

# cities@manchester prospectus

studying cities, changing the world



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## The Context in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century

By the middle of the twenty first century three in four of us will live in cities. We are living in the urban age, which is actually more than just about cities, but is about how a mode of organizing space and society is shaping the world in which almost all of us live. Those great cities of the twentieth century – Paris, London, New York and others – continue to grow in size, surely but slowly.

Yet, some of the most important changes are happening elsewhere in the world. Delhi, Karachi, Mumbai, Shanghai, São Paulo; these cities are where the action is, so to speak, where population growth rates are the highest, and where the issues of producing and managing ecological, economically, and socially sustainable cities are at the most pressing.

Think about the challenges cities face over energy usage, over housing their citizens, over infrastructural needs, over political participation, over addressing poverty and over abating violence. Of course, cities are not just problems that need solutions. Cities have always been sources of cultural creativity, conviviality, diversity, and transnational inter-connections. And so, in the twenty first century, they continue to be sources of inspiration as well as perspiration.

In this urban age traditional disciplines come up short. The challenges faced by cities, by their citizens, and by those who govern them demand new ways of thinking, that draw upon but that move beyond ways in which research has often been divided. *cities@manchester* is about working across disciplines, about working across the global north-global south divide, and about working across standard methodological boundaries.

For while cities face many challenges they are also centers of experimentation, innovation, and of learning. Cities are laboratories, including our own city of Manchester. The solutions to some of the most pressing issues facing the world are likely to be forged and trialed in cities. With *cities@manchester*'s extensive networks that stretch out beyond the academy into the work of policy making, reach out across continents, and transcend academic disciplines it is well positioned to make a difference to the 3.5 billion people who when they next wake up will call a city their home.

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