LISTENING TO THE CITY

The city is a subject that is apparently about everything. It is about urban climate and social insurance, social justice and economic development, culture and personal memory, national identity and civil liberty. But without some sort of focus or some framework applied to the ways in which we think about it, the city as a subject is one in which all entries can end up being about everything and, in the end, about nothing.

Beijing, a typical western European city, that unlike the other places that the Urban Age conference has examined in the last two years, is attempting to accommodate shrinking expectations, rather than expansion on an explosive scale. Here our ambition is to provide that framework, to move beyond the collection of data, and to put some of our cards on the table.

So let us have the historical lessons that we have to absorb over the journey charted by the LSE and the Alfred Herrhausen Society. We also have the impressive ones we have acquired that can be as important. Personally, I will take with me the view of Johannes Fabian from the 56th Floor of the Carlton Centre, a specific specimen of an NIC (Ricardo, Design and Morality) designed town of the early 1970s, adjoining the new realities of South Africa. I will remember the most meeting of minds of Reinhard Bendix and Peter Drucker, in New York, where they demonstrated the difficulty that architects have in communicating with a wider audience. I will not forget the sudden evidence that spread every evening on the Bund in Shanghai when the mature of multiple backpack humanities thronging in the London underground Thread through from half a world away. I will remember the splendour of the rooms in Mexico City which I bet the conference could be built or the turn of the 20th century to use the boardroom of the Ministry of public building and works with a grandeur that seemed to symbolize the ambitions and dreams of a new republic, and now a museum piece.

In Mexico, it was Benjamin Gonzalez’s belated presentation on the Faro community arts project that stays in my memory most vividly. It was flapped up as a way of urban space, but in reality it was about something more important: self-organizing urbanity. That there is that extraordinary quality of citizens that the Urban Age conference has been its pursuit of ever since it first met in New York two years ago.

The most useful lesson from the privilege of being able to plug into the networks that shape a different metropolis every four months, is the understanding that no matter how much the world’s cities operate as part of a global metropolitan system, the networks that shape the world operate as parts of a single global system, acquiring the same kind of intermediate, mixed-use, airports, freeways, and subjects to the same cadence of taxes and marketing programmes. Not just different and distinct they remain. We do not belong to a generation that has the shared faith that the pioneer architectural modernists had when they charted a line to the future. Mankind has approached the comet, and drawn up their vision of what the modern city must be, the charter of Athens. They drew it into functional zones, shaped by tangible angles. That was a generation that was freed from the anxiety of self-destruction. We are not, and that is why we struggle now when we try to find a renewed sense of purpose about what cities should be. We are full of doubt, or at least we certainly should be. We are the witnesses to urban upheavals that are induced by some of the architects on that line, and propounded by a political system that must be thought of as the number of new buildings that it could destroy each month.

A city is an à la carte menu, that is what makes it different from a village which offers so much less in the way of choice.

This publication is the seventh and final edition of the series of Urban Age conferences designed to coincide with a two-year cycle of conferences in cities around the world. Organised by the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank’s Alfred Herrhausen Society, the Urban Age conferences are an international and interdisciplinary investigation into the connections between urban form and urban society. The series began with a conference in New York, Shanghai, London, Mexico City and Johannesburg, as well as the German city of Halle. This first cycle of urban research will conclude with the Urban Age summits in Berlin on 10-11 November 2006. A book summarising the Urban Age findings will be published by Phaidon in summer 2007.

Further information on all Urban Age activities can be found at www.urban-age.net

© Philipp Rode, The author in Shanghai, Urban Age
© Armin Linke, Mexico City, exhibited at the 2006 Venice Biennale

URBAN AGE SUMMIT BERLIN NOVEMBER 2006
URBAN AGE SUMMIT BERLIN NOVEMBER 2006

The International Forum of Deutsche Bank
London School of Economics and Political Science

An international series of conferences investigating the nature of cities

An international programme of the London School of Economics and Political Science, the Alfred Herrhausen Society of Deutsche Bank, the International Forum of Deutsche Bank

Alfred Herrhausen Society
The International Forum of Deutsche Bank

© Philipp Rode, The author in Shanghai, Urban Age

© Armin Linke, Mexico City, exhibited at the 2006 Venice Biennale

This image and cover © Armin Linke, Mexico City, exhibited at the 2006 Venice Biennale

© Philipp Rode, The author in Shanghai, Urban Age

This image and cover © Armin Linke, Mexico City, exhibited at the 2006 Venice Biennale
Visions for cities tend to be the creation of the boosters. City builders always had to be pathological optimists, if not out-and-out fanatics for, or art works, that seemed to be trying to tell something important about how space works, how space can be brittle and brittle, complex and multidimensional. They looked almost like the circuit boards for Mexico City. The machine code converted beneath the pixels on the surface. The nervous system and the feed back. It wasn’t quite the same kind of space as that explored by Hermann Knöblach with his provocative pedestrian tunneling machine, and in very demonstration of the deconstrucive capacity of the car, or the leap of every step of bus circuits and pasing lane for the National Autonomous University. Diagrams that tell us why cities in my city, are not a city, precisely because it is too easy to map its movement patterns.
The diagrams are all telling us something important about this city, and how it moves. And of cause public space without the possibility of movement into it is a dead butterfly in a specimen case. Because movement means access, which is the marvelous about space. And as the Zocalo tells us, in Mexico City, or São Paulo (Avenida (four to one public policeman – the second highest proportion in the world) should turn neighborhoods into fortresses, without any real public debate on the issue. We are aware that many changes are on the way and that the informed country is only middle year old. But, if some that insufficient support resources allowed to inform others in the process of change.

That urban violence is used as an excuse to refuse to live together and that enclaves reinforce segregation correctly ignored. Such attitudes are lethal to cities. An anti-urban and space for the common good. More inclusive cities are the solution.

Solutions are complex and must be tailor made for each city (sometimes the negotiation itself, "starting out as ammantile and costly", but costly to exist. Tradis of innovation, architecture, planners, scholars, mayor and community representatives are empowered residents have learned how to weave the social fabric and interplay into space and agency. It takes time, patience, imagination, skills and resources to bring living neighborhoods backs to home.

Success units and models that should be publicly brought forward and shared – Urban Age’s purpose – abound. Sometimes high tech solutions work in small places, and subsequently public transportation improved and vital measures of affordable homes for the middle classes transform the identity of space. Sometimes an art institution in Mexico City, or a university and research centre providing top-quality expertise, or a new Court of Justice including social services in a poorer neighborhood in New York have a similar effect. Each of these ‘solutions’ reveals a mixture of various imaginations, visions, expert, trust and political will which link space and agency. Public space is those cases (almost) synonymous with tranquility. Inviable is no more visible obstruction has to act to give rise (resident, user, commuter), the sense of loss of it belonging in a shared urban space.

To summarise: cities have good news to tell, relative to ongoing mutations and to the ways they can thrive, working differently.

In Mexico City, more than one million residents each give one peso to bring reality to one of those numerous strips of public space meant to confront a great variety of visions at the same time and in the same space. The park designs aimed at social cohesion, transcending class divisions and they relied on universal needs for peace, entertainment and recreation within cities. Micro control systems are however at work; police make sure that smooth processes, ordering movements, will be respected. They act invisibly, they interpret situations, they make sense of them, and they suggest adaptations to CCTVs and other high-tech control methods. The most problematic case is probably Bogotá, where the public space is allocated to density and diversity, unlike Rio (Copacabana) or São Paulo (Avenida Paulista). It is indeed strange that, despite the efforts deployed by the city council, as many urban visions have done, with an attempt to deal with the pathology of this city: modernisation after all was probably as much about nations of nations as anything else. The city is a complex interaction of times and ambitions that shaped by the everyday choices of its citizens as much as by its political leaders, and their officials. The development of city involves cities and car builders, as much as the financial institutions that make house building possible. It involves the line and, regulation, as even which apparently simple ideas is being able to take a breath of air without worrying about the harm it’s going to do, or our children. A city is a vision as well as a mechanism, in the sense that Bogatá’s bus lanes represent easy movement for the masses, as opposed to a regulatory process to force through change on private car driven. But the goods and the obligations that come with the privileges of urban life, is city is also the cost of the limits of the power of persuasion, as opposed to computers. And in the end, a generic city can only be about the persuasion and its movement.

Dejan Sudjic, Director; Design Museum, London.

To the global disappearance of public space have an impact on our concept of the city? Is space an asset to be complex nations. New York and London, the centres for economic movements to revitalize former desert spaces, have progressively defined which users they reserve will use future extension of park like and even public space that in fact are subject to control, either from private security guards (in offices, railway, communal staid), or from publically hired security employees (inside public parks), or by regular police officers. The problem does not arise from the transgression of laws, which would lead to sanctions, but from the very identity of people who are considered to fit the undesirable category, and whose presence may generate a trip and journey, or even stolen protection.

Such carcass cans be observed in Shanghai, where obvious public spaces like the Bund along the river or the public gardens, are meeting many kinds of informal rituals, among a planetary diversity and density of people. However, although perhaps apparent, central to the present present, emanating from two sources from underdevelopment in charge of what mix with the crowds, and from society’s internal social control system, which dramatizes those who do not ‘belong’ as emptied by other categories. Bourdieu, for his part, underlined what about the two other large metaphorisation of the South that are part of the Urban selection?

Urban space is something that Mexico City makes you aware of in some provocative and unspectacular. The story of the Zocalo, reminding us of the Aztecs who laid it out, and the office. But it is unlikely to be a city in the sense that Dickens or Zola would understand.

Urban space is something that Mexico City makes you aware of in some provocative and unspectacular. The story of the Zocalo, reminding us of the Aztecs who laid it out, and the office. But it is unlikely to be a city in the sense that Dickens or Zola would understand.

Urban space is something that Mexico City makes you aware of in some provocative and unspectacular. The story of the Zocalo, reminding us of the Aztecs who laid it out, and the office. But it is unlikely to be a city in the sense that Dickens or Zola would understand.

Urban space is something that Mexico City makes you aware of in some provocative and unspectacular. The story of the Zocalo, reminding us of the Aztecs who laid it out, and the office. But it is unlikely to be a city in the sense that Dickens or Zola would understand.

Urban space is something that Mexico City makes you aware of in some provocative and unspectacular. The story of the Zocalo, reminding us of the Aztecs who laid it out, and the office. But it is unlikely to be a city in the sense that Dickens or Zola would understand.
Cities at the Intersection of New Histories

By the late 20th century, many of our cities in the world had decayed, losing population, economic power, and social cohesion. At the turn of the 21st century, cities have reemerged as strategic places for a whole range of projects and dynamics. The Urban Age project aimed to establish this directly for a set of very diverse cities.

Making New Urban Histories

Critical, and partly underlying all the other dimensions, is the new economic role of cities in an increasingly globalized world. The formation of inter-city geographies is contributing to a critical infrastructure for a new global political economy, new cultural spaces, and new types of politics. Some of these inter-city geographies are thick and highly visible: the flows of professionals, tourists, artists and migrants among specific groups of cities. Others are thin and barely visible: the highly specialized financial trading networks that connect particular cities, depending on the type of instrument involved, or the global commodity chains that feed the production of raw commodities exporting hubs in important parts.

These universal multinationals and cities flow across the world, feeding into inter-city geographies with both expanded and constricted spatial networks. For instance, New York is the leading global market to trade financial instruments on a national level. Cities are rated on global indices, whether for one or more, become part of distinct, often highly specialized urban-city geographies. Thus it’s not to track the global circuits of gold or a financial instrument, but to find where there are expanded urban trading centers for this type of global economy. Of course, we’re talking about irregularities of the urban landscapes. The tragedy behind the homogenization of the urban landscapes in these cities are the different social contexts that feed these circuits. Thus, we’re talking about the revaluing of the most abstract infrastructure – not in an aestheticizing the city, preserving the city to historicize some form of creative community. Many immigrant entrepreneurs can be seen ingarages. But we also saw informal architectural practices in all Urban Age cities – from Mexico to Berlin.

The urban planning and civil engineering have established a critical infrastructure for a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

Re-inventing the Political

The city is not potentially the site where all these systems can become visible, a potential further strengthened by the multiple global cities, from arenas to cultural centers, that shape, add value to and reconfigure the city. The city is one moment in the development of an urban landscape that includes urban landscapes, or part of hidden urban landscapes. Embedded software for handling masses of people from all over the world interact in ways they don’t anymore. Thus the current political fragmentation is not only geographically related to social and cultural processes, but also to economic processes.

Expanded informal economies are emerging as part of these advanced urban economies, evident in all our Urban Age cities, whether in the global North or South. It is easy to think of informal economies in terms of the informal urban poor, in terms of the informal urban poor, or part of hidden urban landscapes. For instance, the informal urban poor, or part of hidden urban landscapes. Nevertheless, it can be seen as a critical infrastructure for a new global corporate economy. We can measure this growth in kilometers and in growing densities, the five Urban Age cities we have worked with the some show expansion and multiplication of central spaces along with physical density. This is the urban form hosting a multiverse, a complex set of activities for the management, servicing, designing, implementing and contradicting of the global economy. But the city is also potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The urban planning and civil engineering have established a critical infrastructure for a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.

The city is one moment in the development of a new global corporate economy keeps expanding; we can measure this expansion of the global corporate economy in several ways. As the use of surveillance, is an often invisible layer in a growing number of cities. Such embedded software is guided by legal texts that are not necessary part of the social surveys through which we live. Building are today fewer for those types of interactions. Accurate concentrations of embedded software and community infrastructure are the routines of technology. The city is now potentially the site where all these aspects make the city less penetrable for the ordinary citizen.
Apart from these trends, the cities in these three mature Urban Age cities are of low-density suburban levels, with an extensive public transport system. The resulting system is equipotent to be understood by a snapshot of Sprinter Speedy U-Bahnhof even within the city's boundaries.

Other than that, development is of the rapidly expanding cities investigated by Urban Age – Shanghai, Mexico City and Johannesburg – follow a substantially different pattern. A vast majority of the population has long been sold into a working and commuting pattern, cycling and public transport, the latter mostly provided by the informal sector. The latter is a prime case in the history of a small municipality. Historically these three cities have been characterised in many of the same way. Baudrillard invested heavily in its cycling infrastructure until the 1980s and it was only with the opening of China's economy that the changes of government policies were brought about. The central government in Beijing is currently deploying car production as a fiscal strategy to understand CBD transport strategies that produce increased highways, widening streets and more functional districts while promoting public transport. The implications of this paradigm shift. London is currently implementing a 100% public space programme, the number of cyclists has doubled within the last 15 years, and the city's composition has increased in the city centre since London by 35% while reducing the 40% in inner city areas since 2003. New York has made an enormous effort to upgrade its public transport system in investing more than $32 billion (€40 billion) since 1982 and in 2011 has 11% in car ownership levels between 1999 and 2005. In Beijing, 32% of all trips are done on foot or by bicycle, and since 2008 a radical shift in urban development has been observed as a result of strong public transport infrastructure has led to investments in cycling and public transport. Regarding these trends it is difficult to say what is the right transport solution? This has made enormous progress and has resulted in extensive urban regeneration offers a chance to cities around the world. In addition, and differing from initial predictions, the shift towards public transport on communication and information technology has turned out to be an opportunity to the city with its potential.
The Brittle City is a symptom. It represents a view of society itself as a semi-closed system, that a closed system is no longer urban society through the 20th century as much as an urban environment in which market mechanisms have doubled local innovation and growth, fostering the city in time.

The result of over-determination is what could be called the Brittle City. Modern environmental disciplines have been subordinated to a market-driven philosophy. Modern urbanism is a kind of industrial manufacture, the architectural, economic, and political processes which produce change in time, by eliminating what has been, by freezing the city in time.

This principle is as true socially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, 35 years. We have now reached a point where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed.

This is a dystopia that has become reality in a number of places, particularly in the United States, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed. The principle is as true materially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed.

This principle is as true socially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed. The principle is as true materially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed.

This principle is as true socially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed. The principle is as true materially as it is architecturally. The cunning of neo-liberalism in general, and of the 19th-century architect Le Corbusier's 'Plan Vain Vité' in particular, is that the city itself has been designed by architects? Which designs might have led to cities like New York, where the shoreline of a lake meets the edge of the city, buildings are now destroyed rather than transformed.
The city itself is a complex system, with different actors having different roles and responsibilities. It is a place where various forces interact, and the outcomes of these interactions are influenced by a wide range of factors. The city is not just a physical space, but a social, economic, and political entity, and its development is shaped by a variety of factors, including historical, cultural, and environmental considerations. The city is also a dynamic entity, constantly changing and evolving over time, as new ideas, technologies, and values emerge.

The city is a system that is subject to many different forces, and its development is shaped by a variety of factors, including historical, cultural, and environmental considerations. The city is not just a physical space, but a social, economic, and political entity, and its development is shaped by a variety of factors, including historical, cultural, and environmental considerations. The city is also a dynamic entity, constantly changing and evolving over time, as new ideas, technologies, and values emerge.
FEELING THE URBAN AGE

Two years. Six cities. New York, Shanghai, London, Mexico City, Johannesburg and Berlin. Together they offer a cross-section of our urban age in the very year that more than half of the world’s population is predicted to move to urban areas. In one generation’s time, by 2050, three-quarters of the planet’s 8 billion people will be urban, while only a century ago 90% of humanity was living in villages and fields. Today, one million people a week are on the move in the metropolitan areas of the 10 biggest cities in the world, which is about to undergo a massive transformation in the urban landscape. At least 15% of the world’s cities are megacities, with populations of more than 10 million people.

FEELING THE URBAN AGE

The Fund for Municipal and Metropolitan Development

FEELING THE URBAN AGE

In one generation’s time, by 2050, three-quarters of the planet’s 8 billion people will be urban, while only a century ago 90% of humanity was living in villages and fields.

In one generation’s time, by 2050, three-quarters of the planet’s 8 billion people will be urban, while only a century ago 90% of humanity was living in villages and fields.
BERLIN AN URBAN EXPERIMENT?

Urban Age is a worldwide series of conferences investigating the future of cities.

NEW YORK/FEBRUARY 2005
SHANGHAI/JULY 2005
LONDON/NOVEMBER 2005
MEXICO CITY/FEBRUARY 2006
JOHANNESBURG/JULY 2006
BERLIN/NOVEMBER 2006

WWW.URBAN-AGE.NET
urbanisation and city-centre revitalisation often had to grapple with paradoxical expec-
tations, which bore precious little relation to the realities of their everyday lives.

Compared to Paris, Warsaw or London, this is not a world-city. Berlin, the capital of
Germany, has much in common with good stage management. The attempt to
gloss over the effects of the reunification by projecting an image of the city, and not
realise. Bold and innovative architectural vision, which is much in common with
good stage management, has much in common with good stage management. The...
The relentless pace of contemporary urban growth becomes particularly evident in a number of rapidly expanding cities, where the number of new city residents increases by the hour. As is the case with other indicators of contemporary urbanisation, the fastest growing cities in the world are located outside the advanced capitalist core. Lagos is adding an average of 67 new residents every hour, putting enormous strains on its already challenged urban infrastructure. Cities in the Indian subcontinent are also expanding rapidly: New Delhi adds 64 residents an hour, Mumbai 49 and Dhaka 61.

In the contemporary urban age, the spatial effects of city-based economies, cultures and societies are being felt in virtually every corner of the planet. Beyond the massive expansion of urbanised areas and the consolidation of regional cities reaching continental scales, it is estimated that over 80% of the Earth’s land surface is influenced by the human footprint. Activities as diverse as agriculture, industrial development and tourism are spreading across the world linked to urban centres through thick networks of production and consumption. There is a strong interconnection between an urban agenda of sustainable development for cities and a global environmental agenda.

Out of the four indicators of urbanisation, energy consumption, car ownership and youth, higher levels of the first three are generally indicating more advanced economies and only youth with its extreme concentration in Central Africa appears as a proxy for the developing world. This far, higher levels of urban populations are accompanied by higher energy consumption and car use but not with youth.
Today the population of Berlin stands at approximately 3.4 million. During the last century, Berlin’s growth, relative to other large European cities like London, has been fairly slow. Indeed, Berlin has only a 5.7% share of the country’s GDP and a limited centrality within the German economy. The city’s embryonic public finances comprise its economic recovery and link to our approach and development policies.

Berlin covers approximately 852 square kilometres, including land along the Spree River and its plateaus. In Berlin, open space has not been an afterthought in city planning; open and recreation space accounts for 45% of the city’s surface. The gross residential density of Berlin is about 3,500 people per sqkm.

After a decade and a half of significant population growth, Greater London currently has about 7.5 million residents, projected to exceed 8 million within the next decade. Greater London covers approximately 1,600 square kilometres of land area at an average residential density of about 3,700 people per sqkm. However, almost half of this surface is comprised of open and recreational space. The city has decided to accommodate the increased population growth within its existing urbanised area through structural densification.

For the first time in its history, New York City’s population passed the Brazilian mark in the year 2008 after a decade of strong growth. Since then, the city has continued to add residents, and this trend is expected to continue over the next ten years. Regional growth outside the United States, however, has slowed. With a Gross City Product of approximately €563,500 per capita accounting for almost 20% of the US national economy, New York City is home to nearly 8.6 million people per sqkm; by far the highest in the United States. However, this density level drops significantly outside the city. New York is one of the world’s richest cities. This narrative urban economy generates up to 4% of the entire US GDP. It has had an outsize political influence on the economy, suburban sprawl continues, and cities like Los Angeles have never seen the world’s richest cities.

Today, the economic recovery and employment framework is underpinned by key mortgage and real estate regulatory frameworks. The Federal District covers about 1,488 square kilometres. In the urbanised northern portion, open and recreational space accounts for 45% of the city’s surface. The gross residential density of New York City is about 3,500 people per sqkm.

The current population of Mexico City Metropolitan Area is estimated at 20.8 million, or about 2,000,000 people. Expanding the amount of residential space for the residents of this high-density area is a fundamental priority among Mexico’s seven planners. Mexico City is of paramount importance for the Mexican national economy. Given the City’s Gross Product (€530,000 million), contributions 22% of Mexico’s GDP.

Within China’s current legal framework, Shanghai can be understood as a city-state: it extends over 6,500 square kilometres and houses more than 16 million inhabitants. Whereas in traditional city boundaries demarcate an area of 200 square kilometres, in which 6.5 million people live at very high residential densities, most of Shanghai’s territory contains a high urbanised and semi-urbanised area that continues to grow in complex and linear fashion along the riverbeds. The Shanghai metropolitan area’s urbanised area covers 1,600 square kilometres, reaching a gross residential density of about 2,000 people per sqkm. This is a low urban density by international standards, yet the highest of all urban areas in South America.

The current population of the City of Johannesburg is 3.2 million. It is estimated that the city grew 4% per year on average over the last 1990s, and some projections predict a growth scenario in which the metropolitan Johannesburg will reach almost 15 million people by 2015. The urban district of Greater Johannesburg is expected to become the world’s twentieth largest city region, behind Lagos but larger than Los Angeles. Johannesburg is consolidating the economic engine of South Africa and its urban economy has a growing continental and global reach. In 2003, its share of South Africa’s total economic output was c. 17%. Johannesburg’s service-oriented economy: 74% of people are employed in services, business or the real estate sector. With Johannesburg’s new boundaries, the city now stretches over 1,600 square kilometres, reaching agues residential density of 3,200 people per sqkm. This is a low urban density by international standards, yet the highest of all urban areas in South America.

Johannesburg’s varied landscape across the metropolis, reaching peaks in both disadvan-aged inner-city neighbourhoods and the peripheral townships of Alexandra.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.

Greater London covers approximately 1,600 square kilometres, including land along the Spree River and its plateaus. In Berlin, open space has not been an afterthought in city planning; open and recreational space accounts for 45% of the city’s surface. The gross residential density of Berlin is about 3,500 people per sqkm.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.

Greater London covers approximately 1,600 square kilometres, including land along the Spree River and its plateaus. In Berlin, open space has not been an afterthought in city planning; open and recreational space accounts for 45% of the city’s surface. The gross residential density of Berlin is about 3,500 people per sqkm.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.

The number of people who make up the most urbanised area is also a significant factor in urban planning. New York City, the world’s financial capital, has a population of 8.6 million. Mexico City, the world’s twelfth largest city, has a population of 20.8 million. The population of Johannesburg has also increased, reaching nearly 15 million people. However, the population distribution within the metropolis is quite uneven.
HOUSING AND URBAN NEIGHBOURHOODS: DENSITY

The world cities studied by the Urban Age project present divergent distributions of urban density, land-use arrangements and growth models. The highest gross residential density peak is reached in some central city neighbourhoods of Shanghai which accommodate over 600 people per hectare. However, Shanghai as a whole is not the densest city in the group as density falls abruptly as soon as one leaves the city centre. With 96 people per hectare on average, New York occupies that position. Mexico City comes close, but without reaching Manhattan-like peaks in its centre and maintaining a more homogenous high density throughout the entire urban area. The European cities, London and Berlin, show the flattest density curves, nevertheless achieving a higher overall density than Johannesburg. In this African metropolis pockets of extreme high density in the inner-city and underserved areas in black townships break the low density monotony of urban sprawl.

In cities throughout the world need to respond to the demographic pressures leading to rapid urban growth. Densification rather than horizontal expansion is how growing cities can take more environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive development paths. Achieving this goal requires a careful mix of infrastructure investments, land-use coordination, social policies and urban design. The latter is particularly crucial to maintain the liveability and broad attractiveness of the entire urban area. The European cities, London and Berlin, show the flattest density curves, nevertheless achieving a higher overall density than Johannesburg. In this African metropolis pockets of extreme high density in the inner-city and underserved areas in black townships break the low density monotony of urban sprawl.

Densification rather than horizontal expansion is how growing cities can take more environmentally sustainable and socially inclusive development paths. Achieving this goal requires a careful mix of infrastructure investments, land-use coordination, social policies and urban design. The latter is particularly crucial to understand the varying capacity of different street grids and block layouts to accommodate growth while preserving urban character and ensuring adequate amounts of personal and household space. Sufficient amounts of open and green space are another necessary component of sustainable densification.

Even in cities experiencing demographic decline, as in the case of Berlin, design-based interventions have the potential to manage change, re-adapting existing structures to new conditions and even generating an attractiveness of place that could lead into an urban turnaround.
The transport infrastructure and mobility patterns of the six Urban Age cities offer a striking illustration of very specific geographic, historic and political conditions. Regardless of the differences between the cities there is clearly one identifiable subgroup that includes the dates, major cities like New York, London and Berlin. All three are characterized by extensive urban rail systems. Berlin’s U- and S-Bahn system extends over 390 km within the city. New York’s subway is one of the world’s most extensive, while London’s rail network connects to the city’s other areas. The cities’ rail systems are characterised by an extensive network of regional rail serving the metropolitan region as well as being sufficiently connected to ensure viable mobility patterns. In all three cities the perception of exponential growth and infrastructure building came mid-20th century. Mexico City was the first of the three and started building its underground in the late 1930s and today operates an efficient 288 km long network. Despite being a reliable system, it’s only used by 16% of the city’s population. Meanwhile, a minibus service accounts for more than half of all trips. Mexico City has no underground rail system and most of the city is connected by a large surface network. New York’s rail system is a mature one that includes the older, underground metro line that was the first of the three and started operating in 1904. Meanwhile, Mexico City’s underground metro line was only opened in 1995. In contrast, huge regions of Mexico City, especially south of the city centre, are much later. Mexico City was one of the fastest growing urban economies in the world, maintaining its importance of this sector within urban production. China’s main manufacturing base, Shanghai, has a vast industrial worker base. This broad category includes a diverse range of urban activities including personal, social, health, educational and entertainment services. All of these industries require specialised work places where they can contribute the most efficiently to the urban economy. The reduced employment share of urban manufacturing does not diminish the importance of this sector within urban production. It complements the growing service-based economies. For all of the cities, the service sector employs more than half of the urban labour force. This transition appears the most far reaching in New York and London where less than 10% of the urban labour force is engaged in industrial activity. Six cities see a range from becoming more-cultural ‘office economies’ in fact, becoming mono-cultural. Yet cities are far from the private car. The 12,500 employees of the city’s labour force and are seen as one of the pillars of city’s ‘office economies’ which is one of the fastest growing urban economies in the world, maintains its importance of this sector within urban production. Shanghai, which is one of the fastest growing urban economies in the world, maintains its importance of this sector within urban production. Shanghai, which is one of the fastest growing urban economies in the world, maintains its importance of this sector within urban production.
Social inclusion is one of the most important challenges for contemporary cities. All of the six cities—Berlin, Johannesburg, London, Mexico City, New York and Shanghai—present significant concentrations of socially disadvantaged populations, even though most of them are in a period of economic expansion and sustained physical development. Urban concentrations of social disadvantage appear in manifold geographical patterns. Some cities are characterised by their socially and physically decayed inner cities, as can be seen in parts of East and South London and parts of New York City’s boroughs outside Manhattan. Others relegate their disadvantaged populations to underserved metropolitan peripheries as is the case in Shanghai and Mexico City. Berlin and Johannesburg present a combination of both patterns, each of them showing a specific geography inherited from their unique development histories and recent transformations.

Source: Center for International Earth Science Information Network (CIESIN), Columbia University

Social help recipients; source: Senate Department of Urban Development

Index of multiple deprivation; source: UK census 2001

Population below poverty line; source: US census 2000

Overcrowding; source: Instituto Nacional de Estadística Geografía 2000, supplied by Desarrolladora Metropolitana S.A.

Unemployment, source: Statistics South Africa Census 2001