Free Global Cities: A New Vision for Turning the Migration Crisis into an Opportunity

Media Statement: Thursday, 3 April 2025

A groundbreaking new book published today presents a transformative solution to the global migration crisis: self-governed urban prosperity hubs where migrants and refugees can rebuild their lives and contribute to society.

As conventional approaches fail, *Free Global Cities: The Future Leaders in Migration and Public Governance* proposes a bold alternative — autonomous cities designed to foster economic opportunity, education, and innovation. Edited by Dr. Christian H. Kälin, Chairman of the Swiss non-profit humanitarian organisation Andan Foundation, the book brings together a wide range of distinguished global thought leaders to explore how self-sustaining autonomous cities can offer displaced populations the opportunity to build new lives with economic, social, and political integration.

Published by Bloomsbury, the book challenges global leaders and citizens to rethink how the displacement of people forced from their homes due to conflict, persecution and climate change can be turned into opportunity, blending forward-thinking ideas with actionable policy and profitable investment.

“Through these chapters, we explore a pragmatic solution to the global refugee and migration crisis — the creation of self-governing sub-national entities where displaced individuals can live, work, and start businesses, ultimately becoming active contributors to the local economy. By transforming migration from a problem into an engine of opportunity, these free global cities create pathways for refugees to rebuild their lives while driving economic growth and social stability," says Kälin.

A Vision for Self-Sustaining Communities

The book features contributions from 35 leading international experts, including Michael Møller, former Under-Secretary-General of the United Nations; Dr. Titus Gebel, Founder and CEO of Tipolis; Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Paul Robert Vogt, Founder and President of EurAsia Heart; Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives and Secretary-General of the Climate Vulnerable Forum; Dr. Parag Khanna, Founder and CEO of AlphaGeo; Simon Anholt, independent policy adviser and author; and Mikael Ribbenvik Cassar, Deputy Executive Director of the EU Agency for Asylum.

Together, these experts provide a comprehensive roadmap for the future of migration governance, illustrating how *Free Global Cities* can drive prosperity, stability, and development.

Kälin explains that what distinguishes the concept of *Free Global Cities* from existing models of refugee assistance is its commitment to transcending the traditional binaries of aid and charity, integration and assimilation. “Rather than perceiving refugees as recipients of

benevolence or burdens on host communities, it recognizes them as agents of change, capable of contributing their skills, talents, and perspectives if given the opportunity in a new home. By fostering environments of inclusivity and innovation, *Free Global Citi*es seek to harness the untapped potential of displaced people, transforming them from victims of circumstance into architects of their own futures."

Contributor Michael Møller, former Under-Secretary-General of the UN, says "the concept of *Free Global Cities* as innovative and rapid solutions to intertwined existential challenges makes eminent sense because it involves a fundamental and logical rethinking of the very concept of cities and their potential to provide a comprehensive path forward."

Prof. Kishore Mahbubani, Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore and former President of the United Nations Security Council, points out in his commentary that "unless humanity as a whole comes together to cooperate and find creative, innovative solutions, many societies will be torn apart by stresses generated by explosive migration. (…) Fortunately, there is an innovative solution to global migration that can get politicians re-elected after carrying it out. Here, this innovative solution is called *Free Global Cities*."

A Good Future for All

As migration numbers continue to grow, governments and international organizations face mounting pressure to develop solutions that are not only effective but also politically feasible. The *Free Global Cities* model responds to the anticipated increase in migration. These cities are scalable and can be implemented to offer displaced people the chance to build new futures for themselves, while also providing lasting benefits to the nations that host them.

Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives and current Secretary-General of the Climate Vulnerable Forum, says in his contribution that "by prioritising inclusive policies and effective border management strategies, nations and indeed future *Free Global Cities* can enhance their resilience against global challenges, promote sustainable development, and mitigate the negative impacts of forced migrations."

Dr. Parag Khanna, Founder and CEO of AlphaGeo, highlights the existential importance of these cities in his chapter: "Today's new and unfolding migration waves are not just about people on the move. They are part of a far grander story, an epochal shift in the organisation of global civilisation. Activists and scholars often make the case for more open borders on humanitarian or economic grounds. These are noble efforts, and I support them whole-heartedly. The argument here, however, is far more existential. We are entering a window of opportunity — the last window of opportunity — to ensure maximum survival of our species. To succeed, we will have to do more than tinker with immigration policy. Rather, we need a global strategy to reprogramme the geography of human civilisation towards sustainable urban habitats in climate-resilient locations."

As Kälin concludes, "*Free Global Cities* are more than just a proposal; they represent a transformative shift in how the world can handle what will likely become the largest migration crisis in history. These cities offer a bold new approach that provides displaced populations with the resources they need to thrive — from economic stability to access to education and healthcare. They promise a future where migration is no longer seen as a problem, but as an opportunity for more prosperity."

Ends.

Notes to Editors

Publisher: Bloomsbury Publishing
Release Date: April 3, 2025
Availability: https://www.bloomsbury.com/uk/free-global-cities-9781509976416/

Free Global Cities: The Future Leaders in Migration and Public Governance is edited by Dr. Christian H. Kälin and includes contributions from:

- Professor Kishore Mahbubani, Distinguished Fellow at the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore, former President of the United Nations Security Council, Singapore
- Professor Thomas Alexander Aleinikoff, former United Nations Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Dean of the New School for Social Research
- Leah Zamore, Senior Fellow at the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility at The New School in New York
- Emmanuel Guerisoli, Postdoctoral Fellow at the Zolberg Institute on Migration and Mobility, at The New School
- Mohamed Nasheed, former President of the Maldives and Secretary-General of the Climate Vulnerable Forum
- Dr. Parag Khanna, Founder and CEO of AlphaGeo
- Rev Professor Dr Marek Urban, Head of the Department of History of Modern and Contemporary Philosophy at the Pontifi cal University of John Paul II
- Michael Møller, former Under-Secretary-General of the UN
- Simon Anholt, independent policy adviser and author
- Dr. Armen Sarkissian, former President of Armenia (2018 – 2022) and former Prime Minister (1996 – 1997), Ambassador to the UK and EU
- Günter Nooke, German politician
- Dr. Titus Gebel, Founder and CEO of Tipolis
- Michael Castle-Miller, Partner at Albright Stonebridge Group (part of DGA Group), leads the Special Economic Zones Practice
- Professor Dr. Luca S D'Acci, Associate Professor at the Department of Planning, Regional and Urban Studies of the Polytechnic University of Turin

- Professor Dr. Eckart Würzner, Mayor of Heidelberg, Germany
- Professor Dr. Michael Esfeld, professor of philosophy of science at the University of Lausanne
- Dr. Dr. Andreas Baumgartner, co-founder and CEO of The Metis Institute, Deputy CEO of Tipolis
- Professor Mark Beer OBE, Co-Founder of The Metis Institute
- Professor Dr. Dimitry V Kochenov is Professor of Legal Studies at CEU in Budapest and Vienna
- Mikael Ribbenvik Cassar, Deputy Executive Director of the EU Agency for Asylum
- Andrej Majcen, Co-Founder and the CEO of Bitcoin Suisse
- Dr. Petros Arvanitis, Director of Strategy and Sustainability and member of the Executive Committee at Hellenic Train S.A.
- Professor Dr. Dr. h.c. Paul Robert Vogt, Founder and President of EurAsia Heart
- Dr. Benno Büeler, Co-Founder and Chairman of Citra
- Joel Baur, Co-Founder and CEO of Citra
- Andreas Graf, Co-Founder and Director of Citra
- Samih Sawiris, Founder and former Chairman of Orascom Development Holding AG in Switzerland
- Dr. Götz Ruprecht, CEO of Dual Fluid Energy Inc. in Canada
- Andreas Schleicher, Director for Education and Skills and a Special Adviser on Education Policy to the Secretary-General at the OECD
- Franz Probst, Swiss attorney-at-law, Founder of the law firm Probst Partner
- Professor Dr. Barbara Haering, independent consultant in the fields of education, science and innovation as well as public sector reform
- Ken Duncan has over 20 years' experience of managing vocational education and training projects internationally and advising governments on policy in this area
- Professor Tan Eng Chye, President of the National University of Singapore
- Terence Poon, Senior Associate Director at the Futures Office of the National University of Singapore.
- Oliver Porter, responsible for the establishment of the new city of Sandy Springs, Georgia, USA.
- Professor Khoo Teng Chye, Director of NUS Cities, Practice Professor at the College of Design and Engineering at the National University of Singapore

About the Andan Foundation

The Andan Foundation is a non-profit humanitarian foundation based in Switzerland. It is regulated by the Swiss Federal Authority for the Supervision of Foundations and audited annually by BDO.

Andan leads private sector initiatives to support families fleeing their homes due to war, internal conflict, and climate change. It identifies and develops innovative, sustainable

solutions promoting refugees' self-reliance, boosting their resilience, and fostering their inclusion in their new countries. Andan prioritizes projects that expand economic, financial, and political opportunities for both refugee populations and the communities that welcome them. Andan facilitates and propels partnerships between the private sector and UN agencies, governments, NGOs, and academic institutions concerned with refugees and migrants.

https://www.andan.org/

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