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‘FROM FISHING VILLAGES TO MEGACITIES IN 25 YEARS’

Conflicts of an Urban Age is a Special Project of the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia. The exhibition highlights the spatial and social consequences of dramatic urban growth in cities across the world between 1990 and 2015.

Every hour more than 50 new residents are added to the populations of cities like Kinshasa and Dhaka. Guangzhou’s urban area increased by 3,284% while its population increased by 925% between 1990 and 2015.

Ricky Burdett, curator of the exhibition with a team from LSE Cities, says: “In the short time span of 25 years, cities have grown larger and more quickly than ever before. Fishing villages have been transformed into megacities and deserts have become urban playgrounds.”

Planning has struggled to cope with this pace of growth. Instant cities of immense fragility and precariousness appear overnight, while others struggle to invest and plan urban futures able to adapt and change in response to unknown needs, pressures and desires.

“Building cities for a billion people over the next decades is an opportunity to plan to get things right by accommodating future growth, or to get them wrong by imposing inflexible solutions. Some cities have grasped the opportunity to plan and grow more equitably, others have suffered sprawl and unplanned growth,” says Burdett.

Research in 186 cities shows that the population has more than doubled, but their footprints have increased almost five-fold in just 25 years. Density has dropped and open space reduced. In Africa and Asia, where 90% of this growth will take place, most urban development remains poorly regulated or unplanned.

“If we don’t plan the next 25 years, which will include one of the most sustained periods of urban growth, we’ll end up with dysfunctional cities. We need to design cities that are more open, democratic and flexible,” says Burdett.

Designed by Squint/Opera, the exhibition uses animations and projections to illustrate how cities are changing and the impacts they have on their residents and on the environment.

Main features include:

- **Global urban trends from 1990-2015**, including comparison of how Los Angeles, Johannesburg, London, Manila, Kolkata, Accra, Madrid, Kinshasa, Singapore, Bogotá, Quito, Dhaka, Kabul, and Hong Kong have grown.
- **Projection of future growth** highlights the challenges of unplanned growth: accommodating the world's urban population growth by 2030 at Los Angeles' density would cover almost half of the European Union; at Hong Kong's density, the global urban population would take up less than half of Italy.
- Case study cities – **Shanghai, Addis Ababa, London, Istanbul, São Paulo, Mexico City, and Mumbai** – allow an in-depth understanding of the major changes that have impacted on equality and access to open space since 1990.
- **Film-based animations** provide analytical texture to the case study cities, while comparable statistics and analysis of spatial, social and environmental data provide insight into the consequences of planning decisions on the social and physical fabric of these cities.
- **Solutions from above** illustrates almost 50 examples of new developments in a time of intense urbanisation, highlighting how these architectural solutions result in inflexible building types bounded by lifeless public spaces.
- **Solutions from below** showcases the Urbanxchanger initiative of collaborative interventions in São Paulo, Mexico City, Delhi and Cape Town, illustrating the potential of catalysing urban change at a local scale.
- A **central display** of illuminated Perspex sheets provides a **comparison between the growth paths of eight large cities** between 1990 and 2015: Bangkok, Cairo, Chicago, Guangzhou, Ho Chi Minh City, Karachi, Kinshasa, and Lagos.

Urban dynamics from selected cities featured in the exhibition

Accra (Ghana): Population – 4,429,649; 239% increase since 1990. **554% increase in urban footprint since 1990.**

Cairo (Egypt): Population – 15,734,924; 64% increase since 1990. **231% increase in urban footprint since 1990.**

Chicago (USA): Population – 8,913,778; 22% increase since 1990. **47% increase in urban footprint since 1990.**

Dhaka (Bangladesh): Population – 13,609,023; **240% increase since 1990.** 163% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

Guangzhou (China): Population – 24,657,221; **925% increase since 1990.** 3,284% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam): Population – 9,978,274; 286% population increase since 1990. **1,036% increase in urban footprint since 1990.**

Istanbul (Turkey): Population – 13,974,428; 61% increase since 1990. **180% increase in urban footprint since 1990.**

Lagos (Nigeria): Population – 11,008,357; 185% increase since 1990. 178% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

London (UK): Population – 11,197,941; **31% increase since 1990.** 27% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

Los Angeles (USA): Population – 15,138,973; **23% increase since 1990**. 20% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

Shanghai (China): Population – 24,387,272; **143% increase since 1990**. 140% increase in urban footprint since 1990.

Growth data on cities supplied by NYU Urban Expansion Program at the Marron Institute of Urban Management and the Stern School of Business, New York University.

For further information on the exhibition and the Urban Age, please contact:

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-NOTES TO EDITORS-

Conflicts of an Urban Age

A Special Project of the International Architecture Exhibition 2016 realised by La Biennale di Venezia. Curated by LSE Cities, it is part of the Urban Age programme (jointly organised by the London School of Economics and Political Science and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft). The exhibition has been developed in the context of Habitat III, the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development that will be held in Quito, Ecuador on 17-20 October 2016.

Curator: Ricky Burdett, Professor of Urban Studies, LSE and Director, LSE Cities and Urban Age

Assistant curators: Aron Bohmann, Researcher (LSE Cities)
Peter Griffiths, Managing Editor (LSE Cities)

Project Manager: Emily Cruz, Outreach Manager (LSE Cities)

Realised by La Biennale di Venezia

Venue: Sale d'Armi C, Arsenale

Ricky Burdett - Biography

Ricky Burdett is Professor of Urban Studies, director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age Programme. He was Director of the 10th International Architecture Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia in 2006 and curator of the Global Cities exhibition at Tate Modern in London in 2007. Burdett was a member of the UK Government's Independent Airports Commission and sits on the Council of the Royal College of Art in London and New York's Regional Plan Association's international advisory panel. He has been involved in regeneration projects across Europe and was Chief Adviser on Architecture and Urbanism for the London 2012 Olympics and architectural adviser to the Mayor of London from 2001 to 2006. He is co-editor of *The Endless City* (2007), *Living in the Endless City* (2011) and *Transforming Urban Economies* (2013).

ABOUT LSE CITIES

LSE Cities is an international centre at the London School of Economics and Political Science that carries out research, conferences, graduate and executive education and outreach activities in London and abroad. Its mission is to study how people and cities interact in a rapidly urbanising world, focusing on how the physical form and design of cities impacts on society, culture and the environment.

lsecities.net

ALFRED HERRHAUSEN GESELLSCHAFT

The Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft (AHG) is the international forum of Deutsche Bank. AHG seeks traces of the future in the present: identifying trends, exploring intellectual frontiers and conceptualising topics for analysis and debate. It promotes research and gets involved in debates on current issues. Working with partners from politics, economics, science and society, it establishes discussion forums across the globe.
www.alfred-herrhausen-gesellschaft.de

URBAN AGE SHAPING CITIES CONFERENCE

LSE Cities hosts the annual Urban Age conference jointly organised with Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Gesellschaft. As part of the 15th International Architecture Exhibition of la Biennale di Venezia, the 2016 Urban Age *Shaping Cities* conference - which will focus on the social, spatial and political forces that shape cities - will take place on 14-15 July 2016.

To register for the conference please go to:

<https://lsecities.net/ua/conferences/2016-venice-biennale/>

HABITAT III

Habitat III is the United Nations Conference on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development. It will be held on 17-20 October 2016, in Quito, Ecuador. This major global event is convened by the United Nations General Assembly and held every 20 years. Habitat III will be one of the first UN global summits after the adoption of the Post-2015 Sustainable Development Agenda. It offers a unique opportunity to discuss the important challenge of how cities, towns and villages are planned and managed, in order to ensure sustainable development, and hence shape the implementation of new global development and climate change goals. The Conference will result in a concise, focused, forward-looking and action-oriented New Urban Agenda. (www.habitat3.org)

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