

## Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism and Civic Data Design Lab Debut *Atlas of Popular Transport* at 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Cambridge, MA – 8 May 2025 – The [Norman B. Leventhal Center for Advanced Urbanism](#) (LCAU) and the [Civic Data Design Lab](#) at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's (MIT) School of Architecture and Planning (SA+P) are proud to present the *Atlas of Popular Transport* at the 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, curated by Carlo Ratti and opening 10 May 2025.

In many cities in the Global South, residents rely on popular transport such as minibuses, tuk-tuks, shared vans, or repurposed school buses to move within their city. Yet in most of these places, no official data on these transportation modes exists – not even a map. The *Atlas of Popular Transport* shows what happens when this changes.

The immersive multimedia installation tells the story of sixteen cities across Africa, Asia, and Latin America where students, civic hackers, artists, union leaders, and riders used GPS and smartphones to map these widely used but poorly documented systems. The exhibition features their maps as well as audio-visual scenes that transport the audience from the streets of Manila with buzzing jeeps to the music-blasting matatus of Nairobi.

The installation also includes a printed Atlas with stories from the teams that led data collection and implementation efforts. These stories demonstrate how making systems visible, including on platforms like Google Maps, can inspire changes in urban planning, health policy, and mobility.

"The *Atlas of Popular Transport* is a manifesto for collective intelligence," says Sarah Williams, Faculty Director of the LCAU and the Civic Data Design Lab. "The knowledge needed to create data isn't behind closed doors or waiting to be generated by expensive equipment – it's in the streets, in our hands, and with the people who use these systems every day."

The Atlas highlights the growing movement to democratize data for empowerment and action. Many cities in the Atlas were inspired by the [Digital Matatus project](#) or the global network it helped catalyze. Today, platforms such as [Digital Transport for Africa](#), the DATUM project in Latin America, and the [Global Network for Popular Transportation](#) provide tools for making informal transport systems visible.

The 19th International Architecture Exhibition of La Biennale di Venezia, titled 'Intelligens. Natural. Artificial. Collective,' is curated by Carlo Ratti and open to the public from 10 May to 23 November 2025. It invites audiences to consider how different types of intelligence can work together to rethink the built environment.

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A press kit can be found at <https://atlasofpopulartransport.mit.edu/>.