



EUROPE'S CITIES IN THE 2020s

Change, challenges and governance capacities

European Cities Programme
Inaugural Roundtable, 04 May 2022

Ben Rogers, Bloomberg Fellow in Government Innovation
LSE Cities, London School of Economics and Political Science





European Cities Programme

Meeting the urban challenges of the 2020s

A research, engagement and capacity building programme on the future of European cities supported by Bloomberg Philanthropies

The world's cities face many common challenges, but Europe's cities also have features that set them apart. The continent urbanised early, has long-established traditions of city self-government and is today characterised by a dense network of medium-sized cities, many with compact, historic centres developed before the car, generous welfare systems and strong planning regimes.

In more recent years, Europe's urban centres have gained a new sense of power and purpose – a development aided by the transition to an urbanised, post-industrial economy, a growing expert policy consensus in favour of cities, and, within the European Union, supranational funding and policy support. Though the picture varies across the continent, on the whole Europe's cities have gained new agency, become better networked and developed an increasingly confident sense of shared identity. Many cities

Print or share



Project team

Ben Rogers; Nuno F da Cruz; Catarina Heeckt; Francesco Ripa; Lucie Charles

Project Funders

Bloomberg Philanthropies

Research Strand

CONTENTS OF THIS PRESENTATION

1. City life in Europe has a long history and deep cultural roots that have produced a distinctive urban profile today
2. One way of telling the story of Europe's cities is in terms of declining hard and developing soft power
3. Within Europe, cities have found new energy and confidence
4. But while some cities have flourished others have struggled
5. And Europe's cities as a whole face daunting challenges
6. Questions

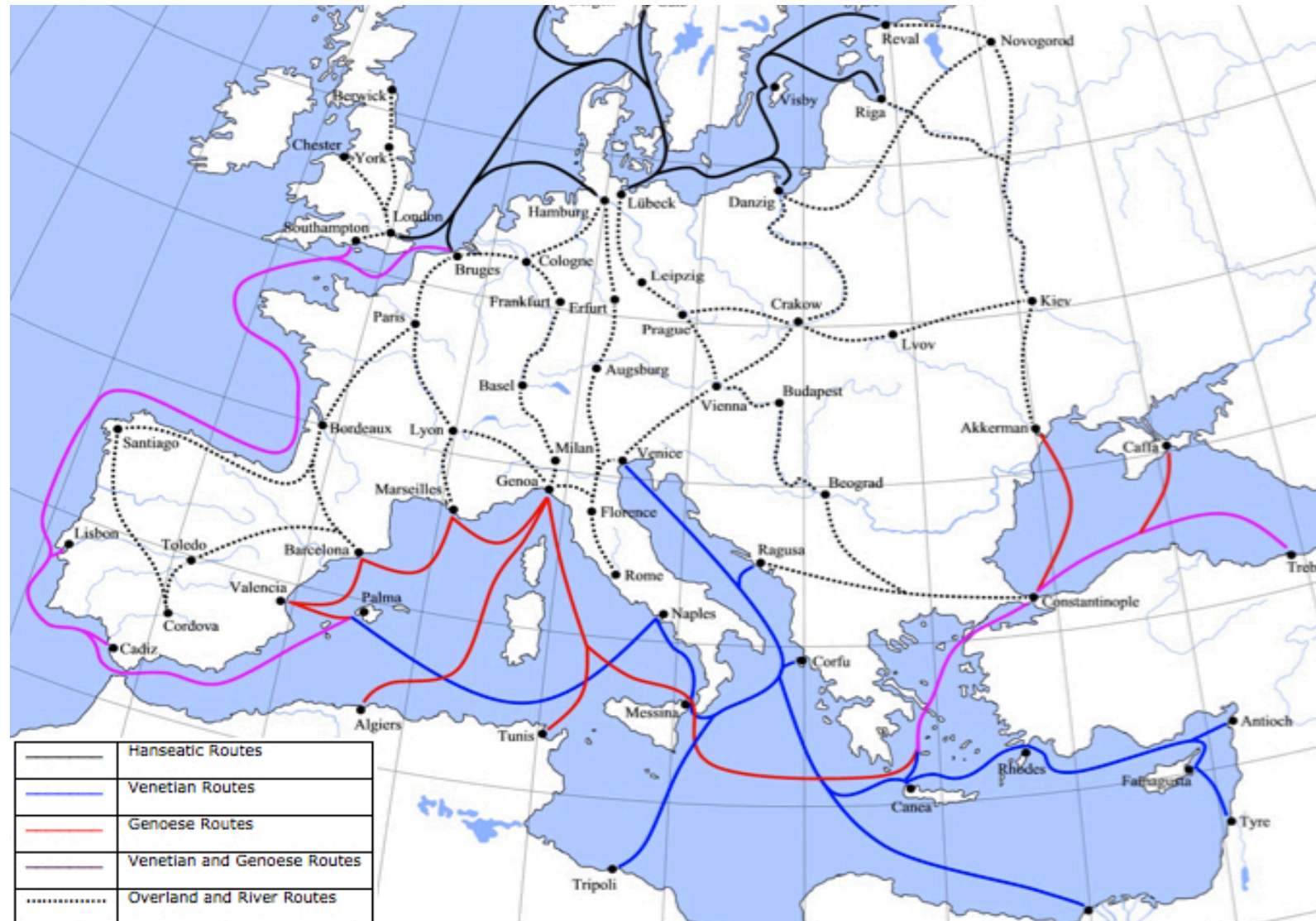




CITY LIFE IN EUROPE HAS A LONG HISTORY AND DEEP CULTURAL ROOTS THAT HAVE PRODUCED A DISTINCTIVE URBAN PROFILE TODAY

Late medieval trade routes in Europe

**MOST OF EUROPE'S
CITIES PREDATE THE
NATIONS WHICH NOW
CONTAIN THEM**



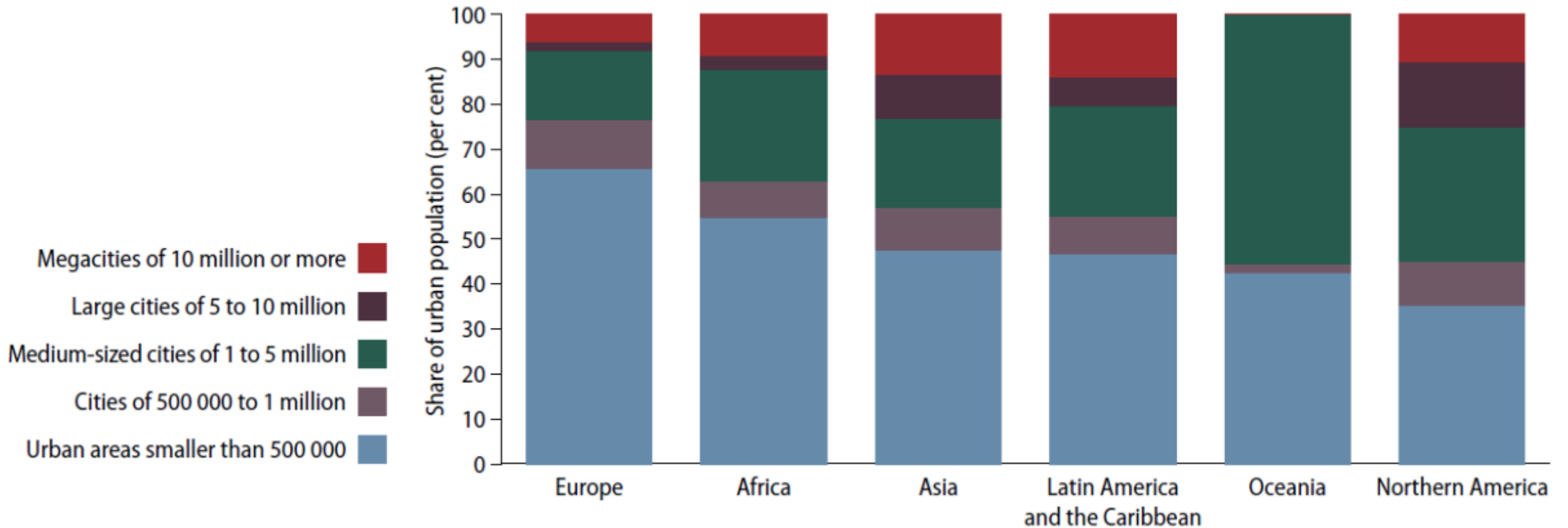
**FROM THE 17TH CENTURY
WE HAVE TO TELL THE
STORY OF NATION STATES,
COLONIAL EXPANSION,
AND URBAN GROWTH
TOGETHER**

The Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations, Crystal Palace, London 1851



THE CITIES THAT THIS HISTORY HAS LEFT US ARE MID-SIZED AND MID DENSITY

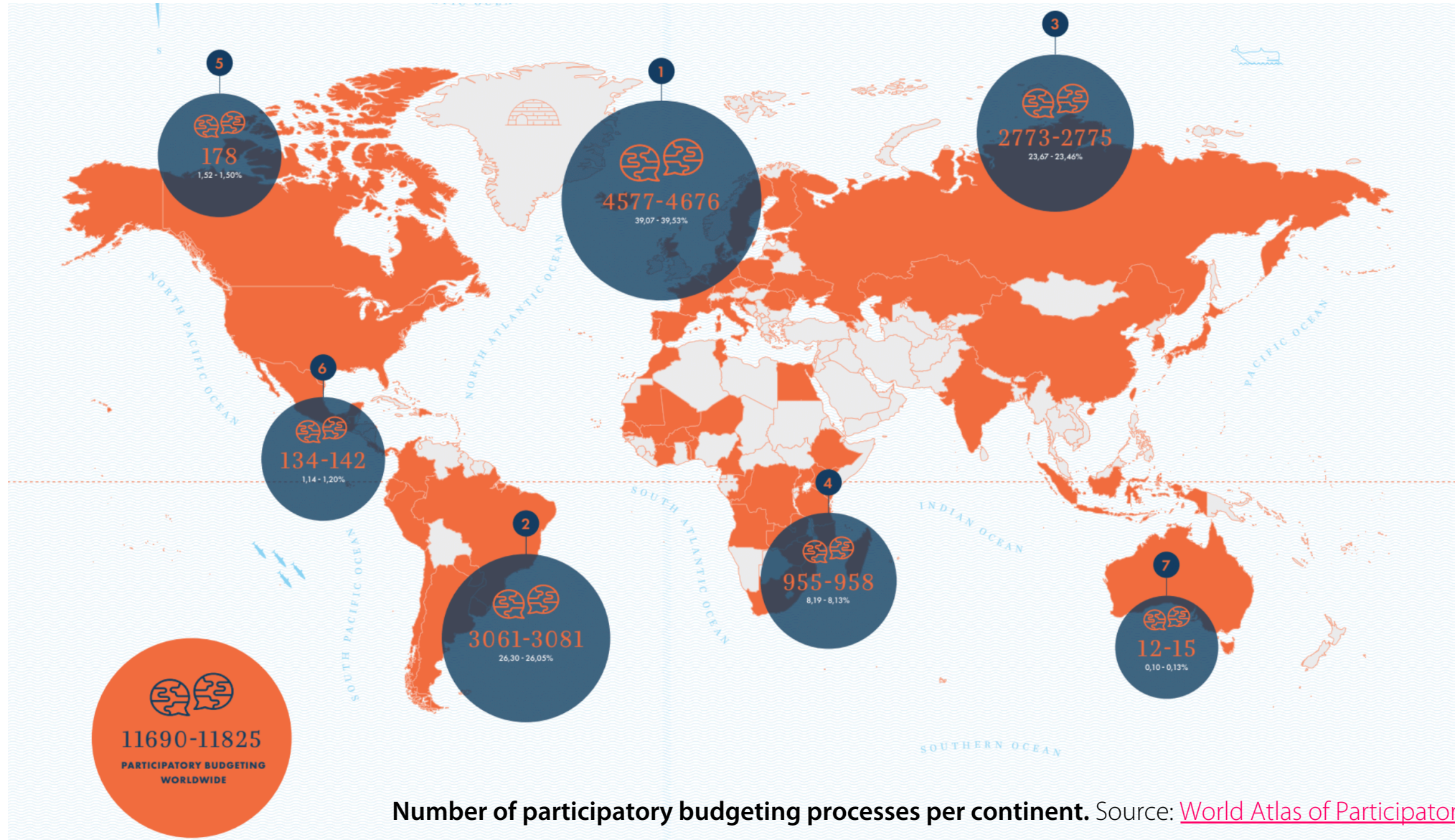
Urban population distribution by settlement size across global regions



**THEY ARE TYPICALLY
PEDESTRIAN AND CYCLIST
FRIENDLY, WITH HISTORIC
CENTRES AND A RICH
PUBLIC REALM**

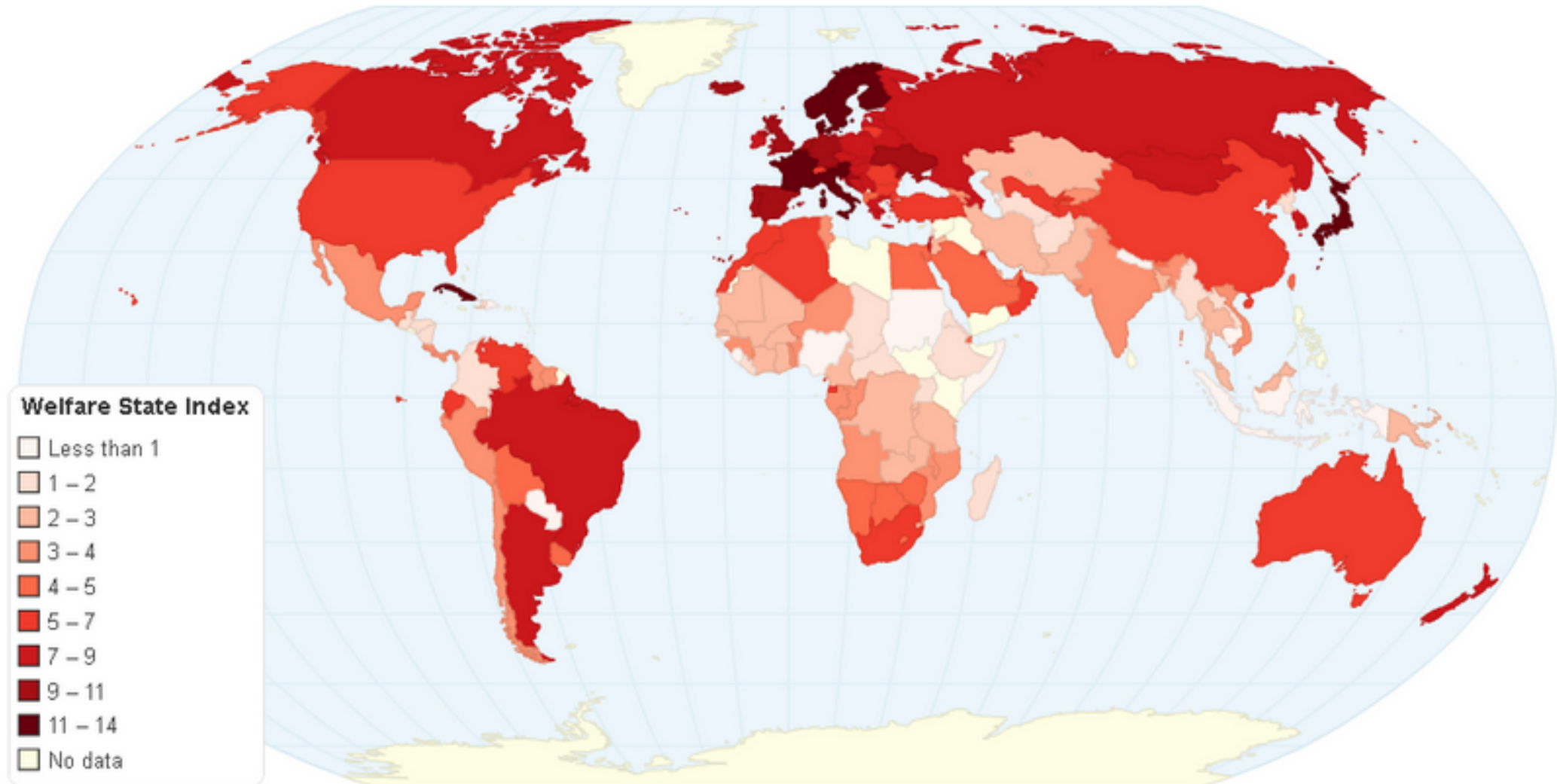


AND HAVE RELATIVELY STRONG DEMOCRATIC NORMS AND INSTITUTIONS



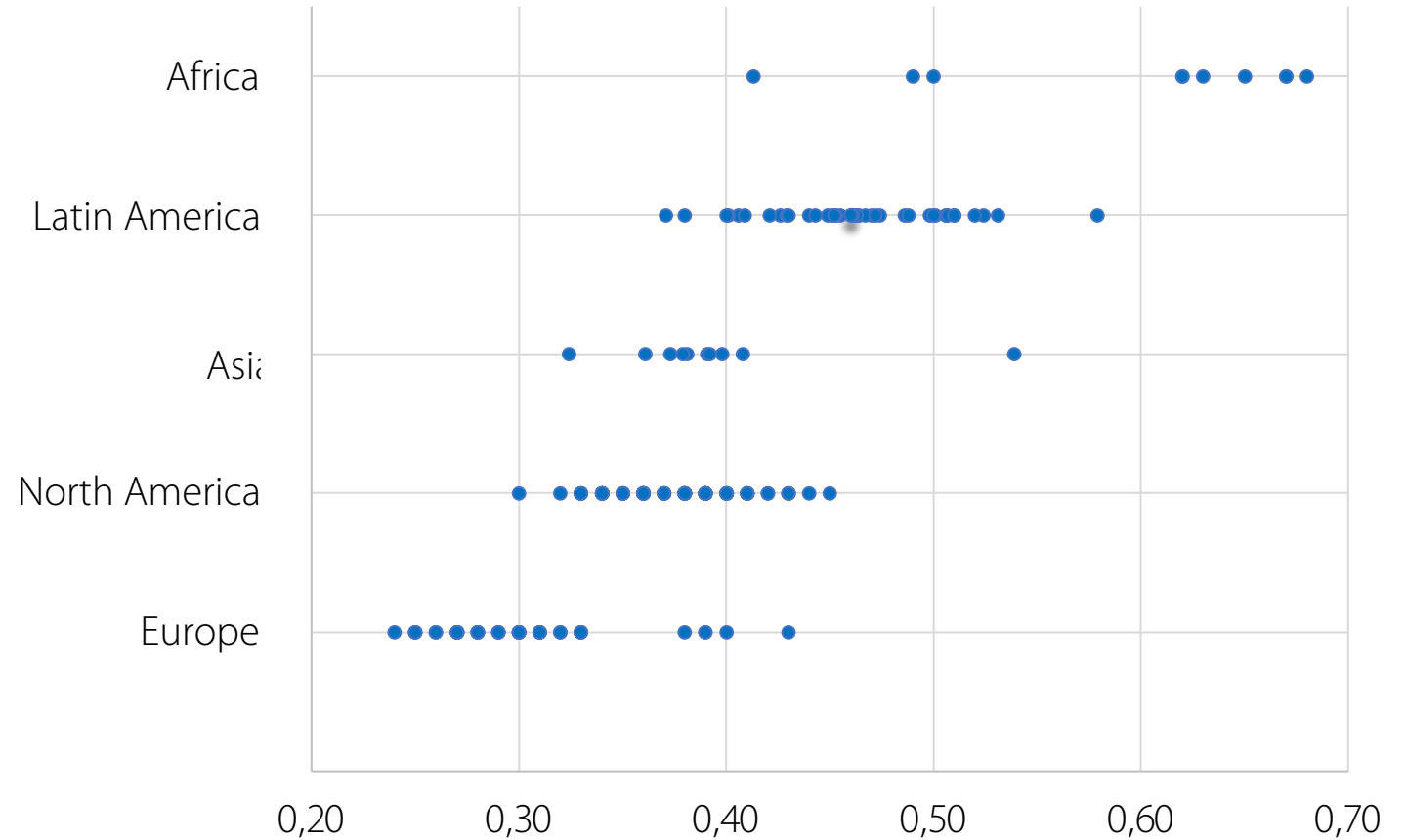
Number of participatory budgeting processes per continent. Source: [World Atlas of Participatory Budgeting, 2019](#)

THEY HAVE WELL-DEVELOPED WELFARE STATES

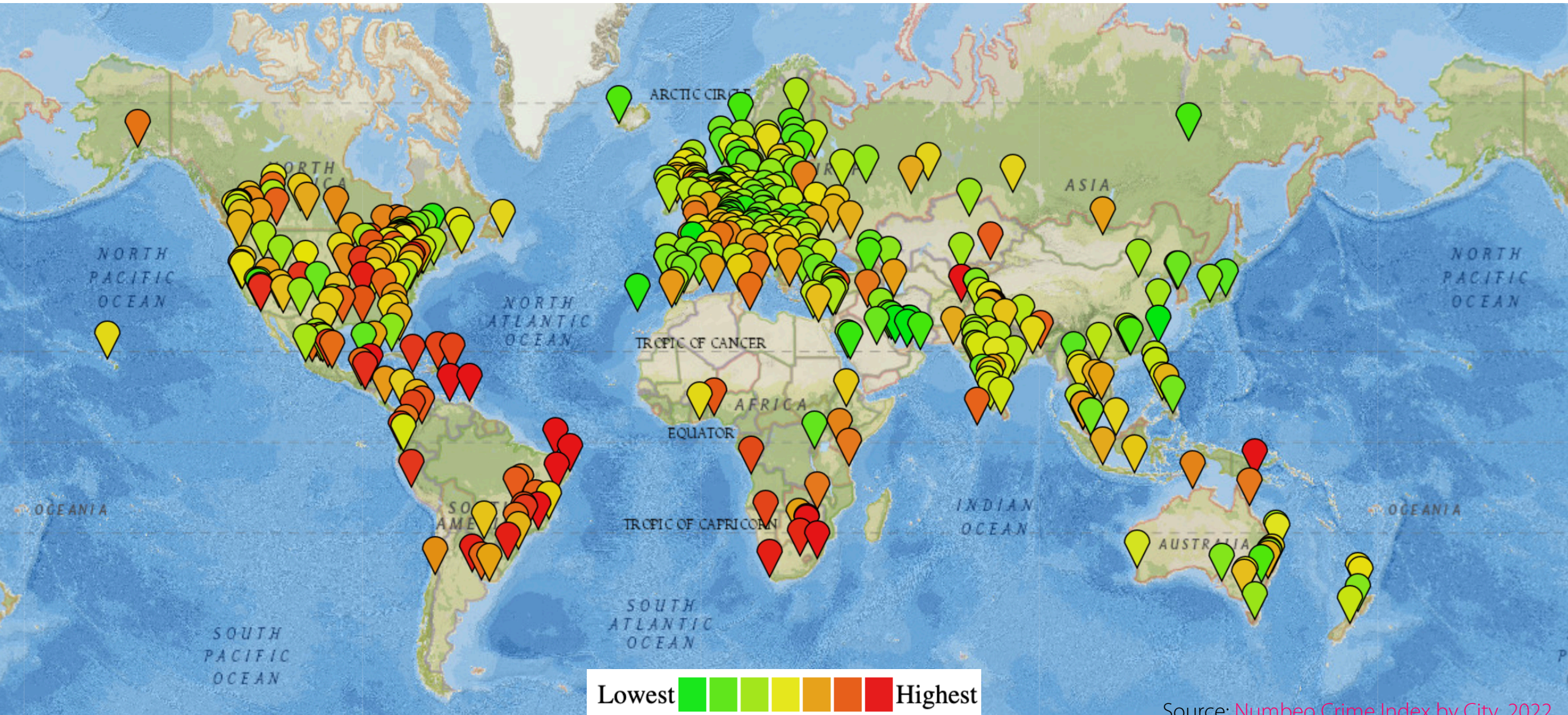


**AND ARE LESS UNEQUAL
THAN CITIES IN OTHER
CONTINENTS**

Gini Coefficient of selected cities per global region



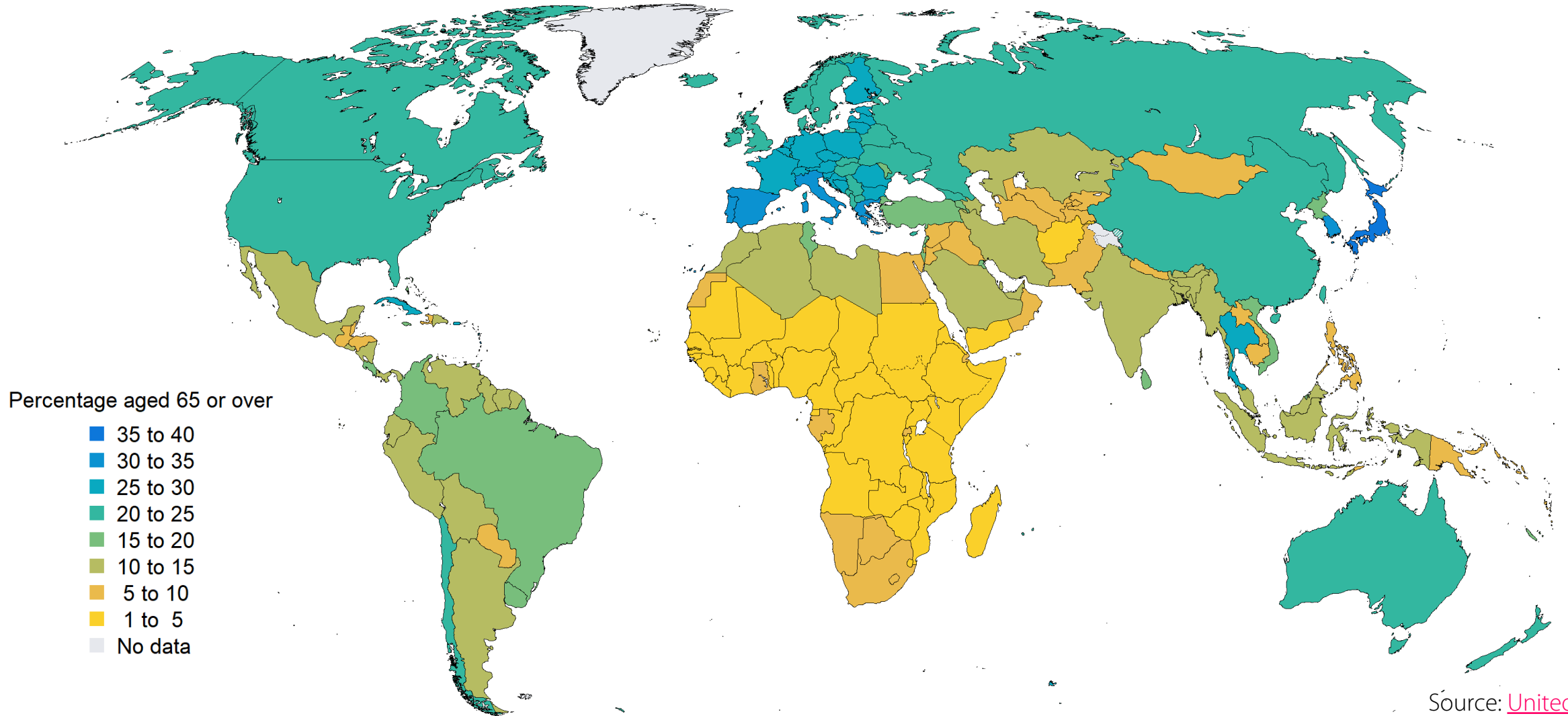
THEIR CITIZENS ARE COMPARATIVELY HEALTHY, SAFE, AND RICH



Source: [Numbeo Crime Index by City, 2022](#)

EUROPE'S POPULATION IS AGEING

Percentage of population aged 65 or over, 2040 (medium-variant projection).



DESPITE PROGRESS, EUROPE'S CITIES REMAIN MAJOR ENGINES OF CARBON POLLUTION

Greenhouse Gas Emissions of C40 Cities per emission sector





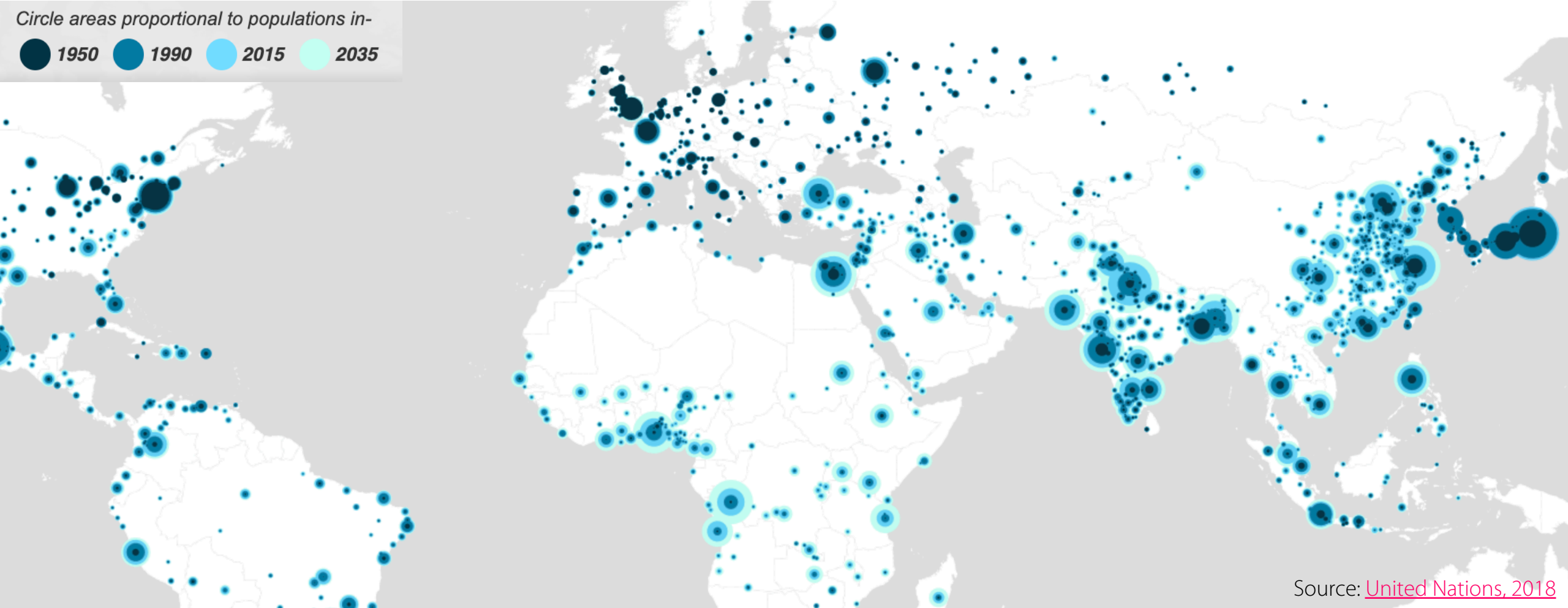
**ONE WAY OF TELLING THE STORY OF
EUROPE'S CITIES IS IN TERMS OF DECLINING
HARD AND DEVELOPING SOFT POWER**

EUROPE LED THE WAY ON URBANISATION BUT REST OF THE WORLD HAS CAUGHT UP

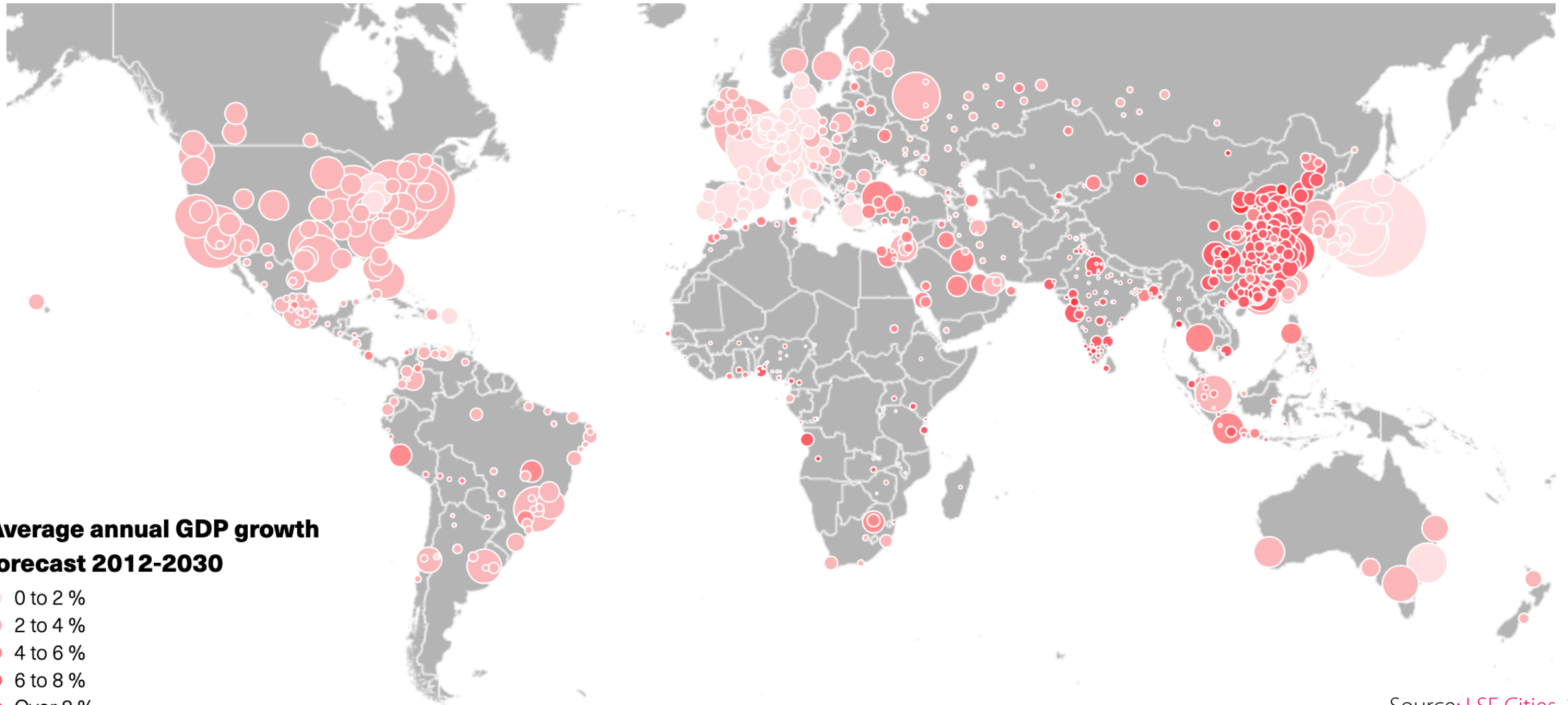
World City Populations 1950-2035

Circle areas proportional to populations in-

- 1950
- 1990
- 2015
- 2035



ECONOMIC GROWTH HAS BEEN AND IS PREDICTED TO BE LOWER THAN ELSEWHERE



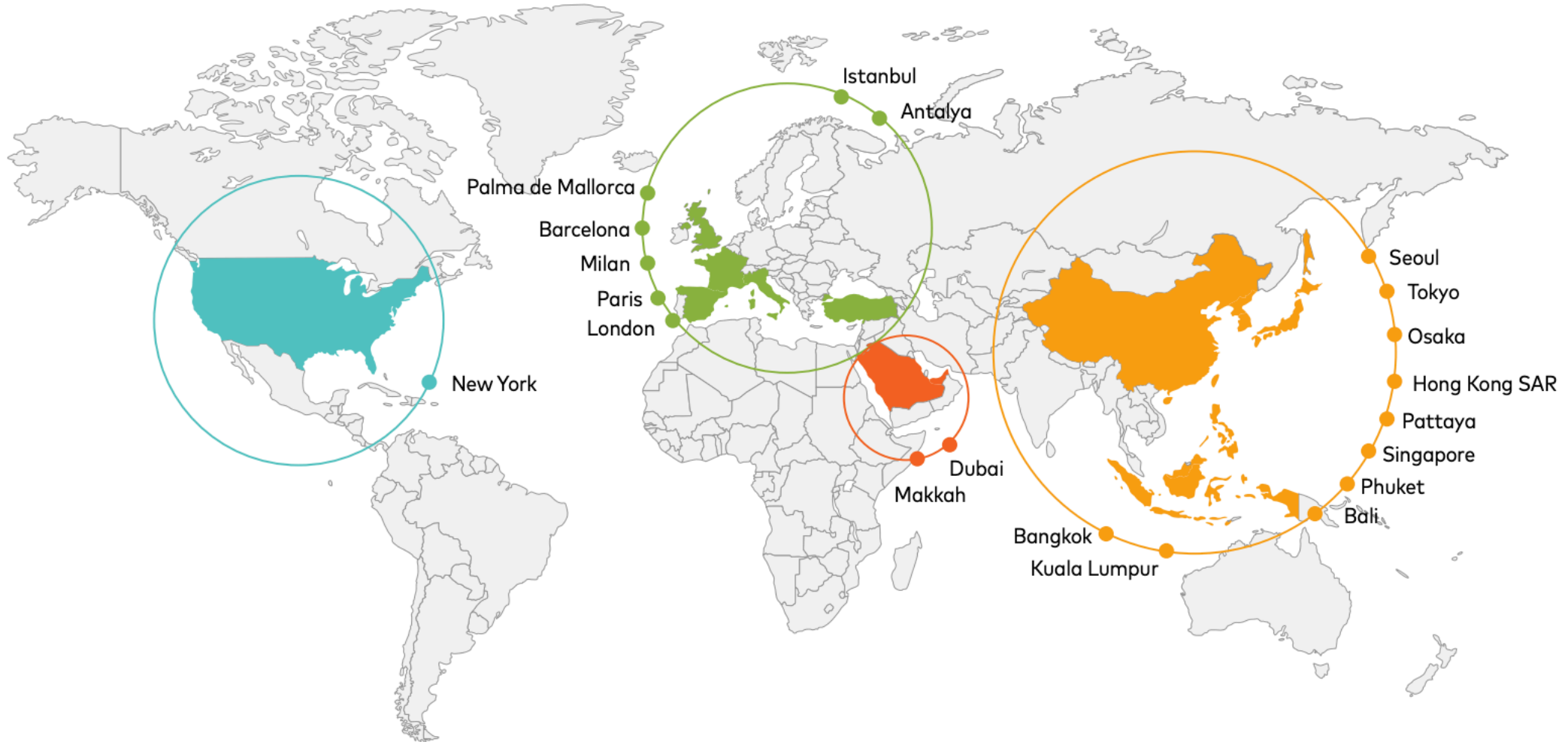
YET EUROPE'S CITIES HAVE RETAINED A REMARKABLE DEGREE OF SOFT POWER

UNESCO Heritage sites



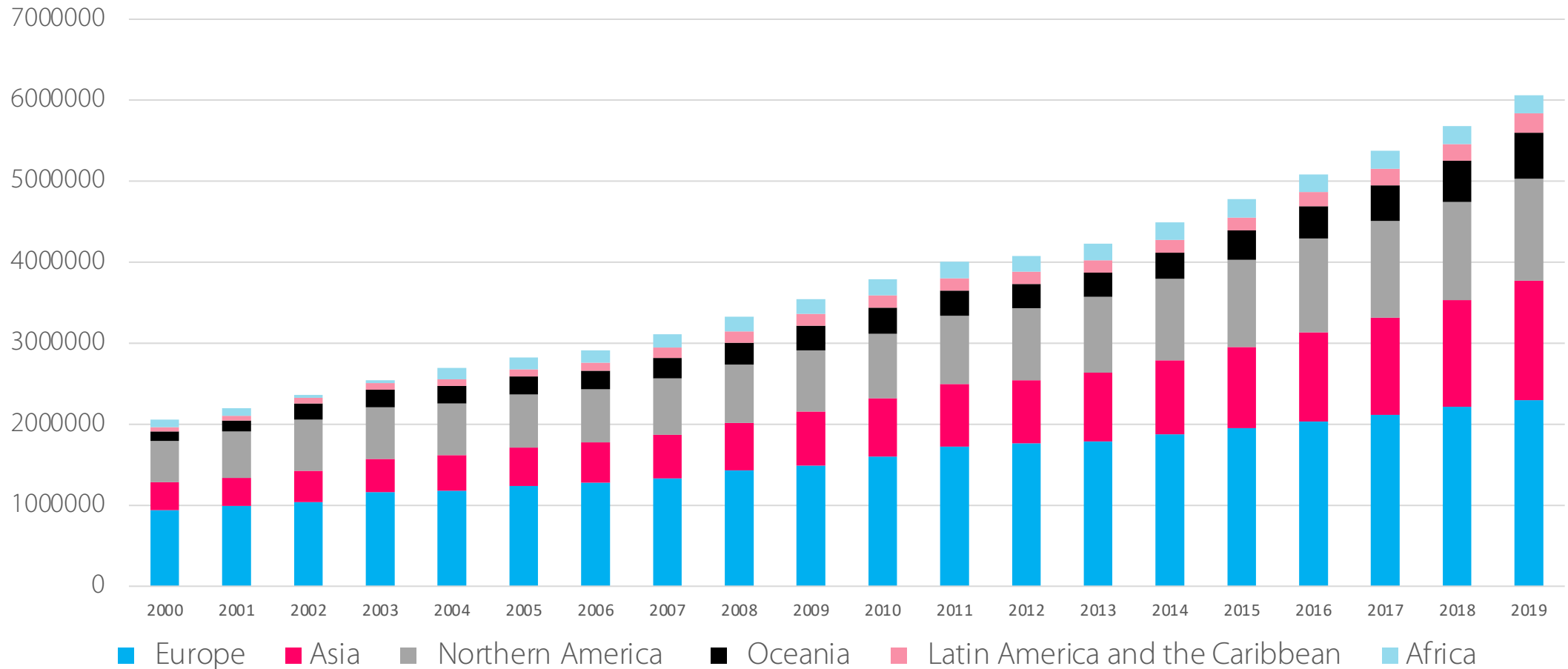
EUROPE'S CITIES ATTRACTS MORE THAN THEIR SHARE OF TOURISTS

Top 20 Destination Cities 2019



... OVERSEAS STUDENTS

Number of inbound internationally mobile students per world region (aggregation of national numbers)



... AND SPORTING ALLEGIENCES

Most supported football clubs in the world



1. Real Madrid



2. Barcelona



3. Manchester United



4. Juventus



5. Chelsea



6. Paris Saint-Germain



7. Bayern Munich



8. Arsenal



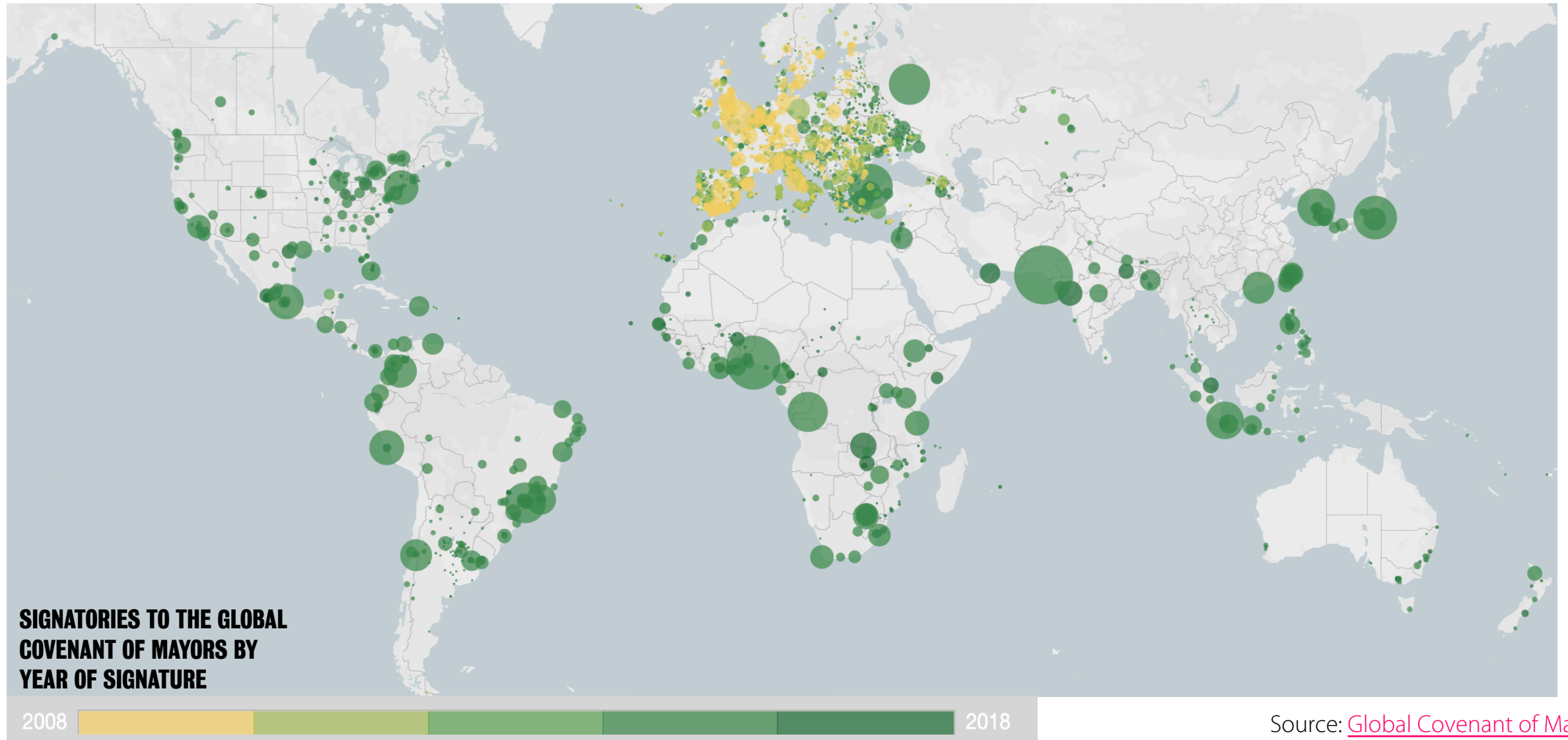
9. Liverpool



10. Manchester City



THEY HAVE COME TO PLAY A LEADING ROLE IN GLOBAL CITY NETWORKS



AND ARE WIDELY VIEWED BEACONS OF URBAN INNOVATION

THE PROMISE OF THE 15-MINUTE CITY

Politicians and urban planners are betting on hyper-local living — a future ideal that borrows much from the past. But is it a path to urban utopia or just a fad?

Source: [POLITICO](#)

TIME 2030

[← BACK TO HOME](#)

Amsterdam Is Embracing a Radical New Economic Theory to Help Save the Environment. Could It Also Replace Capitalism?

Source: [TIME](#)



Superblocks: Barcelona's car-free zones could extend lives and boost mental health

Publié: 13 septembre 2019, 16:04 CEST

Source: [The Conversation](#)

'Typical Manchester' launches world-leading climate goal

Source: [Business Growth Hub](#)

BUSINESS | JOURNAL REPORTS: TECHNOLOGY

Cities Take the Lead in Setting Rules Around How AI Is Used

A look at what New York, London, Barcelona and other places are doing to establish regulations that other cities—and countries—may want to copy

Source: [The Wall Street Journal](#)

What Italian cities can teach us about how to establish urban commons - and their value

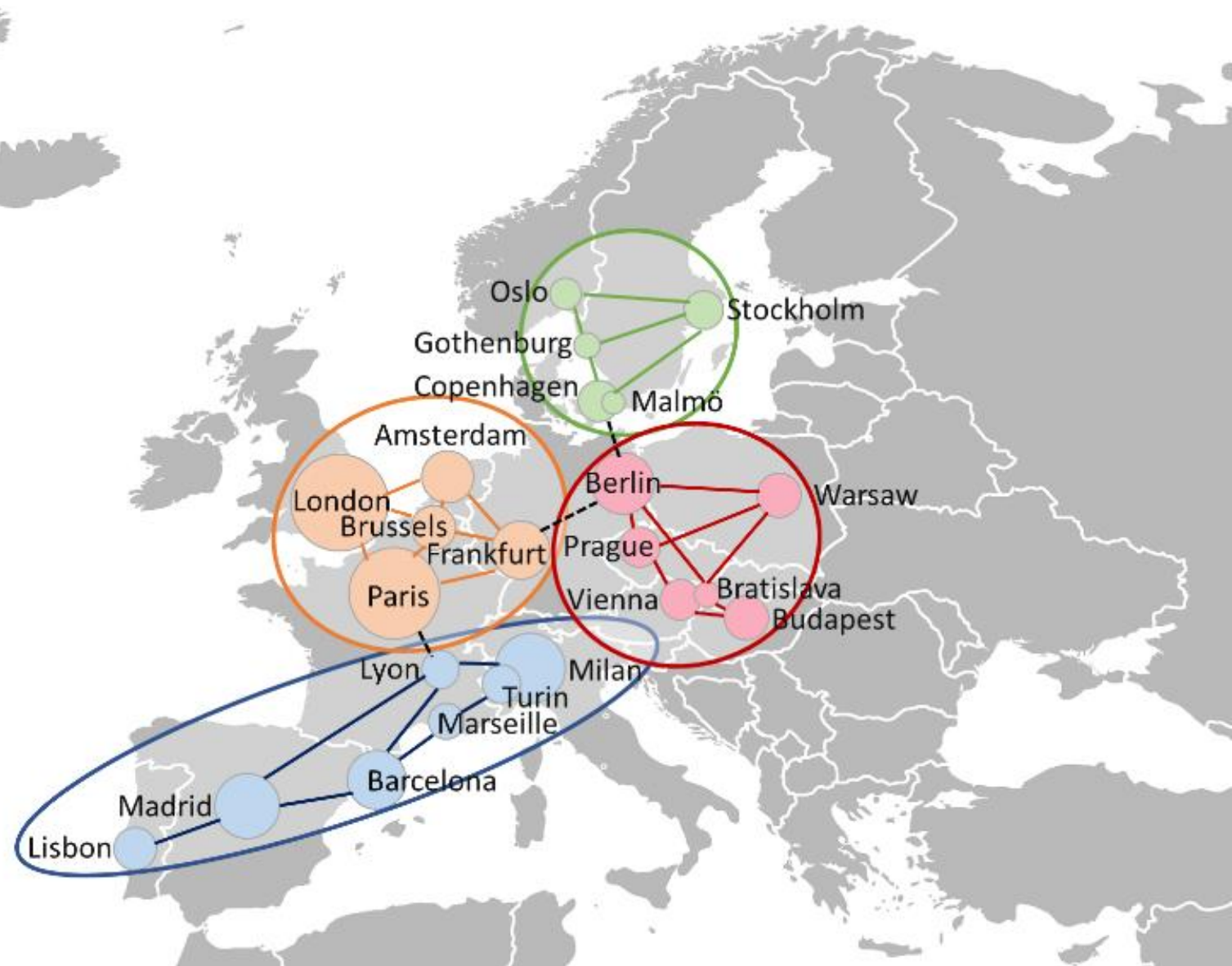
COMMUNITY, LOCALISM, NEW ECONOMICS · 19 November 2018

Source: [The Alternative](#)

A 3D topographic map of Europe, showing the continent's elevation and terrain. The map is rendered in shades of gray, with higher elevations appearing as darker, more prominent peaks. The text is overlaid in a bold, red, sans-serif font, centered horizontally across the middle of the map. The text reads: "WITHIN EUROPE, CITIES HAVE FOUND NEW ENERGY AND CONFIDENCE".

WITHIN EUROPE, CITIES HAVE FOUND NEW ENERGY AND CONFIDENCE

EUROPE INCREASINGLY DEPENDS ON ITS URBAN ECONOMIES



EUROPE'S YOUNG PEOPLE CONCENTRATED IN CITIES

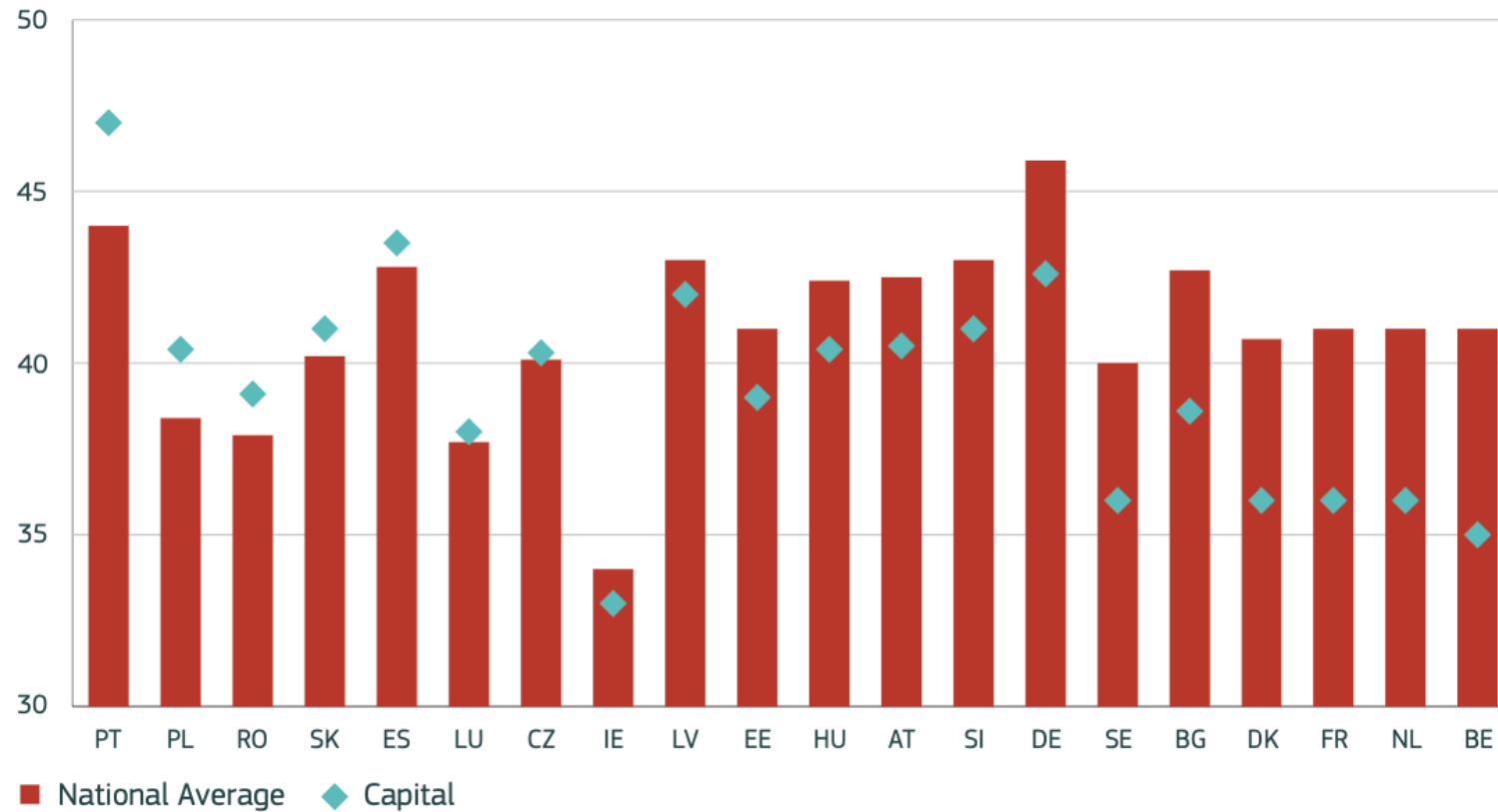


Figure 20: Median ages in European capital cities as compared to the national average (latest year available within 2011-2016)

Source: JRC elaboration based on Eurostat data, accessed in December 2018.

EUROPE'S CITIES HAVE COME TO COLLABORATE ACROSS BOUNDARIES AND BORDERS

GLOBAL

metropolis ●
1985

ICLEI
Local Governments
for Sustainability
1990

IOPD International
Observatory
on Participatory
Democracy
2001

**C40
CITIES**
CLIMATE LEADERSHIP GROUP
2005

RESILIENT
GLOBAL
RESILIENT
CITIES
NETWORK
2013

Cities Coalition for
Digital Rights
2018

**GLOBAL COVENANT
of MAYORS for
CLIMATE & ENERGY**
2008

OECD CHAMPION MAYORS
for Inclusive Growth
2016

UCLG
United Cities
and Local Governments
2004

**WORLD
CITIES
CULTURE
FORUM**
2012

**CITIES
FOR GLOBAL
HEALTH**
2020



EUROPEAN

**EURO
CITIES**
1986

ENERGYCITIES
1990

URBACT
Driving change for
better cities
2003

**EUROPEAN
GREEN CAPITAL**
An initiative of the
European Commission
2008

POLIS
CITIES AND REGIONS FOR TRANSPORT INNOVATION
1989

CIVITAS
Sustainable and smart mobility for all
2002



... AND ADOPTED PROGRESSIVE APPROACHES ON CLIMATE CHANGE, MIGRATION, CIVIL RIGHTS AND OTHER ISSUES IN DEFIANCE OF NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS

Mayor of London Sadiq Khan launches his own version of the Brexit bus

The London Is Open bus will tour the capital offering advice to EU nationals who want to stay in the capital

Source: [Harper's Bazaar](#)

Bratislava mayor: Where national governments fail, cities step up for democracy

Source: [EURACTIV](#)

European mayors eye long-term partnerships with counterparts to rebuild Ukraine

Source: [EURACTIV](#)

100 EU cities commit to going climate neutral by 2030

A new Brussels scheme will help cities like Sofia, Rome, Budapest and Paris decarbonize.

Source: [POLITICO](#)

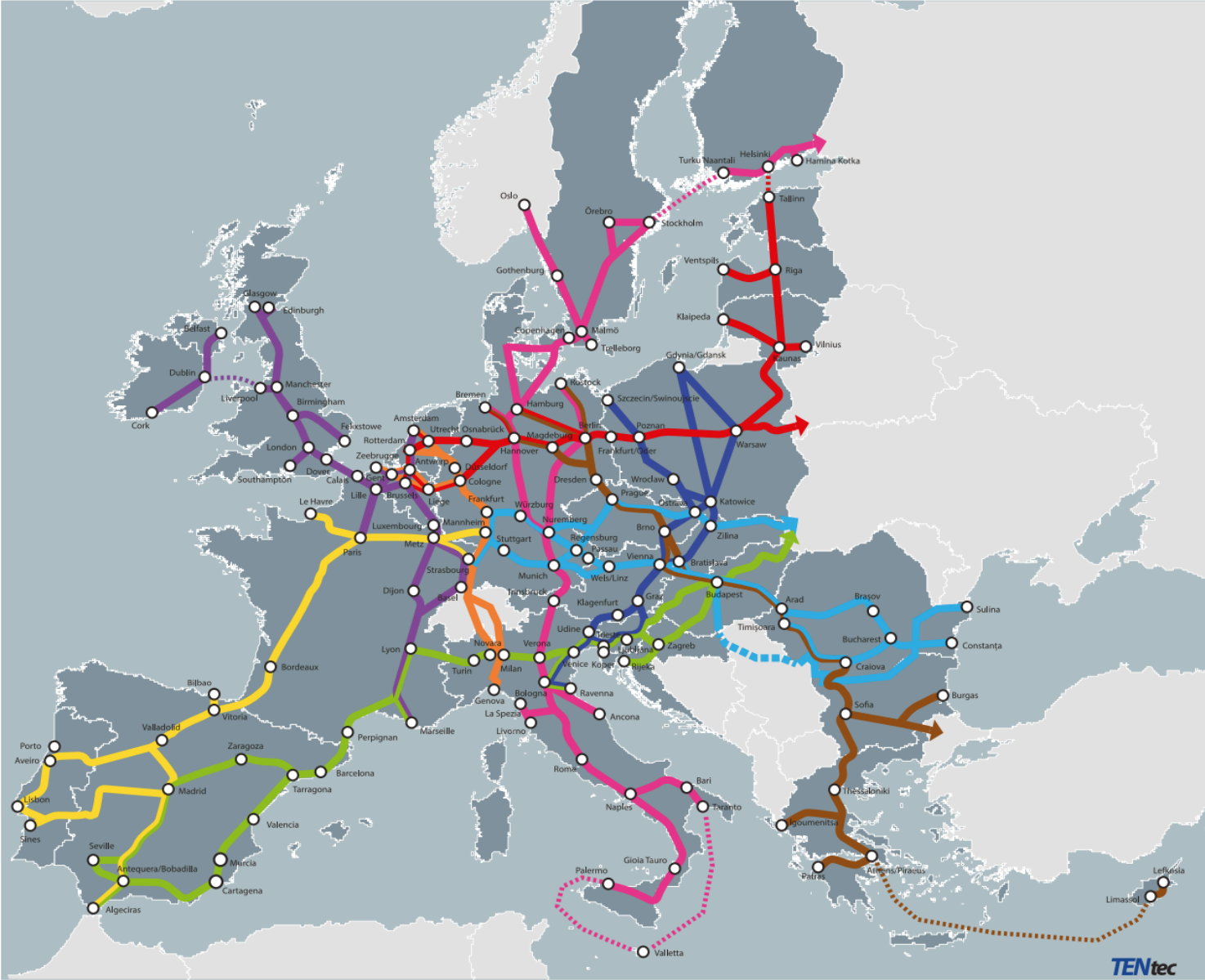
Greens surge in French local elections as Anne Hidalgo holds Paris

Socialist mayor retains capital, with Macron's LREM losing out to the ecology party

Source: [The Guardian](#)

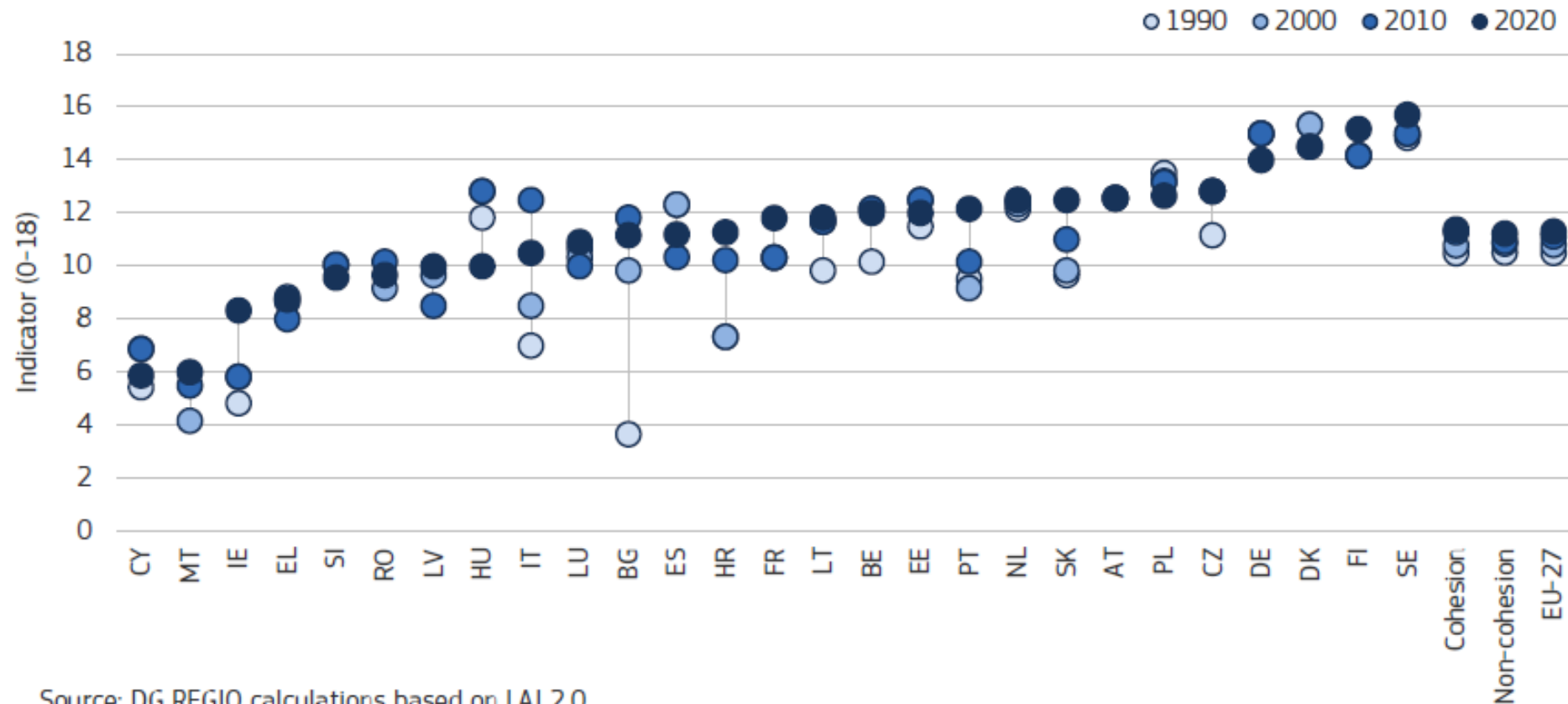
Trans-European Transport Network Corridors

**THE EU HAS BACKED
URBAN AGENDAS AND
MULTI-LEVEL AND
NETWORKED GOVERNANCE**



BUT DESPITE THE TALK ABOUT GIVING CITIES MORE POWER, THERE HAS BEEN ONLY MODEST CHANGE IN MOST COUNTRIES

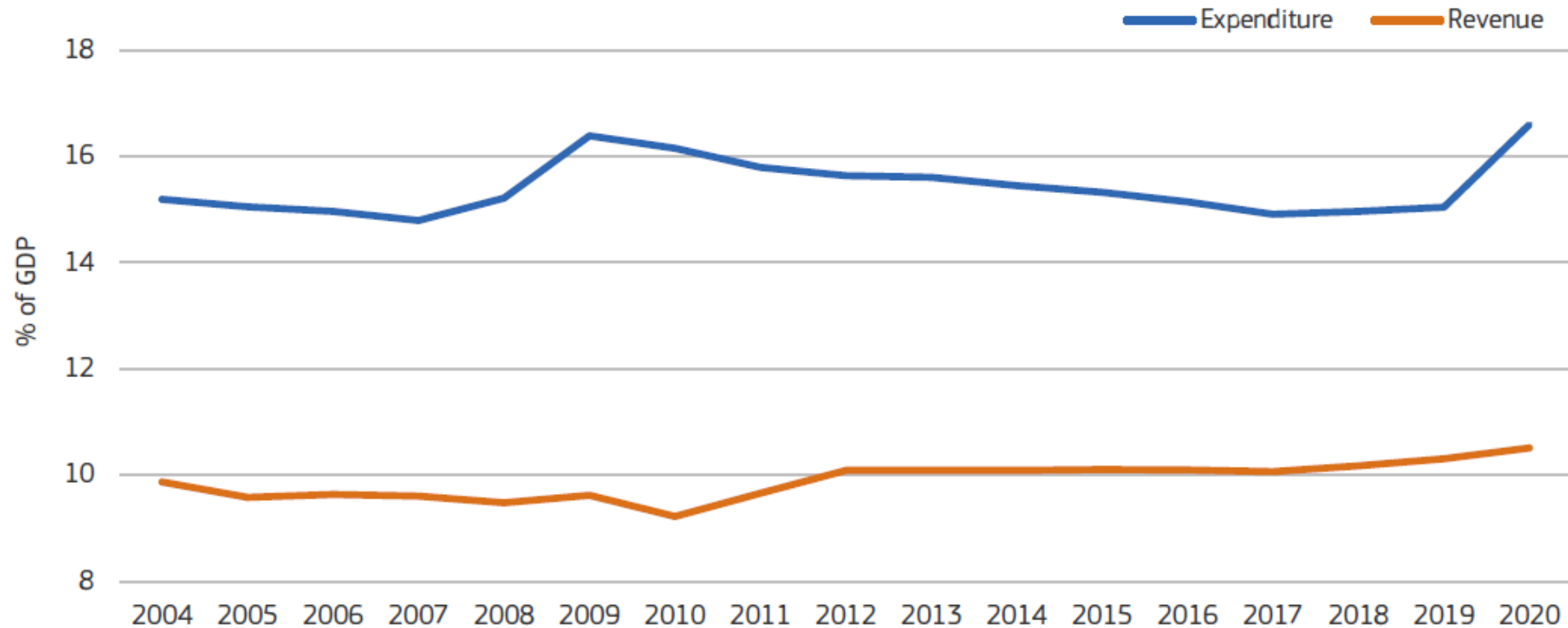
Figure 8.20 Local self-rule indicator, 1990, 2000, 2010 and 2020



Source: DG REGIO calculations based on LAI 2.0.

NATIONAL GOVERNMENTS HAVE BEEN PARTICULARLY UNWILLING TO DEVOLVE POWER OF REVENUE AND EXPENDITURE

Figure 8.11 Sub-national government expenditure and revenue, EU-27, 2004-2020

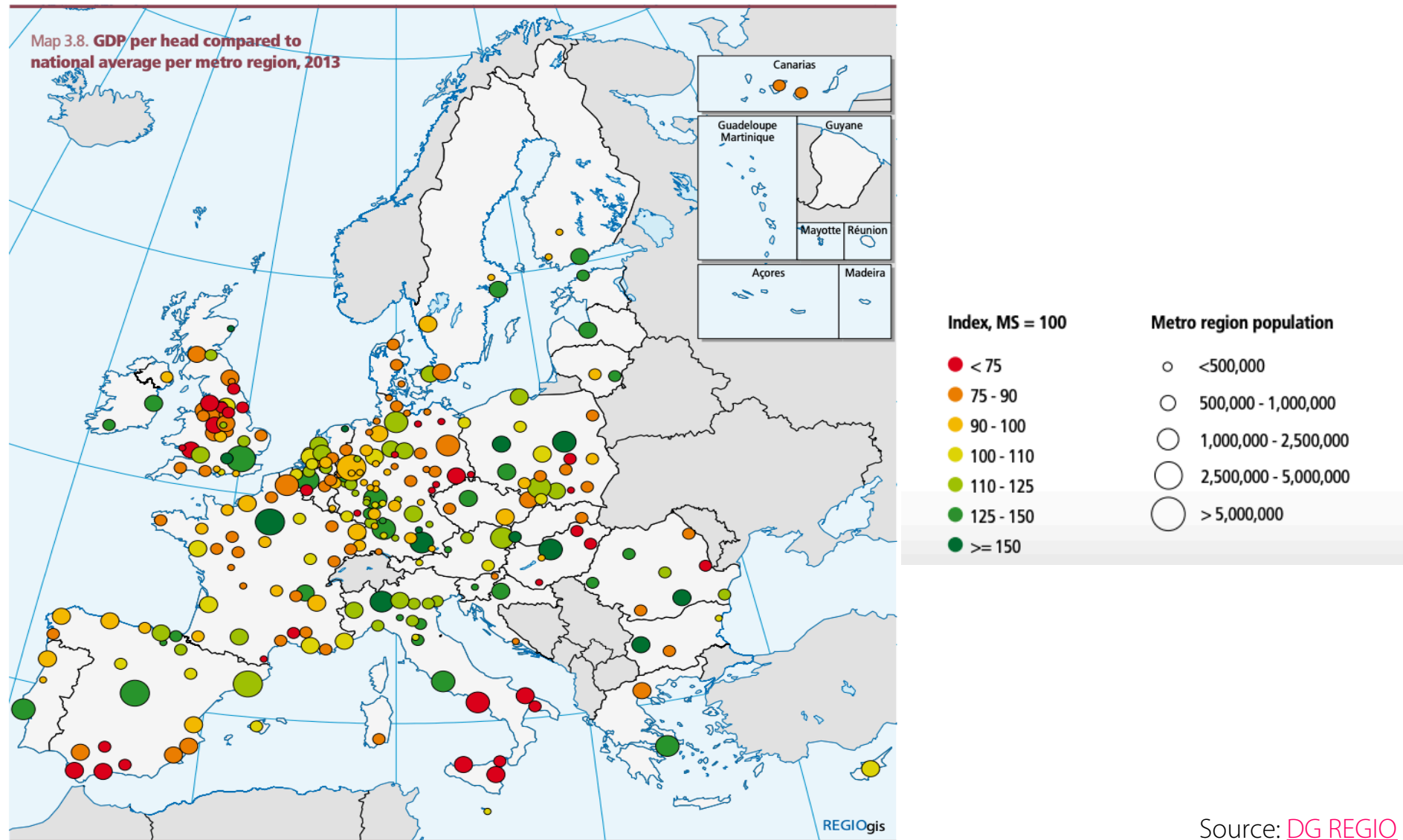


Source: Eurostat [gov_10a_main].

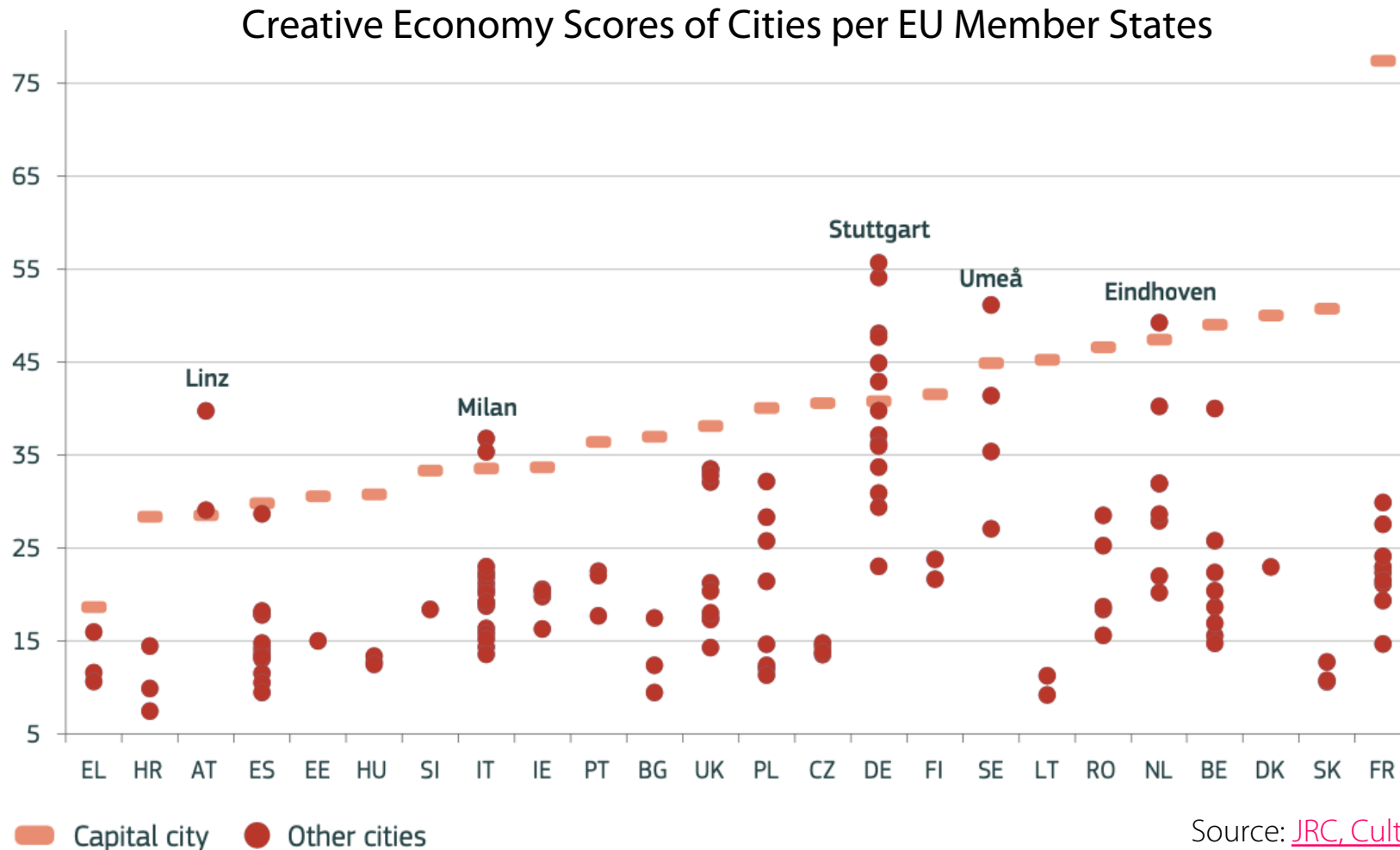
A grayscale 3D topographic map of Europe, showing the continent's terrain with various elevations and peaks. The map is centered on the continent, with the Atlantic Ocean to the west and the Mediterranean Sea to the south. The text is overlaid in the center of the map.

**BUT WHILE SOME CITIES
HAVE FLOURISHED OTHERS
HAVE STRUGGLED**

THERE ARE MANY CITIES WHERE GDP IS LOWER THAN THE NATIONAL AVERAGE

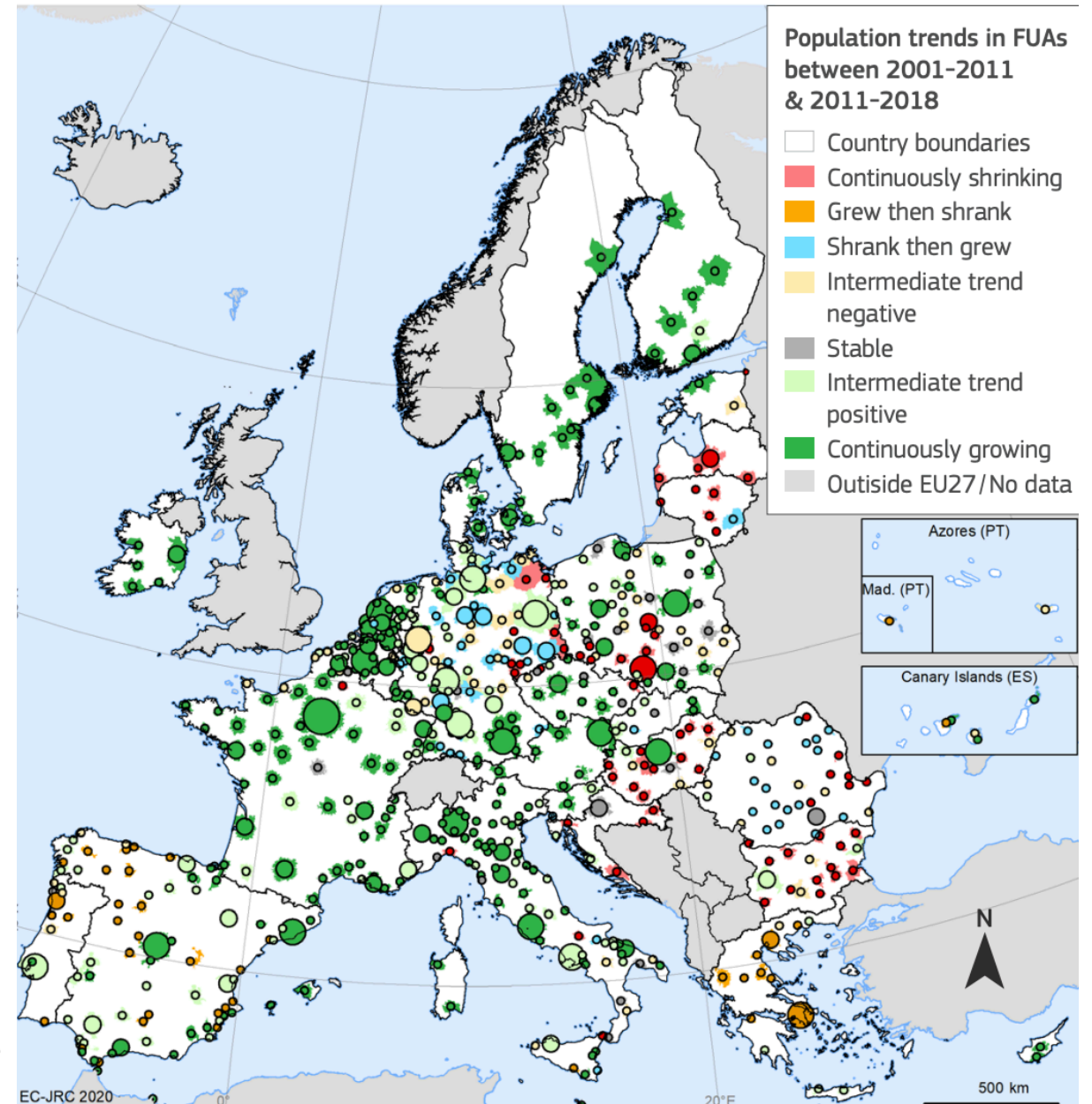


SOME CITIES LOOK MUCH BETTER POSITIONED TO PROSPER AS KNOWLEDGE AND CREATIVE SECTORS CONTINUE TO GROW

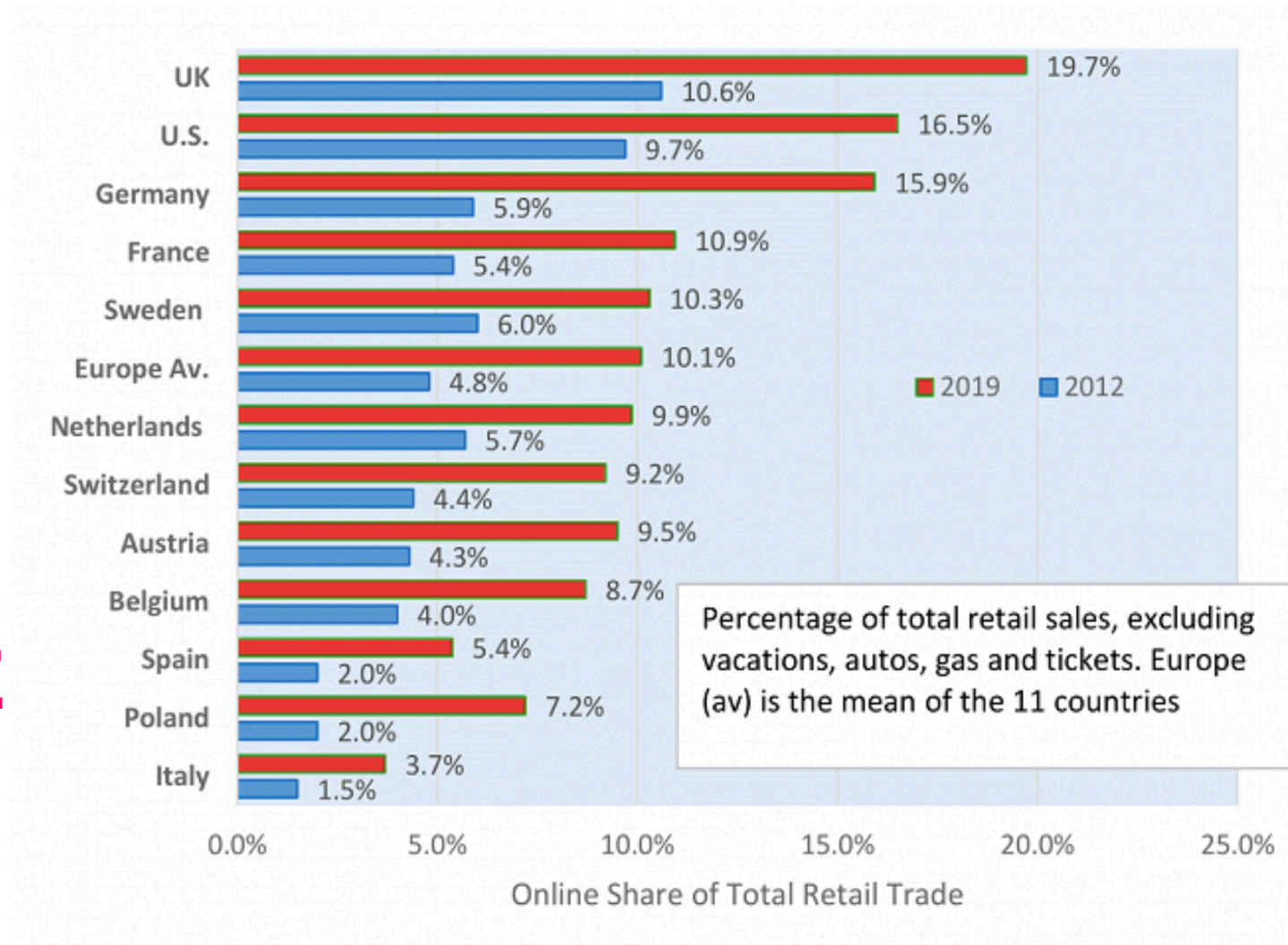


**WHILE MANY CITY
POPULATIONS ARE GROWING,
OTHERS HAVE SHRUNK—
ESPECIALLY IN EASTERN
EUROPE**

Changes in FUA population size
between 2001 and 2018

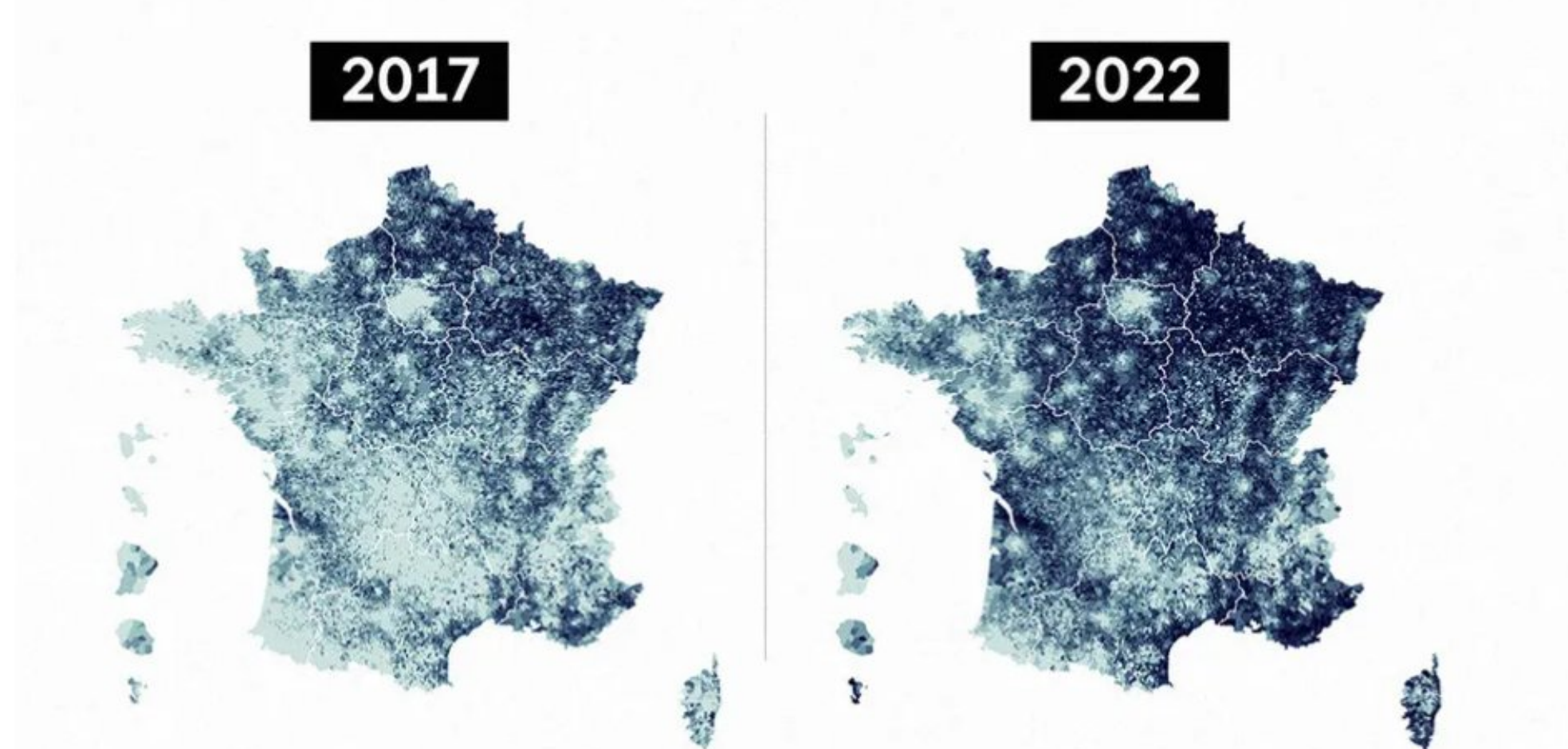


THE PANDEMIC HAS ACCELERATE THE RISE OF REMOTE WORKING AND SHOPPING, WITH POTENTIALLY PROFOUND IMPLICATIONS FOR CITIES – BUT THIS IS PLAYING OUT DIFFERENTLY FROM PLACE TO PLACE



A GROWING GAP BETWEEN SUCCESSFUL & 'LEFT BEHIND' REGIONS IS FUELING ILLIBERAL MOVEMENTS

Votes for extreme right parties in the first round of the 2017 and 2022 presidential elections

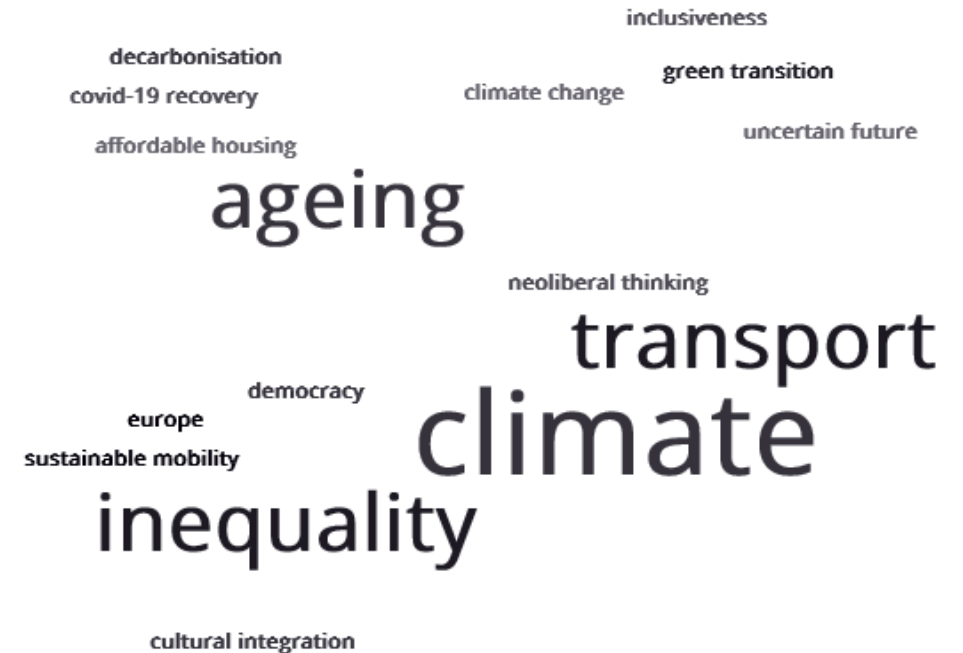


A 3D topographic map of Europe, showing the continent's elevation and terrain. The map is rendered in shades of gray, with higher elevations appearing darker. The text is overlaid in a bold, red, sans-serif font, centered on the map.

**AND EUROPE'S CITIES AS A WHOLE
FACE DAUNTING CHALLENGES**

KEY CHALLENGES IDENTIFIED IN INTERVIEWS

- Climate
- Sustainable transport
- Housing and socio-spatial inequalities
- Migration and social integration
- COVID-19 recovery
- Ageing
- Populism
- Resilience in the face of emergencies



QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

- a) Is there anything important missing or wrong in our analysis?
- b) Is our hope in cities misplaced?
- c) What are the challenges that are not getting the attention they deserve?
- d) Which cities are not getting the attention they deserve?
- e) Are European cities recovering from the pandemic in a distinct way?

A 3D topographic map of Europe, showing the continent's elevation and terrain. The map is rendered in shades of gray, with higher elevations appearing darker. The text "KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION" is overlaid in a bold, red, sans-serif font, centered on the map.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM THE DISCUSSION

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ROUNDTABLE

POLICY PRIORITIES

Energy and climate: cities can “make or break” this agenda

- Beyond technical solutions, they require a complete rethinking of urban life
- Emphasis on the economic co-benefits

Digital transformation and data: European cities and the EU at the forefront

- EU : Digital Services Act; European cities leading on the Coalition for Digital Rights
- A “golden opportunity” for a strong alliance across levels of government and with civil society

Socio-spatial inequalities

- Housing as a tool to maintain diversity, with the best practice example of Vienna

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ROUNDTABLE

GOVERNANCE: INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORKS

Importance of different national contexts

- Different levels of decentralisation, legal frameworks

Insufficient increase in capacities and resources for cities

- Making the case for empowering cities : what are the perceived risks of devolving power? What are the risks of not doing so for the delivery of urgent agendas ?

Mixed assessment of the role of EU

- Multi-level governance, reduced inequalities, democratic values
- But still lacking a broad and forward-looking agenda for cities

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ROUNDTABLE GOVERNANCE: INNOVATIVE PRACTICES

Cities increasingly need to form partnerships to fill their resource gap

- To what extent can these partnerships further social and climate goals? How can cities keep control of their agenda?

Democracy and participation:

- Citizens' engagement for co-creating solutions and ensuring buy-in

Increased soft power of cities

- Diplomatic and political leadership in defending peace and democracy
- Strong city brands and weight in the creative economy

Multiplying city networks

- The need to better differentiate between them, and possibly identify connector cities

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ROUNDTABLE

SPATIAL SCALE AND MATERIAL FORM

Morphology of European cities

- Historically inherited compact form and pre-car development puts European cities at an advantage for climate transition

Beyond the urban core

- the contentious relationship with peripheries: Paris, Amsterdam
- Urban-rural linkages

The European system of cities

- European cities are mid-sized, numerous and close together, facilitating the emergence of networks
- The important role of secondary cities was flagged as unique to Europe
- Emphasis on the importance of acknowledging and considering different typologies of cities

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM ROUNDTABLE

TIPPING POINTS: FROM RADICAL TO ELECTABLE

Global challenges call for a complete rethinking of urban life

- European mayors are very interested in the issue of behavioural change (Eurocities)
- To what extent does the European city lend itself better to this rethinking?

European cities are likely contexts through which social tipping points emerge, which can be change-leading on a global scale (Phillip Rode)

- European cities provide examples of electoral successes of radical agendas (Paris, Vienna, Amsterdam)
 - People need to “experience imaginaries” (Marteen Hajer)
- Smaller, less well known cities also have a huge potential for social change (Augsburg, Konstanz)