

Research impact: making a difference

Creating more liveable cities

Research by LSE Cities was instrumental in the legacy design of the London Olympic Park and more 'liveable' cities around the world

What was the problem?

As more of the world's population cram into cities, the results of haphazard planning are self-evident. City residents complain of urban sprawl and poor accessibility, of overcrowding and living cheek-by-jowl in pockets of social deprivation.

The challenge is to create cities where people want to live: places where shops, jobs, social facilities and open spaces are easily accessible, and where planning the physical city takes account of its social, economic and environmental development.

The problem is most acute in developing economies, where almost all the projected growth in urban population will occur over the next 30 years. By 2050, seven out of 10 of the world's population will live in cities, up from two out of 10 just a century ago.¹

What did we do?

LSE's work on urban planning and design is led by Professor Ricky Burdett, Director of LSE Cities, a world-renowned interdisciplinary centre that investigates the physical and social dimensions of cities.

Professor Burdett developed his integrated approach to urban design as a member of the UK government's Urban Task Force. Burdett's research for the Task Force established a framework of design principles for creating more liveable places based on 'the compact and well-connected city'. This framework set out criteria for assessing urban planning proposals and it argued for minimum levels of population density linked to public transport accessibility.

More evidence about how people respond to higher-density living came in LSE Cities research conducted in five London wards. The study correlated residents' and stakeholders' views with an analysis of urban layout and public transport accessibility. Satisfaction levels rose with public transport access to local amenities and declined when relatively high densities coincided with high levels of social deprivation.

Another focus of LSE Cities is how green policies affect sustainable economic growth at different stages of development, a particular interest of LSE Senior Research Fellow Philipp Rode. Rode's

¹ Source: World Health Organization,
http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/

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research has revealed how a city's physical form and infrastructure affect its energy consumption and emissions. Applied to the cities of Stockholm, Copenhagen and Portland, this research has also illuminated the effectiveness of urban policies and governance structures in managing the transition to a green economy.

What happened?

LSE Cities' sustained engagement with better urban living, green city economies and the development of 'brownfield' sites previously used for industry or commerce has contributed to a radical re-thinking of urban development policies in the UK and globally.

Burdett's design methodology for creating compact and well-connected cities has informed the UK government's national planning policy and the mayoral London Plan. Official policy now supports the methodology's emphasis on 'designing for quality' and 'making the best use of land' and its call for intensified development of brownfield sites across English cities.

As Adviser on Architecture and Urbanism to the Mayor of London (2000-2006), Burdett contributed to the Greater London Authority's Housing for a Compact City, which recommended minimum density levels for new sites based on their accessibility by public transport. This has produced revised planning frameworks for the London boroughs of Hackney and Tower Hamlets and for major publicly-funded regeneration projects.

Burdett also served as Chief Adviser on Architecture and Urbanism to London's Olympic Delivery Authority (2006-2010). In this capacity he was instrumental in creating the design brief and legacy masterplan for the highly successful London Olympics of 2012. Applying his city model to the wider Olympic site, he helped to deliver an integrated urban plan that connects the Olympic park to its surrounding communities. This has created a dense and diverse 'piece of city' rather than a gated community, and the park's high architectural standards have influenced professional standards throughout the UK. Burdett's research and ideas continue to influence the work of the London Legacy Development Corporation in ensuring the long-term benefits of the Olympics site.

Burdett has also had wider influence through a number of key policy appointments, e.g. as Chief Adviser to the Mayor of Genova, as Scientific Coordinator for the city plan of Parma, and as a member of the steering committee for Milan Expo. In 2012 he was appointed to the UK Airports Commission in recognition of his expertise on global cities and their development.

"The report from the LSE will be a valuable tool in shaping the future of Stockholm and in planning for meeting our challenges."

The Mayor of Stockholm

The work of LSE Cities has "had an influence out of all proportion to its size ... the centre is internationally significant."

Professor Nigel Thrift, Vice-Chancellor, University of Warwick

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The United Nations Environment Programme has adopted Philipp Rode's research on green economies for its influential Green Economy Report, which aims to motivate policymakers globally to encourage investment that will aid the world's transition to a green economy. Municipal authorities in the US and Europe have commissioned studies on green policies, and LSE Cities' research into how 90 global cities are managing the transition has stimulated policy debate internationally.

Through conferences, research and outreach activities, LSE Cities' Urban Age Programme has established a distinctive research agenda and an international network of urban policymakers and scholars. Since 2005, more than 4,600 experts have come together at 13 conferences. Over 40 academic and research institutions have collaborated in data gathering and research, alongside the city authorities of Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Sao Paulo, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Istanbul, London, New York and Chicago. Exhibitions, books and a much visited website have further helped to raise public understanding of urban issues.

Ricky Burdett is Professor of Urban Studies, and director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age Programme. His research interests focus on the interactions between the physical and social worlds in the contemporary city and how urbanisation affects social and environmental sustainability. He is currently a Visiting Professor in Urban Planning and Design at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University as well as a member of the UK Government's Independent Airports Commission and a member of Council of the Royal College of Art in London. Professor Burdett was Global Distinguished Professor at New York University from 2010 – 2014. 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 a judge in the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities initiative and is a member of the Hurricane Sandy Regional Planning and Design Competition organised by US Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. Professor Burdett was also a member of the Urban Task Force which produced a major report for the UK government on the future of English cities. He is co-editor of *The Endless City* (2007), *Living in the Endless City* (2011) and *Transforming Urban Economies* (2013). Professor Burdett was Global Distinguished Professor at New York University from 2010 – 2014.

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