

# **OSKAR VON MILLER FORUM**

Press Release

## **Living in the Endless City**

**A lecture by Ricky Burdett, London School of Economics on 22 January 2015 at 6:30 pm at the Oskar von Miller Forum**

The city of the future is facing major social challenges. Demographic change, the pluralization of cultures and lifestyles, and a growing social inequality manifested through spatial fragmentation are transforming urban society. This is of particular importance when one considers that half of the world's 7 billion people live in an urban environment. By 2050, when the world's population is predicted to peak at 9 billion, it's expected that 75 percent of all humans will live in cities. Already today, cities such as Lagos, Delhi and Dhaka are growing by over 300,000 people a year. In addition to having a profound impact on the planet's ecological balance, the form that this new wave of urban construction takes will shape the human conditions for billions of people growing up and growing old in cities.

Cities can both brutalize and humanize people and the environment. Which way they go depends on governance and leadership. City leaders have an opportunity to make a difference, building on the spatial and social DNA of their cities, rather than importing generic models that cater to the homogenizing forces of globalization. A well-run and designed city represents the nexus of good planning, architecture and local politics. It takes cooperation amongst these disciplines to make real and fairly rapid change. Change at the local level, if inspired and persistent, is as significant as good urban leadership and a strong metropolitan vision. The rediscovering of the fragile thread that links physical order to human behavior will be the main task of enlightened leadership in a world where, for better or worse, 75 percent of us will soon be living in urban environments.

## **About Ricky Burdett**

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).