“What we are doing with the Urban Age Programme in general, and the Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award in particular, is develop a grammar of success for cities. You cannot establish this grammar without acknowledging the experience of grassroots projects that are designed by the people, not urban planners and architects.”

Wolfgang Nowak
When was it established?
2007

Can anyone enter?
Only existing projects in specified metropolitan cities, identified in advance by the organiser through an open public call, are eligible to enter.

Where are these metropolitan areas?
To date, the award has been presented in five cities in as many continents: Mumbai (2007), São Paulo (2008), Istanbul (2009) and Mexico City (2010) and Cape Town (2012). There was no award in 2011.

Are there any other eligibility criteria beside geography?
Projects must demonstrate evidence of partnership and cooperation between different stakeholders, prove measurable impacts for their users and the wider community, and not discriminate on the basis of gender, age, religion or ethnicity.

Is there a prize attached to the award?
750,000 ZAR

Who judges the award?
An independent, international jury comprised of prominent academics, architects, actors, business leaders, political scientists, social activists, sociologists and writers with expertise and knowledge of the city under consideration.

Who administers the award?
The non-profit Alfred Herrhausen Society, which is the international forum of Deutsche Bank.

Is the award related to the Urban Age Programme?
Yes. The award is an integral component of the Urban Age Programme, which is an international investigation of the spatial and social dynamics of cities founded in 2005 and centred on an annual conference, research initiative and publication.
Edgar Pieterse, director of the African Centre for Cities and jury chair of the 2012 Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award, reflects on the difficult but rewarding process of adjudicating the 254 entries and determining a final shortlist of eight.

The Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award recognises and celebrates creative solutions to the problems and opportunities in city dwellers globally. The fifth cycle of the award was launched on November 18, 2011, and offered community organisations and urban activists in Cape Town a three-month window to submit their entries. The response was overwhelming: 254 entries were received. The jury believes this response reflects the rich reservoir of organisations, talent and grassroots leadership across all segments of Cape Town’s neighbourhoods. This diversity of activism bodes well for the future, especially as the City of Cape Town initiates its development strategy.

The volume and diversity of the submissions for 2012 Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award made the adjudication process incredibly difficult, but profoundly rewarding too. On March 20, the jury convened for three days to adjudicate the submissions, and also toured the city to review the many outstanding projects. The jury unanimously identified eight projects to shortlist, from which an overall winner was selected: Mothers Unite. All eight projects are introduced and profiled in the following pages.

The 2012 Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award foregrounds grassroots initiatives that connect social well-being with improving the physical environment. The jury believes that improvement in the quality and experience of place is the gateway to urban opportunities and improved livability in a city. In this regard the jury was struck by the notable absence of mature or advanced submissions that dealt directly with the unacceptable living conditions of the one million Capetonians who live in highly inadequate shelter (backyards, free-standing informal dwellings and overcrowded public housing).

The paucity of innovation tackling structural urban exclusion is clearly compounded by the large-scale under-utilisation of especially public land—a vasculature aftermath of apartheid spatial planning and social engineering, which must surely have a debilitating impact on economic efficiency and inclusion.

The jury was impressed with the efforts of the Social Justice Coalition (p.26) to bring sanitation, one of the toughest urban problems, to the attention of both residents and public bodies. In their methodology this organisation seems to strike a powerful balance between protest and proposition: while open to partnering with local government in order to initiate janitorial services that will ensure oversight and maintenance of communal toilets, they nonetheless reserve the right to protest against perceived injustices.

In a similar vein, the jury was struck by the ingenuity of the Regeneration of City and Soul (p.30) initiative, which draws on young men prone to gang activity by helping them find alternative, hands-on outlets to re-engage them back into their communities in ways that also improve the physical environment. This work is echoed in the well-rounded and ever-deepening methodologies of both Thrive Recycling (p.26) and the Rocklands Urban Abundance Centre (p.26), which draw on residents’ connection with nature to operationalise various regenerative urban services, including recycling, food gardens and community trading systems. It is in this light that the multi-dimensional work of the Bicycle Empowerment Network (p.25) deserves recognition and promotion. The jury believes that all these projects, as well as numerous other greening and food security initiatives, if duly supported and successfully able to scale-up, hold an important key to addressing some of Cape Town’s most profound challenges.

Durable urban change is often about carefully targeted macro interventions that can change the energies and dynamics of a surrounding neighbourhood. Mothers Unite (p.27) and Masiphumelele Community Library (p.25), two projects that evidence incredible tenacity, both reveal the power of “urban acupuncture.” These projects serve as reminders that through vision, commitment over the long haul and principled partnerships, just about any problem can be confronted and addressed.

More attention must be paid to the transformative power of using the built form to alter social dynamics. The Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading (p.27) initiative convincingly proves that careful attention to the quality of public spaces and mobility corridors, especially in the harshest environments, can dramatically change the experience and horizons of a neighbourhood. We hope that the important lessons emerging from that vibrant experiment in place-making will be recognised and amplified across the city, particularly in light of a recent decision by the City of Cape Town to extend this approach across various neighbourhoods in the city.

In light of the impressive range of submissions, the jury is currently exploring ways for the award process to leave a more durable legacy than simply rewarding a winner. This proposed initiative will establish a variety of mechanisms to facilitate the sharing of information and accessing of resources across all 254 projects. Most importantly, creative ways will be found to ensure that the 2014 World Design Capital project incorporates the creativity and innovation that the 2012 Deutsche Bank Urban Age Award uncovered in Cape Town.

Edgar Pieterse is an urban scholar, writer and creative agent whose interests include the theory and practice of policy discourses and interventions to make the African city more just, open and accessible. He holds the South African Research Chair in Urban Policy at the University of Cape Town and is director of the African Centre for Cities. Formerly a special policy advisor to the premier of the Western Cape, he is the author of City Futures: Confronting the Crisis of Urban Development (2018).
A GRAMMAR OF SUCCESS FOR CITIES

Wolfgang Nowak, managing director and spokesperson for the Alfred Herrhausen Society, a Berlin-based philanthropic organisation and founding partner of the Urban Age project, discusses his organisation’s prominent role in the evolution of, and sustained commitment to the Urban Age Award.

Cityscapes: Can you briefly situate the Urban Age Award within the context of the Urban Age Project as a whole?

Wolfgang Nowak: The Urban Age Programme started in 2004 when Ricky Burdett, professor at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) asked me to fund a conference of European mayors in Barcelona. I was very impressed by what I saw and heard, especially those mayors who said that they didn’t have the tools to run modern cities in the age of cities. They were working with tools from the 19th and early 20th century and sometimes had to act illegally to do something good in the cities.

After further discussions with Ricky, we discovered that the real problems are in the countries with mega cities: India, Mexico, Turkey and Brazil, for example. We decided to pool the Herrhausen Society’s expertise from government and the LSE’s from architecture and planning, which is how the Urban Age conference started. The conference brings together top professionals, including all the people you would expect—mayors, urban planners, city politicians—but also architects, NGOs, scientists. The achievement of the conference is in bringing together different people from a variety of origins, people who normally don’t meet, and enabling them to confront each other with their ideas at one place: it is about getting them to sit at the same table and conduct a global investigation into the future of cities.

The idea for the Urban Age Award goes back to February 2006, when we hosted an Urban Age conference in Mexico City. I had an opportunity to visit a slum. Despite being a really awful crime-ridden neighbourhood, its inhabitants had nonetheless created a marketplace and a school. They had tried to improve their own situation, creating a new city inside a situation of hopelessness. You find the same thing in Mumbai and São Paulo, people resisting their environment by building something. This is what prompted us to create the Urban Age Award, which is now in its fifth cycle in Cape Town. The aim of the conference and the award is to enable people to do something: we enable the mayors to find better solutions and we enable the citizens to realise their projects, and sometimes we even enable mayors and citizens to meet.

CS: Urbanisation is such a big, multifaceted and, one could even argue, unstable topic. Was there any fear amongst your bosses in choosing something that, within its DNA, is inherently unstable?

WN: In the beginning there were doubts when we proposed this to Deutsche Bank. Our initial plan was to do it for two years, but very soon we found out that this was an enormous problem. We’ve been committed to the project for seven years now. This year we are holding a conference in London (December 6–7) about urban transport and the electric city. Next year we may go to Rio de Janeiro, to discuss cities, games and big events, to assess their impact. I think the most urgent problem we face is our cities—it is a global problem. What we are slowly doing with the Urban Age Programme in general, and the Award in particular, is develop a grammar of success for cities. There are many examples. You cannot establish this grammar without acknowledging the experience of mayors and citizens creating a new city inside a situation of hopelessness.
What is the Alfred Herrhausen Society?

Named after Alfred Herrhausen, a German banker and former chairman of Deutsche Bank who was assassinated in a roadside bomb attack in 1989, the non-profit Alfred Herrhausen Society (AHS) is a corporate social responsibility initiative of Deutsche Bank. Founded in 1992, its work focuses on new forms of governance as a response to the challenges of the 21st century. The Urban Age conference series and award programme is one of three major projects initiated by AHS. Broadly speaking, the AHS seeks traces of the future in the present, and working with partners in government, academia and business, aims to conceptualise relevant themes for analysis and debate globally.

of grassroots projects that are designed by the people, not urban planners and architects. The Award allows us to compare the product of very informal community initiatives are often the result of grassroots projects that are designed by the people, not local experts who know and understand the cities in which the award is being presented. This was a problem. You have to have a plan.

CS: Why did you specifically decide to partner with LSE?

WN: I admire the school and also I know many of its staff—Ricky Burdett, Richard Sennett [professor of sociology], Anthony Giddens [former director of the LSE]—through my various professional activities. For instance, I worked with Anthony on the Third Way programme. I think LSE Cities has a great international network and mentors students from all over the world. When LSE Cities came to me asking for support for their work in Barcelona in 2004, I was happy to get involved.

CS: Looking particularly at the Urban Age Award, the Herrhausen Society is never part of the judging panel.

WN: No I don’t want somebody to say, this is what Deutsche Bank likes. The award is really an independent one. We have three permanent jury members, because we want to compare the decisions made in each country, but local experts who know and understand the cities in which the award is being presented drive the award.

CS: Have there been any individual projects that have moved, surprised or delighted you?

WN: It’s a very personal question. All these projects have moved me, but the last time I was so moved—to the point of being unable to answer a question on television—was in Mexico. I was so moved—to the point of being unable to answer a question on television—was in Mexico. I was so overwhelmed—to the point of being unable to answer a question on television—was in Mexico.

CS: This is a fascinating aspect of the award, how it spotlights citizen activism in a way.

WN: Well, in a way it is more these people who live in a slum and inhabitants and some of them decide to become citizens. This is what we award. They decide to take responsibility, do something, and in the process they become citizens.

CS: Is this not the key to the life of any city, when you feel that you are a member of it, not just a disenfranchised occupant or user?

WN: But normally you say people who live in a city are citizens. No, these people are simply trying to survive and suddenly they decide to act. In Mexico City, for example, one of the shortlisted projects involved 30 gangs from Iztapalapa that had agreed on a truce. They took over a dump, cleaned it and established a centre with sports facilities, artistic workshops and a library to promote legal graffiti and artistic work as an alternative to drugs, crime and violence. They even built a kiosk, where they sold coffee and some soup. When I asked the gang leader why and how, he said that he didn’t want his children to live like him. When the owner of the dump found out it had been cleaned and was now a wonderful space, he wanted to take it back and build some structure on it. “We convinced him not to come back again,” the gang leader told me.

WN: I am not one of these people, like a Florence Nightingale, who stands and gives soup to the poor. What we want is to enable the poor no longer accept soup queues and produce their own soup.

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CS: The Alfred Herrhausen Society organises three projects, two of which have a committed global outlook. ‘To what extent are the Urban Age conference series and Foresight project, which assesses how the divergent future plans of the world’s major countries can give rise to common approaches to solutions for the problems facing a multi-polar world, meant to overlap or converge in the knowledge they produce.

WN: We will overlap one day. We will bring them together because the Foresight project is dealing with the so-called BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). The big problem for the BRICS is developing cities. Maybe one day very soon we will bring both projects together and have a conference on city and urban planning in the BRICS. This will be a Foresight conference as well.

CS: This example again highlights the unstable DNA of the larger Urban Age Programme. Your award engages with people that are living what Giorgio Agamben calls the “bare life”. In a sense you have to entertain moral and ethical ambivalences.

WN: Wolfgang Nowak is a lawyer by training. Prior to joining the Alfred Herrhausen Society he was Director-General for Political Analysis and Planning at the German Federal Chancellery (1999–2002). A member of the Metropolitan Leadership Council of the Brookings Institution, Washington D.C. and member of the Board of Directors of the British think-tank Policy Network, he founded the Erich Pommer Institute for Media Law and Management at the University of Potsdam.

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Ricky Burdett
director of LSE Cities and
cofounder of the Urban Age programme, talks
about how the Urban Age Award foregrounds
the notion of alliance, addresses the problem
of democratic deficit in cities, and rewards
initiatives that try and make public space more
porous and connected.

Cityscapes: The Urban Age Award was created to celebrate
initiatives that are active in changing their own realities.
How does the award conceptually augment or complement the
Urban Age project?

Ricky Burdett: The Urban Age project started as a global comparison of major cities in
rapidly urbanising parts of the world. As a result, the process
inquiry it has necessarily taken a global, at times Google-
view of the urban condition. The Urban Age Award has been
instrumental in connecting us to the ground by observing the
actions of individual human beings and the social collective,
recognising that urban change does not only come about as a
result of global organisations or city mayors. The result is that the
Urban Age project as a whole—which brings together architects,
planners, mayors and academics in an annual conference
which moves each year from city to city—has developed a
mechanism for identifying and rewarding localised initiatives, bringing into sharp focus a scale of intervention which would
normally be lost in discussion in a conference hall or debating
chamber. The award has become a critical instrument of our
interdisciplinary research that connects the physical and social
in cities.

CS: Was it part of the genesis of the
conference, or did it emerge
out of the conference?

RB: It was Wolfgang Nowak’s
idea, which came up after
we completed our first round
of Urban Age conferences in
six cities. Having travelled
to various cities, including
Mexico City, Johannesburg
and Shanghai, we felt it was
appropriate to go into greater
depth in understanding the
urban DNA of the cities under
scrutiny. We had seen some
inspiring projects, such as the
Faro in Mexico City (an arts
centre placed at the heart of a
rough informal settlement in
the vast, 22-million metropolis)
and invented a mechanism
which would allow us to search
and identify similar projects
elsewhere.

CS: What is your involvement in
the award from year-to-year?

RB: I was the chair for the first
three occasions, in Mumbai, São
Paulo and Istanbul, and have
been a member of the jury in
Mexico City and Cape Town.

CS: Can you talk about the
inspection process? Let’s take
São Paulo as an example. What
do you look for? Is the notion
of partnership the key factor, or
simply a variable?

RB: We look for projects which
have been realised, demonstrate
new alliances and improve the
built environment. The Alfred
Herrhausen Society, which
sponsors the award, recruits a local
award manager who mobilises
interest and generates awareness
through print and digital media,
and available networks, including
government and NGOs. All
submissions are then vetted for
compliance with the award criteria
and a shortlist of projects is visited
by the jury—made up of local and
international figures. The process
takes about six months from start
to finish, with an intense three-
day jury session held a few weeks
before the final announcement.
In the case of São Paulo, three
permanent international members of
the jury were joined by the

Photo: Robert Weiland
What is LSE Cities?

LSE Cities is an international research centre based at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), a social science university founded in 1895. The mission of LSE Cities, supported by Deutsche Bank, is to extend on LSE’s century-old commitment to the understanding of urban society through the investigation of how complex urban systems are responding to the pressures of growth, change and globalisation. Through research, conferences, teaching and projects, LSE Cities aims to shape new thinking and practice on how to make cities fairer and more sustainable for the next generation of urban dwellers. The centre builds on the interdisciplinary work of the Urban Age Programme, an international investigation of cities around the world established in 2005.

former captain of Brazil’s football team, Rai—well-known for his support of young people in the favelas—and other local urban experts. Information on the award was disseminated through of the country’s major NGOs to ensure that it reached local activist organisations as well as established institutions.

The notion of partnership, or more correctly, alliances between groups who do not normally collaborate, is one of the central criteria of the award. But, the result of these innovative alliances must have a spatial dimension, ideally one that invests in the quality of design and space. So, if we come across a great project which has been created by local activist organisations as well as established institutions.

In many ways, the point of the award is to seek out projects that, in their small-scale way, go against the grain of the trends I identify in the quote. In other words, nearly all the projects we have rewarded are initiatives that try and make public space more porous and connected, rather than fragmented and divisive (such as the award-winners in Mexico City or Mumbai). Nearly all the projects we have admired are ones that try and make the dynamics of city life environmentally more friendly (such as the food-gardens, recycling and job-creating initiatives we saw in Cape Town and São Paulo).

A large number of the projects we endorsed are about breaking down barriers and reducing social divisions by making them more open and accessible (in Istanbul, as well as the other cities).

When you involve people across a range of social strata, from those socially disadvantaged to those in city government, it could be read as a political gesture. Have you encountered criticisms, in the press, in government or elsewhere, that the award is taking an explicitly political line in spotlighting and awarding projects that address the problem of democratic deficit?

The process of urban change is a political act, and our position at the Urban Age is not neutral. There is a shared agenda, which has evolved over the last 11 conferences, that promotes the notion of the compact, sustainable, democratic and healthy city. At times, this paradigm conflicts with the vested interests of some of the key actors involved in city dynamics, such as landowners, real estate developers or car manufacturers. Our objective is to be political with a small ‘p’, bringing an open debate to each city we visit, offering a ‘mirror’ for reflection rather than recommending solutions or policies. I think this is the role of engaged academia in the contemporary world.

A question related to the orientation of the award. Is it correct to say that the focus of the award is on projects that benefit low-income city residents that least benefit from urban planning or urban design? Slum dwellers, in other words. Or do you think the award manages to represent a broader social stratum of interests?

The orientation reflects the particular demographic and socio-economic standing of each city under consideration—and the major problems faced by the residents. In Mumbai, where 60% of the population live in slums, the core needs of the people differ greatly from those living in Istanbul. Paulistanos also have different problems to their Latin American brothers in Mexico City. Given the award to something as basic as a communal toilet in Mumbai encapsulates the very nature of the urban problem in that city. In Istanbul, the GDP per person is much higher and there aren’t really slums in the Indian sense, and we awarded a community music project located in one of the city’s most disadvantaged inner-city neighbourhoods. Here, the project was more about social engagement rather than survival. We do not exclude projects that might be of interest to different social groups, but we are unlikely to premiate [reward] an initiative that simply benefits the elites.

The first award was presented in 2007 in Mumbai, India. Has there been, or will there be a kind of long-term review of winning projects? For example, how is the Mumbai Waterfronts Development Centre doing, also the Cortiço Rua Solon doing?

As jury members, we have very light–touch connection with the projects after the prize has been awarded. The Alfed Herrhausen Society keeps in touch with the process is likely to be formalised now that the award has reached the mature age of five.

At the outset, the award was held in same city as conference. Why did you decide not to present one in Hong Kong, and opt for Cape Town?

In 2010 we held a conference in the affluent US city of Chicago, but gave the award in Mexico City the following year. Last year we held the conference in one of the richest cities in the world, Hong Kong, but decided to work in Cape Town. The reason for this is straightforward. The added value of this distinctive award is greater in cities which are at the lower end of the social and economic development trajectory. It is here that people and organisations get together to make up for what the state cannot give them and we know that $100,000 will make a significant difference. The fact that we had over 250 entries for the Cape Town Award suggests that we are touching a real need in the dynamics of this city.
“This award initiative explicitly seeks to recognise and validate organic initiatives from the grassroots, which is a vital complement to the efforts of the public sector to integrate the city and improve liveability in all areas, especially poor and working class areas.”

Edgar Pieterse, Cape Town Jury Chair
MUMBAI

2007

Population:
19.7 million (metro)

Country population:
1.2 billion

Urban population:
30% of total population (2010)

Rate of urbanization:
2.4% annual rate of change (2010–15 est.)

Year of award:
2007

Number of entries:
74

Winners:
Triratna Prerana Mandal, Mumbai Waterfronts Centre

Special mention:
Urban Design Research Institute

Photos

Institute

Urban Design Research

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Country population:
19.7 million (metro)

Situated on the western coast of India, in the Ulhas River estuary, Mumbai is India’s leading commercial and cultural centre. The city, which is home to the country’s film industry and stock exchange, pays almost 40% of the nation’s taxes. Chronic overcrowding and urban poverty is nonetheless a commonplace feature of everyday life in Mumbai. More than half of Mumbai’s population live in slum settlements occupying a mere 10% of the city’s land. The city’s largest slum, Dharavi, has population densities of 82,000 people per km2. Mumbai’s slums fall into two categories: authorised slums, which are served with basic infrastructure, and the far more numerous (65%) illegal settlements, which have no power or water and are subject to demolition. The inaugural Urban Age Award was presented to two transformative projects that demonstrated how Mumbai citizens had improved the lives of local residents and the quality of their urban environment through innovative partnerships.

Triratna Prerana Mandal (TPM)

Founded in 1985 by a group of young men who met at a cricket club in Mumbai’s Santa Cruz neighbourhood, this non-profit community-based organisation oversees a broad range of activities with partners in local government. It was singled out for an innovative slum sanitation programme, which increased the availability of public toilets for Mumbai residents. A partnership with the World Bank-funded Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai, which constructed the new toilets, TPM used these toilets as key nodal points to create dynamic spaces offering computer classes, English-language tuition, child-care services and women’s self-help and skills groups. TPM is also active in solid waste management and administers a programme that teaches residents waste collection, classification and composting skills.

Mumbai Waterfronts Centre (MWC)

Historically, Mumbai’s 34km-long western waterfront was ravaged by indiscriminate waste disposal and unplanned development. Frustrated by the state of the city’s waterfront, a group of local Bandra residents joined forces to improve and reclaim a 7km stretch of shoreline, including the Bandra Carter Road promenade, Bandra Bandstand promenade, Bandra Land’s End and Juhu Beach. The project created an open public space that is accessible to all sections of Mumbai’s crowded population. Significantly, the restoration project, which is maintained by residents, helped spur a larger citywide initiative on the western waterfront. MWC has been involved in a similar project at the Dadar-Prabhadevi beach area, a 4km-long public area that includes two municipal gardens.

Bandra Carter Road promenade, Bandra Bandstand promenade, Bandra Land’s End and Juhu Beach. The project created an open public space that is accessible to all sections of Mumbai’s crowded population. Significantly, the restoration project, which is maintained by residents, helped spur a larger citywide initiative on the western waterfront. MWC has been involved in a similar project at the Dadar-Prabhadevi beach area, a 4km-long public area that includes two municipal gardens.

Urban Design Research Institute (UDRI)

Established as a trust to enrich public understanding of Mumbai’s historic Fort district, UDRI’s work has led to increased awareness about the city’s history and architectural heritage. Its lobbying resulted in the passing of a landmark urban heritage preservation law, and prompted the restoration of Elphinstone College, one of the oldest colleges of the University of Mumbai, which is housed in a Romanesque Transitional style building. UDRI has worked with neighbourhood associations and local government to secure the restoration and regeneration of the Fort district, a tangible symbol of India’s collective memory and heritage used by millions of commuters daily.

Jury:
Shabana Azmi
Actor and local activist; goodwill ambassador for United Nations Population Fund

Ricky Burdett, chair
Academic and researcher; professor of urban studies at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE); director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age programme

Rahul Mehrotra
Architect and academic; founder of Rahul Mehrotra Associates; professor of Urban Design and Planning and chair of the Department of Urban Planning and Design, Harvard University

Suketu Mehta
Journalist and author; associate professor in journalism at New York University

Enrique Norten
Architect and academic; founder of TEN Arquitectos & Miller; chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania

Anthony Williams
Businessman and city politician; former mayor of Washington, D.C. and CEO of Primum Public Reality Trust

Sources:
Allied Hertha Sponer Society; Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (ed.), Living in the Endless City (2011); ‘Mumbai’s Quest for ‘World City’ Status’, pamphlet issued by UN-Habitat, PK Das & Associates; The World Factbook.

Year of award:
2007

Number of entries:
74

Winners:
Triratna Prerana Mandal, Mumbai Waterfronts Centre

Special mention:
Urban Design Research Institute

Photos

Robert Weiland

UDRI

Triratna Prerana Mandal

Mumbai Waterfronts Centre

WINNER

SPECIAL MENTION
SÃO PAULO

2008

Population: 19.9-million (metro)
Country population: 203-million
Urban population: 87% of total population
Rate of urbanization: 1.1% annual rate of change
Year of award: 2008
Number of entries: 133
Winners: Do Cortiço da Rua Solón ao Edifício União

Special mention: Cooperativa Nova Esperança, BioUrban and Instituto ACAIA

Founded in 1554, São Paulo achieved city status in 1711. Booming exports and immigration in the late 1800s significantly increased its economic prosperity, indelibly changing its character. Described as the classic second city, São Paulo has managed to avoid the boom-and-bust cycle of similar non-capitals—Manchester, Chicago, Shanghai—and is currently Brazil’s preeminent economic powerhouse. São Paulo’s GDP is in excess of $10,000 per capita. The city’s pronounced wealth—it is home to 30,000 dollar-based millionaires—is matched by high levels of urban poverty, UN-Habitat categorising 30% of its citizens as ‘poor’. While living conditions in São Paulo are not comparable to those of slums of Nairobi or Mumbai, it is estimated that more than four-million citizens live in slum dwellings, on the streets or in un-regularised, sub-standard housing units existed in urban São Paulo. Built in the 1970s, 934 Rua Solón is a partially completed concrete-frame multi-storey structure close to São Paulo’s central district. Squatter families occupied it in the 1980s and relied on a precarious system of electrical and water supply. Working with a variety of partners, São Paulo’s Faculty of Architecture initiated a project to ‘de-densify’ the building. Over 30 of the 73 families squeezed into the building were re-housed. The site was cleaned, new kitchens and bathrooms were fitted, a collective power grid installed, and the extensor of the building improved. The project was awarded because of the way it established a method for interaction between the social and the physical, between the built and the lived, right in the heart of the city next to jobs, schools and social amenities.

WINNER

Do Cortiço da Rua Solón ao Edifício União

Abandoned buildings are common in many Brazilian cities. In 2007, 619,915 vacant but habitable housing units existed in urban São Paulo. Built in the 1970s, 934 Rua Solón is a partially completed concrete-frame multi-storey structure close to São Paulo’s central district. Squatter families occupied it in the 1980s and relied on a precarious system of electrical and water supply. Working with a variety of partners, São Paulo’s Faculty of Architecture initiated a project to ‘de-densify’ the building. Over 30 of the 73 families squeezed into the building were re-housed. The site was cleaned, new kitchens and bathrooms were fitted, a collective power grid installed, and the extensor of the building improved. The project was awarded because of the way it established a method for interaction between the social and the physical, between the built and the lived, right in the heart of the city next to jobs, schools and social amenities.

SPECIAL MENTION

Cooperativa Nova Esperança

It is not uncommon for residents of poorly serviced favelas to throw their waste into ditches and streams that flow into the city’s main river, Rio Tietê. This recycling initiative aimed to reduce the volume of waste deposited in streams and on public roads, while also generating income for its waste collector participants. A collector-run initiative, the project was piloted by the Company for Housing and Urban Development of the State of São Paulo and developed under the Integrated Programme of Urbanization of the Pantanal Slum.

SPECIAL MENTION

BioUrban

Pioneered by the young sociology student Jeff Anderson in the Mauro favela, a crumbling inner city area in São Paulo, this project helped implement a series of aesthetic measures that have transformed the spatial quality of the neighbourhood within a short period of time. They include the cleaning up of small spaces and areas in front of people’s homes, creating flowerbeds in place of concrete kerbs, using colour and recycled materials to humanise the facades of buildings and exposed infrastructures, creating public artworks and the staging of collective activities such as painting sessions. All materials used in the project come from waste and garbage found in the neighbourhood.

SPECIAL MENTION

Instituto ACAIA

Established in 1998, this project began with the establishment of a spacious arts and crafts workshop with extensive training facilities open to deprived children from the surrounding favelas. The success of the initiative prompted ACAIA to expand their activities into the favelas themselves. Working closely with residents’ associations, which they helped form, ACAIA in 2006 initiated strategic development plans and made spatial improvements in Vila Leopoldina, a slum settlement next to the city’s wholesale food market that houses 960 families. In addition to the construction of a new sewage system and paved streets, the initiative created a new public space with play equipment and ‘art-cafés’ that is used extensively by local children.

Jury:
Tata Amaral Film director, writer, producer and actor
Ricky Burdett, chair
Academic and researcher; professor of urban studies at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE); director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age programme
Lisette Lagnado Art critic, curator and historian; professor at Faculdade Santa Marcelina, São Paulo, chief curator of the 27th São Paulo Biennial, 2006
Fernando de Mello Franco Architect and academic, founder MMBB architects, professor in architecture at Universidade de São Judas Tadeu, São Paulo
Enrique Norten Architect and academic, founder of TEN Arquitectos & Miller; chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania
Raf Souza Vieira de Oliveira Footballer and social activist, founder and director of the Foundation Gol de Letra, a UNESCO-wide scale model for supporting at-risk children
Anthony Williams Businessman and city politician, former mayor of Washington DC and CEO of Primum Public Reality Trust

Turkey’s leading city, Istanbul has been described as the “hip city on the Horn” and “one of the coolest cities in the world”. It has also one of 23 global cities expected to reach 10-million-plus inhabitants by 2015. “The city hasn’t grown—it has exploded, overrun by a surge of poor immigrants from Anatolia in eastern Turkey and the Black Sea region,” reported Spiegel in 2007. Migrant workers often resort to living in makeshift houses known as gecekondu, many on Istanbul’s fringes. Although illegal they are tolerated by a city government struggling to engage the city’s mounting exclusionary dynamics. “Insufficient welfare state structures alongside the collapse of informal and identity-based incorporation mechanisms in the city have created exclusionary dynamics that operate on a much larger scale than ever before,” writes Assa Akosy in Living in the Endless City (2011), an Urban Age publication. Many of the projects addressed some of the critical problems faced by Istanbul’s most fragile communities—new immigrants, isolated women, disadvantaged children, and disabled and homeless young men—while others focused on the spatial inadequacies of this rapidly growing city: traffic congestion, lack of open space and restoration of the city’s heritage. Innovative partnerships, performing and learning composition, repairing school hours playing accordions, a high proportion of deprived immigrant families, the Women and Children Centre provides child-care and education facilities designed to empower local women. Run on a volunteer basis by the First Step Women’s Environment, Culture and Enterprise Co-operative, the centre offers classes on leadership, entrepreneurship and domestic violence, as well as networking opportunities for women from all backgrounds to help them overcome marginalisation and social exclusion.

WINNER

Barış İçin Müzik
(Music for Peace)

This project in Etişnekapi, one of Istanbul’s most disadvantaged inner-city neighbourhoods, offers free musical education to local school children between the ages of 7 and 14. The project allows young boys and girls to spend time with dedicated volunteer musicians. By creatively adapting the unused basement of the local state school into a bright and airy space where children spend after-school hours playing accordions, learning composition, repairing instruments, performing and eating together, the initiative performs an important social. Apart from its obvious social impact on the children and their families, many of them recent immigrants from poorer regions in Turkey, the project represents a commitment to an inner-city area suffering from disinvestment and increasing deprivation. The project is an innovative investment in human and social capital, which uses arts and culture in a highly pragmatic and unsentimental way to promote urban regeneration.

Jury:

Beliç, Ak
Cartoonist, author, playwright and documentary film director.

Ricky Burdett, chair
Academic and researcher; professor of urban studies at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age program.

Çağlar Kayder
Writer and academic; professor of sociology at Bogazici University, Istanbul and SUNY-Binghamton, New York.

Enrique Norten
Architect and academic; founder of TEN Architects & Miller; chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania.

Han Tümertekin
Architect and academic, principal at Minarlar Tasarım Danismanlik, visiting professor at Graduate School of Design, Harvard University.

Anthony Williams
Businessman and city politician; former mayor of Washington DC and CEO of Primum Public Equity Trust.

Arzuhan Doğan Yalçındağ
Businesswoman; chairperson of Doğan TV Holding, Istanbul.

Sources:
WINNER

Asamblea Comunitaria de Miravalle (Miravalle Community Council)

Founded in the borough of Iztapalapa—a historically poor neighbourhood in the east of the city—by indigenous people from different ethnic backgrounds who recently migrated into the city, Miravalle is a community-based project that facilitates partnerships between local and metropolitan organisations and local individuals. It supervises a solid waste management project involving the collection and recycling of two-tonnes of PET plastic per week, which generates employment for 30 young people. It also oversees a cultivation project that provides fresh produce, in particular vegetables, for a low-budget lunchroom, ensuring healthy nutrition. A comprehensive project, Miravalle also offers a wide variety of sport and cultural services—art workshops, dance classes, a skateboarding park—as well as an education programme aimed at helping residents overcome the technological gap. They have also turned a former garbage dump into a public space for social interaction. Their work in Iztapalapa has contributed to changing perceptions of the borough, once deemed a ‘no-go zone’.

SPECIAL MENTION

Recuperando Espacios para la Vida (Recovering Spaces for Life)

Located in Santa Fe, an area of marked socioeconomic disparity in the west of the city, this project focuses on the recovery of public spaces through a variety of initiatives. A partnership between the Iberoamericana University and members of the local community, the project includes environmental education, technological literacy and skills training. The Iberoamericana University offers advice on implementing projects and also facilitates introductions that enable local community members to find jobs in Santa Fe, one of Mexico City’s major business districts. Additional projects include a workshop in psychosocial risk prevention, which is offered at various schools in the area.

Jury:
Vanessa Bausche
Actress and social activist.

Ricky Burdett
Academic and researcher, professor of urban studies at London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE), director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age programme.

Jose Castillo, chair
Architect and academic, co-founder of arquitectura 911sc; professor at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Mexico City.

Denise Dresser
Writer, political analyst and academic, and professor of political science at Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México, Mexico City.

Enrique Norten
Architect and academic, founder of TEN Arquitectos & Miller; chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania.

Beatrice Romero
Visual artist.

Anthony Williams
Businessman and city politician, former mayor of Washington DC and CEO of Premium Public Realty Trust.

Sources:

MEXICO CITY

2010

Population: 19.3-million
Country population: 115-million (July 2012 est.)
Urban population: 78% of total population (2010)
Rate of urbanization: 1.2% annual rate of change (2010–15 est.)

Year of award: 2010

Number of entries: 193

Winners:
Asamblea Comunitaria de Miravalle

Special mention:
Centro Cultural Consejo Agrarista (CODECO) and Recuperando Espacios para la Vida

In the 1970s, demographers predicted that Mexico City would reach 30-million inhabitants by the 2000, a prognosis that never transpired. ‘The city’s population has peaked at just under 20-million, this as migrants search for better opportunities in other cities such as Guadalajara and Monterrey, according to UN-HABITAT. Despite some congested historic areas in the city centre-experiencing residential decline, Mexico City faces a number of urban problems. Sprawl has highlighted the city’s growing infrastructural incapacity, while high crime has resulted in a widespread fear of insecurity. Environmental factors, such as earthquakes and air pollution—the latter exacerbated by the city’s high altitude and mountains—are also problems. Emanating from a range of social and geographical backgrounds, the 193 entries for the fourth cycle of the award suggested the existence of strong and diverse alliances aimed at improving the urban environment and quality of life. The support of universities, local authorities and government programmes, as well as the cooperation of different community organisations, has been an important factor in the success of these projects.

WINNER

Asamblea Comunitaria de Miravalle (Miravalle Community Council)

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Jury:
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Actress and social activist.

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Denise Dresser
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Enrique Norten
Architect and academic, founder of TEN Arquitectos & Miller; chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania.

Beatrice Romero
Visual artist.

Anthony Williams
Businessman and city politician, former mayor of Washington DC and CEO of Premium Public Realty Trust.

Sources:
CAPE TOWN

2012

Population: 3.5-million (metro)
Country population: 49-million
Urban population: 62% of total population (2010)
Rate of urbanization: 1.2% annual rate of change (2010–15 est.)

Year of award: 2012
Number of entries: 254
Winner: Mothers Unite
Shortlisted projects:
- Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN)
- Masiphumelele Community Library
- Regeneration of City and Soul

1. Bicycle Empowerment Network (BEN)
Cycling is a popular recreational sport in Cape Town, however, few citizens use bicycles to commute in the city. This urban mobility and job-creation project imports unwanted bicycles, which it distributes through a network of community-based bicycle empowerment centres (BEC’s) based in retrofitted shipping containers in low-income areas across the city. Offering workshop facilities and serving as sales nodes for utility bikes, the BEC’s create employment where there is little, address poverty through the provision of affordable mobility, and offer children access to a healthy recreational activity. Every BEC manager has an interest in cycling and receives training in financial and operational management, as well as bicycle mechanics. BEN works with schools, runs cycle clubs, and teaches safety and affordable repairs; it is also piloting a pedi-cab service.

2. Masiphumelele Community Library
Durable urban change is often about carefully targeted micro interventions that can change the energies and dynamics of a surrounding neighbourhood. Located amidst affluent peninsula communities, Masiphumelele is a densely populated slum settlement with only a very few basic services. This library and education resource centre serves a multitude of functions. In 2011 it loaned 12,500 adult and 28,000 children’s books. In addition to library services, it functions as a job centre, offers English-language instruction to children and adults, teaches computer literacy, and allows scholars access to a quiet study environment. It offers a total of 20 free education programmes. The project was initiated by the development agency Masicorp and gifted to the City of Cape Town, both parties share the running costs.

3. Regeneration of City and Soul
This work-in-progress undertaking addresses a widespread social problem: unemployment, often the spur for criminality and drug abuse. Situated in Retreat, a low-income community southeast of the city centre, the project involves transforming disused, publicly-owned buildings into safe, clean and productive spaces while reintegrating its participants back into their community. Former homeless people, drug addicts and gang members, all graduates of rehabilitation programmes run by Hands of Honour, undertake the construction work. Their first success story was transforming a derelict municipal building into a community school uniform factory surrounded by gardens. Their next goal is to convert a dilapidated local building into a multi-purpose centre to house a shoe factory, as well as skills-training workshops for established trades such as plumbing, welding, carpentry and landscaping.
**Rocklands Urban Abundance Centre**

Located on the grounds of Rocklands Primary School in Mitchell’s Plain, this educational permaculture garden oasis responds to the complex socio-economic challenges—jobs, food security, education, green issues—facing this peripheral community. Run by SEED, a small public benefits organisation, and staffed by seven full-time employees, the centre is a public benefits organisation, run by SEED, a small public benefits organisation, and staffed by seven full-time employees. The centre, which houses a genetic base of productive plants, supports home food gardens in the area through subsidised seedling and manure sales. It also offers ongoing training and support in cultivation and permaculture. Tree planting days aim to inculcate pride in this desolate neighbourhood.

**Social Justice Coalition**

Founded in 2008 and based in Khayelitsha, a far-flung semi-slum settlement, the SJ is one of the largest and most influential social movements in South Africa. It lobbies to bring together communities, government and civil society to discuss, plan and implement initiatives that will address key challenges facing residents of historically poor and underdeveloped communities, in particular access to basic services. This particular project emphasises informed advocacy and community awareness around sanitation-related issues. Relevant literature is widely distributed and includes a community newspaper (The Zikale Paper). The project has networked with 2,000 members and offers forums where residents can engage with issues related to basic services, learn about their rights, and how to contribute to improving their communities.

**Thrive Recycling**

Based at the Hout Bay Drop-off, a city waste facility on the border of Hout Bay village and Imizamo Yethu slum settlement, this waste-management project revolves around innovative residential recycling initiatives. Established in 2009, it enables participants to earn an income by becoming a part of the waste management cycle. Collected waste is delivered to a co-operative staffed by 11 members, who retrieve useable items, sort the balance and resell recyclables on for further handling. In parallel, ‘Thrive’ also runs a recycling scheme that rewards residents of Imizamo Yethu for bringing waste to the co-op by issuing them with vouchers redeemable at local informal shops and service-providers. Economic upliftment aside, the project has great environmental benefits by helping to reduce landfill waste and litter. The project’s holistic approach also sees them offering waste-management education programmes at schools.

**Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading**

Crime and unemployment are broadly linked. Endorsed by a wide range of funders, this Khayelitsha-based project aims to build safe and integrated communities by addressing issues of social, economic, cultural and institutional exclusion. The project focuses on reclaiming public space by transforming it into a freely accessible arena for recreation and community life. Using indicators, a particular neighbourhood is targeted for development. Participatory urban appraisals are held to develop a community action plan for new social and economic facilities, and safe, walkable paths between them, a process that generates high levels of ownership amongst residents. The project is revolutionary in that it proves, for the first time on a large scale, that inclusive, universal urban design principles, coupled with community consultation, have the power to reshape the most blighted landscapes.

**Mothers Unite**

This project in Lavender Hill, a low-income neighbourhood southeast of the city centre with high unemployment and gang activity, demonstrates the power of “urban acupuncture”. Founded in 2007 in a private home, it offers a refuge from social insecurity, gang culture and violence for children aged between three and 15. Now based in an infrastructure village made up of shipping containers in the grounds of a city multi-purpose hall, Mothers Unite caters to 120 children, offering meals three afternoons a week, as well as a variety of educational and creative activities in partnership with various developmental and educational institutions. These include computer literacy, food cultivation and first aid skills. The project infrastructure has grown to encompass a library, kitchen, food garden, yoga/training room, playground and administration office. An oasis in its surroundings, the project’s primary aim is to restore the sanctity of the family unit.

**Jury:**

Andrew Boraine  
City administrator and academic; chief executive of the Cape Town Partnership, adjunct professor at African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

Ricky Burdett  
Professor of urban studies at the London School of Economics and Political Science (LSE) and director of LSE Cities and the Urban Age programme

Malika Ndlovu  
Poet, playwright, performer and arts consultant

Enrique Norten  
Architect and academic; founder of TEN Arquitectos, chair of architecture at University of Pennsylvania

Edgar Pieterse, chair  
Academic and researcher; director of African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town

Nomfundo Walaza  
Civil rights campaigner and clinical psychologist; chief executive of Desmond Tutu Peace Centre

Anthony Williams  
Businessman and politician; director of Corporate Executive Board, Virginia; former mayor of Washington, DC

**Photos**

Gavin Withers Photography  
01, 03, 05, 07, 09, 10

Moeen Mitha Photography  
04, 08

Social Justice Coalition
“We seldom take the time to humble ourselves, to say, ‘I don’t understand’, and ask communities what they actually need. They know exactly what is needed, and as such they should be the ones in control. Solutions to problems germinate in the communities themselves rather than in boardrooms.”

Nomfundo Walaza, Cape Town Jury Member