



## 5. In praise of the lift by Matt Alagiah

Elisha Graves Otis may not be a household name but he has arguably done more to shape cities around the world over the past 160 years than any mayor, president or planner. While he wasn't actually the inventor of the lift as many erroneously believe, he did devise the safety brake in 1852, which meant elevators could be trusted for the first time.

Before then, constructing buildings of more than six or seven storeys was pointless, because few people were willing to trudge up that many flights of stairs. With the emergence of the safe lift all that changed. Ever since, our cities have bloomed, growing upwards as fast as outwards and scaling new heights worldwide. Thanks to the humble lift, the tallest buildings in the world are today hundreds of metres high and plans for the first 1,000-metre-tall tower are underway in Saudi Arabia.

While it's important to remember that the most pleasant cities around the world retain a degree of human scale, it's impossible to deny that our cities have needed – and will continue to need – to become denser to accommodate growing populations. The lift has helped us achieve that and will do so even more in the future.

If it's astounding how much the lift has shaped our cities over the

past century, it's equally astonishing that the basic technology that transports human beings up and down buildings has barely changed since Otis's day. The same four fundamental ingredients (ropes, brakes, a counterweight and a cab) are still used in almost every lift in the world.

But that, too, is now changing. The engineers at ThyssenKrupp Elevator (one of the four big global lift manufacturers) have come up with a design called the Multi, which disposes of ropes and instead drives through a system similar to magnetic levitation (used by some modern trains). And whereas most lift shafts can only accommodate one cab, the Multi's shafts will be able to carry multiple cabs, which will be able to move both vertically and horizontally. If none of this sounds particularly groundbreaking, allow me to wheel out an industry heavyweight. The editors of leading industry publication *Elevator World* have described the removal of ropes from lifts as the industry's "Holy Grail".

ThyssenKrupp's invention will once again shift the economics and possibilities of the construction industry, enabling developers to build towers that reach more than a kilometre in height. And whether we like it or not, we may well need such soaring skyscrapers in the future, as our cities become megacities and our megacities become something that we can scarcely imagine today.

But don't take my word for it. Executives at major lift manufacturers are confident about the future – they know their market is only set to grow in the years

and decades to come. Let their confidence be a sign. We'd better get used to living at greater and greater heights.

*Matt Alagiah is Monocle's executive editor and has covered new trends in the property sector for several years. He didn't find lifts particularly interesting until visiting ThyssenKrupp's headquarters. Since then, his appreciation for the unassuming lift has soared.*



## 6. My troubled love affair with Rome by David Plaisant

To call the current state of Rome disastrous would be an understatement in a city accustomed to magnificent superlatives. Every day seems to bring news of yet another urban calamity. Large chunks of streets – and their haphazardly parked cars – disappear into sinkholes, then the effects of snow and ice bring the city to its knees; and, most dramatically, a total lack of maintenance causes buses to explode on central streets and avenues. These are but a few of the incidents that Romans are expected to take in their stride.

Rome is often described as ungovernable, and as a new resident to the city this was hard to come to terms with. Yet its hint of lawlessness and adamant informality also means that Romans you've just met will happily invite you to dinner that night – and insist you bring a friend too. In the streets and piazzas a choreographed chaos pervades; here you can have a cappuccino (no flat whites, *grazie*) in a tatty café or opulent bar and it will taste the same – resoundingly delicious.

Of course the daily grind in Rome throws up plenty of challenges. If you're reliant on public transport the general advice is "don't be" but the thousands of potholes dotting the city's ancient streets also make getting around by scooter or bike an increasingly precarious activity.

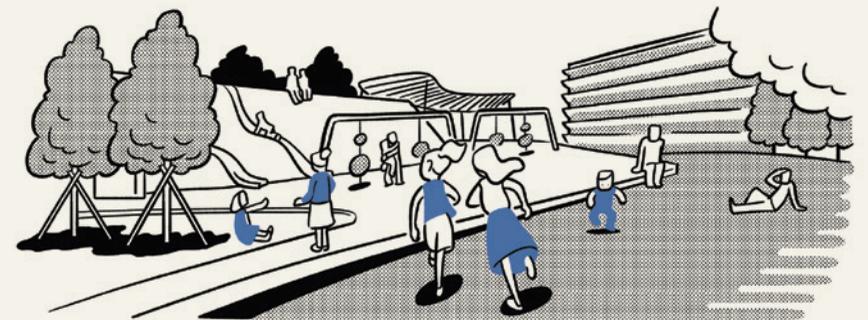
Then again, everyday life is infused with flavours that go a long way to making up for those transport trials and rush-hour mayhem. Indeed, that a good plate of seasonal and locally grown delicacies nourishes the soul in a way that no chain restaurant ever could is emblematic of the lack of showiness that dominates the Roman way of life. Just because a Negroni costs €3 and might be served in a plastic cup doesn't make it any less delectable. As spring brings blue skies and perfectly agreeable evenings, residents revert to the outdoors and those who are fortunate enough to have a *terrazza* often assume the role of host by default.

For those who like rules and a sense of civic order, the Italian capital may be too much to stomach. Certainly, the parlous state of the city's finances and public services is not something to shrug off; that would seem glib given the inconvenience and waste that this city's *degrado* (deterioration) is causing its inhabitants.

Yet just as Roman infrastructure and urban complexities throw a spanner in the works of efficiency, the Roman cuisine helps to slow the metabolism to a pleasantly unrushed pace. In Rome, residents

can only hope to be happy if they let the rhythms and routine of the city hold sway. In the Eternal City that's the difference between eternal frustration and eternal fulfilment.

*David Plaisant spent more than five years at Monocle, writing for the magazine and producing 'Section D' and 'The Stack' for M24. As Monocle's Rome correspondent, he can regularly be found boarding Frecciarossa high-speed trains to report on stories from Trieste, Taranto and beyond.*



## 7. Why I built a park by Bénédicte GF Hentsch

The story of Le Parc Gustave & Léonard Hentsch dates back to 1925 when my grandfather, captain and goalie of the Servette Football Club, decided to build a stadium for his beloved club. The chosen site for the Stade des Charmilles was in the middle of Geneva's thriving industrial zone.

From its inauguration in 1930 to its complete closure in 2002, the stadium hosted 2,500 matches and some of the world's leading football teams. Its sudden demise, mainly due to safety reasons, raised the question of what to do with the area. Should the stadium be replaced with yet another property development?

By then the neighbourhood, which had been dotted with factories, had transformed into a dense residential district. And I realised what it needed: a park. A place where people could meet, play and relax.

Before work could begin on the four-hectare property, a new football arena had to be built. The new Stade de Genève, which cost CHF120m (€103.2m), was inaugurated in 2003 and attention then turned to the park.

I decided to name it Parc Gustave & Léonard Hentsch after my grandfather and father, who had witnessed the ups and down of their beloved Servette Football Club on its

pitch. And I would gift it to the city. Now came the hard part: turning a former football stadium in a post-industrial part of town into a bustling green space.

A park should be a reflection of the neighbourhood, a place where all generations can interact. In a "good" neighbourhood people from different social backgrounds congregate and mingle. And a "good" park should be used by everyone as if it were their own garden. Parc Gustave & Léonard Hentsch opened in 2015 and the neighbourhood has claimed ownership of the space as if it had always been there. Now it's time for the trees to grow and the birds to start singing.

*Bénédicte GF Hentsch is the retired co-founder and chairman of the former Banque Bénédicte Hentsch in Geneva. He was previously managing partner at the family-owned private bank Darier Hentsch & Cie, which merged with Lombard Odier in 2002.*