



ABU DHABI DIS CONNECTED



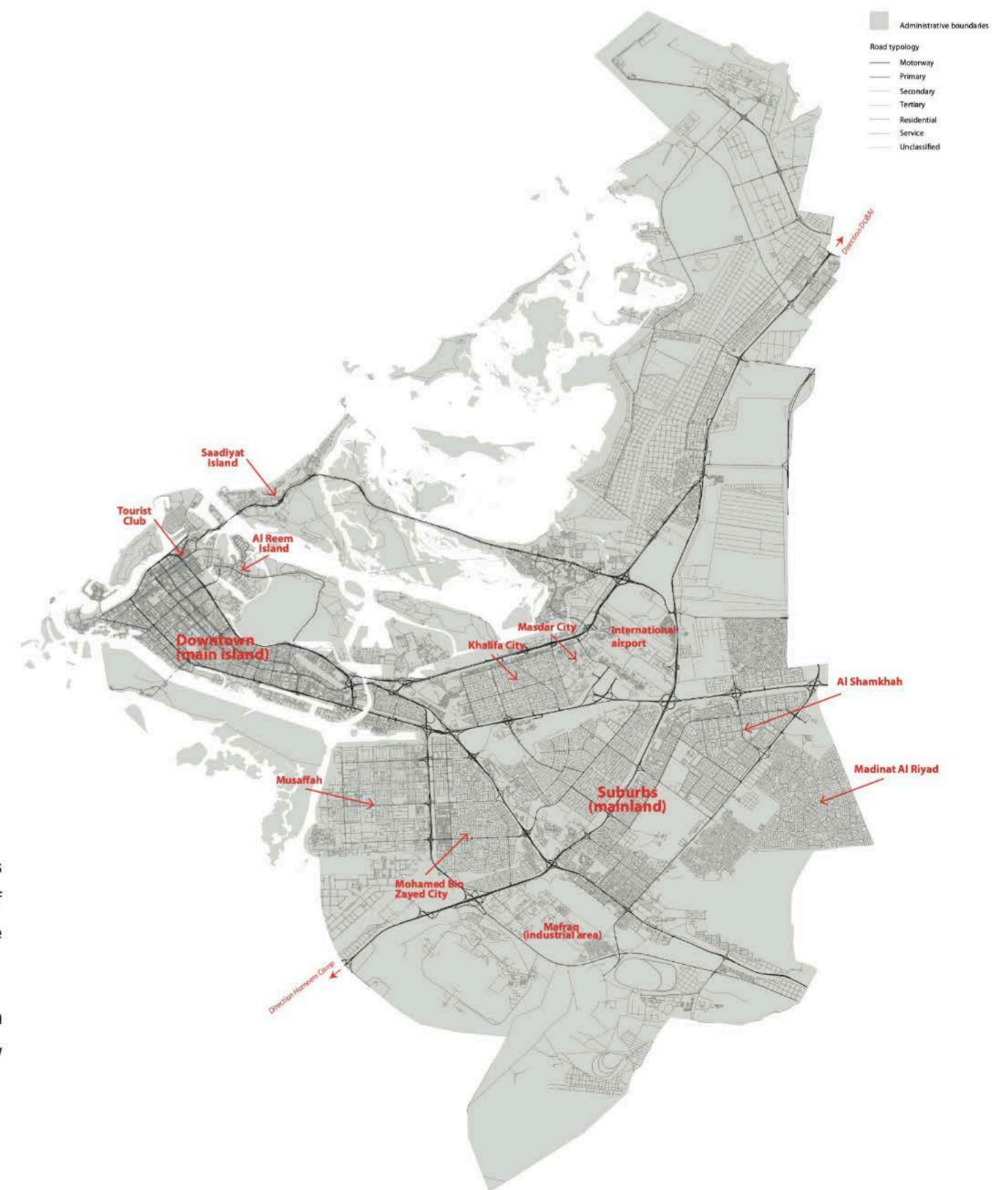
Photo @AKyriazis

This exhibition features a series of images to understand the spatial and lived realities of navigating a city that is disconnected. Photographs, videos and maps are visual components of a collaboration between the London School of Economics and the Department of Architecture and Design, Abu Dhabi University. The research findings show that despite these challenges, residents are adaptable and they reclaim public spaces within the streets of the city.

This exhibition explores Abu Dhabi in recent times and through historical strategies of planning. Seeing the city from different points of view reveals the challenges faced by residents. Working with students and research helps to imagine new ways to develop in the future.

Abu Dhabi is a city with rapid growth, highly dependent on car infrastructure. People navigate through the bustling central business district and out into the seemingly empty suburbs. Mega highways connect these areas, at the same time creating barriers for those who try to navigate the city on foot or via limited public transport.

The constant construction builds new pathways between areas of the city. However, they are not always connecting neighbourhoods that are close by. Additional challenges are brought on by the climate conditions of heat, dust and coastal development. In response, the city transforms as the sun sets and people gather in open areas.



Abu Dhabi (Dis)connected is one of the final outputs of a two-year research project Roads as Tools for (Dis)connecting Cities and Neighbourhoods: a Socio-spatial Study of Abu Dhabi, a collaboration between LSE and Abu Dhabi University. A project managed by LSE Middle East Centre and supported by the Emirates Foundation. The London exhibition is in association with LSE Arts.

The material of the exhibition is produced and coordinated by the research team and includes additional images taken by Abu Dhabi University Architecture and Design students under the supervision of Apostolos Kyriazis. The motion design was created by students from Care Design Lab - L'École de design Nantes Atlantique, under the supervision of Clémence Montagne and Nicolas David.



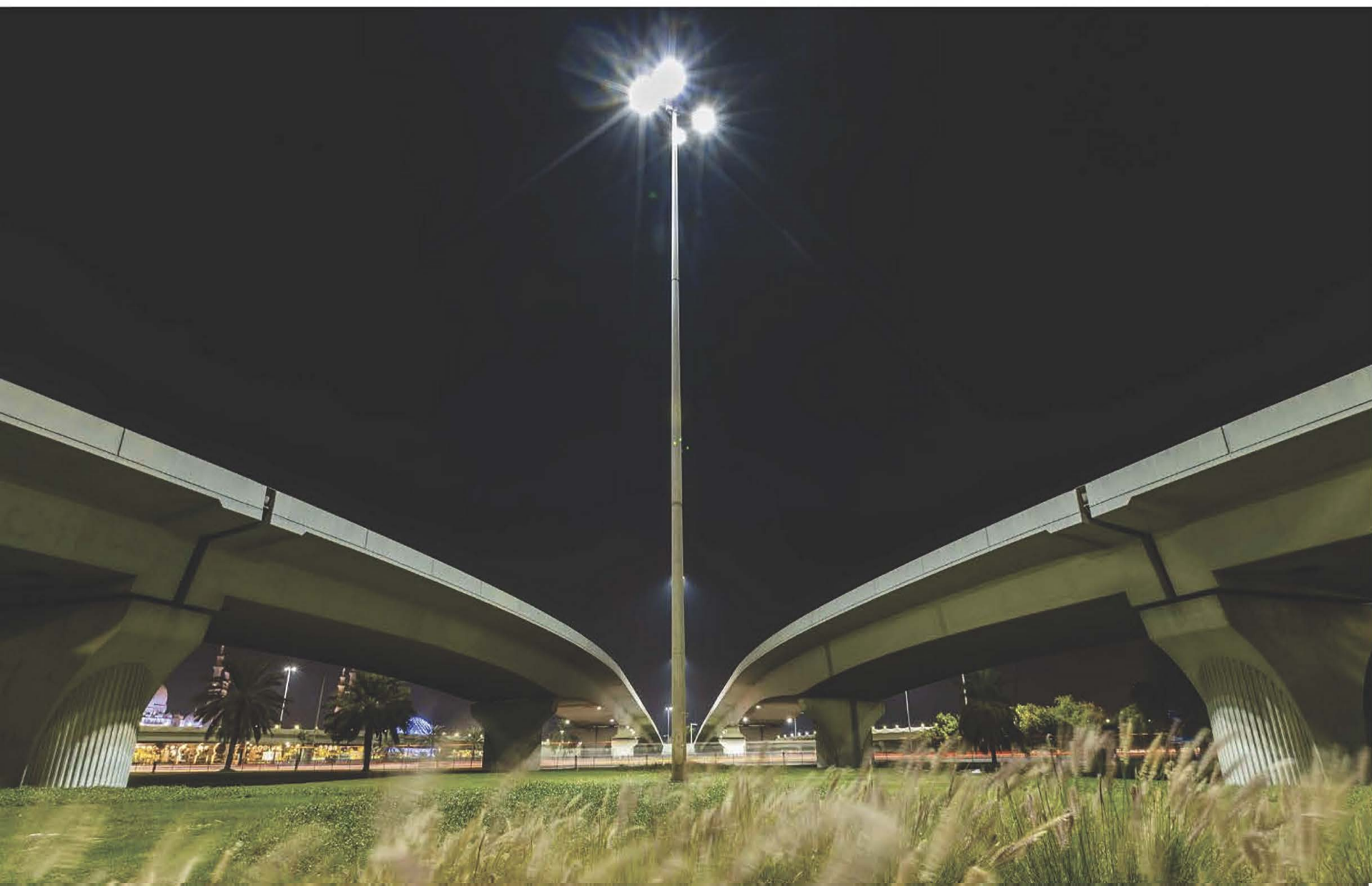
Photo @AKyriazis



Photo @PShwinger

We also want to thank Dr Michael Mason and Robert Lowe at LSE Middle East Centre, Professor Ricky Burdett and Dr Philipp Rode at LSE Cities, the Chairs of the Department of Architecture and Design Dr Magdy Ibrahim and Dr Osama Mohamed, the Research Office Director Dr Philip Hamill, the ADU Provost Prof. Thomas Glas-Hochstettler and the former ADU Chancellor, Prof. Waqar Ahmad at Abu Dhabi University.

A special mention to Eiman Shahin (LSE MEC researcher) for helping in the preparation of the exhibition and design of the website. Also, to Sepehr Zhand and Branwen Spector (researchers at LSE) and Nour Al Ali, Juman Feras Sebai, Haya Omar Al Baiti and Hiba Hafeez Syed (researchers at Abu Dhabi University) who helped with the research project. Along with all those who provided us with their local and institutional knowledge and daily narratives.







Archives / الأرشيف



Photo @AKyriazis

Abu Dhabi is the capital of the United Arab Emirates (UAE), a federation of seven emirates, each of which is ruled by an absolute monarch. It is also the capital of the emirate of Abu Dhabi, the largest of seven emirates of the union. The emirate spans 67,340 square kilometers and accounts for nearly 86% of the total territory of the UAE. Abu Dhabi has a population of 1.8 million, mostly settled on Abu Dhabi Island, one of the many offshore islands extending into the Persian Gulf and separated from the mainland only by a narrow channel. Before the first oil resources were discovered by British prospectors near the western shores of Abu Dhabi Island in 1958, only a few hundred fishermen were settled in a small village.

Constant Construction

البناء المستمر

Photo @AKyriazis

Urban development in modern Abu Dhabi can broadly be divided into three key phases: 1963–1973, 1974–2004 and 2004–2015. Abu Dhabi has grown from a small village in 1949 to a burgeoning capital city of 374,000 in 1990. The post-2004 boom in the construction industry marked a hike in population growth rates, partially due to an increase in the migrant population. In 2007, Plan Abu Dhabi 2030 was finalised. The Plan focusses on building an identity of being a modern Arab city, catering to the needs of the Emirati population, supporting its diverse resident populations and addressing issues of sustainability.



Photo @AGomes

Disconnection

الانفصال



"I don't feel safe for her to be on the street. I don't feel safe for my daughter to be on streets. Cars are whizzing by. Its very, very, very car oriented. Even if couldn't have said the same thing about the Corniche something feels different about Khalifa City, that I don't know what it is. There's hardly any greenery."

Abu Dhabi Resident

Labourers from many countries migrate to the Gulf regions, ensuring the city's constant and rapid development is possible. These residents often live in camps outside the central business district. They travel long distances in company buses to get to construction sites. Some of the labour camps are linked with public transport infrastructure.



Photo @PSchwinger

In many areas, labourers must cross urban highways to transit or get to work sites. Roads have become an obstacle to
daily life.

Abu Dhabi (Dis)connected

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Connection

الاتصال

To ease the journey, migrants create comfort though makeshift shades and resting places at bus stops and in roadside locations. Gifted sofas are iconic of the way people remake public space, forming new areas to gather.



"There's a category of roads which I interact with as a person outside of my car - the back roads and almost-suburban spaces in between. On these roads we find street-side cafes with views of empty building plots, mini-play areas, or seating zones with the odd shading here and there and/or sidewalks where you can watch cars go. These roads are what retains Abu Dhabi's familiarity and essence, shying away from the large highways."

Abu Dhabi Resident

Abu Dhabi changes at night. When the sun is down and temperatures are more bearable, people come out into the streets. This night-time culture shows the city lived in a different way, requiring a certain level of safety for people to move around.



Futures

المستقبل



New planning focusses on physical well-being; new infrastructure supports residents to walk and cyclists to use pathways as active zones set apart from the main roads. However, at the same time, impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic, mobile phone applications, internet and new vehicles are emerging to move goods and services across the city. All these changes allow for new lifestyles that can influence the future of Abu Dhabi.

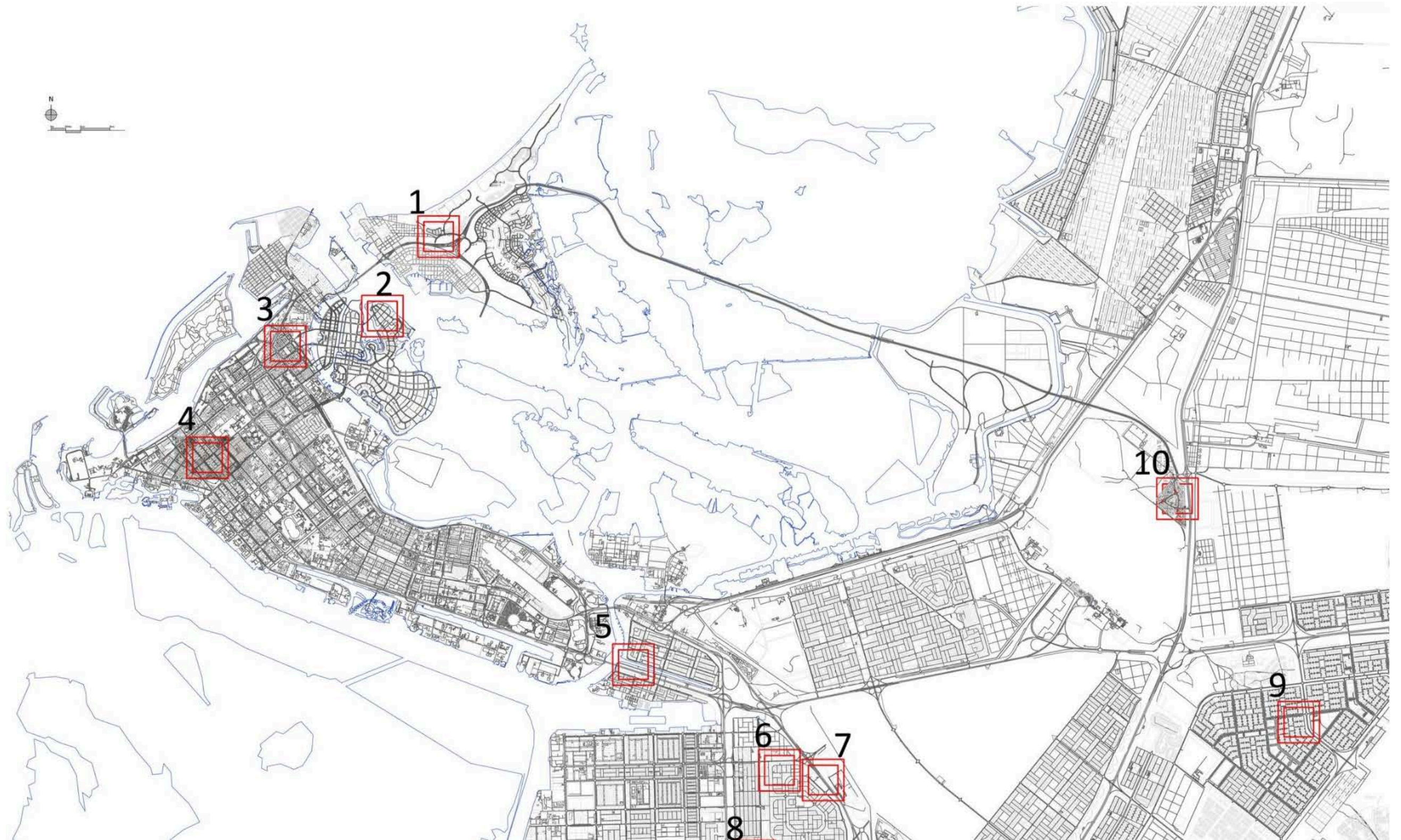


Abu Dhabi Areas

مناطق أبوظبي

Streetscape images and land use maps of ten selected study areas in Abu Dhabi.

Photography by the research team and research assistants/students at Abu Dhabi University (Nour Al Ali, Juman Feras Sebai, Haya Omar Al Baiti and Hiba Hafeez Syed).



Area 1 - Saadiyat

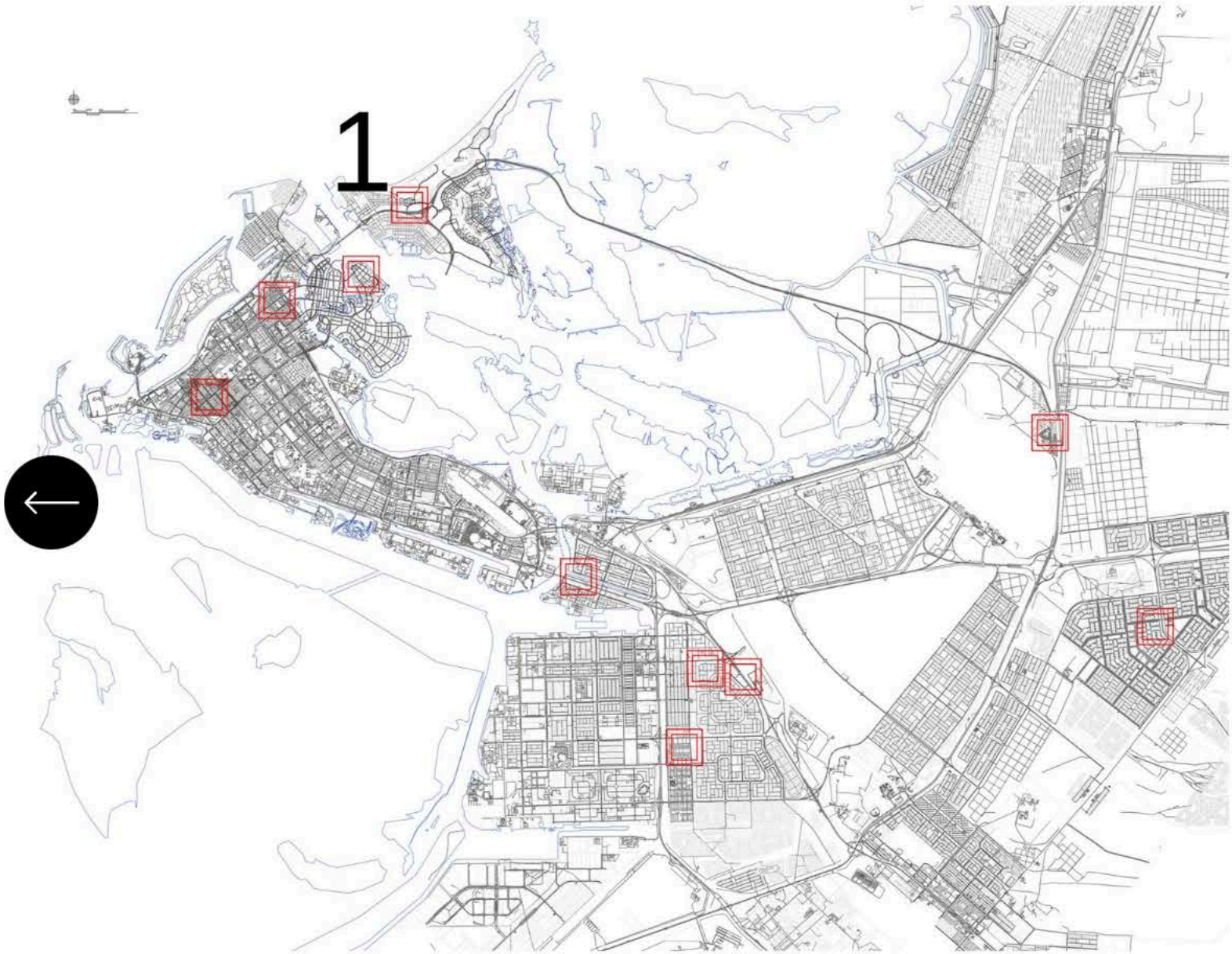


Photo @AGomes

Area 4 - Khalidya



Photo



Archives

الأرشيف

Historical Photographs of Abu Dhabi



Planning Abu Dhabi (1974)

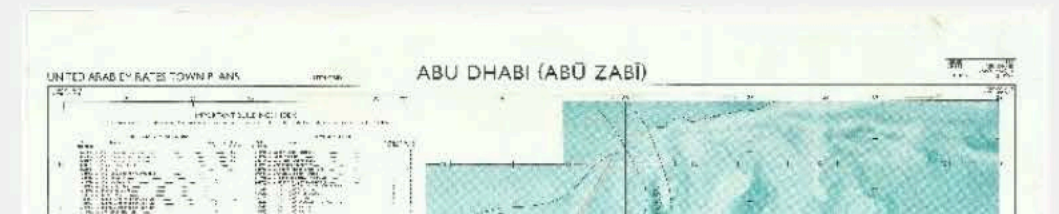


Abu Dhabi in the 1970's



An aerial view of Abu Dhabi in 1974

Historical Maps of Abu Dhabi





Resource Urbanisms

المدين والموارد

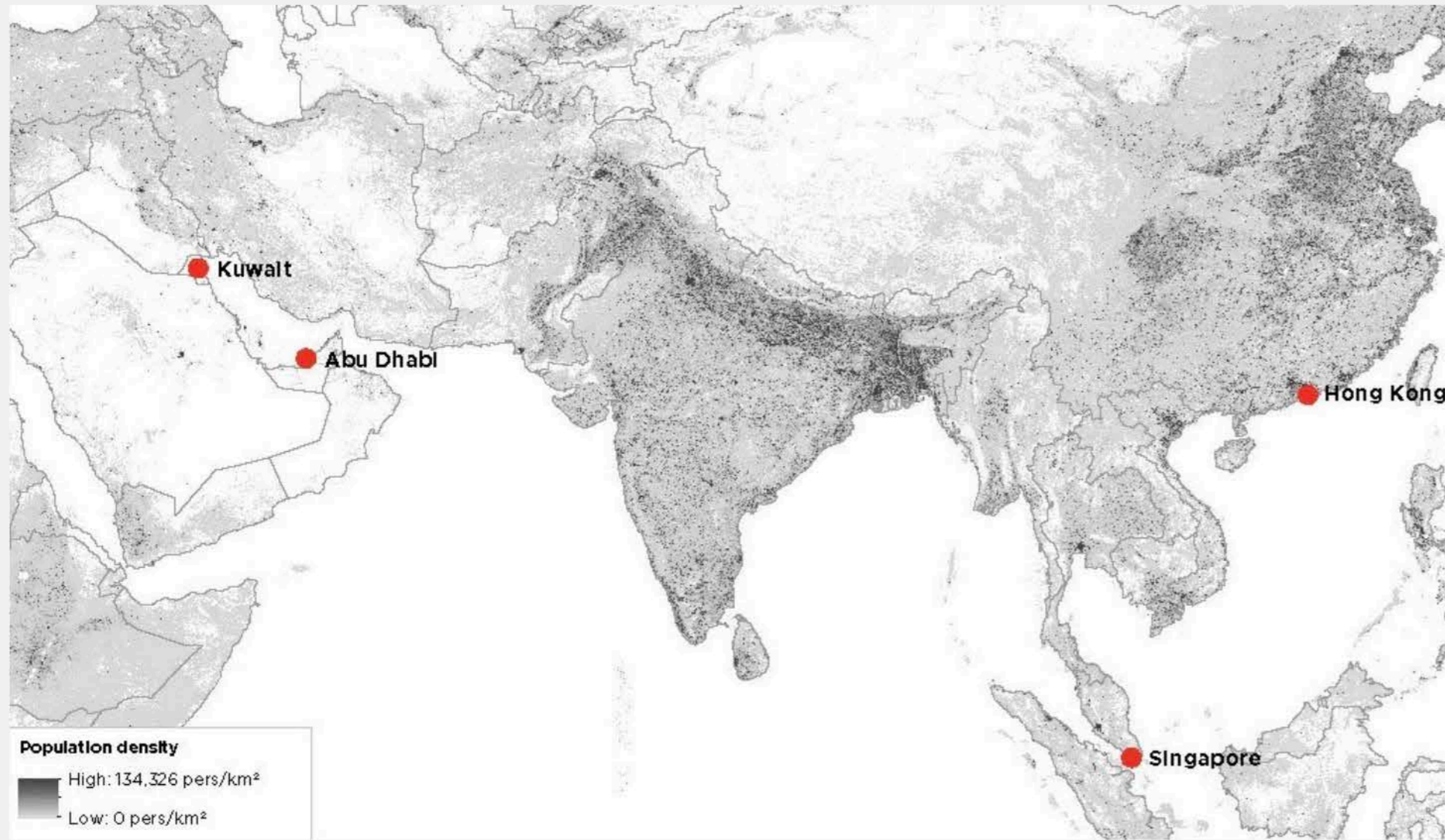
Photo @AGomes

This research builds on the 2015-17 Resource Urbanisms project funded by the LSE Kuwait Programme and supported by the Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences (KFAS). The project aims to examine multiple aspects of how natural resources, urban form and infrastructure affect each other and potentially lead to the establishment of divergent forms of urbanism. It compares Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Singapore and Hong Kong's divergent socio-spatial characteristics including population, land area, residential densities, housing typologies and transport modal share.

Resource
Urbanisms

Download the
Report

Case study locations: Kuwait, Abu Dhabi, Singapore and Hong Kong



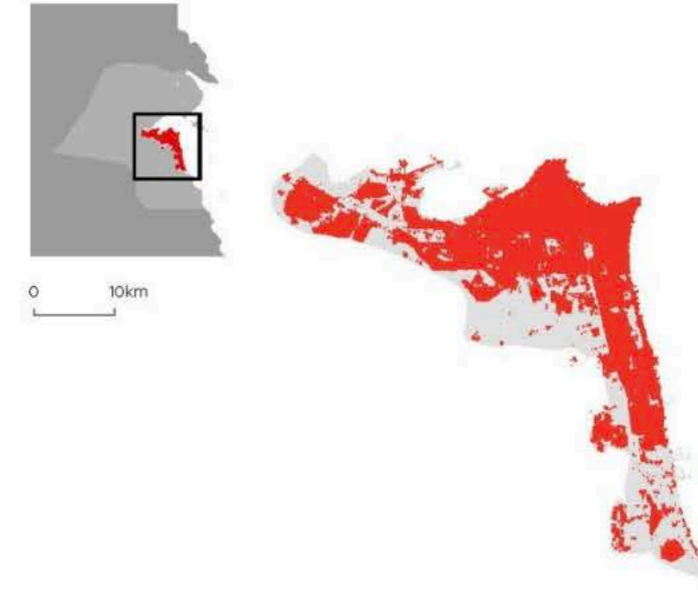
Urban living area (ULA) is a measure developed by LSE Cities to calculate the total developed land within a metropolitan area. It includes all built-up areas as well as small open spaces adjacent, or close, to the built-up areas. However, it excludes large, unoccupied spaces, 'dead' built-up spaces such as isolated roadways and areas occupied by large storage structures, such as shipping containers or oil storage tanks that are included in traditional measures of built-up areas. Such areas have been excluded as they are scarcely used by residents in day-to-day life and can distort calculations of residential and workplace density in a city. The ULA provides a means to identify the boundaries within which people live, work and travel, which is particularly important when exploring the use of land as a resource.

Figure 2: Urban living areas (ULA)

Urban living area (2015)
Metropolitan area (2015)

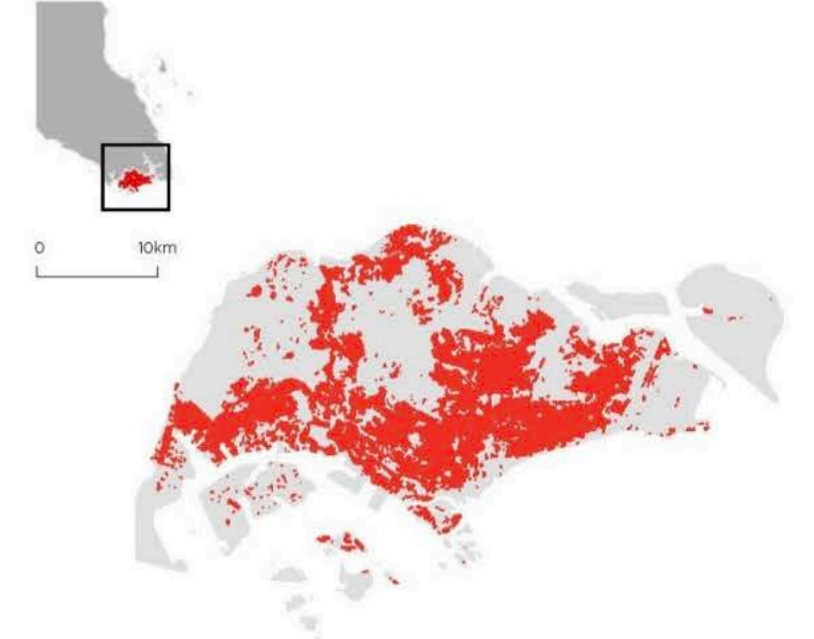
Kuwait

Metropolitan area
852 km²
Urban living area
424 km² (50% of the metropolitan area)



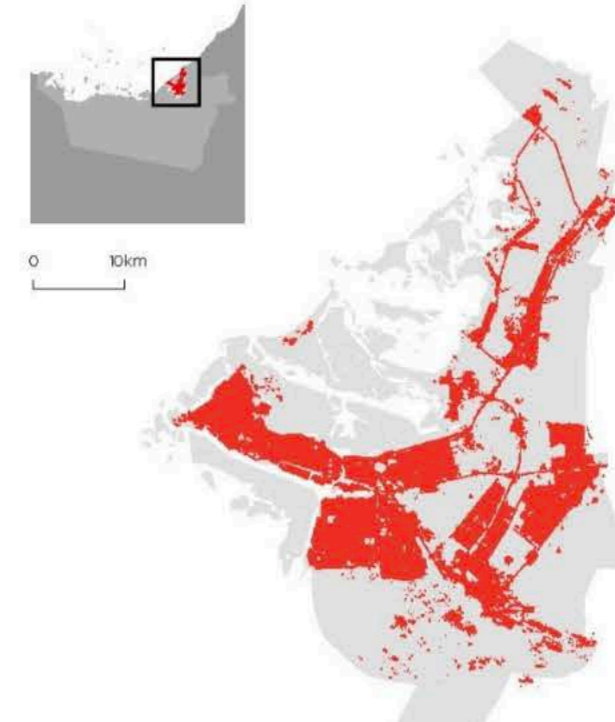
Singapore

Metropolitan area
719 km²
Urban living area
232 km² (32% of the metropolitan area)



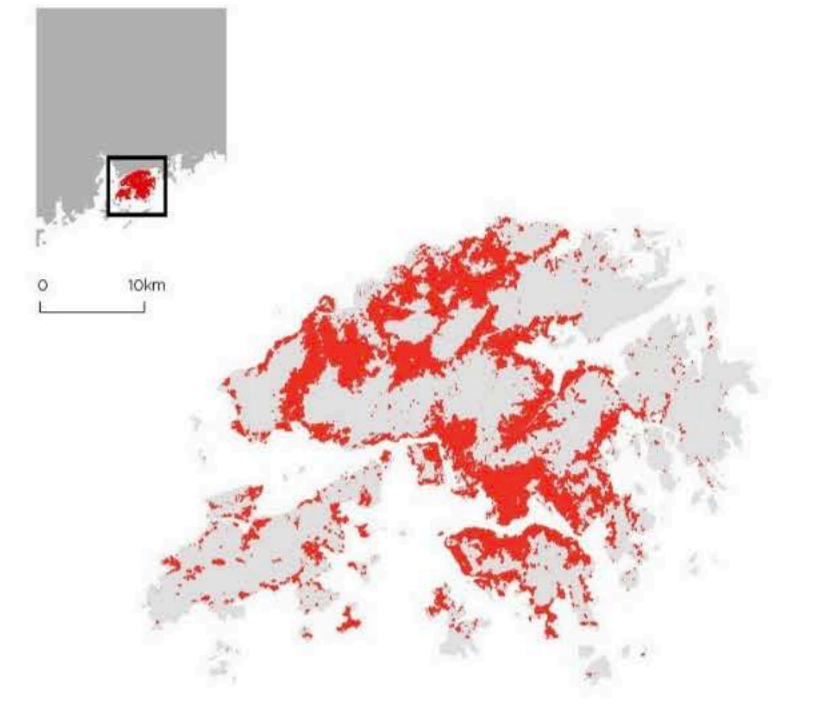
Abu Dhabi

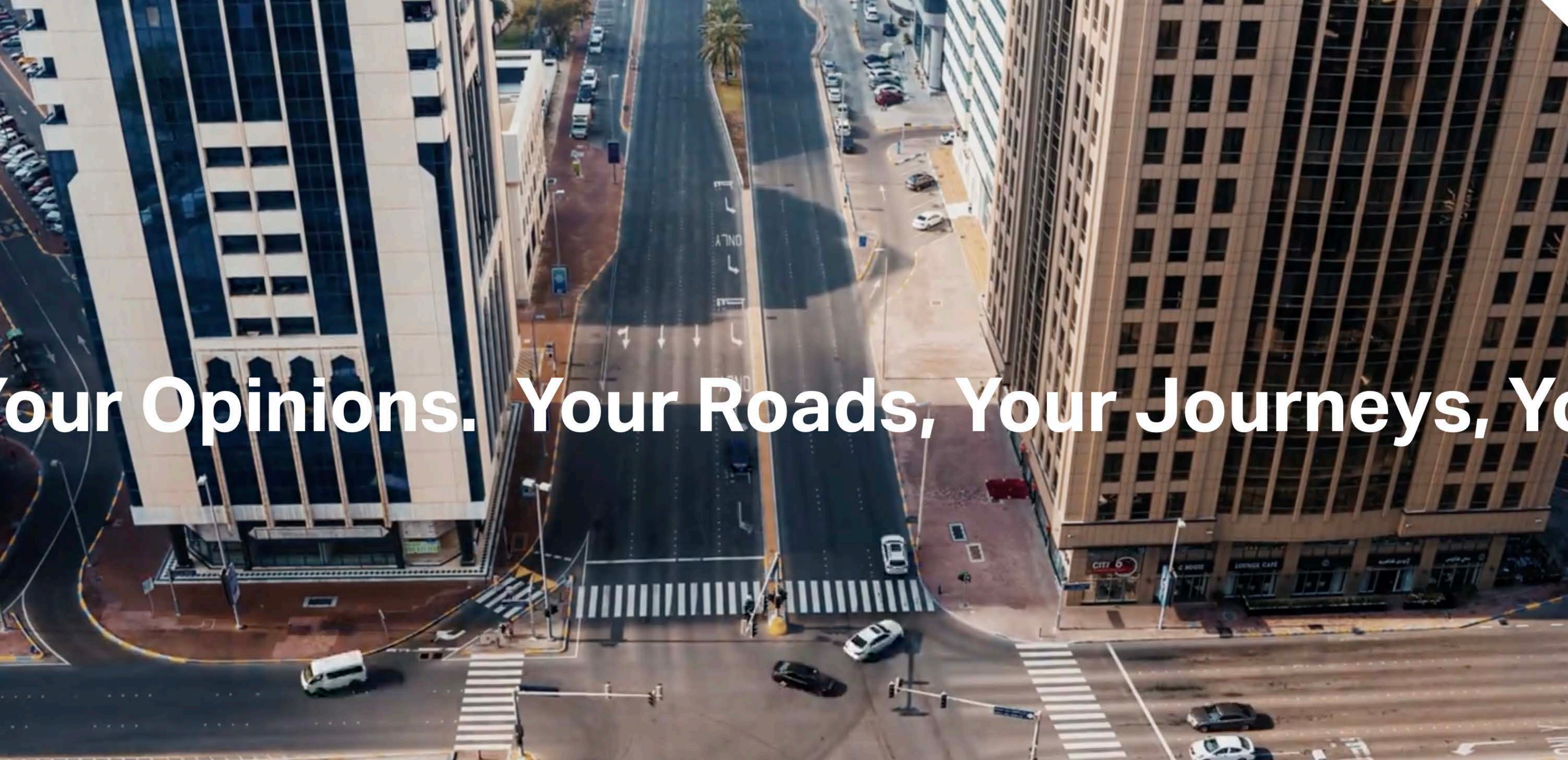
Metropolitan area
1,584 km²
Urban living area
389 km² (25% of the metropolitan area)



Hong Kong

Metropolitan area
1,109 km²
Urban living area
247 km² (22% of the metropolitan area)



An aerial photograph of a city street intersection. The street runs vertically through the center, with a road sign that reads 'ONLY' and arrows pointing in both directions. The buildings on either side are tall and modern, with many windows. There are several cars on the road, and a crosswalk is visible at the bottom of the frame. The text 'Your Opinions. Your Roads, Your Journeys, Your' is overlaid in white across the middle of the image.

Your Opinions. Your Roads, Your Journeys, Your

How do you think roads impact your life?

Do roads make you feel connected or disconnected?

Do you feel safe on roads?

Are roads necessary for urban development?

ROADS KILL CITIES
STREETS MAKE THEM.

both - depends on their size/width and what surrounds them

Yes - if in a car as the driver or passenger.

No - as a pedestrian. Esp. when there are no designated spaces for pedestrians to walk or cross the road.

No - every road is an answer to traffic.

Roads are the veins of the city that connects the heart of the city to the rest of the places. Where there is no road, the unconscious of the city lies there.

unwalkable roads connect me physically but disconnect me socially from the world around me.

NO both as driver & pedestrian

Roads are essential as the main veins of transport for a city however they should not cut through communities prioritise walking and cycling & promote compact living!

The share of space dedicated to roads shows us the priorities of planners and their political

being a pedestrian on large roads makes

Yes, but we should

