

## PRESS RELEASE



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### **Transformative Cities People's Choice Award winners announced: Petorca (Chile), Burgas (Bulgaria), Porto Alegre (Brazil) and Medellín (Colombia)**

Winners of the Transformative Cities Award were announced at an international online event yesterday, following a global online vote with 11,000 participants. The 2020 Transformative Cities People's Choice Award went to four initiatives for their work in the areas of water, energy, housing and food systems. The winners were chosen from a selection of 12 international finalists through a process that is likely the most participatory public city award in the world.

Cities and towns are epicentres of climate damage and sites of polarizing politics and battles over the privatization of essential services. Even in the crushing context of COVID-19, many of these initiatives are adapting and thriving. In some cases, it is precisely the spirit of activism and commitment to the creation of a better world that has equipped these initiatives to persevere during the pandemic and help limit its spread. By demonstrating the scale of what is possible at the local level, these initiatives are modeling more utopian futures.

The winners of the People's Choice Award are:

- Water Category: [Agua Para Todos from Petorca \(Chile\)](#) which is a rural union of community water providers that generated sustainable solutions to the region's water crisis. The initiative strengthened community mobilization, used socially appropriate technology to conserve and reclaim water, and provided environmental education.
- Energy Category: [The municipality of Burgas \(Bulgaria\)](#) which implemented the most up-to-date energy approaches and measures to overcome energy efficiency and energy poverty and transform into a smart, energy efficient city. Burgas demonstrated the power of local authorities to drive sustainable change.
- Housing Category: CaSanAT from Porto Alegre (Brazil) which is a space for social activists and volunteers to come together for community discussions and action on socio-environmental issues, fighting both the COVID-19 pandemic and repression by the Bolsonaro government.
- Food Category: [Penca de Sábila Corporation from Medellín \(Colombia\)](#) which is successfully helping 12,000 small-scale farming families in rural Medellín to convert to agroecological (organic) farming, and to sell their surplus directly through a cooperative store.

Special guest Raquel Rolnik, former UN Special Rapporteur for the Right to Adequate Housing, remarked: “Transformative Cities is bringing to us snapshots of forms of resistance against commodification and financialisation that are both innovative and based in a legacy of existence and resistance, developed by the people but also strengthened by local governments.”

### **Quotes from winners**

Water: Álvaro Escobar, President of the Unión de Agua Potable Rural (APR) de la cuenca del Río Petorca, speaking for Agua Para Todos Y Todas (Petorca, Chile), said: “Thank you to everyone who voted for us. This is a recognition for other leaders who every day defend the human right to water throughout the world, even in a pandemic.”

Energy: Vesna Baltina, Deputy Mayor of Burgas (Bulgaria), said: “I believe only through good interaction between all stakeholders and the local government we can accelerate the process of transforming our cities, and strive for a fair society based on equality, support and transparency in public decision making processes.”

Housing: Lúcia Ortiz, Friends of the Earth International and president of AT Brazil, speaking for CaSanAT (Porto Alegre, Brazil), said: “We are fighting for social justice, all of us together. The Bolsonaro government is trying to expel us from our house, but we are firm in our position, defending democracy against neoliberalism.”

Food: Javier Márquez Valderrama, co-founder and director of the Penca de Sábila Ecological and Cultural Corporation (Medellín, Colombia), said: “This award recognises the way we have built up political structures with peasants to protect 12,000 households or more than 50,000 people. We will not be sustainable if we don’t recognise the role of farmers. That’s why we dedicate the award to all the farmers in Medellín.”

The winners were announced at an online award ceremony with participants from all over the world. During the ceremony, Transformative Cities launched this year’s [Atlas of Utopias](#) where the stories of the finalist from the last three years are consolidated to showcase their work and provide a source of inspiration for activists and movements around the world. El Pais described the Atlas as a ‘Map to a better world’.

The Transformative Cities Peoples Choice award was launched in 2017 by the progressive think tank, the Transnational Institute, to highlight collective initiatives experimenting with new ways to practice democracy and secure access to basic rights. This third edition of the award was co-organised by TNI with Friends of the Earth International, Habitat International Coalition, The Global Right to the City Movement, RIPESS and ECOLISE.

Following this public award, TNI will continue to support the many transformative cities by giving them more visibility and by facilitating processes of exchange and collective learning.

## **NOTES TO THE EDITOR**

Video of the Award Ceremony: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s500oFcAc3s> (English),  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hf3\\_gKDvE4](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-hf3_gKDvE4) (Spanish)

Website of the Transformative Cities initiative: <http://transformativecities.org>

More information about the Award Show available at:  
<https://transformativecities.org/2020award/>

Website Transnational Institute: <https://www.tni.org>

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