

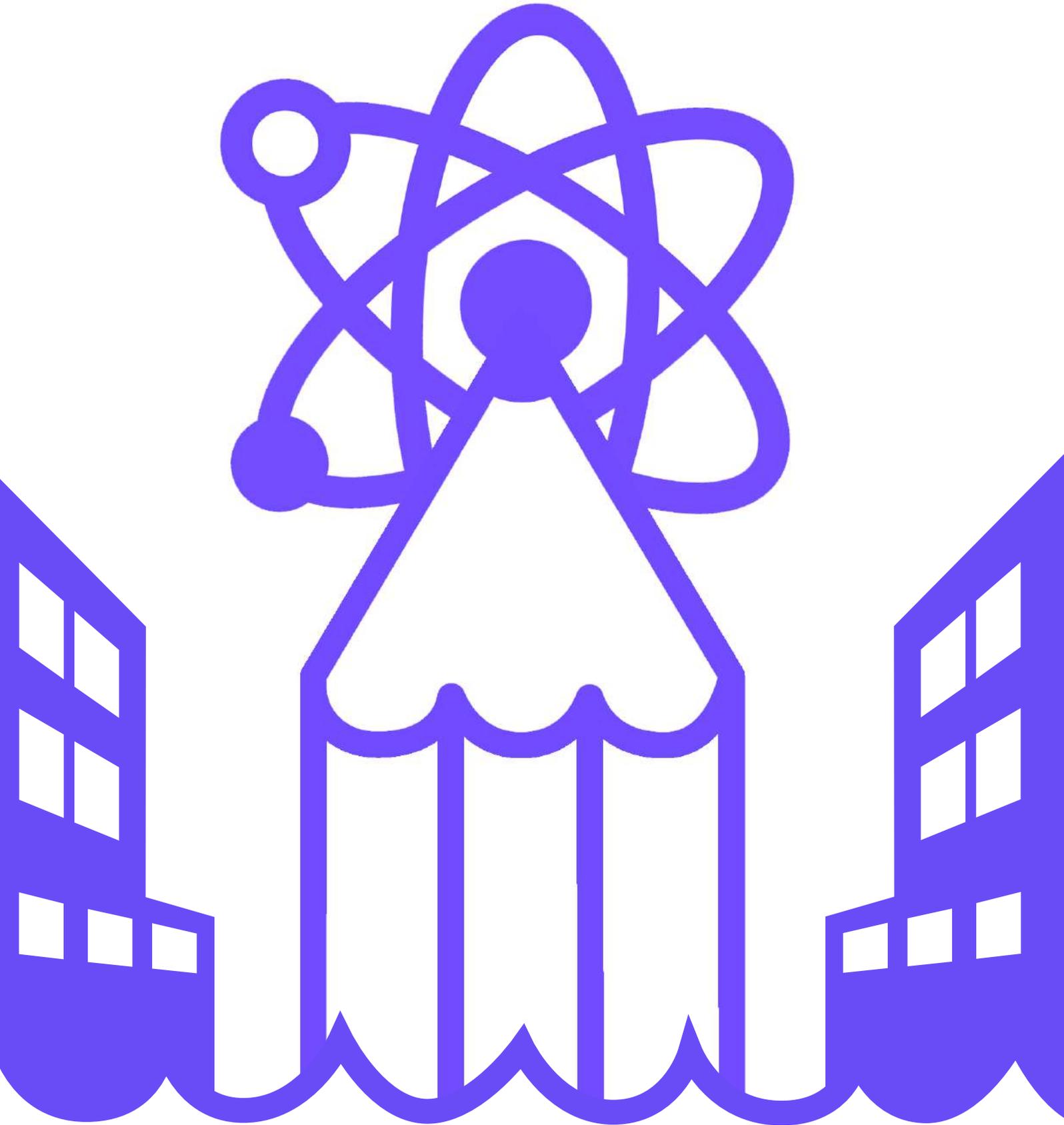


EU CONEXUS

European University for Smart
Urban Coastal Sustainability

EU-CONEXUS

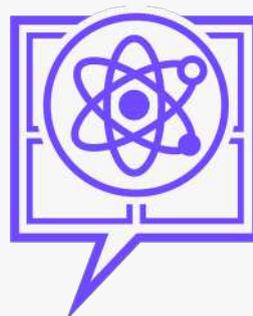
Comic Strip in Science



Co-funded by
the European Union

EU-CONEXUS

Comic Strip in Science



INTRODUCTION

EU-CONEXUS, the European University for Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability, is an integrated transnational higher education and research institution covering the smart urban sustainable coastal development from a holistic perspective.

The Alliance brings together nine universities strategically distributed across Europe: La Rochelle Université (France), Agricultural University of Athens (Greece), Catholic University of Valencia (Spain), Klaipeda University (Lithuania), University of Zadar (Croatia), Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest (Romania), South East Technological University (Ireland), University of Rostock (Germany), and Frederick University (Cyprus). Together, they aim to develop science and innovation into a hub of excellence on Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability.

EU-CONEXUS Comic Strip in Science project promotes nine

research projects - one at each partner university - addressing coastal sustainability through a wide range of scientific disciplines, from social sciences to fundamental research. The main objective of the project is to inform a non-expert audience on how EU-CONEXUS addresses coastal sustainability, raise the awareness of the general public (mainly young people and adults) on scientific research and increase their interest in science. The project also encourages dialogue and collaboration between scientists and artists.

Scientists were selected via a call for expressions of interest open to all EU-CONEXUS researchers and PhD students motivated by science communication and interested in exploring the intersection of art and science. Selected participants had the opportunity to collaborate with professional illustrators and comic artists.

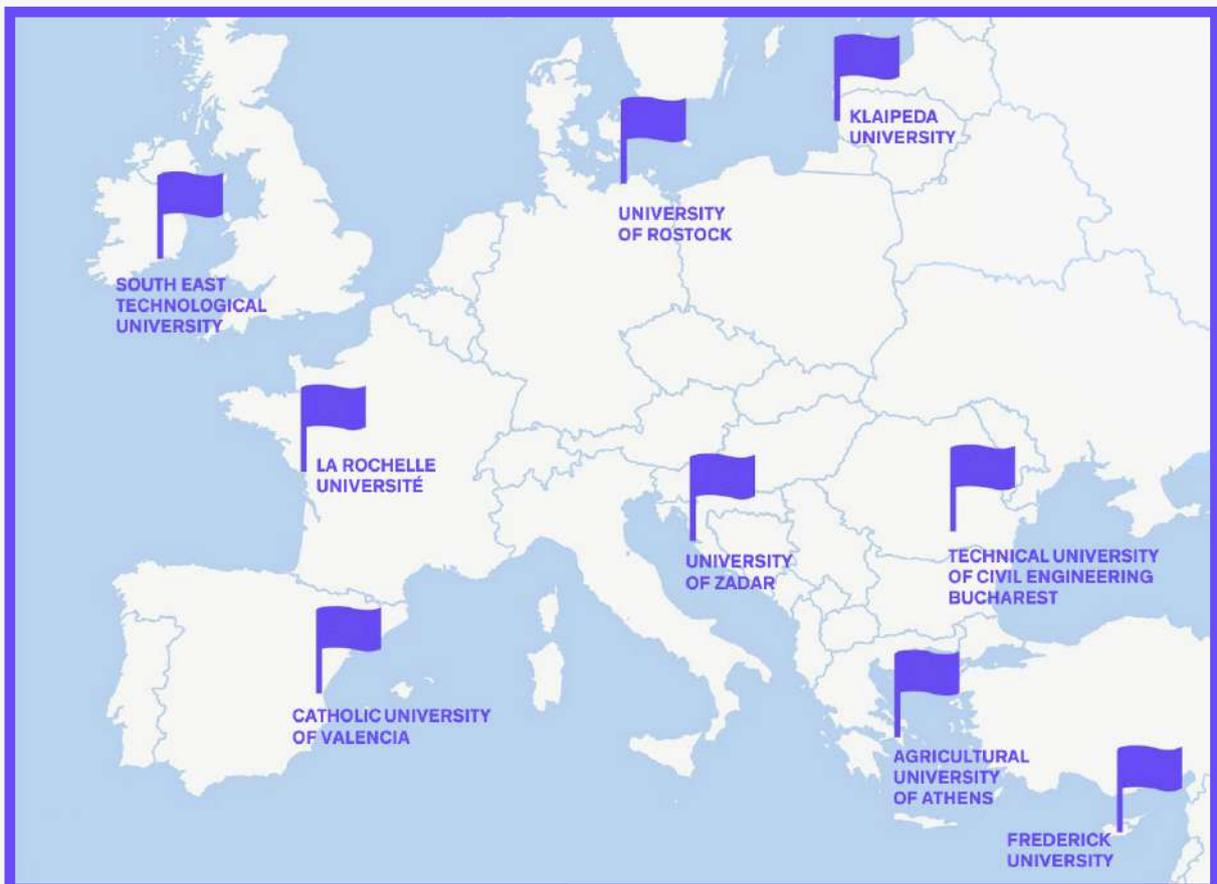
Artists were chosen based on their motivation to engage with the

public, the quality and originality of their artistic work, their storytelling abilities, and their interest in bridging art, science and society.

The project unfolded over two six month phases, from June to November 2025 with the creation of four comic strips and from November 2025 to April 2026 with the creation of five comic strips, pairing researchers and artists from the same country to bring scientific concepts to life.

Each research project was transformed into a 3 page comic strip with a cover page, designed to be creative, engaging and accessible for non-expert readers.

The project was coordinated in collaboration with PieR Gajewski, comic author from La Rochelle (France), who has long worked with La Rochelle Université.



CREATION OF FOUR COMIC STRIPS IN SPAIN, GREECE, LITHUANIA AND FRANCE

01 - Spain

“WALKABLE CITIES”

Alonso Sanchez Rodriguez & Xulia Vicente (artist)

Research project: “Walkable Cities: Health Promotion and Well-Being Through Urban Trails in Three Neighborhoods of Valencia”

[Catholic University of Valencia](#)

02 - Greece

“CHOICES, CHOICES”

Konstantinos Velaoras & Steve Stivaktis (artist)

Research project: “The Impact of Environmental Certifications on Consumer Behavior for Certified Hotels: Analysis Through the Theory of Planned Behavior”

[Agricultural University of Athens](#)

03 - Lithuania

“THE FLESH EATING MONSTER”

Greta Gyraitė & Ula Rugevičiūtė Rūgytė (artist)

Research project: “From Sea to Sickbed: The Unseen Story of Vibrio spp.”

[Klaipeda University](#)

04 - France

“BEYOND ROBINSON”

Annabel Audureau & PieR Gajewski (artist)

Research project: “Robinsona: Adventurers of the Postmodern World”

[La Rochelle Université](#)

WALKABLE CITIES

By Alonso Sánchez Rodríguez & Xulia Vicente



Would you like to take a stroll around this city?

What about this one?

Narrow pavements

Lack of Local businesses

Obstacles

Too much traffic

Lack of trees and vegetation

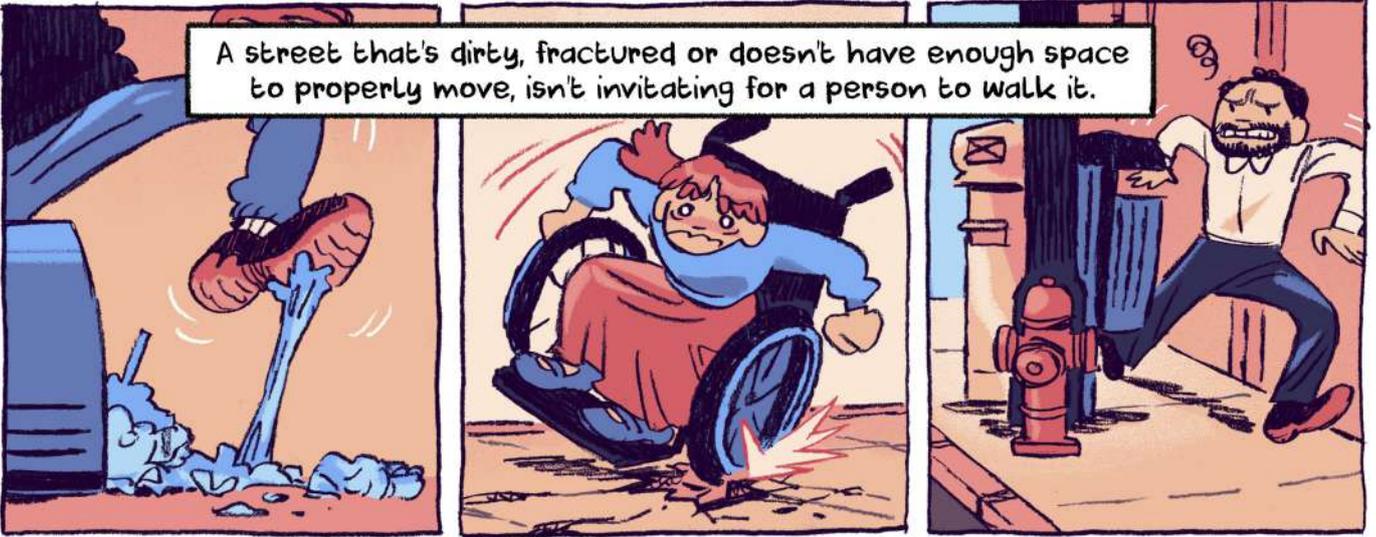
Lack of recreational areas

Poor maintenance

Our research shows all these items affect how likely people are to walk around the area where they live.



A street that's dirty, fractured or doesn't have enough space to properly move, isn't inviting for a person to walk it.



When consulted, neighbors also ask for more green areas, local businesses or parks for children as incentives that make for a nice promenade.



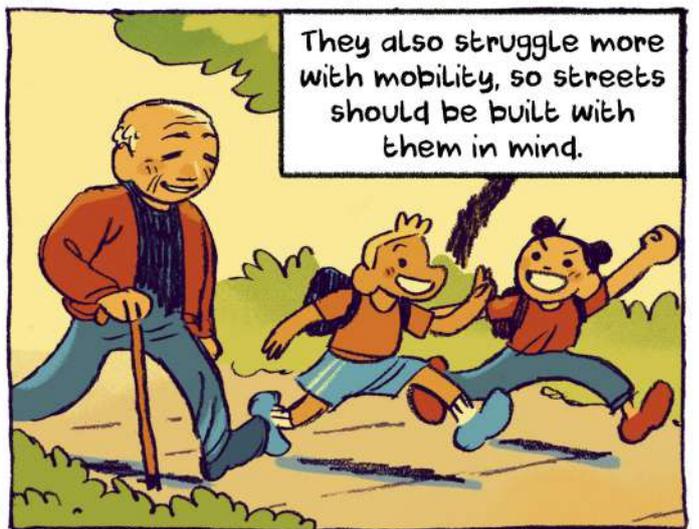
Why is this important? Well, walking is vital for the health of the population, helping prevent depression, feelings of loneliness and even cancer.



This is especially relevant for older age groups, who are more vulnerable to these issues.



They also struggle more with mobility, so streets should be built with them in mind.

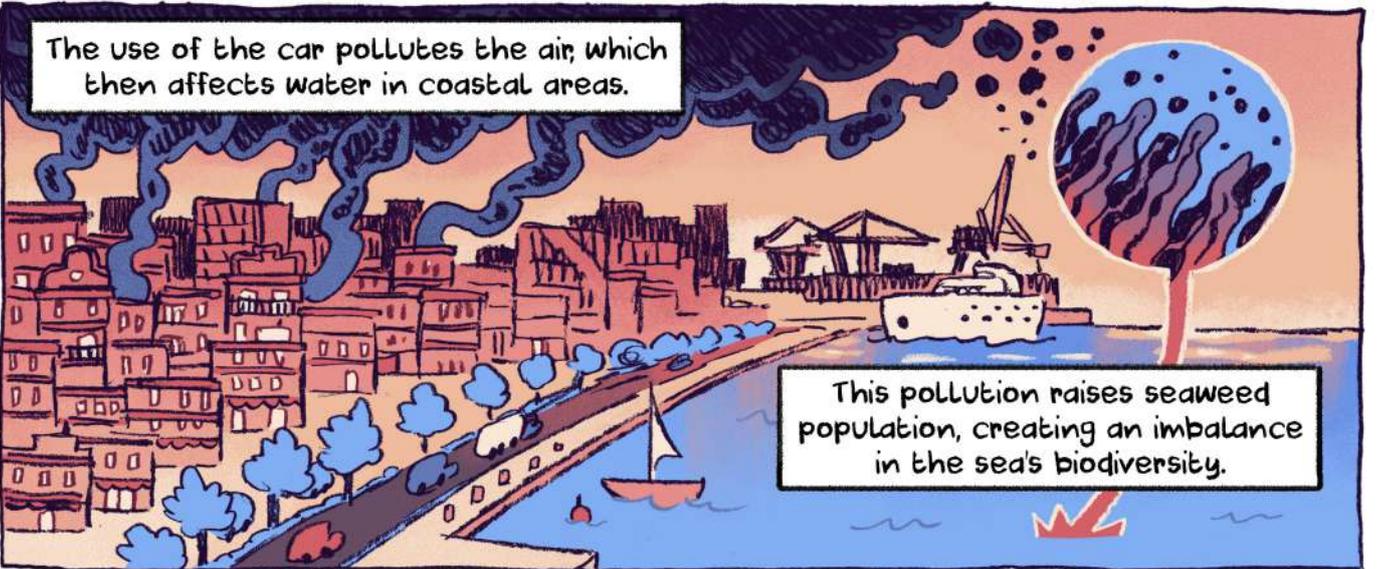


But the issue doesn't end there: areas that prioritize car traffic (more lanes, higher speed) are way less walkable.



If people don't find it easy to walk or cycle, they'll usually take a car.

The use of the car pollutes the air, which then affects water in coastal areas.



This pollution raises seaweed population, creating an imbalance in the sea's biodiversity.

Thus, urban planning and maintenance is vital for taking care of our environment: both soil, air and water. And of course, for all their inhabitants, including us.



Let's strive for more walkable cities!





I'M GOING TO LOSE IT!



I'M LEAVING FOR MY HOLIDAYS IN A WEEK, AND I HAVE NO IDEA HOW TO EVEN REACH THE ISLAND. NOW I HAVE TO THINK ABOUT WHAT'S ECO-FRIENDLY, TOO?

HEY, YOU SAID YOU WANTED TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES.



I THOUGHT I DID! I FOUND A CHEAP HOTEL, EASY TO ACCESS...

...BOYCOTTED BY LOCALS FOR POLLUTING THE HARBOUR...



MANOLIS, YOU HAVE TO HELP ME, MATE! I CAN'T BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MURDERING SEALS. THEY'VE BEEN DOING SO WELL LATELY!

COME ON, IT'S NOT THAT HARD.



LOOK, THERE'S A BUNCH OF WEBSITES TELLING YOU EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW. YOUR HOTEL IS CHEAP, SURE, BUT --

SEAL KILLERS.

WELL, THEY'RE NOT ON A MURDER SPREE, BUT STILL.



LOOK AT THIS BNB OVER HERE. SAFE AREA, NICE VIEW, AND LOOK!

OH, A LITTLE LEAF. AND IT'S... TURNING TO DUST?



THEY'RE TREE-DESTROYERS.

NO! THEY'RE USING BIODEGRADABLE PRODUCTS! AND SEE THIS LITTLE "V"?

THEY'RE VAMPIRES!

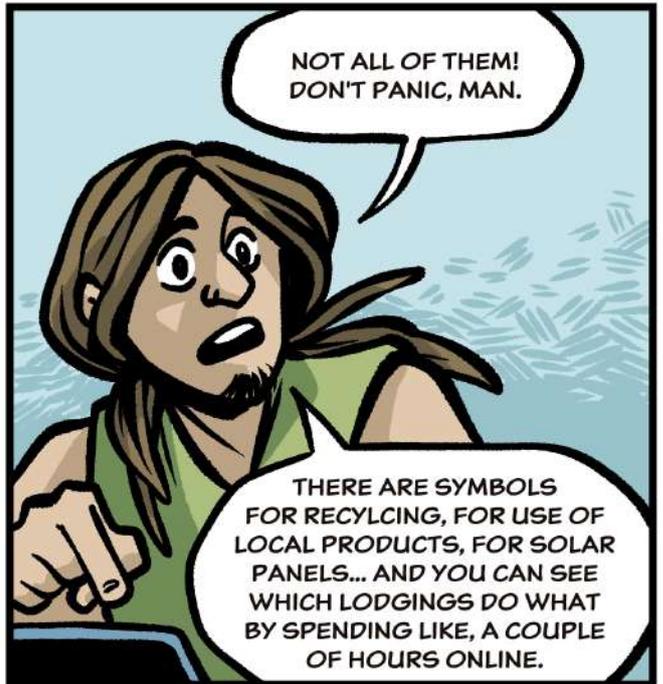
THEY-- WHAT? THEY'RE A VEGAN-SAFE PLACE. ARE YOU OKAY?



I DON'T WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE FOR DESTROYING NATURE, MATE. AND I BOOKED A ROOM IN A VAMPIRE DEN!

GEORGE? STILL NO VAMPIRES.

BUT YES, POLLUTERS!



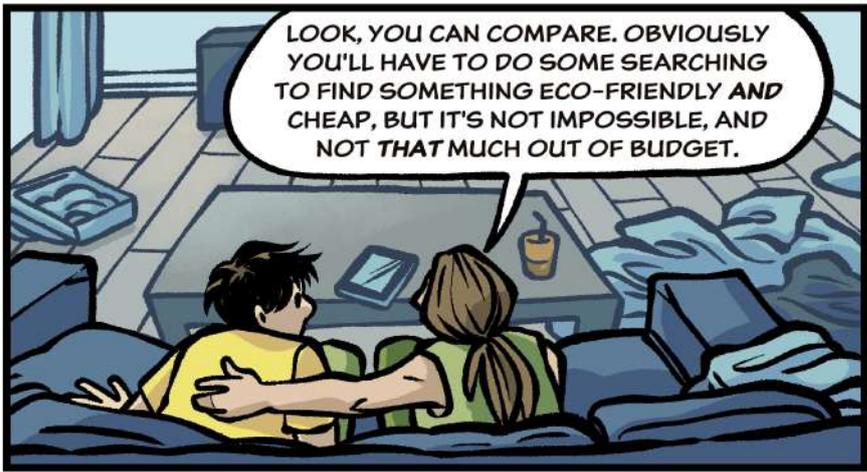
NOT ALL OF THEM! DON'T PANIC, MAN.

THERE ARE SYMBOLS FOR RECYCLING, FOR USE OF LOCAL PRODUCTS, FOR SOLAR PANELS... AND YOU CAN SEE WHICH LODGINGS DO WHAT BY SPENDING LIKE, A COUPLE OF HOURS ONLINE.



I WANT TO BE RESPONSIBLE, BUT I DON'T KNOW AS MUCH ABOUT THE ENVIRONMENT AND WHAT'S HARMING IT AS YOU DO! AND THIS VEGAN PLACE IS EXPENSIVE.

BUT THIS ONE ISN'T.



LOOK, YOU CAN COMPARE. OBVIOUSLY YOU'LL HAVE TO DO SOME SEARCHING TO FIND SOMETHING ECO-FRIENDLY AND CHEAP, BUT IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE, AND NOT THAT MUCH OUT OF BUDGET.



RIGHT. I MEAN, SPENDING MORE MONEY THAN I EXPECTED *DOES* STRESS ME OUT--

SHOCKER.

...BUT SINCE I CAN AFFORD IT, I'LL FEEL BETTER KNOWING I'M SUPPORTING GOOD BUSINESSES.



THAT'S WHAT I PREFER TOO. IT TAKES SOME WORK AND SOME BUDGETING, BUT...

BUT YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S TOTALLY WORTH IT.



THAT'S THE SPIRIT! AND I'M ALWAYS HERE TO HELP.

AND TO SAVE ME FROM THE VAMPIRES!

YEAH -- WHAT?



GEORGE?
LET'S START OVER.

BASED ON
TRUE STORIES

ULA RUGEVIČIŪTĖ RUGYTĖ
& DR. GRETA GYRAITĖ

SCIENTIFICALLY
APPROVED

THE FLESH EATING MONSTER

WHAT ON
EARTH?!!



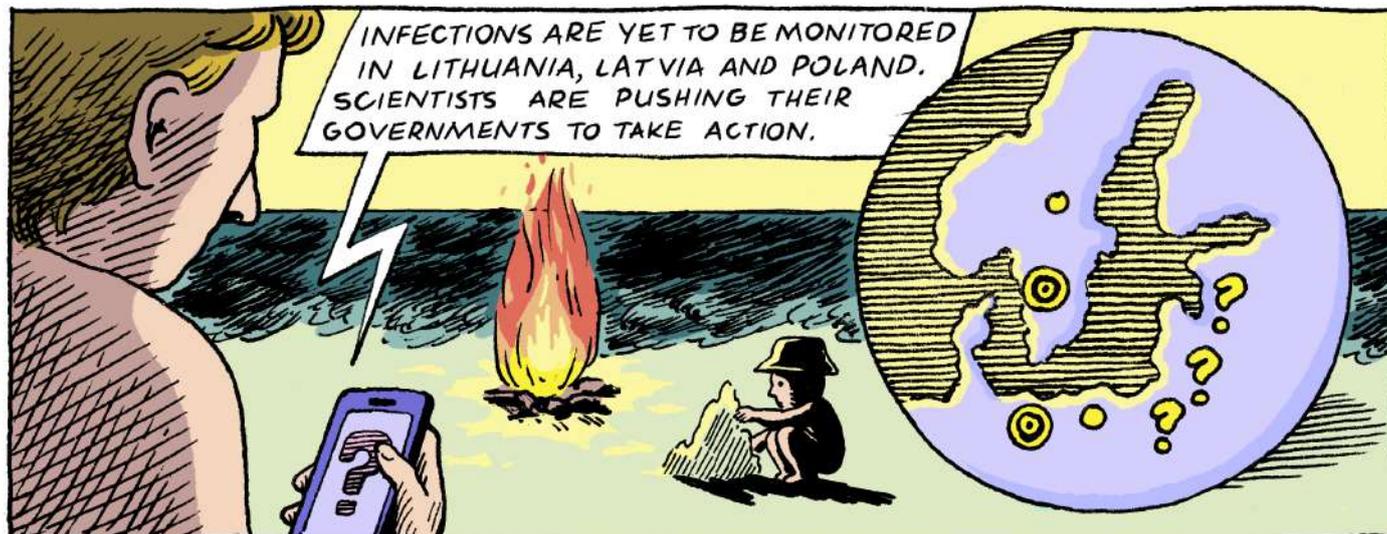


FOR 62 YEAR-OLD SARAH, THE LOVE OF DAILY SWIMS AND GARDENING HAS LED TO A TRAGIC END.

THE WOMAN REPORTEDLY DIED AFTER A DIP INTO CONTAMINATED WATERS. OVER 1500 CASES OF INFECTIONS BY THE VERY SAME DISEASE AGENT HAVE BEEN REGISTERED IN THE BALTIC COAST.

THESE NUMBERS SHOW THE POWER OF THE AQUATIC MICROBE. SCIENTISTS WORRY A BIG PART OF CASES GOES UNREPORTED.

ONCE A HAVEN OF TRANQUILITY THE BALTIC SEA HIDES A GROWING THREAT BENEATH ITS WAVES.



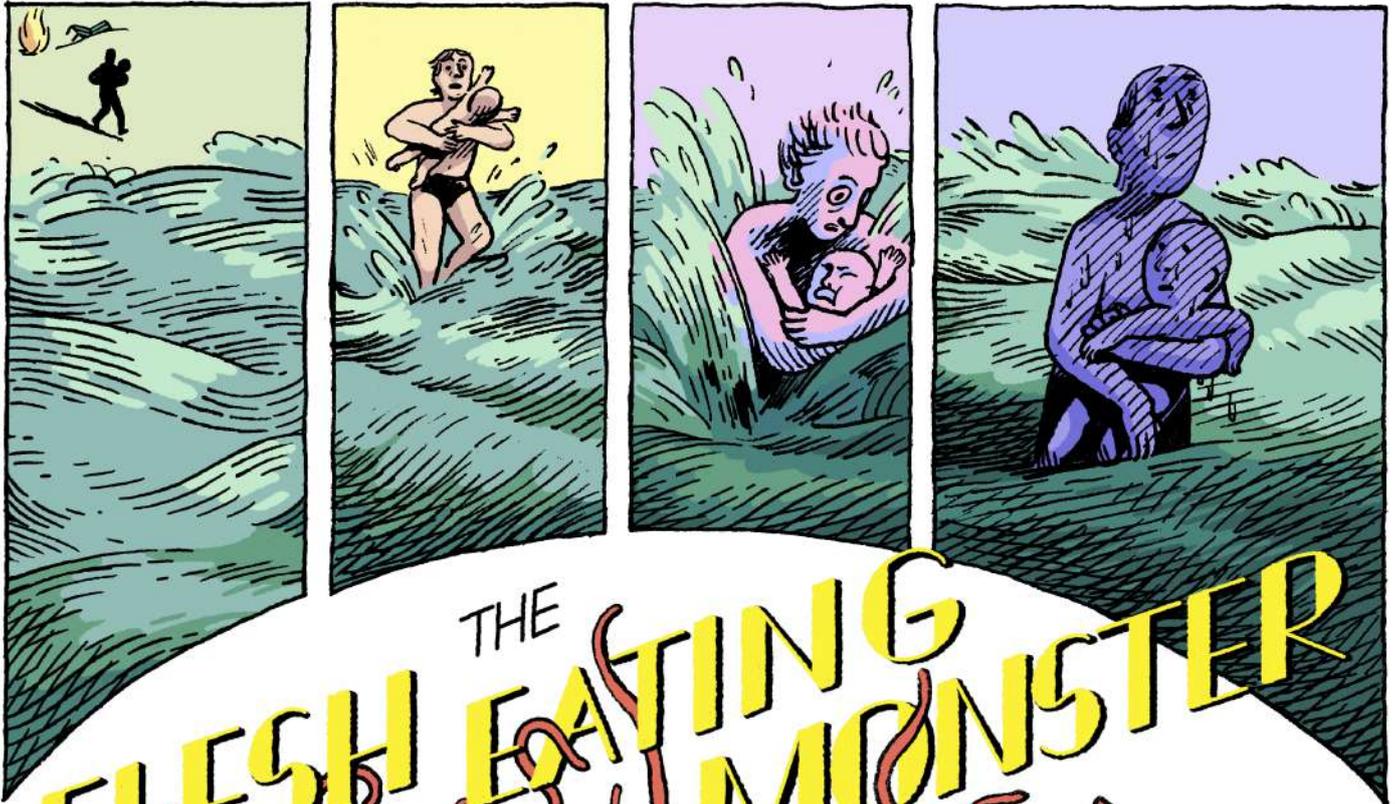
THE HEALTH-CARE AND AGRICULTURE SECTORS HAVE ALSO FACED CRITICISM OVER THE EXCESSIVE...

...USE OF ANTIBIOTICS, AS THE GERM IS GROWING INCREASINGLY MORE RESISTANT TO THE DRUG.

MUCH LIKE US, THE SILENT ENEMY PREFERS WARM TEMPERATURES AND THRIVES IN THE EVER WARMING BALTIC SEA.

VACATIONERS ARE ADVISED TO AVOID SWIMMING OR WADING IN THE BALTIC SEA, SHOULD THEY BE WOUNDED...





THE FLESH EATING MONSTER

THAT'S WHAT THEY CALL IT THESE DAYS! WHOEVER WANTS TO GO INTO THE WATER WITH THAT?! WELL, WE HAVE A SPECIAL GUEST FOR YOU TONIGHT WHO'S HAD A CLOSE ENCOUNTER WITH THE THING!



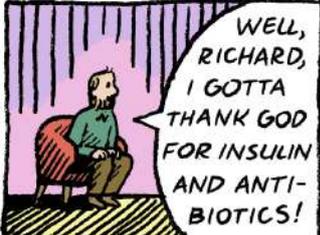
PLEASE WELCOME INTO THE STUDIO...



...JONAS!



SO JONAS, YOU'VE SPENT WEEKS IN A HOSPITAL BED, WHAT HAPPENED?



WELL, RICHARD, I GOTTA THANK GOD FOR INSULIN AND ANTI-BIOTICS!



SEE, I WAS OUT IN THE SEA FISHIN' AS USUAL TRYIN' TO MEET QUOTA



WHEN I SAW THIS THING MOVING IN THE WATER...

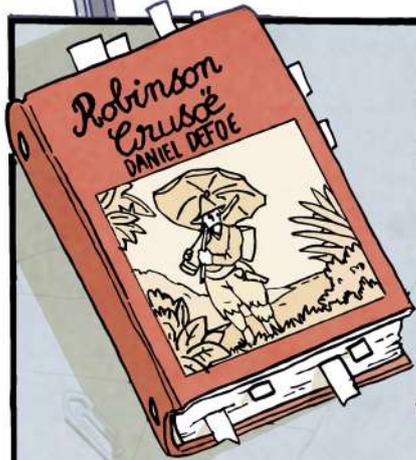
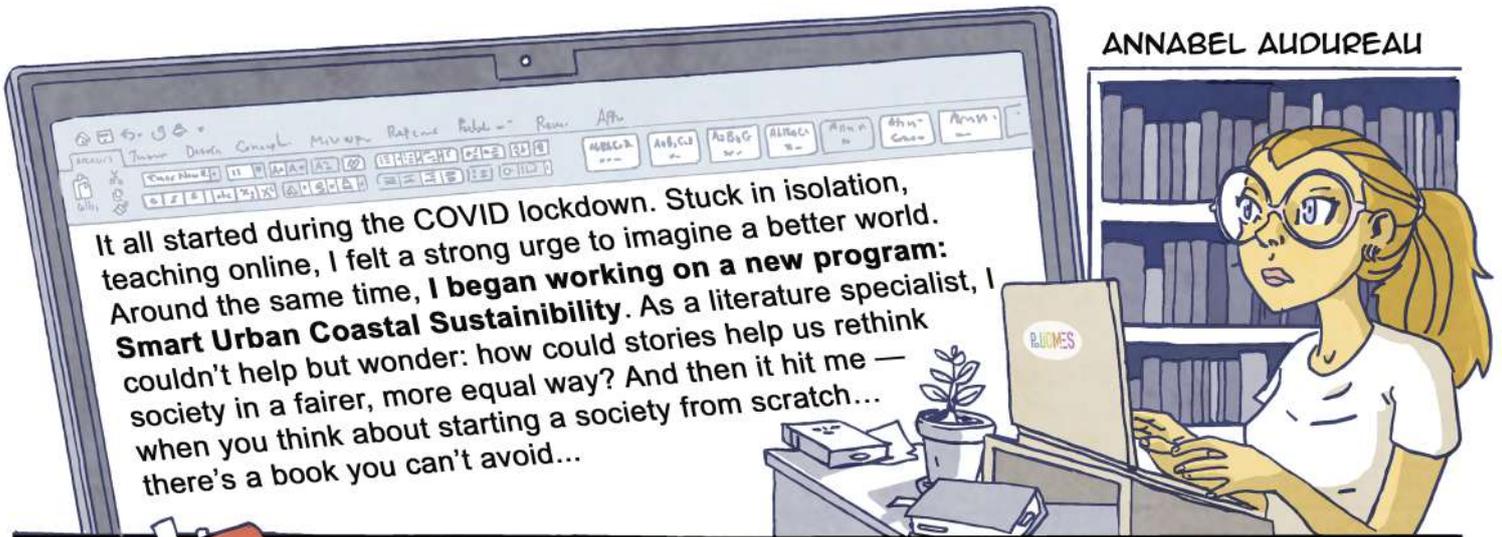


Beyond Robinson

Annabel Audureau

Piér Gajewski





ROBINSON CRUSOË,
WRITTEN BY DANIEL DEFOE IN 1719.
WE ALL KNOW THE STORY: A MAN
SHIPWRECKED ON A DESERT ISLAND.
FROM THIS BOOK ROSE A MYTH,
A GENRE ALL ITS OWN.

BUT WHAT DEFINES A 'ROBINSON'?

LOCATION AN ISLAND,
BACK THEN, ISLAND MAPS WERE OFTEN
DRAWN AS WOMEN... A METAPHOR FOR
SOMETHING TO BE POSSESSED



WAY OF LIVING

HIERARCHICAL AND PATRIARCHAL.
ROBINSON IS THE MASTER ABOVE ALL
(SLAVES AND NATURE.)



TIME NOTION

HE KEEPS A METICULOUS JOURNAL
(LOG), COUNTING DAYS,
OBSESSED WITH **LINEAR TIME.**



BODY CHANGES

WILD AND HIRSLUTE, HE EMBODIES A RAW,
ALMOST **DEHUMANIZED MASCULINITY**

DEEPEST WISH

'ROBINSON' SHOWS A MINDSET ROOTED
IN CAPITALISM, COLONIALISM AND
DOMINATING OTHER LIVING THINGS...
HE ONLY DREAMS OF GOING BACK TO THE
OLD ORDER, THE WORLD HE CAME FROM.

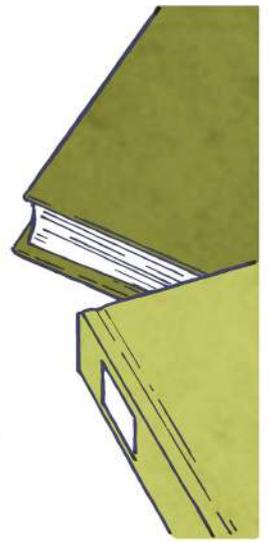
**IN SHORT: OUR SOCIETY IS MADE FOR HIM,
DESPITE HIS OWN TRANSFORMATION.**



WE CAN ALL AGREE: SUBORDINATING NATURE TO OUR NEEDS (AS CAPITALISM DOES) INEVITABLY LEADS TO CLIMATE CHANGE, POISONED OCEANS, AND THE DEVASTATION OF COASTAL ENVIRONMENTS.

SO, I ASKED MYSELF: DO FEMALE ROBINSON OR 'ROBINSONNA' STORIES EXIST, AND CAN THEY OFFER NEW PATHS TO A BETTER WORLD?

I FOUND TWO MAJOR CONTEMPORARY BOOKS. BOTH TAKE PLACE IN POST-APOCALYPTIC WORLDS, WITH ISOLATED WOMEN STRUGGLING TO SURVIVE.



NOW, LET'S EXAMINE WHAT DEFINES A 'ROBINSONNA', THROUGH THE LENS OF "THE WALL"

Into The Forest by Jean Hegland (1996)



The Wall (Die Wand) by Marlen Haushofer (1963)

LOCATION

A MOUNTAIN, A PHALLIC SYMBOL, A SPACE FOR INTROSPECTION.



WAY OF LIVING

NON-HIERARCHICAL, CLOSELY CONNECTED TO NATURE AND CARE.



TIME NOTION

CIRCULAR, SHAPED BY THE SEASONS, DAILY TASKS, AND KAIROS (LIVED TIME).

BODY CHANGES

DE-GENDERED, FUNCTIONAL, ADAPTED FOR CARE AND RESILIENCE.

DEEPEST WISH

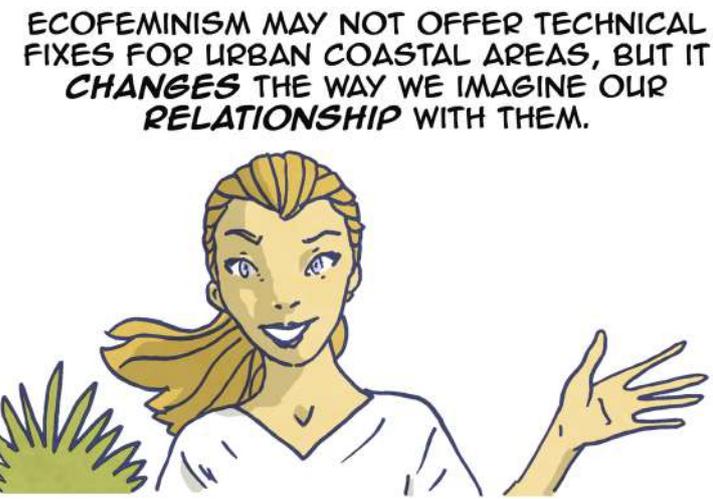
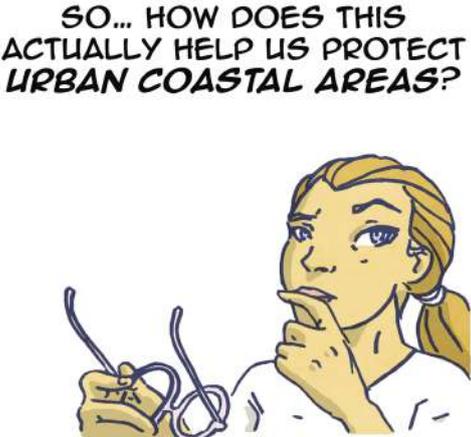
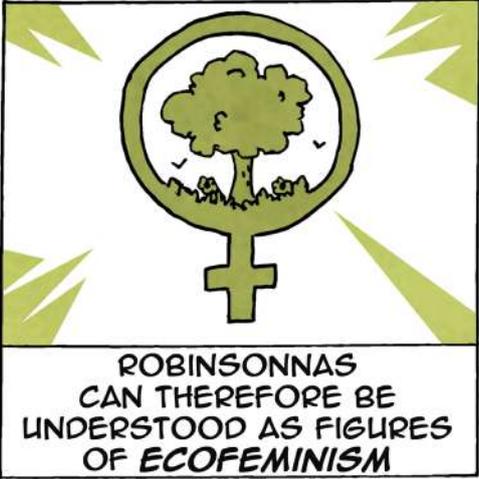
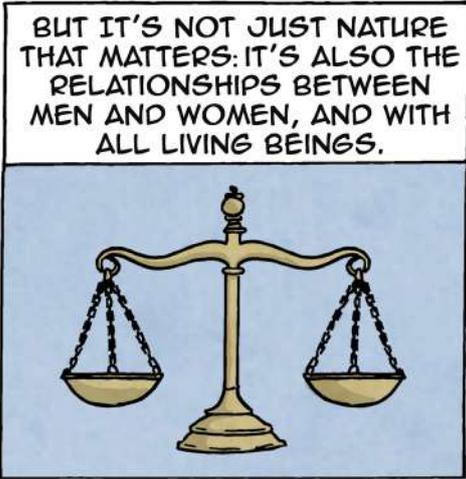
SHE REFUSES TO RETURN TO THE WORLD SHE ONCE KNEW.

IN SHORT: OUR SOCIETY IS HOSTILE TO WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION AND NATURE.



Conclusion

ROBINSON'S AND ROBINSONNA'S VISIONS OF SOCIETY DIFFER IN HOW THEY RELATE TO THE ENVIRONMENT



SUCH A SHIFT IS CRUCIAL, BECAUSE EVEN THE BEST TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS WILL FAIL WITHOUT THE **COLLECTIVE WILL** TO MAKE THEM WORK.

READ. ACT. UNITE. THE CHANGE IS IN OUR HANDS.

Second phase COMING IN 2026

CREATION OF FIVE COMIC STRIPS IN
CROATIA, ROMANIA, IRELAND, GERMANY AND CYPRUS

05 - Croatia

Irena Radić Rossi & Tomislav Košta (artist)
University of Zadar

06 - Romania

Roxana-Laura Doncea & Andrada Băeş (artist)
Technical University of Civil Engineering Bucharest

07 - Ireland

Louise Skerritt & Clíodhna Lyons (artist)
South East Technological University

08 - Germany

Caroline Spratte & Nele Brönnert (artist)
University of Rostock

09 - Cyprus

Lora Nicolaou & Kyriaki Mavroudi (artist)
Frederick University



BIOS



Alonso SÁNCHEZ RODRÍGUEZ is both a researcher and a PhD candidate at the Catholic University of Valencia (Spain). His work focuses on increasing physical activity in urban environments and how exercise contributes to brain health. During his PhD training, he has completed several research stays, including at the University of Stavanger in Norway and at Yale University in the U.S. He is also interested in how mountain activities (especially friluftsliv) can enhance health and well-being.

ResearchGate

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Alonso-Sanchez-Rodriguez-2?ev=hdr_xprf



Xulia VICENTE is a cartoonist and illustrator from Spain. She grew up in the northern region of Galicia, and eventually moved to study Fine Arts in Valencia, where she currently lives. Her main focus is comics and narrative work, either through publishing, work-for-hire or self-made zines. She's also worked as a freelance illustrator, mostly in editorial, and as an art teacher at Barreira's Illustration Master's degree. Some her most notable comic books are *Sello de dragón* parts I and II (Sallybooks) with Manuel Gutiérrez, *Elisa y Marcela* (La Cúpula), and *I see a knight* (Shortbox), winner of an Ignatz Award for 'Outstanding comic' in 2022.

linktr.ee/xuliavicente



Konstantinos VELAORAS is an Environmental Engineer with over 17 years of experience in environmental auditing, sustainability, and ESG methodologies. He is currently a PhD candidate at the Agricultural University of Athens, where his research focuses on the economic characteristics and consumer behavior related to environmental and energy certifications in the hospitality industry. His expertise includes environmental auditing, sustainability strategies, and carbon footprint management systems. He has co-authored several publications on environmental certification and its economic impact within the tourism sector. Professionally, Konstantinos works as an Environmental Inspector for the Region of Attica, ensuring industrial and commercial compliance with environmental legislation. He holds three master's degrees from Imperial College London, the University of Patras, and the University of Ioannina.



Steve STIVAKTIS is an award-winning comic artist, illustrator, and art teacher located in Athens, Greece. Known mostly for queer speculative fiction stories with elements from folklore, Steve's work aims to raise awareness for important issues as much as to entertain at the same time.

[Insta: @stivaktis](https://www.instagram.com/stivaktis)

Dr. Greta GYRAITĖ is a Lithuanian marine microbiologist specializing in the relationship between coastal water quality and potentially pathogenic microorganisms. She holds a PhD in Ecology and Environmental Sciences (2021) and has gained extensive international experience through studies and research in Belgium, Germany, and across the Baltic Sea region. She is currently affiliated with the Marine Research Institute at Klaipėda University and Vilnius University's Life Sciences Centre. Her work focuses on the occurrence, virulence, and antimicrobial resistance of *Vibrio* spp. in coastal environments, particularly in the context of climate change. In 2021, she received the prestigious "Švyturio Klaipėdos Ateities Stipendija" for her contributions to marine science in Lithuania. Greta is committed to science communication and raising awareness of coastal microbial risks to public and environmental health.



Ula RUGEVIČIŪTĖ RUGYTĖ is an illustrator, comic author and the co-founder of the Lithuanian Illustrators Association "ėėė". Originally from Kaunas, Lithuania, she is currently based in Strasbourg, France, where she earned her DNSEP in *La Haute école des arts du Rhin* (2017). She explores visual storytelling in various forms, merging the intimate, the dream-like, and the political in her work. She has been illustrating articles and books for adult and young audiences, as well as participating in comic zines. Her illustrations for Jurga Vile's book "Fallen from the moon. A dream about Oscar Milosz and other birds" has been awarded "Illustration of the year" by the K.A.2023. Her first comic book "The Murmur of the Shadows" (2024) explores collective memory and the trauma of the Russian occupation of Lithuania. Ula's upcoming graphic novel is set to be published by the French publishing house *éditions ça et là*.

<https://www.ularrugyte.com>



Annabel AUDUREAU holds a PhD in Comparative Literature and teaches in the Literature Department at La Rochelle Université. A specialist in popular literature and culture, she is also the deputy director of the PoLiCÉMIÉS research unit. This interdisciplinary team brings together researchers in French and foreign languages and literatures, political science, and media studies around a central focus: analysing cultural transitions within the context of Smart Urban Coastal Sustainability. In this framework, her current research explores the relationships between popular cultures and the environment.



PieR GAJEWSKI is a French illustrator, printmaker, and graphic novelist. A graduate of the *École des Beaux-Arts* in Angoulême (BD section, with honors), he has been awarded several international artist residencies, including Villa Kujoyama in Kyoto, Lingua Comica (Japan), the *Maison des Auteurs* (Angoulême), and residencies in Essaouira, Kraków and Philippines. His work has been exhibited at the Centre Pompidou (Paris), the Kyoto International Manga Museum and in cities such as Istanbul, New York, Manila... He has collaborated with national and international media (*Libération*, *XXI*...). From 2008 to 2021, he developed a long-term visual dialogue with photographer Carole Sionnet around the imaginary city *La Ville Bleue*. He has also produced several graphic reports on artists-in-residence for La Rochelle Université.

<https://piergajewski.eu/>





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December 2025

