, Melbourne, Mexico City, and New York, we committed to work with C40 to develop climate action plans that will deliver the scale of emissions reductions required to meet the goals of the Paris Agreement. Once again, cities are shaping the century ahead.

EDWIN M. LEE: The results of the 2016 election here in the United States have certainly heightened, if not necessitated, a sense of

climate responsibility at the local and state level. We have a federal administration that continues to deny that climate change is a threat, even as intense hurricanes barrel through cities like Houston and Tampa, wildfires consume the Pacific Northwest, and severe drought persists in the Midwest. The President’s withdrawal of the United States from the Paris Climate Agreement was a particularly catalysing moment. In the days afterwards, U.S. cities stepped up. More than 300 U.S. Climate mayors signed a letter of support for the Paris Agreement, expressing our continued commitment to protecting our planet and people. In addition, countless business, state, education, and non-profit leaders and organisations also pledged their commitment to act on the climate.

From a global perspective, leadership from cities has never been more urgent. Networks like C40 Cities are bringing the power of cities together for the global good. C40 represents one quarter of the global economy and 650 million people. That is a significant share of the global market that can truly move the needle forward.

Last year, I announced the launch of a community choice aggregation programme that allows residents and businesses to choose cleaner,

¹ Created and led by cities, C40 is focused on tackling climate change and driving urban action that reduces greenhouse gas emissions and climate risks, while increasing the health, well-being, and economic opportunities of urban citizens. The current chair is Mayor of Paris Anne Hidalgo, and three-term Mayor of New York City Michael R. Bloomberg serves as president of the board.

more renewable energy at competitive rates. This programme is critical to San Francisco's citywide goal of achieving 50 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2020, and 100 per cent by 2030. Last month, Salesforce, one of our San Francisco-based companies, announced that it will power its current buildings and newest building – the largest tower on the West Coast of the United States – with 100 per cent renewable energy. Given that our federal administration continues to abdicate its responsibility when it comes to confronting the realities of climate change, it is important that local governments, businesses, and non-profits continue to step up.

Over the past centuries, mobility and energy in the city have been designed around a fossil fuel-based model tailored to meet the needs of private cars, male individuals, and industry. How can we shift to a different conception?

ANNE HIDALGO: I am confident that the era in which our streets have been dominated by fossil fuel-powered vehicles is coming to an end. Our citizens want and deserve healthier streets. You can see this in the decisions being taken by pioneering mayors around the world, to restrict the most polluting vehicles and incentivise citizens to choose public transit, cycling, and walking. I am proud that for many years now, Paris has been leading the way. For example, when we introduced the Vélib' bike-hiring

scheme, just six cities in the C40 network had such a scheme. Today 43 cities of the network have bike-sharing schemes. That represents hundreds of millions of bike journeys in cities each year, not generating any greenhouse gas emissions. By pedestrianising the right bank of the river Seine, we have created a wonderful new space for Parisians, and those who love Paris, to enjoy. We have also committed, along with Mexico City, to ban diesel vehicles from entering the city altogether by 2025, because these cause the most damage to public health. Air pollution kills more than four million people worldwide every year, and the majority of these deaths occur in cities. These policies are based on the urgency of both the health crisis and the climate crisis we are facing.

You can see in the announcements being made by car manufacturers that they recognise the need to shift their business model to a future that will be dominated by clean vehicles. CEOs, investors, and consumers are all changing the way they think about transport, as well as energy production, urban planning, and many other areas of city life, to embrace a sustainable and green future.

EDWIN M. LEE: Cities have a tremendous opportunity to shift the current mobility paradigm. For one, we recognise that how we move people and goods has an impact not only on our economic success, but also on the well-being, climate, and public health of our

communities. Shifting to renewable fuels and zero-emissions vehicles can bring better air quality and reduced health impacts, particularly in communities most affected by pollution and vehicle congestion. In San Francisco, about 50 per cent of our public transportation fleet is full electric or carbon-free renewable energy.

We also have one of the largest municipal fleets of diesel buses in the country. In 2015, I directed our transportation agency to convert our entire fleet to renewable diesel, which has a significantly lower emissions and pollution profile than traditional diesel. We even scaled this work to gain greater adoption in private and regional transportation fleets by using renewable diesel as an immediate drop-in transition fuel as we move towards a zero-emissions vehicle future. This requires an electrified transportation market. The San Francisco Bay Area is one of the largest markets for electric vehicles in the United States, thanks to investments in electric vehicle infrastructure. We know that demand for Teslas, Chevy Volts, and Nissan Leafs is only going to grow, which is why we made it policy that all new building construction in San Francisco should have enough electrical capacity and infrastructure to support on-site vehicle charging. This will bring greater access and equity to charging throughout our city neighbourhoods.

To truly imagine a different conception of mobility, we will need to go beyond fuel-switching and electrification. As cities, we need to re-think how we design our streets, make transportation investments, and guarantee both public safety and equal access, especially to residents who face the greatest mobility challenges. San Francisco's 'Transit First Policy' prioritises public dollar investments in public transportation that rely on low- to no-carbon fuels. We are investing in more bike lanes and an expanded bike-sharing programme, two bus rapid transit projects, and a new 'Central Subway' project that will improve transportation connectivity and access for transit-reliant communities. In 2017, we'll also begin the first phase of a project to ban private vehicles along our major downtown corridor, making it more bike- and

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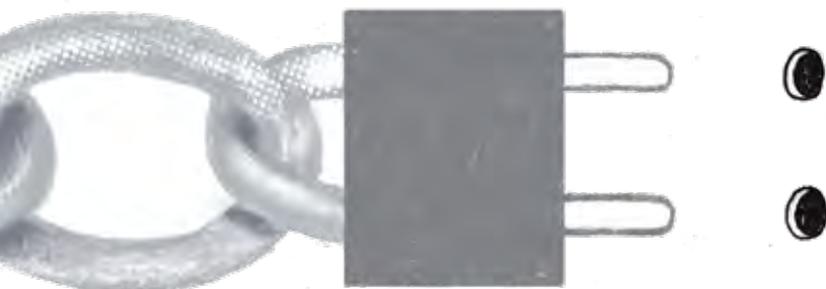
pedestrian-friendly. Being ‘Transit First’ has helped us shift our own paradigm towards a multi-modal transportation system that provides safe, walkable, transit-accessible, and bikeable options to all communities and all of our residents.

Cities share similar concerns and challenges, especially regarding climate change. You are both involved in networks of megacities – what is their geopolitical and concrete policy significance in today’s world?

ANNE HIDALGO: Climate scientists are cautious about attributing specific weather events to climate change. Yet, from the summer 2017 monsoon flooding of Mumbai and Dhaka, the destruction wreaked by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma on Houston, Miami, and Havana, and the heatwaves and forest fires affecting Los Angeles, the incredible impact that climate change is having on our cities is self-evident.

This is the context in which mayors are now operating. Every decision that we make is based upon the urgency of the climate crisis we face. C40’s *Deadline 2020* report revealed precisely what cities need to do to deliver on the Paris Agreement. The short answer is that, in order to prevent catastrophic climate change, action needs to begin now, at full speed and scale. To achieve that ambition cities need to share knowledge on what policies, projects, and approaches work best, so other cities can learn from them and act without delay.

Each year C40 and Bloomberg Philanthropies host the C40 Cities Awards, recognising the most innovative efforts by cities around the world in tackling climate change. The striking thing about the finalists, announced this month, is the scale of the ambition and the degree to which they seek to transform whole areas of city life. Sustainability is no longer about recycling schemes and solar panels on



city halls. It is an integral consideration in every part of city policy-making, from public health to economic development, from urban planning to infrastructure investment.

EDWIN M. LEE: Cities have always shared a sense of connectivity to one another, which has only been strengthened by the global economy and a growing interconnectedness. Cities have also played a prominent role in the geopolitical landscape as well, as hubs of innovation and cultural activity.

As I begin my final two years of service to the people of San Francisco, I am aware now more than ever of the important role that our major cities must play on the global stage. The C40 cities truly represent a counterbalance to the climate scepticism and cynicism coming out of Washington D.C.

Climate change cannot be solved in one city. Joining with global networks is the best way to accelerate the action needed to avoid the worst outcomes. Networks like C40 give San Francisco the chance to share our best practices and lessons learned when it comes to green building, energy, and waste reduction. Networks that cross city-state lines also give us access and open up channels of communication. San Francisco is also an active member of the Pacific Coast Collaborative, which has connected us with peer cities and states along the West Coast and sparked greater collaboration and thought partnership. And the Under2Coalition² signed by sub-national entities demonstrated that nations, states, and cities can come together to do something great for the planet.

What is happening today reminds me of the moment in June 1945 when delegates of

² <http://under2mou.org/>

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50 nations gathered in San Francisco to sign the charter that led to the formation of the United Nations, and how that changed the world for the better. Next year, as city, state, and regional officials prepare to come to San Francisco for California Governor Jerry Brown's 2018 Global Climate Summit, our cities will have an opportunity to send a message of unity to the world.

Networks of cities present great potential but how can we ensure that such initiatives involve citizens from all walks of life and do not remain projects designed by and for a well-off, well-educated globalised elite, in which only a select few have a voice?

ANNE HIDALGO: My predecessor as C40 chair was Eduardo Paes, then mayor of Rio de Janeiro, and under his tenure C40 reached an important milestone of including more than 50 per cent of cities in the network from the Global South. To deliver on the Paris Climate Agreement will require the cities of Europe, North America, and Australia to urgently cut our per capita emissions. But just as vital will be to ensure that the cities of China, India, Africa, and Asia achieve sustainable development. There are more electric vehicles on the streets of Chinese cities than any other country. Paris, and cities across the C40 network, are looking to our fellow mayors in every part of the world for inspiring ideas.

One of my key priorities as chair of C40 is to ensure that the citizens of our cities have a voice in the decisions that are shaping our climate future. I want every citizen of Paris and of every city to help guide our efforts. Our goal is to secure the future of our shared planet and that cannot be delivered by decisions of far-away people in closed rooms. Cities are inherently shared spaces and therefore the future of our cities must be a shared endeavour.

EDWIN M. LEE: At the heart of San Francisco's climate action and economic success is a commitment to collaboration, equity, inclusion,

and innovation. When I took office as mayor, I made a promise that San Francisco's environmental policies would work to benefit everyone. Success would only be achieved if we developed inclusive policies that directly engaged and benefited our city's under-served populations. For example, San Francisco's transportation sector remains one of the most significant sources of emissions. We are tackling this challenge by focusing on air quality, electrification, public transportation, and pedestrian and cyclist safety. But it is also important to link our efforts to education and jobs. In February 2017, San Francisco became the first U.S. city to make our city college free to all residents. When I announced new mandatory requirements to expand electric vehicle charging capacity in April 2017, we were positioned to connect it with a free Electric Vehicle Hybrid certification programme at San Francisco City College. This programme will train our local workforce to service the increased adoption of electric vehicles and charging technology. These educational and job pathways are critical to transitioning our communities to the low carbon jobs of the future.

Part of my goal in leading San Francisco's global engagement is to amplify the voice of those who believe in climate change, and be a welcoming beacon to those who are not yet engaged. We must understand and encourage those who are struggling to simply meet their basic needs and for whom the climate con-

versation seems overwhelming. These are the people who will feel the impacts of the climate crisis most. We must bring the lens of inclusion and collaboration to climate change work at all levels – from global to local.

To solve the climate crisis, we need everyone's help. So much work is happening on the ground in cities big and small across the United States that is cutting-edge and bridging economy, environment, and equity issues. Our role as cities participating in alliances and networks is to lift up that work and continue to place equity at the centre of the conversation. The same can be said of our many city organisations that help to advocate for policies on a local level.

Anne Hidalgo, the good news is that more and more female mayors are leading cities. Why is the connection between women, climate, and cities so important? And what are the objectives of the Women4Climate initiative?

ANNE HIDALGO: Ever since I was elected mayor of Paris, the media has emphasised that I am the first woman in this role. Across the globe, I am no longer an exception to that old rule, which was maintained for far too long. My friends the mayors of Washington D.C., Tokyo, Sydney, Barcelona, and Cape Town share similar experiences. Women are breaking through the glass ceiling at more and more local elections, and women mayors are increasingly normal. The figures bear this out:

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in 2014 just four cities across the C40 network had women mayors – now, since the beginning of 2017, 15 mayors are women, a 275 per cent increase. Governing large metropolitan areas is no longer forbidden territory.

Climate change is real and those who doubted it may have changed their minds with the recent hurricanes. But there is another inconvenient truth we need to tackle: women are more vulnerable to climate change than men. It is our duty to pave the way for the next generation of female leadership. The actions of future women leaders will be key in the fight against global warming.

Women4Climate will offer support, advice, and guidance to promising young women and their sustainable projects, for the benefit of the largest possible number of people. In Paris we have already identified a group of 10 inspiring young women leaders who will be mentored through the scheme, whom I am confident will be leading the way for decades to come in the global fight against climate change.

How do you imagine the city of the future?

ANNE HIDALGO: By 2050, more than two thirds of the people on earth will live in cities. To ensure the future of our planet, those cities of the future will need to produce close to zero greenhouse gas emissions. That might seem like a massive shift in the way that our cities operate, but I am confident that the spirit of innovation and collective ambition that defines city life will make such a transformation possible. Those cities will also be healthier, more prosperous, and more equitable.

EDWIN M. LEE: Urbanisation and increased density have many benefits for the environment, but will also create challenges. As cities, how do we ensure equity among our populations? How do we manage transportation needs and housing demands along with social service delivery? We know that cities will continue to be hit hard by rising sea

levels, hotter temperatures, and more extreme weather conditions. As we look ahead, I believe cities are primed to be leaders in tackling these challenges. We can lead the transition to a green economy. San Francisco has managed to reduce our emissions by 28 per cent from 1990 levels, while our local population has grown by 19 per cent and our economy by 79 per cent. Our commitment to inclusive climate work is leading to greater prosperity and innovation.

Cities are the future. We are the laboratories and incubators of innovation, especially with climate action and politics. San Francisco will continue to be a model of inclusive values that celebrates diversity and acceptance. These inclusive values are what will translate to climate success and greater innovation and prosperity for all. At a time when our nation is trying to close our borders, figuratively and literally, San Francisco and cities throughout the world will be beacons of hope.



ANNE HIDALGO

has been mayor of Paris since 2014. In December 2015, she became chair of C40 Cities, the leading network of the 90 most important cities in the world committed to addressing climate change. Hidalgo was first deputy mayor of Paris from 2001 to 2014.



EDWIN M. LEE

is the 43rd mayor of the city of San Francisco, located in California, United States. San Francisco's first Asian American mayor, his policies have led to the city experiencing its most successful economic expansion ever, whilst still achieving a substantial reduction in emissions from 1990 levels.

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