Ownership

04 Portrait | Robin Chase
Robin Chase is a start-up pioneer from the USA who co-founded the car sharing service Zipcar in 1999 – the largest in the world today. Since then, she’s been doggedly pursuing her vision of a society in which people prefer to share than to own.

10 Portfolio | Owning little
They live an ascetic life, and frown on all luxury. We look at the eight objects owned by Buddhist monks.

12 Interview | Prince Karel Schwarzenberg
As the head of a princely house steeped in tradition, Karel Schwarzenberg knows what it means both to own vast assets and to lose them. He speaks to us about the advantages and disadvantages of wealth.

18 Report | In the Mara Naboisho Conservancy
In the southwest of Kenya, some 550 members of the Maasai tribe are leasing out their land. This means they can help establish sustainable tourism while maintaining their traditions. We go on an expedition across the 50 000 acres of their conservancy.

28 Essay | Land rights
Private land ownership can help to overcome poverty and promote economic development, says Frank Pichel, the co-founder of the Cadasta Foundation.

32 Masterpieces | Bernardo Bellotto
The Liechtenstein family once owned three palaces in Vienna. The Venetian artist Bernardo Bellotto painted Prince Joseph Wenzel I in front of one of them.

34 Literary choice | Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa
The downfall of the Sicilian high nobility: this Italian writer was inspired to write “The Leopard,” his only novel, by the life of his own great-grandfather.

36 Carte Blanche | Brother Mathias
Before joining the Franciscans, Brother Mathias studied political sciences in Neuchâtel and helped to found a start-up in Russia.
Some have it, others don’t. Some are content with what they own, while others can never get enough. But money only becomes “wealth” if you actually do something with it. The word *dýnamis* in Ancient Greek sums it up – meaning the active power residing in things of value that lets us change ourselves or something else, as Aristoteles also writes. Exercising this power doesn’t always have to mean owning personal, material wealth, and this new issue of CREDO proves it.

The American entrepreneur Robin Chase is the subject of our cover story. She believes that our future lies not in a world of ownership, but in a sharing society and a sharing economy. “There is more than enough physical stuff already; we just need to think about and organize it differently,” she says. A change in thinking has also altered the life of the Maasai in the southwest of Kenya. Since leasing their land to the Mara Naboisho Conservancy, they have been getting a secure, basic income. They used to regard the wild animals as belonging to the government, but some of them have now come to see them as part of their personal wealth, just like their own cattle.

But sometimes private wealth can simply be taken away by one’s own government, as Prince Karel Schwarzenberg knows all too well. In our interview, he also tells us of the tradition by which individual family members have relinquished their inheritance in order to build up the family assets purposefully over generations. This in turn has enabled them to help people in need.

And then there are people who decide to live a life free of ownership out of a deep personal conviction. The eight objects that a Buddhist monk may possess have recently been joined by a few electronic devices, pens and books – as long as they are all simple and purely functional. I hope that you find this issue of our journal informative and enjoyable to read.

H.S.H. Prince Philipp von und zu Liechtenstein
Chairman LGT
Back in 1999, before Uber, Lyft, Airbnb, YouTube, Wikipedia and Facebook had emerged, Robin Chase had an epiphany in a little café in Cambridge, Massachusetts, when it suddenly struck her that the Internet could be used to share surplus goods, knowledge and time. She became the co-founder of Zipcar, which is today one of the biggest car sharing services in the world. Since then, she’s been committed to realizing her vision of a society in which people prefer to share than to own. This would help us to save our planet, and make a fair life accessible to all its citizens.

“This is where it all began, one sunny September morning.” Robin Chase points to a little table by the window in the Andala Coffee House, a red brick building in the city of Cambridge, located north of Boston, Massachusetts. “This is where our car sharing idea originated, and I’ve since had hundreds of meetings here about sharing surplus resources.” She strides purposefully over to us when she arrives for our conversation, and with her short cotton dress and her short-cropped silvery hair, she looks a lot younger than her 59 years. Her schedule is tight, as is so often the case, for her appointment book is full of workshops, conferences and presentations all over the world: in Buenos Aires, Amsterdam, New York, Leipzig, Washington and Boston. “Being able to sleep three nights in a row in the same bed is an exception for me. And if it’s my own bed, that’s pure luxury.” She comes swiftly to the point: we’re here to talk about how she founded her first start-up company.
Robin Chase in the Andala Coffee House, where the idea for Zipcar originated and where she still meets many of her business partners today.
Robin Chase likes to ride her bike here in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where she lives and works.

Robin Chase enthusiastically about how you could rent cars there by the hour. Chase had a business degree from the elite Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Danielson wanted to know if she felt this could be a viable business idea in the USA too.

“It was the ideal moment, and I was just the person who needed to hear this,” says Robin Chase with complete conviction. After two years in which she’d concentrated on bringing up her children, she was keen to work again and was looking for a good idea for a start-up. It wasn’t just about getting independence and money. She wanted to do something to help improve society and protect the climate. Up to then, she could barely tell one make of car from another, but she was still convinced that a car sharing service would work in Boston. It’s densely populated, and its inhabitants are innovation-friendly. “This was just the kind of thing I was dreaming of: creating a platform to share unused resources. I also knew that the Internet could make that kind of thing possible.”

“My children were six, nine and twelve years old back then. My husband drove the car to work every day. I was mostly getting around by foot, bike or public transportation.” It wasn’t just for financial reasons that they didn’t want a second car. “I didn’t want to have to hunt for a parking space, take it to the car wash or to the repair shop, and I didn’t want to have to dig it out from beneath mountains of snow in the winter.” Now and then, however, she’d have liked to have a car – such as whenever she had to shop for a lot of things, or when she had to take one of her kids to the doctor’s unexpectedly. But then she met the geochemist Antje Danielson in that café.

The right idea at the right time

Danielson’s son Max was attending the same kindergarten as Chase’s youngest daughter Linnea. The two mothers were also united in their interest in protecting the environment and in their belief in community spirit. Back in the fall of 1999, Danielson had just returned from a trip to Berlin, and told Chase
But potential investors weren’t as convinced about her business model. They argued that US citizens saw their car as a status symbol to be owned. And they also didn’t believe that the Internet could provide the necessary platform. There were no smartphones back then, and neither Wikipedia, Facebook, Etsy, Airbnb nor Uber existed. Just 40 percent of Bostonians had access to the World Wide Web, and most of them only had it at their workplace. Investors also feared that customers would be careless with the cars they borrowed. To make matters worse, the word “share” triggered negative associations. “It brought hippies to mind along with poor quality, grungy goods and slow service,” laughs Robin Chase as she reminisces about the early days.

Starting up
Chase had been used to sharing things since she was small, and she was also accustomed to forms of transportation other than cars. She’s the daughter of a US diplomat, has five siblings, and in her youth she explored Damascus, Jerusalem, Swaziland and parts of the USA by foot, bike and scooter. That helped her to develop a love of freedom and adventure, and to become self-confident. Throughout her life she’s found it more exciting and more important to check out different places and cultures than to acquire material things. It was sometimes difficult to convey this to her own children, though. “They complained that they didn’t get the same gadgets as their friends,” explains Chase. “I told them: you’re getting amazing experiences that will enrich you for the rest of your life.”

Given her own experience, Chase is totally convinced that most people will gladly offer help and time if they can, and if they see that others need it. So she disagreed with her critical investors, remaining firm in her belief that people are basically good. She was also sure that the Internet would provide an effortless means of renting cars by the hour, and that even US citizens would rather share cars than own them if the financial bottom line looked good. That’s why she refused to be constrained by any resistance. She found investors, got insurance for three light-green Volkswagen cars, and came up with a name that would provide a cool image for her new company: Zipcar. She told her team they were not allowed to call their service “sharing,” and coined the following slogan: “Zipcar makes renting a car as easy and convenient as getting cash from an ATM.” The Zipcar website had barely gone online in June 2000 when the first customers got in touch – and the company developed into the biggest car sharing service in the world.

Retreat and advance
In 2013 the Avis Budget Group acquired the company for USD 500 million. Chase and Danielson had long left the company management, and after several rounds of financing, they only held a few percent of the shares. “It was really difficult to give up running the company. Zipcar was my fourth kid,” says Chase. She decided to leave in 2003, mostly for personal reasons. Her father had died in the previous six months, and her eldest daughter – 15 years old at the time – was becoming a model. “I really wanted to be there for her the whole time. And I’d just been through a really strenuous financing round, right in the middle of the dotcom bubble. Physically, I was a wreck.” Looking back now, she sees this as a blessing, because withdrawing from Zipcar gave her the freedom and the time to create other start-ups – always with the support of her husband, Roy Russell. He was an electrical engineer, but quit his job while Chase was spending over a hundred hours a week getting Zipcar off the ground. “Our kids were in danger of running wild,” she says – only half-jokingly. “For two years, he became the primary child caretaker.” Russell later became Zipcar’s Chief Technology Officer – a job he’s since had in all her start-ups.

Reinventing capitalism
In 2009 TIME Magazine listed Chase as one of their “100 most influential people” in the world. Her TED Talk “Excuse me, may I rent your car?” has been watched more than 59 000 times since 2012. In 2010 she and Russell moved to Paris for two years in order to set up Buzzcar, a platform that lets users rent cars directly from their owners. In 2012 she co-founded Veniam, a company that installs technology in vehicles to serve as hotspots and deliver reliable WiFi to people all over the place, even on the outskirts of urban centers. In their spare time, they’ve been renovating their house in Cambridge, Massachusetts, where
they’ve now got solar panels on the roof. They grow fruit and vegetables in their garden, and are enjoying precious moments with their first grandchild.

Robin Chase is certain that an economy founded on collaboration is the best. And she’s also convinced that capitalism will have to be completely reinvented to this end. She explains her ideas in her book “Peers Inc.” Here, “Inc” means companies that create online platforms, while the “peers” are the individual entrepreneurs who offer their services, knowledge, goods and resources via those platforms (see explanation on p. 9). “The most efficient organizational structure for a company is to be a platform and have as little as possible on it that’s owned and engage as much as possible from outside.” She names Airbnb, Etsy and Lyft as examples. Chase believes that such companies can grow and learn faster, and can attract more diversity and creativity, and thereby realize more innovations. They can also be quicker at finding the perfect person for every job: “Like the needle in a haystack.”

**Unexploited resources**

Since founding Zipcar, Chase has been discovering potential everywhere for utilizing and sharing surplus things – from cars, beds and smartphones to talent, experience and creativity, energy from the sun and the wind, and even empty school gyms and theaters. She sees almost completely inexhaustible reserves of undiscovered, unexploited resources that could benefit both producers and consumers. “There is more than enough physical stuff already; we just need to think about and organize it differently,” she writes in “Peers Inc.”

But this start-up pioneer also acknowledges the negative consequences of economic development – especially offering lower than minimum wages and removing safety nets for the peers. This is why Chase is campaigning to get the world’s tax systems restructured, and to get a national healthcare system in the USA. “In the sharing economy, everyone will be hustling several jobs in parallel, so social welfare can’t be dependent on a single, permanent job.”
Robin Chase is even more concerned about the rapid development of self-driving vehicles. If it’s less expensive to send your car home than to park it, or cheaper to send it to the pizzeria than to get your pizza delivered, then she thinks we’ll have hell on Earth: our cities will be completely choked with cars. “The future lies in autonomous, zero-emissions cars that we share. We have to use taxes and infrastructure to regulate empty cars, or cars with only one person in them. And we also have to encourage walking and cycling.”

Shared mobility as a mission

Time is running out for us to create the necessary prerequisites. That’s why Robin Chase has set up a platform called “sharedmobilityprinciples.org.” Under her leadership, international non-governmental organizations have devised ten principles that could help us to lead environmentally friendly, fair, prosperous, yet affordable lives in our cities (see box on p. 7). Chase is trying to get as many cities as possible to sign up. “At present, the huge tectonic plates of our society are in motion. We can determine where they get stuck, and where they solidify.” She never tires of proclaiming her mission throughout the world. It bothers her that this entails traveling many miles, which in itself pollutes the environment. “But as long as I can have a major impact on the future design of our cities, our income and our transport by being on the spot, I’m going to keep doing what I do.”

But for the moment, Robin Chase is just looking forward to the rare joy of sleeping three nights in a row in the same bed. She’s going on a lakeside vacation with her husband, son and two friends. They’ve rented a small car for the trip – just big enough for five people with very little luggage. 

Kerstin Zilm is a journalist and author. She reports on her new home of California for the German and US media.
The monastic way of life is something common to different religions, including Christianity, Buddhism and Hinduism. Whether wandering holy men, isolated hermits or members of a community of nuns or monks, what usually unites them is a renunciation of well-nigh all worldly things. Instead, they devote themselves to spiritual goals through a life of asceticism. As a result, they own almost no possessions. Benedictine monks, for example, are required to renounce the vice of individual ownership altogether, so that they might free themselves inwardly and accept God. Buddhist monks, too, are only allowed to possess very few things. Traditionally, these comprised the eight utensils shown here – though the precise choice of objects could sometimes vary. They have at times been complemented by electronic devices, books, a flashlight or pens, all of which must be as simple as possible and functional in intent. Luxury items are proscribed, as owning them could trigger envy in others. Cash is also taboo.

A water filter, a walking staff, clothes, a tooth brush, an alms bowl, a sewing needle, medicine and a razor: the traditional possessions of a Buddhist monk.
Karel Schwarzenberg is the head of a princely house that is rich in tradition. Over the course of its history, his family has had its property confiscated seven times. As a self-styled “zoon politikon” – a “political animal” – he speaks here about the advantages of living in a state that respects the rule of law, contrasting it with the long shadows cast by totalitarian systems. He further expounds on the obligations and privileges that arise from owning wealth.

CREDO: Your Serene Highness, our topic here is ownership: more precisely, your possessions. Isn’t it somewhat unseemly to talk about this?
Karel Schwarzenberg: We can talk about anything and everything. But I’m not very qualified to do so in this case, as my son has long been responsible for managing my estates. I’ve withdrawn from economic life and am just an observer.

There’s different information about the size of the Schwarzenberg assets.
The numbers are all exaggerated. It’s still a very nice amount, but nothing compared to what it once was. In the last hundred years, we’ve gradually lost ninety percent of our assets through expropriation.

What do your remaining assets mean to you?
They give you a certain independence. It’s our good fortune, too, that they are beautiful tracts of land – whether here in Bohemia, in Styria, Lungau or Franconia. Our estates mostly comprise forests.

At one time, your family also owned huge agricultural estates – though not much has remained of them.
Our farmlands in Bohemia were already confiscated during the land reforms of the 1920s. Hitler took away the farms of our ancestral seat in Franconia in the 1930s. He knew that our family opposed him, so he appropriated the oldest property we owned – the farms around Iffigheimer Berg. At least we were given some compensation back then. We invested the money in apartment buildings in Frankfurt, but what remained of them after the War had to be sold to the city of Frankfurt. With the money that this brought in, we bought a vineyard the size of about five football fields. So over less than twelve years, what used to be several large, feudal estates were transformed into a small vineyard.

It sounds like the Grimm fairy tale in which “Hans in Luck” sets off on his journey with a clump of gold, but at the end is left with only a stone.
That’s right. And it was a similar story with our other possessions.

But in “Hans in Luck,” the main character gets happier, the less he owns.
I’m not unhappy. Look, I was born shortly before the War. Our generation had the mercy of being born late, as German Chancellor Helmut Kohl once rightly said. Given my age, I was never tempted by one or the other totalitarian system. That was a huge stroke of luck. What’s more, if you’re a member of a family like mine, if you’ve managed to survive the 20th century, and you’re doing all right, then you can only offer thanks to God. My uncle and adoptive father, Heinrich zu Schwarzenberg, was
“Every good deed you do will bring its own punishment. That should be enshrined as a historical law.” - Prince Karel Schwarzenberg.
imprisoned in Buchenwald, while another uncle here in Bohemia was put in communist penal camps twice. I was never locked up! That’s amazing, given the history of the 20th century. And then came the annus mirabilis of 1989: the fact that I was able to return to Prague, where I was born, was the greatest miracle of my life.

**Most of the assets of the Schwarzenbergs are held today in a family foundation in Liechtenstein? Why?**
Because Liechtenstein respects the rule of law. In the 20th century, many countries allowed severe breaches of the law. That experience has taught me it’s better to settle in a country where those things don’t happen.

“A foundation enables you to keep your assets together and preserve them for the next generation.”

**But setting up a foundation also offers tax advantages, doesn’t it?**
That’s not a crucial aspect. The tax benefits aren’t as wonderful as people think. The main reason is really that a foundation enables you to keep your assets together and preserve them for the next generation.

**Why is it so important to keep the assets together?**
That’s a family tradition. The assets were built up purposefully over generations, also thanks to many family members relinquishing their claim to them. I don’t have the right to disperse them, not least since the will of my adoptive father compels me to preserve them. And I think that’s the right thing to do. In this way, we can support those in need, and still do something for the general good, just as we have always done, everywhere.

**There’s a saying that the rich can teach the rest of us how to be penny pinchers. Is that true?**
Sure, otherwise they’d never be rich.

**Some of your ancestors were known for their thrift.**
Yes, such as my Uncle Johann, who was one of the richest men in Czechoslovakia, even after the first land reform. At Budweis railway station, people would regularly see the Schwarzenberg head forester get in the first-class car – that was his right, according to his employment regulations. The reigning Prince, Uncle Johann, would then get into the second-class car, while his nephew sat in third class. Then there was Adolph Josef, under whose auspices the Schwarzenberg fortune reached its zenith in the 19th century. His daughter-in-law visited him in his palace in Vienna, and was astonished to be served a bottle of beer and a sausage for dinner. Adolph Josef explained to her: “You know, I’ve set myself a limit on my expenses every month, but I’ve used it up. As a result, I have to hold back until the end of the month.” Of course, it’s also a matter of self-discipline.

**Is this a trait you share?**
No. My mother was a Fürstenberg, so frugality isn’t quite as pronounced in me.

**Don’t extensive assets also bring limitations with them?**
It depends on how you view it. We were brought up like this, and it’s not just right that we maintain them: ownership brings responsibilities. Not just toward our family and our house, but to the country in which we live. Whether it’s here in Bohemia, in Styria or in Franconia. It’s not like owning shares that you can buy today and sell tomorrow, regardless of whether they’re of companies in Japan, Chile or the Czech Republic. It’s something different, and it’s bound up with our fate, and with a lot of emotions.

**The Schwarzenbergs early on set up social institutions, and introduced pensions for their employees.**
Yes, from the 17th century onwards. The breakthrough came about with Ferdinand, the second Prince Schwarzenberg, who set up numerous hospital foundations. Then came the pension funds. After the Second World War, Prince Adolph set up the Schwarzenberg Housing Foundation in Austria, which helped many workers to finance buying their homes.

**How did all this come about?**
It was always important to us that we should take care of our employees – or our subjects, as they were back then. In Southern Bohemia, there was a saying: “If you want to have a good life, grab the tail of a Schwarzenberg mare and hold on tight.” My whole upbringing was geared toward taking responsibility for our people.
In 1968, after Warsaw Pact troops marched into Prague, you helped to look after Czech refugees in Vienna. They naturally came to me for help. I was their first calling point. We checked them all, as we still had the old lists of our employees. If someone said: “I’m Jozef Novák, my father was a gamekeeper in České Žleby in Bohemia,” we’d ask: “What was your father’s first name, what was your mother’s, and in what year was your father born?”

And what then?
Whoever gave all the right answers received a voucher for a pension and a guest house that I’d rented for them. So everyone was looked after. What’s fascinating is that there were a lot of them, and they were all telling the truth! There wasn’t a single fraud among them.

You were Chancellor under the then State President Václav Havel, you founded a political party, and have served twice as Czech Foreign Minister. Do you regard your political activities as part of this tradition of serving the people?
Yes. Of course, everyone does what comes best to him.

But surely politics attracted you?
Undoubtedly. I’m a “zoon politikon,” a political animal. Look, since my childhood, politics has played a role in my life, so I later chose to play a role in politics. I was already reading the papers by the age of eight or nine, and they were full of articles about confiscating Uncle Adolph’s estates. Of course that interested me, and it led me into politics at an early age.
Does it hurt that the assets of the Schwarzenbergs were decimated like that?
Sure. Especially because the earliest family possessions were lost in the process. Take a look at the Castles of Hluboká or Český Krumlov sometime – they belonged to us for centuries. But that’s not the most important thing.

So what is?
There was an incredibly popular actor and writer here in Bohemia called Jan Werich. When our family had its assets confiscated after the February putsch of 1948, he told my father he was very sorry about it. My father shouted at him: “Don’t talk such rubbish. In the course of its history, my family has had its assets taken away seven times. That’s nothing new. But can’t you see that it’s this country that’s going to the dogs?” Werich was on the far left, so he saw things differently back then. But he later admitted to me that my father had been right.

And is it true that the Schwarzenbergs lost their assets seven times?
Yes. The first time was thanks to Charles V, then came Gustavus Adolphus, Napoleon and the King of Bavaria. After that came the First and Second Czechoslovak Republics, with the German Republic between them. But I’m not complaining. My father once said to me: “Look, we got you to study forestry. Didn’t they teach you that lightning strikes the tallest trees? So you can either duck down, then you’ll have your peace. Or you can stick your neck out, but then you shouldn’t be surprised if you sometimes take a knock.”

What seems particularly tragic is that your family was opposed to the Nazis, and yet you still had your estates confiscated by the communists.
Every good deed you do will bring its own punishment. That should be enshrined as a historical law. The House of Liechtenstein didn’t cooperate with the Nazis either, and they also paid for it in the end. History isn’t fair.

There’s a law in Czechoslovakia named after your family, the “Lex Schwarzenberg” of 1947. How did that come about?
That’s a unique case in law. It was an archetypal example of injustice – a law against an individual person. It states that everything owned by Adolph Schwarzenberg will pass to the state of Bohemia. In Austria, they created a law against a family – the Habsburgs. But here, it was against an individual man.

Why?
Because he was a good man. They couldn’t accuse him of collaboration, and as a Czech citizen he wasn’t covered by the Beneš Decrees to confiscate the property of the German population. So they had to create a law that applied just to him.

All the same, since 1989 you’ve been given back a substantial number of your assets from your father’s branch of the family.
Regrettably, the Lex Schwarzenberg meant that what was taken from my uncle didn’t fall under the law of restitution. But I did get back what had belonged to my father.

Did the restitution go smoothly?
These things never go without a hitch. I naturally had to go to court over it, and of course some of the assets were lost for good. Once the state has taken something away, it really doesn’t like giving it back. If you don’t understand that, then you must have a child’s faith in the rule of law.

With regard to the former assets of your uncle, do you see any residual chance of restitution?
You should never give up hope, but I’m skeptical. Look, the American Loyalists were never compensated either, and the same has been true of many others. Sometimes, history takes decisions over our heads.

Are any legal disputes still running?
Most of the lawsuits have been settled. One is still running that a dear cousin of mine started against me.

Your cousin believes you’ve acted against the will of your adoptive father, so she’s challenging your inheritance rights. She claims you’ve undertaken too little to get your confiscated property returned.
She has always assumed that things are done here as they are in the West. But I know this country, and it’s pointless. The Lex Schwarzenberg is airtight. There’s nothing to be done.

Are such unpleasant quarrels simply a consequence of being wealthy?
To answer that, I can only offer a quotation from one of our literary classics, the “Good Soldier Švejk” by Jaroslav Hašek: “Why do people kill each other? Because of money, of course.” But hopefully that will soon be over.
This country experienced 41 years of communism, from 1948 to 1989 ...

Actually, it was 50 years of totalitarian rule, from 1939 to 1989, if you include the Nazis as well as the communists. You have to consider that as a single period.

**Do you still notice these 50 years of totalitarianism in the Czech Republic?**

Sure. National Socialism only lasted for seven years in Austria, but the stench of it lasted in the universities, institutions and the bureaucracy until the 1970s.

**And what is it that you notice here?**

Morals have suffered. People don’t know anymore what’s right. I can tell you a story about the time when I was Chancellor under Václav Havel. Every Sunday I used to drive out to get to know the country better. One day I was in a Bohemian village, in the region with the open-cast mines for brown coal. I looked around me in horror – the forest was dying, the monuments and churches were decaying, and the houses were in a desolate state. On my way back home I was hungry, so I looked for a pub that was open and finally found one. As I was going in, I saw a sign: “No gypsies allowed.” So I promptly walked away again. When President Havel asked me the following morning about my weekend, I told him. He smiled at me and said: “You know, the forest will recover. We’ll restore the monuments. And when people get their houses back, they’ll do the repairs themselves straightaway. You’ll see. But the emotional trauma will take decades to heal.” Havel was right. A totalitarian system leaves wounds behind. It will take at least three generations to get over it.

*At the start of our conversation, you were enthusiastic about the freedom of the wealthy. Is there perhaps a freedom to be found in possessing nothing?*

Yes, but it’s more arduous.

*Those who have little don’t have to worry about much.*

Nevertheless, it’s nicer with money. To sum it up: if I have to, I can tell anyone to get lost. Not everyone has that option.

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Karel Schwarzenberg was born in Prague in 1937 to the poorer, cadet branch of the aristocratic house of Schwarzenberg, whose ancestral seat is in Franconia. The Bohemian estates of both branches of the family were confiscated when Karel was still a child – first by the National Socialists in Germany, then by the Czechoslovak Republic after the War. In 1948 the family emigrated to Vienna. Karel studied forestry and law. In 1960 he was adopted by his uncle, Heinrich zu Schwarzenberg, who belonged to the senior branch of the family but who had no sons. Since then, both branches of the family have been united. As the Chairman of the International Helsinki Federation and as an editor of dissident literature, Karel Schwarzenberg campaigned for human rights. After the Velvet Revolution of 1989 he returned to Prague and was appointed director of the office of the legendary Czech writer and politician, President Václav Havel. His own political career began in 2004 when he was elected to the Czech Senate. Between 2007 and 2013 he twice served as Czech Foreign Minister, and in 2013 he was beaten by Miloš Zeman in the presidential election. Karel Schwarzenberg remains a member of parliament to this day. His principal residence is the former hunting lodge of Dřevíč, some 20 miles west of Prague. His family wealth is estimated to be roughly 300 million euros, and his estates include castles, houses, farmland and forests in Germany, Austria and Bohemia. The House of Schwarzenberg is the second-biggest owner of forests in both the Czech Republic and Austria.

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Mathias Plüss is a science journalist and writes for “Das Magazin” and elsewhere.
The Maasai still wear their traditional clothes today. Lions and other wild animals see their red robes from afar and keep their distance – they fear and avoid the Maasai.
In the southwest of Kenya, over 550 of the local inhabitants are leasing out their land to the Mara Naboisho Conservancy. This unique model combines nature conservation and progress to make a profit. It proves that sustainable tourism can protect both the ecosystem and the wild animals that live there. And it can also promote development among the Maasai people without compelling them to betray their traditions.
When his herd comes home in the evening, Daniel Korio (32) checks with his eyes and hands to make sure all the animals are healthy and uninjured.

It's still dark when Daniel Korio wakes up. He's a wiry man, 32 years old, and a shepherd from the tribe of the Maasai. The first birdsong can be heard outside, otherwise everything is quiet. Daniel slips under the mosquito net, gets out of bed, puts on his shirt, trousers and black rubber boots and goes out without waking his wife Kerempe or their small daughter, Sintakoi. From the threshold of his little house he looks out over his “manyatta,” the homestead of his family. Here, on this overgrown grassland in southwestern Kenya, stands the house he shares with his main wife Kerempe, the houses of his co-wife and of his four brothers, plus the traditional hut where his mother lives – a windowless dwelling made of dried cow dung and mud. But the most important thing is the kraal in which the whole family’s cows, sheep and goats spend the night. “In former times, the cows were our pride and joy,” he says. “And our survival depended on the well-being of our animals.” Things are rather different today. Every month, Daniel Korio receives a “salary” worth 11 000 Kenyan shillings – some 110 Swiss francs. It’s roughly a quarter of what he needs for his family in a month. He gets the money for leasing out his land to the Mara Naboisho Conservancy, where a company is offering sustainable tourism. The lease is valid for 15 years, and up to now he is just one of 554 Maasai landowners in Naboisho who have signed such a contract. It is an appealing region for travelers because it’s full of game and is situated on the edge of the Maasai Mara National Reserve, which itself borders the famous Serengeti to the south.

Sheep for school fees

It’s half past five in the morning, and the moon is still high in the sky. Clouds keep scudding past it, but Daniel can nevertheless see that all is well in the kraal. Dawn breaks just a little later, and the animals begin to bleat and moo. They want to eat and be milked. Daniel trudges across the muddy ground left by the recent downpours. When he reaches the enclosure made of vertical tree trunks, he opens the wooden gate. Some 50 cows crowd their way out – black, mottled, white and spotted, light
and dark brown – along with the sheep and the goats. Daniel gives them a visual check, just as he does every morning. He needs to be sure to identify any injuries or illnesses at an early stage. But the care he lavishes on his cattle wasn’t enough to save all of them during Kenya’s severe drought of the past three years. “Our cows couldn’t find any more grass, and many of them died,” he explains. He wishes he could just forget about those months. “The ones that survived were so thin that they hardly brought any money when we sold them.” In years gone by, such hard times would have meant he couldn’t afford to send his children to school anymore. “Before we started leasing out our land, we always had to sell a few sheep whenever it was time to pay the school fees.” But during the drought, his emaciated herd wasn’t worth anything anymore. In such a situation, selling the one or other animal would have been enough to buy food and medicine, but school fees for the children would have become an unaffordable luxury. Thanks to the lease, however, he was able to fall back on its monthly payments. “I’m grateful that the future of my children is no longer dependent on the rain,” says this father of two sons and one daughter. Earlier this year, heavy rain showers brought the long drought to a sudden end.

**Upholding traditions through change**

Once the early morning light comes, the vastness of the land becomes apparent. There’s no other settlement to be seen, just scrub and bush all the way to the horizon. Daniel is happy when he’s with his cattle. Here, he can find inner harmony – just like his father did, and his grandfather, and the generations before them. At the same time he is aware that the Maasai will have to change their traditions in order to uphold them. That also applies to the issue of land ownership. In earlier times, the land belonged to the community, and it would never have occurred to any member of the Maasai to fence off a piece of it. But then traditional land rights were joined by modern land law. By 2005, the changes in society reached the Maasai in Naboisho, and the Kenyan government started privatizing the land. Since then,
members of other ethnic groups have been able to buy plots of land in traditional Maasai areas, and the first fences have been erected in these seemingly endless expanses of land. When they saw this, the Maasai understood that they would have to place their land under private ownership, otherwise they could end up without owning any of their ancestral homeland.

Safari before daybreak
Some 13 miles away from Daniel's “manyatta,” John Saningo Naingisa is stepping on the gas, keeping his gaze fixed on his rearview mirror. An elephant bull is storming after the SUV that John is steering across the savannah this early morning. Behind him, Heidi Fjild and Monica Celius from Norway are staring back at their heavyweight would-be attacker, whose upturned ears and loud trumpeting leave no doubt as to his intentions. The two women are on their first-ever safari. John is driving them through Naboisho, and they set off before daybreak because the cool hours of the morning are the best time to see a lot of animals.

Heidi and Monica have been exploring the region for three days now, and they are fascinated by all the animals they're discovering. Sometimes they can watch them for hours on end. They tell of having been right up close to see prides of lions eating, cheetahs out hunting, and herds of elephants at the water hole. At the side of the dirt road three lions are ambling off, after having caught and eaten their prey – probably a Thomson’s gazelle, explains John, given the dark red, medium-sized pool of blood that can be seen clearly from the car.

Protection for man and beast
Less than twenty feet from them, a hyena is waiting in the bush until the lions have moved farther away. As soon as it feels safe enough, it'll set about what they’ve left over from their meal. Shortly before the end of their safari, the Norwegians see some leopards next to the road – a mother with two cubs. They saw this family yesterday already – John recognizes them. The two women are delighted to have John as their guide in the Con-
Encounters with cheetahs in Naboisho are becoming more frequent again. The numbers of wild animals have been increasing since the area was declared a conservancy.
The Maasai often wander on foot through the Conservancy. They’re exploring the area before going out stalking animals with the tourists.

A life-changing encounter
One of the basic ideas behind Naboisho is that you can only protect the animals if their survival is to the benefit of the local people. Tourism functions as a bridge between these two objectives: quite a number of travelers are willing to pay a lot of money to be able to experience wild animals roaming freely. In Naboisho, a large proportion of the revenue generated is utilized to ensure the survival of the Maasai and the continued existence of their culture. The Norwegian investor Svein Wilhelmsen is one of the fathers of this model, combining nature conservation, development and profit. Wilhelmsen explains how he was captivated by the abundance of wild animals, by the landscape and by being among the Maasai the very first time he visited this region, back in 1982. When he returned, 15 years later, he made an acquaintance almost by chance that would change both his life and that of the Maasai in Naboisho. One evening, as he was camping on the banks of the Talek River, an elder of the Maasai called Ole Taek came to join him. Sitting at the campfire, Taek told Wilhelmsen how he worried about his people. He railed against the “classical” tourism in the neighboring Maasai

servancy. “He has incredibly good instincts and explains just as much as we want to hear,” says Heidi Fjild (47). They also love the young Maasai’s sense of humor. John grew up in Naboisho and now works as a guide for the tourism company Basecamp Explorer. He’s one of over a hundred permanent employees from among the Maasai who’ve found work in the tourism sector in Naboisho. Another few hundred jobs have also been created in the nature conservation projects and in projects for the benefit of the Maasai community that are being funded by the Basecamp Group. According to the company’s own figures, some 10 000 people in Naboisho profit from the different jobs available in the Conservancy. These facts are important to the two Norwegians, because they consciously chose to book their vacation with a company that practices sustainable tourism. “I wanted to be sure that the animals aren’t disturbed by tourists who really just want to enjoy nature,” explains Monica. When they booked their trip, they weren’t aware that the leasing fees, the jobs and the community projects mean that the Maasai benefit from the tourism revenue in Naboisho. “We only realized that after we got here, and we were very pleasantly surprised.”
Mara National Reserve, because the profits bypassed the local population completely, and his tribe was even losing out from the so-called nature conservation practiced there. The Maasai were now forbidden from grazing their flocks in the reserve and had no more access to their ancestral lands. Instead, thousands of tourists came through every year, without his people benefiting from the revenue generated by tourism. There were still no schools and no hospitals, and there was no work for anyone. Ole Taek also told Wilhelmsen about his worries for the ecosystem in the Maasai Mara, which was suffering from the stampede of tourists and was deteriorating more and more every year. Wilhelmsen remembers well the warning given by the old Maasai: “We can only survive with nature. If it dies, our culture dies too. If you destroy the Maasai Mara, you destroy something that is irreplaceable.” This conversation with Ole Taek touched him deeply, recalled Wilhelmsen many years later.

Setting up the Conservancy

Together, the two of them developed a model that would enable the Maasai to get their share of the revenue brought in by sustainable tourism. Half a year after their conversation, Wilhelmsen founded the company Basecamp Explorer, and the first lodge was opened on Ole Taek’s land in 1998: Basecamp Masai Mara. But before they could take the first steps toward creating today’s Conservancy, something else had to happen: Kenyan land law had to change. This is why the year 2005 was a milestone, says Wilhelmsen. Privatizing the land created opportunities for investors, because it was now possible to make long-term agreements with landowners. But this also harbored great dangers for the preservation of the ecosystem and its animals – and for the Maasai and their culture. This was because private, fenced-off plots of land would cut across the migratory routes and the habitats of the wild animals, and also across the pasturelands of the cattle. To both Wilhelmsen and his Maasai partners, setting up the Mara Naboisho Conservancy seemed the best way to prevent the worst-case scenarios. Instead of dividing up the region into building land, arable land or pasture for individual use, they could in this way preserve a single area of some 50 000 acres. Naboisho’s position means it plays an especially important role in the ecosystem, for it fits like a jigsaw piece into the map of the animals’ migratory routes. This is particularly the case with the wildebeests that come each year in search of pasture, wandering through the Serengeti in Tanzania, the Maasai Mara and the adjoining nature reserves.

A war cry for the future

Dominic Koya sits on the terrace of the Leopard Hill lodge and looks out at a giraffe plucking leaves from an umbrella thorn tree, a hundred feet or so away. He didn’t use to be so interested in giraffes. “We saw the wild animals as something that belonged to the government, and we had the impression that they were no concern of ours.” Today, Dominic regards the wild animals as part of his own wealth. He enjoys watching the giraffes and elephants almost as much as he likes being with his cattle. Dominic is 34 years old and one of the 554 Maasai landowners who are participating in the Mara Naboisho Conservancy. He’s the chairman of their committee. “When I heard that we should make our land available, I was skeptical at first,” says Dominic. “We will lose our culture if we divide up our land, fence it in and sell it,” he says. “And we love the tourism because it’s our only opportunity to make money from what we own, but in a different way.” That’s why Dominic has been canvassing the last few doubters untiringly so that they might lease their land and join the Mara Naboisho Conservancy too. The word “Naboisho” is a war cry in the Maasai language Maa, meaning “come together.” In order to preserve their way of life for the future along with their cattle, sheep and goats, the committee has given the landowners a few rules too: the shepherds may let their herds graze in the Conservancy, but only in designated areas. The committee wants to use a rotation principle to prevent overgrazing. Their next step will be to restrict the
number of cattle that are allowed to graze in the Conservancy, because overgrazing is already a big problem. “In the future, every landowner should only be allowed to have one cow for every five acres of land,” explains Dominic. He too will have to sell some of his herd. “That’s a difficult step for any Maasai to take,” he admits, “but for us, there’s no other way to safeguard our future.” If there are no upper limits, the herds will get ever bigger as the population increases, and this will drive the wild animals away from the grazing lands. “Then that would be the end of tourism – and the end of our income, too,” he says dispassionately.

Learning can be an adventure
After a long day out in the savannah, Daniel Korio’s shepherd Lepakim has brought the herd back home to the kraal. Before they are corralled in for the night to protect them from attack by predators, the animals wait between the houses for the women to milk them. Kerempe has already brought some milk for the evening meal, and is now sitting in front of the smoky fire in the small, windowless hut that serves as her kitchen, cradling two-year-old Sintakoi in her arms. She’s cooking tea with a lot of milk in a soot-blackened pot, then there’ll be corn porridge. Her younger son, seven-year-old Sebaya, is talking about what he did in school today. To him, learning is an exciting adventure. “I never went to school myself,” says Kerempe softly, and you can hear her regret. Even just one generation ago, the Maasai hardly sent any of their children to school – and certainly not the girls. That has changed in recent years, because the Maasai have meanwhile understood that education is the most promising way of earning more money. That’s why Kerempe is just as convinced about the Naboisho model as her husband. “The wild animals attract the tourists, and they bring us money.” Some of this money has already been invested in schools, water, health clinics and better roads. But Kerempe believes even more should be done. Daniel agrees. “We used to just milk our cows. Today you could say we’re also milking the rhinoceroses, elephants and lions.”

Bettina Rühl has been a freelance journalist since 1988. Her main focus is on Africa. She used to report on Africa over the course of research trips lasting several weeks, but since 2011 she’s been based in the Kenyan capital of Nairobi.
Naboisho in figures

The Conservancy was founded in 2010 and today covers some 50 000 acres of land belonging to 554 members of the Maasai tribe. They profit from the arrangement in several ways, not least through the leasing fees that guarantee them a monthly income. Basecamp Explorer and the other tourism companies pay USD 900 000 each year in leasing fees. The project has also created over 300 jobs, which in turn benefit over 10 000 people.

The wildlife population used to be threatened, but has recovered considerably since the Conservancy was founded. Naboisho alone is home to more than 320 species of birds.

The Conservancy belongs to the Mara-Serengeti ecosystem that covers some seven and a half million acres, stretching from the Ngorongoro Highlands in Tanzania to the Loita Hills of southern Kenya. It is one of Africa’s most diverse wildlife regions. This ecosystem is estimated to be home to approximately 40 percent of the continent’s remaining larger mammals. Over the past 50 years Africa has lost over 90 percent of its most important wild mammal species, such as rhinoceroses and lions.
My house is my castle?
Imagine for a moment that you do not have secure rights to the house you live in. Imagine living without a title, deed, or lease to prove your claim to the place you call home. Consider what it would be like to live without any confidence that your government would enforce your claim. In fact, it might even be the government that issued a timber, mining or agricultural concession on your property, without so much as informing you. Would you invest your savings or labor in improving the property knowing that you could be displaced? Would you leave the house empty during the day knowing that in your absence someone could take it from you? How would that affect your ability to work or send your children to school? Consider how it would impact your ability to use the property for collateral, or pass it along to your children.

For a majority of the world’s population, these are not rhetorical questions. These are daily realities.

A functioning land administration sector is the foundation of a national economy, critical for economic growth. In advanced industrial countries we often take infrastructure, such as an up-to-date and accurate land registry and cadastral for granted. Unfortunately, digital land registry and cadastral systems with national coverage exist in only a fraction of the world’s countries, with the World Bank estimating that more than 70 percent of land in emerging economies is undocumented. From urban shanty towns to smallholder farmers, one-third of the people on the planet do not have documented rights to their land.

The right to own land and property rarely surfaces in any top ten list of human rights. That’s because we in the developed world are barely aware of its significance, claims Frank Pichel. He has personal knowledge of how owning property can help individuals to overcome poverty, and can help to promote economic development. He was jointly responsible for setting up the Cadasta Foundation, and through it he helps to realize land rights programs all over the world.
Without accurate information regarding land rights, many sustainable development goals – food security, sustainable resource management, climate change mitigation, and equal rights to property for women – remain impossible to achieve, not to mention the potential for conflict when rights are not recognized and enforced. Furthermore, this lack of data on land use and rights limits government’s ability to equitably assess taxes, deliver services, or plan for development.

“The lack of land rights documentation is also a major barrier for private investment.”

The increasing demand for land
The lack of land rights documentation is also a major barrier for private investment. Without clear records of ownership, fraudulent property transactions abound. And without an accurate, complete, and accessible government land registry, interested buyers have no way of verifying that they are negotiating to buy a property with the actual owner. In fact, a recent report commissioned by the US Agency for International Development and the European Investment Bank found that land tenure issues are seen as the biggest risk for investment by companies acquiring land in emerging economies.

While many emerging economies have struggled in adopting efficient land administration systems, there are some bright spots worth noting. Former Soviet states in particular have flourished in adopting exceptionally modern and equitable land governance frameworks since the collapse of the Soviet Union. One need only look at the 2018 World Bank Doing Business Report to notice that six former Soviet states – Lithuania, Georgia, Belarus, Estonia, the Slovak Republic and Kyrgyzstan – top the list in terms of time, cost, and steps for registering property. While not a perfect indicator, the ability to register property is illustrative of the success found in Eastern Europe in improving land administration processes and adapting them to the market environment. It should also be noted, however, that these Eastern European countries possessed a number of advantages as compared to other developing countries – namely, a highly educated workforce, functioning governance institutions, a history of administering land, and perhaps most importantly, a tabula rasa in terms of laws and policies. Without that historical legacy, or entrenched processes (and potential opposition to change by land professionals and state officials), these governments were able to modernize more quickly.

Increased demand for land and a greater understanding of the importance of land rights in sustainable development and poverty alleviation have sparked efforts to document and formalize such rights around the world. Unfortunately, traditional approaches to documenting and recording property rights are not keeping pace with increased demand worldwide. However, recent technological innovations, including drones, accessible satellite imagery, smartphones with GPS, and cloud computing are making it easier than ever for individuals, communities, and organizations to map and document land rights.

Putting land rights on the map
Cadasta Foundation, a Washington D.C. based nonprofit organization, is working to meet the growing demand to document and register land and resource rights for those left out of formal land administration systems. Cadasta works to tackle land administration constraints with easy-to-use digital tools, technology, and services to help its partners efficiently document, analyze, store, and share critical land and resource information, particularly in places where governments are failing to provide the public good of equitable and affordable land administration.

Although citizens holding land informally suffer most acutely from a lack of recognized and secure land rights, they are not the only actors affected. The lack of information on land rights, property boundaries, and infrastructure is a constraint to economic development and security for public and private sectors alike. The basic identity conferred by recognizable street addresses is a boon to private sector actors looking to deliver goods and services, while governments benefit by having data that serves as the cornerstone for planning, infrastructure delivery, and revenue collection.

Cadasta works with governments, nonprofits, and communities from around the world to support their land and property rights documentation efforts. By offering a secure suite of mobile and web-based tools, partners are able to directly record and
capture evidence of their property claims by using GPS-enabled smartphones. Even in the most remote areas, the Cadasta platform is designed to collect multi-layered information about people’s relationship with land and resources, including spatial dimensions, footage from drones, digital maps, video or audio interviews, photographs, paper attestations, tax receipts, and other supporting documents. The platform is also able to process and store data that has already been collected through traditional paper-based surveys and maps. In addition to offering users its technical platform and tools, Cadasta also supports its partners by providing land information system expertise and training in their efforts to document their rights.

**Cadasta at work**

This approach was recently used in the town of Mufulira, Zambia, where the volunteer mapping group OpenStreetMap (OSM) Zambia used Cadasta’s tools to document the property rights of residents living in an informal settlement. Following a brief remote training by Cadasta’s staff, the OSM team trained community members to collect land rights information using Cadasta’s tools. Despite having little experience using smartphone technologies, the team was able to record the rights of over five thousand households and properties in just two weeks.

Working with OSM Zambia, the City Council of Mufulira is using the data they collected to assist in their planning and infrastructure delivery and to issue Certificates of Occupancy.

The example of Mufulira can be replicated in other districts. Indeed, the Zambian Ministry of Local Government is working closely with OSM Zambia and Cadasta to identify ways to replicate the project and expand the available data on housing and land use. With collaborative and fit-for-purpose approaches such as Cadasta’s tools, the technology now allows for cost-effective measures in closing the data gap; ensuring that citizens are protected, government has the data it needs to make critical decisions and provide services, and that businesses can utilize the information.

Additionally, in the Indian state of Odisha, government officials made history and headlines in May of 2018 with the Odisha Liveable Habitat Mission by handing out formal land rights to two thousand landless residents of urban informal settlements. For the first time, these non-transferable, but inheritable titles recognize the rights of the informal settlement residents.

Speaking with the Thomson Reuters Foundation about the initiative, G. Mathivathanan, Commissioner at the State Department of Housing and Urban Development, noted: “Now the slum dwellers can live without having fear of being evicted.”

The pilot project utilized Cadasta’s tools for data collection and was coupled with community data collectors, imagery from drones, smartphone applications, and participation from local government. The project has plans to expand to cover two hundred and fifty thousand households and a million citizens by the end of 2018. The initiative is already being touted as the “world’s largest slum land titling initiative.”

**Owning property is a human right**

Land and property rights often don’t make it into lists of top ten rights or even consciousness in developed economies not because they aren’t valued, but, in part, because they are so fundamental that they are often taken for granted.

Without secure property rights, you could leave for work in the morning and come home to find that someone had changed the lock to your home and moved in. Or someone could claim your vegetable garden just as you were preparing to harvest your fruit and vegetables. For most people in Europe, North America, and some parts of Asia, this is so beyond the realm of possibility that we do not give secure land and property rights much thought. But ask any farmer, indigenous community, or resident in an informal settlement in an emerging economy what rights they need to climb out of poverty and you will hear a resounding: secure land and property rights.

**Mr. Pichel** is the co-founder and Chief Programs Officer at Cadasta Foundation. As a seasoned land administration specialist, Mr. Pichel has worked to design, manage, and implement land governance projects around the globe.
Once upon a time ... – that’s how fairy tales begin. And once upon a time, there were three palaces in Vienna that belonged to the Liechtenstein family. Back in 1759/60, their proud owner, Prince Joseph Wenzel I von Liechtenstein, was immortalized by the Venetian painter Bernardo Bellotto in front of his Garden Palace in the Rossau district. Of his other two palaces, one of them had already been in the family for centuries – the old “Majoratshaus” on Herrengasse, Joseph Wenzel’s main residence and the site of his private art gallery. It had originally been a Gothic palace, was expanded during the Renaissance, and then extensively refurbished in the Baroque in order to adapt it better to the domestic needs of a man of status like the Prince. This mighty palace dominated Herrengasse, the street that led up to the Emperor’s residence, the Hofburg.

The next-but-one generation after Joseph Wenzel decided to revamp the Herrengasse Palace completely. In 1790, Prince Alois I commissioned the architect Joseph Hardtmuth to turn the old, confused conglomerate of a building into what was to become the most modern palace in the inner city of Vienna. Hardtmuth constructed an imposing façade with two series of columns and buttresses behind which he situated the Prince’s living quarters. The inside courtyards housed the riding stable and riding arena, the legendary library, and the chancellery on the Wallnerstrasse side. But Prince Alois II, the nephew of Alois I, found little pleasure in all this classicistic magnificence. Instead, he chose to make the City Palace on Bankgasse the focus of his life in Vienna.

In his memoir *The World of Yesterday*, published posthumously in 1942, Stefan Zweig wrote of the Herrengasse Palace’s grand finale. Its riding arena had been converted into a concert hall back in 1872, the “Bösendorfersaal,” and on November 9, 1913, the Rosé String Quartet gave a final concert there before the whole palace was torn down. This was the last act, as it were, in its long history of ownership. Vienna’s first high-rise building
of the 20th century was later erected on the site, and it still stands today. “Once upon a time ...” is thus an apt phrase here, one tinged with melancholy. But the things we own are transient, and no doubt must be so. That even applies to palaces.

As for the City Palace on Bankgasse, fortune had already smiled on it several decades before. Back in the 1830s, the architect Heinrich Koch was commissioned to carry out what we today would call a feasibility study. The aim was to convert one of the Liechtenstein palaces into a contemporary, residential mansion in the most economical fashion possible. In 1837, it was the City Palace on Bankgasse that won the right to the makeover. It had been acquired by Prince Johann Adam Andreas I von Liechtenstein back in 1694, more or less by chance, while it was still being built. It was here that he realized his dream of erecting an Italianate residential palace that met all his needs, and it was also given an extra floor where he could organize and exhibit his works of art for the first-ever time. The palace was finished in 1705, and Johann Adam Andreas lived in it for seven years. After his death, interest in this palace dwindled.

Around the mid-18th century, when Prince Joseph Wenzel I was living on Herrengasse, sections of the City Palace on Bankgasse were rented out. In 1807, the décor and the art collection from Bankgasse were transferred to the Garden Palace in Rossau, which now functioned as a gallery. In 1810, the Garden Palace was opened as the first-ever publicly accessible art gallery in Vienna (subject to an admission fee), and it remained open until 1938. When his Jewish compatriots were forbidden from entering the Garden Palace after the Nazi annexation of Austria in 1938, it was closed by Prince Franz Josef II, the father of the present reigning Prince. Thus two centuries of history came to an abrupt end – a history that had begun shortly before 1700 and had blossomed twelve years later into a Baroque summer residence with one of the most magnificent gardens in Vienna. The Garden Palace was a spectacular property, but once the Baroque era of grandiose summer fêtes was over, no one quite knew what to do with it anymore. Just like the City Palace on Bankgasse, the Garden Palace too was rented out. Its dreary everyday existence under lease was interrupted only by the period when it was turned into a museum.

The Second World War also left its mark on the history of the palaces. When the Princely Family moved to Vaduz as their permanent home in 1938, their two remaining Viennese palaces endured a sense of déjà vu. Just as back in the 18th and 19th centuries, they were again rented out – this time in order to compensate for the harsh financial losses caused by the confiscation of the family estates in Czechoslovakia after 1945.

Owning property had suddenly become a burden. The Rossau Garden Palace might once have featured in Bernardo Bellotto’s painting of Joseph Wenzel, but like the City Palace on Bankgasse it, too, was only saved by being leased out. So it seems like a real fairytale ending that the economic success of the current reigning Prince, Hans-Adam II, coupled with renewed family pride in their patrimonial possessions, has enabled both palaces to undergo a sweeping rejuvenation. A new chapter in their history has now opened up for each of them. Is there perhaps an artist who could immortalize the success of this Prince before one of his palaces today, like Bellotto of old?  

Dr. Johann Kräftner is the director of the Princely Collections of the House of Liechtenstein and from 2002 to 2011 was director of the LIECHTENSTEIN MUSEUM, Vienna. He is the author of numerous monographs on the history and theory of architecture.
Gestures of dwindling elegance

"Il Gattopardo" ("The Leopard") by Giuseppe Tomasi di Lampedusa is a melancholic novel whose ingredients are bitterness and beauty. It tells of an archaic island, Sicily, where the sun shines down so mercilessly that all endeavors to change things inevitably end in lethargy and exhaustion. At its heart is the fictitious noble family of the Salinas, whose male members have for centuries been among the island’s rulers. The novel starts in May 1860, when General Garibaldi’s troops land in Sicily. It’s the beginning of a new era: liberty and unity are the watchwords. The royal dynasty of the Bourbons is to be ousted, for they are the representatives of reaction. Instead, all of Italy is going to be united under the House of Savoy. Centuries-old structures of feudal ownership are to be torn down to make way for a bourgeois, democratic nation of patriots. Whoever isn’t willing to hoist the tricolor will be regarded as stuck in the past.

Don Fabrizio, Prince of Salina, is a giant, lionesque man whose charisma dominates any gathering. His coat of arms features a proud, but diminutive leopard – the “Gattopardo” – and he views these new times with contempt. Not so much out of any desire to retain his vested rights or out of a concern for his privileges, but because all the upstarts surrounding him offend his sense of style as they go about appropriating Sicily. The dogged ambitions of social climbers are always an ugly thing to behold, perspiring heavily in their upwardly mobile exertions. Newcomers always choose the shortest route between two points, for they possess no appreciation of the elegance to be found in Baroque curlicues and detours. And yet the Prince is convinced that the beauties of tradition are all that can help one to bear the sorrows of Sicily.

The young scion of an ancient family
Tancredi Falconeri, the Prince’s nephew and ward, also springs from an old, princely family. Don Fabrizio loves him almost more than his own children, despite his nephew adopting a very different approach to politics. Tancredi wants to move with the times, and so he’s serving in Garibaldi’s troops. Everyone loves him: the supporters of the new, progressive Italy love him because they feel honored by the patronage of this son of an old family. And the Prince loves Tancredi, in part because he admires the charm and the youthful vigor with which he strides out into the world.

But in everything that Tancredi does, the Prince also recognizes gestures of elegance such as can be second nature only to the offspring of an ancient house. “Maybe,” ponders Don Fabrizio, “it is impossible to obtain the distinction, the delicacy, the fascination of a boy like him without his ancestors having romped through half a dozen fortunes.” And because this novel loves...
moral ambivalence, it could also be that the Prince forgives his
nephew his party politics because he sees it simply as an act of
opportunism necessary in life – after all, Tancredi will have to
pursue his career in the new Italy.

The nature of man
In a famous scene in the novel, Tancredi tries to gain his uncle's
understanding: "If we want things to stay as they are, things will
have to change." This is intended to sound like an optimistic
gesture of reconciliation. But the Prince is a pessimist when
it comes to history, so he knows what it really means. Even if
everything changes politically, and the men of the new era utter
their platitudinous phrases about democracy and equality, the
nature of man will nevertheless always remain the same, with
his greed, his perfidy and his lethargy. If the Prince were not so
charismatic, you'd have to regard him as a cynic.

Tancredi is moving with the times, but he has a problem:
he has no fortune, for his deceased father had gambled away
everything the family owned. So the son urgently needs to marry
rich. Don Calogero Sedàra is the mayor of Donnafugata, where
the Salinas have their summer residence. He’s a man for the new
times, “the head of the liberals,” and is consumed by ambition.
He uses his office for personal enrichment, and has managed
to acquire great wealth in a short space of time. He also has a
stunningly beautiful daughter, Angelica – so lovely, in fact, that
Tancredi can even claim without embarrassment that he has
fallen in love with her for her beauty alone.

Three forms of capital
For the Prince, it’s a considerable impertinence to think that a
Sedàra might in future belong to the family – a man who doesn’t
even know how to wear a tailcoat. But his old blood desperately
needs a cash infusion, so Don Fabrizio will have to swallow this
bitter pill, even if it chokes him. When the organist of Donna-
fugata points out that Angelica’s mother was the daughter of
one of the Prince’s tenants, Peppe Giunta, who was so “filthy
and savage” that everyone always called him “Peppe ’Mmerda”
(“Peppe Shit”), the Prince begins to feel the ground giving way
under his feet. "He found himself trying to work out the relation-
ship between the Prince of Salina, uncle of the bridegroom, and
the grandfather of the bride." Luckily, he can’t find any.

Beauty, status and money: these are the three forms of
capital that are mutually convertible. “And to get on in politics,
now that a name counted less, would need a lot of money.” And
sometimes the old villas needed fresh money in order to ensure
that their beauty did not decay. ⬤
In the fall of 2017, Mathias Müller (40) made an important decision: He took a perpetual vow to live a life of poverty, celibacy and obedience towards God. Before he joined the Franciscans as Brother Mathias, he studied political sciences at the University of Neuchâtel and helped to found a start-up in Russia. Today, Brother Mathias helps marginalized people through the Chrischtehüsli in Zurich, and he also works in the missionary association of the Swiss Franciscans. Both activities aim to alleviate the distress of the poorest in society.

After seven years of preparation, the Franciscan Brother Mathias took his “perpetual profession of vows” and gave his life completely to God. Poverty is a central aspect of his life, but it means far more than owning nothing.

“A cell phone? I've not got one of those any more. Many people have wanted to give me one. But I'll consciously do without one for as long as I can. As a Franciscan, I'm committed to a life without possessions, to celibacy, and to obedience.

In a material sense, shunning possessions means I only have what I need in everyday life. But owning nothing isn’t an end in itself. It's intended to lead me to a spiritual poverty, which to me means giving my ego and all my plans over to God. Because I've decided to live completely for Him, I want to be ready to let go of everything at any time. But letting go requires faith: I have faith in the loving God who gives me what I really need every day. And I can receive only if my hands are empty.

Poverty means neither indifference nor joylessness. Instead, it's meant to lead to freedom and spiritual riches. If you own nothing, you can lose nothing. But I can certainly indulge myself by enjoying God’s Creation. After all, God made the world to give us joy.

Today, material things hardly tempt me anymore. I recently celebrated my 40th birthday, but when my friends asked: ‘What can we give you?’, I couldn't think of anything. So I gave myself the gift of a pilgrimage. I spent three days walking from Zurich to Einsiedeln via Rapperswil and back. Experiencing nature, being together with people, and eating a good meal – that's my idea of luxury.

It's the spiritual poverty I sometimes find more difficult. It's in my nature to want to plan things and to keep things under control. So putting everything into God's hands is a challenge to me – following the paths He chooses, even when they don't always meet my own expectations ...

But I didn't become a Franciscan overnight. I grew up on a farm in the canton of Lucerne. I was confirmed in the Catholic Church at 15, but I didn't really practice my faith after that. I went to high school and then studied political sciences. I wanted to find out how the world functions. And I loved languages,
It was this radicalism of Francis that wouldn’t let go of me. He gave God all his wealth and spoke of ‘sister poverty.’ As soon as his Brothers wanted to own something, he sensed danger. He wouldn’t tolerate any dependency on possessions. But he never glorified hardship – on the contrary, he tried to help sick, impoverished people.

I felt drawn to the Franciscans. I lived as a postulant for a year – that’s the first year you spend learning to become a Franciscan. Then I completed my novitiate and was given my habit. Every year I renewed my vows to the Order. Then about a year ago, after seven years of preparation, I took my perpetual profession of vows. It’s comparable to saying ‘yes’ at your wedding.

We Franciscans live from what people give us – but we also work. I am active in the Chrischtehüsli, an advice center in Zurich, and I’m also in the missionary association of the Swiss Franciscans. Both are voluntary, so I don’t earn anything. But there are four of us Brothers in Zurich, and three of us have money coming in, so we all share it. One of us is paid a wage, and the other two are retired and get their state pension.

The Chrischtehüsli was originally set up to alleviate the suffering of the drug addicts on the Platzspitz, the spot by the River Limmat in Zurich where they used to congregate. Today, we still mentor not only drug addicts but also refugees, migrant workers and people with mental health issues. Our director himself used to be a refugee. He’s from Iran.

We go into the streets, two of us at a time. The marginalized people who live there have to deal with existential problems, and they soon talk to us about faith. People who have everything often think they don’t need God any more. But those who have nothing need God, just to be able to survive. The biggest suffering comes from social poverty – the feeling that you’re not needed.

Francis already warned us against condemning the rich. Wealthy people too can live ‘poor’ lives in the spirit of St. Francis – if they are aware that their ‘talents’ come from God, and see themselves merely as custodians of them. So wealth brings responsibility. And I have the highest respect for conscientious companies that create jobs and utilize their profits in a meaningful manner.”

which is why I chose to attend the University of Neuchâtel in French-speaking Switzerland.

After finishing my degree, I went to Ukraine, then to Belarus and Russia. I learnt the language there and was fascinated by Russian culture. I got to know some young people in Moscow who were setting up an agricultural company. They were constructing cowsheds and were in contact with German firms. I soon began managing their purchases. I was living out of my suitcase, jetting around the world, and attending trade fairs.

At the beginning, I was hardly earning anything from the company. Later, I could have got a company car, but I was already accustomed to getting by on little. The company grew, and it seemed like I had an attractive career ahead of me. But I realized that the success didn’t fulfill me. Inside me, something was missing.

Luckily, Russia was experiencing not just an economic upswing, but a spiritual awakening too. People there talk openly about religion, and they philosophize about God and the world. The Russian soul has a propensity to faith.

So initially, I got to know the Russian Orthodox Church. Then I experienced a Catholic community in Moscow where people from all kinds of countries were celebrating mass together. There was something there that united them all, and this was how I encountered a living faith. Suddenly, attending church on Sunday was more important to me than going out on a Saturday night. I read the Bible and felt drawn to Jesus.

Once, when I was traveling back in Switzerland, I came across an opportunity to spend Easter in the Benedictine Monastery of Disentis. It appealed to me, because I’d never before been in a monastery. I was skeptical – but at the same time I was fascinated by the life style I saw there. And I spoke with people who had been through experiences similar to mine.

Bit by bit, I got to know the different Catholic Orders, and then I happened upon the story of Francis of Assisi. He came from a rich family and enjoyed life to the full. Then he had a profound experience of God. Francis took the gospel at its word and lived out what it teaches. First, people thought he was mad. Then they began to join him.
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