

Oslo European Green Capital Opening and Handover Ceremony

Governing Mayor in Oslo.

Rådhushallen, 4. januar 2019, kl. 15.00

(Subject to change)

Your Majesty,

Your Royal Highness,

Commissioner,

Excellencies,

Mayors,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

First of all, let me thank the European Commission and the Jury for awarding Oslo the title European Green Capital 2019.

It is a great honour, and we will do our best to live up to the expectations.

Oslo is growing. More and more people move here to work and live.

I was born and raised in Oslo, and have witnessed this city's growth and transformation from a provincial capital at the periphery of Europe, to a vibrant city with people of more than 200 nationalities.

When I was a boy, we lived in a small wooden house in Rodeløkka. We had an outhouse in the back yard and no hot water.

It was during those years that the first metro-line opened in Oslo.

This city was really too small for a metro-system, but the politicians were ambitious and foresighted.

Today the metro and trams are the back-bone of the public transport system.

Along with many others, we moved out to the new suburbs along the metro-lines in the late 1960's – to an apartment building with hot water, central heating and a water closet.

As the national economy grew, so did people's welfare.

Private cars were the symbol of individual freedom – and urban development was defined by cars.

It was eight lanes right here on the square outside city hall.

It was a different time. No one seemed to care that cities were polluted.

My uncles worked at the Oslo's Ship Yard.

Back then they flushed pure mercury straight into the fjord.

The harbour was dominated by ships and traffic.

We had to travel out of town if we wanted to take a swim.

It was not until we got the toll ring in place in the 1990's that we were able to finance a tunnel underneath the city centre, and divert the traffic away.

Today, the waterfront has been re-opened to the public.

The fjord is again breathing and you can swim wherever you like.

Now, we take new steps to make the city even greener and more liveable.

Oslo is a compact city, neatly located between the green woods and blue sea.

This unique combination of fresh water, wild forest and a hectic city life is what I love most with Oslo.

As most cities, Oslo has gone through a tremendous development.

In my life time alone the city has grown with more than 200 000 inhabitants.

For the first time in history more than half of the world's population lives in cities.

In Europe the figures is even higher.

My generations has benefited greatly on modernization and growth.

The downside is that the pressure on the world's resources now is reaching its breaking point.

Our wealth and growth are now creating rapid climate change.

Combating climate change cannot be left to someone else, somewhere else, at another time. We need to act – here and now.

And no one is better placed to make these changes than we who live in cities.

Global climate change is also local climate change.

Here in Oslo, transport is responsible for 60 per cent of all emissions.

By making it easier to use public transportation, less people will be dependent on private cars.

This is a win-win.

Not only do we reduce CO2-emissions. We also reduce air pollution, and queues on the roads.

Some say it takes courage to make these changes.

I would turn this statement into a question, and say: Who dare not to make these changes?

We are the first generation who can see climate changes with our own eyes, and probably the last generation who has the opportunity to do something about it.

This does require broad support from the public and the business sector.

That is why we want the European Green Capital Year 2019 to be a motivator for green transformation – for our citizens, for the industry and for the whole of Europe.

Thank you for giving us this opportunity.

I look forward to getting the European Green Capital year started.

Thank you.