



... I'll show you some pictures. Here you see where I was living with my mother 60 years ago.



BACK TO THE GRASS ROOTS



Right next to us an empty factory, like so many others in our city.



I wished I could have moved away like my neighbours. But who gives a woman in a wheelchair work?



You already had your wheelchair?

Yes, since my accident. But that is another story.

Why did you want to work?



Back then you needed money for everything: food, rent, insurance. To get money, someone had to give you work.



Of the people remaining few had jobs. Everyone was afraid.



Afraid of the future. And many were angry because they felt cheated.



Was there no money at all without work?

Yes, but not enough to live a comfortable life.



And not enough for the physiotherapy I needed every week.



My luck, that I met Ajsha. She was happy to have something to occupy herself.



She's your great-grandmother! We quickly became best friends.



She lost her smile only when she spoke of Syria.



A terrible war was raging there.

Hey, then the baby is our grandmother!



Ajsha lived in a former hotel that was being used as a refugee shelter.



Thanks to her baby, she had permission to leave the shelter daily.



I watched her housemates in the windows. They had much less freedom.



Something else caught my attention: the old walnut tree.



The colourful foliage reminded me of when I was still able to kick through piles of dry leaves.



Why did our town have so few trees? Why was it grey everywhere?



I understood that the whole city was really a prison.



A refugee's life must not be better than that of a normal city dweller.



Even though there was so much unused land around those old factories.



Should it not be possible to free both, refugees and land?



Instead of languishing in cramped hotel rooms, these people could be out here, creating a green paradise.



The city government should step in and use this idea!

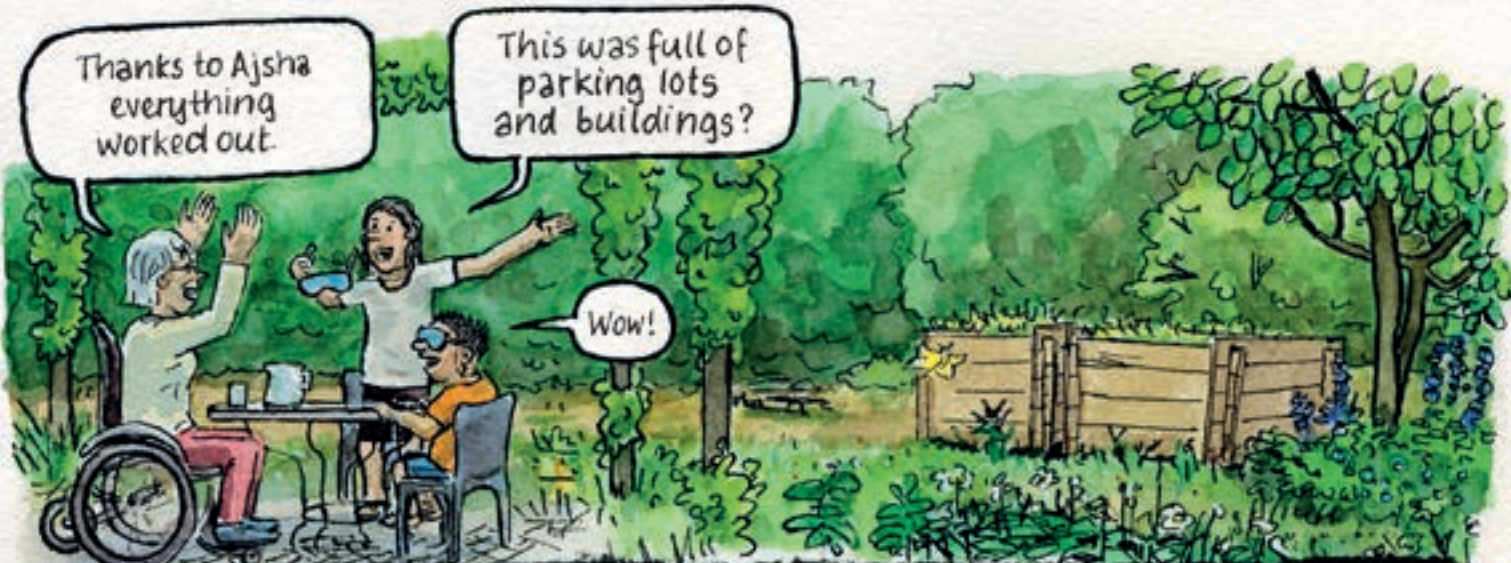


In fact, I got a phone call soon after. I felt confident... until I saw this article. What had I done?



Suddenly I was in charge, with a salary and accountability!

Cold office spaces instead of hotel rooms. How would people react?



Thanks to Ajsha everything worked out.

This was full of parking lots and buildings?

Wow!



The refugees were competent and motivated partners.



Meanwhile, the government had other tasks in mind for us.



The entire city's household garbage was dumped in our hall.



We were supposed to sort it and finance ourselves with the raw materials we reclaimed.



What do I do with plastics, metals and glass? - Ajsa said: "Everything is fine!"



She was right: We needed compost! The garbage contained plenty of food-waste.



Behind the hall some ground had already been cleared: hard, solid earth.



Thanks to the rubbish bags, it would create fertile soil in the Spring.



Small areas, many workers, no machines: what kind of farming is suited there?

🎵 permaculture
Food from natural ecosystems!



Precisely! Permaculture was new to me. I was fascinated.



I carefully chose companion plants for our crops.



The crowdfunding for our project went viral.



In addition to the recycling products came more and more fresh vegetables.



We became the flourishing center of trade.



Visitors planning similar projects came from near and far.




Penniless refugees had become sought-after experts.




Neighbours who were once foreign to each other, got to know one another by working collectively.

And the government didn't harass you?




Oh, our grass roots movement eclipsed the nationalists. They lost power soon afterwards.




Similar projects were beginning everywhere. My people traveled as consultants throughout Europe.

Once more people believed in their own creative power and were no longer afraid of the future.



No one cared about which nation someone came from. The things people had in common were now more important.

So you really did save Europe!



No! You are the great-grandchildren of the woman who did.