



URBAN

A VISION MEETS REALITY IN ETHIOPIA

GENESIS



Doklab GmbH in coproduction with SRF Swiss Radio & Television, SRG SSR and ZDF/arte. Directed by DODO HUNZIKER. Written by DODO HUNZIKER & YARED ZELEKE. Production: CORINNA DÄSTNER, URS SCHNELL.
Director of Photography: FRANK SCHWAIGER, PIERRE REISCHER. Art Director: CAMILLA EFRÉM MEKONNEN. Editor: ANJA BOMBELLI, GISELA CASTRONARI-JÄNSCH.
Composer: IVO UBEZIO. Sound Design: PETER VON SIEBENTHAL. Post-Production: PIERRE REISCHER. Narrator: HELEN ZERAY.
With: TILAHUN AYELEW, FITALEW TILAHUN, AGEENO TILAHUN, HELEN ZERAY, FRANZ OSWALD, BENJAMIN STÄHLI, FASIL GIORDHIS, ZEGEYE CHEREMET.

DOKLAB SRF SRG SSR arte MEDIA 100.1

PRESSKIT

URBAN GENESIS

A film by DODO HUNZIKER



LOGLINE

Ethiopian farmers and a team of international architects join forces to tackle the problem of rural exodus. Can a visionary model town show the way out of the globally worsening migration crisis?

SYNOPSIS

URBAN GENESIS explores the example of the unique urban development project BuraNEST in Ethiopia to address one of the greatest global challenges of our time: the population explosion and largely uncontrolled urbanization in Africa. The feature documentary approaches this visionary project from several social perspectives:

FASIL GIORGHIS, Ethiopian star architect, and his colleague ZEGEYE CHERNET from the Addis Ababa University are engaged in intensive research on how to sustainably manage the rapid social transformation. Giorghis fears political destabilization, because more than 80% of Ethiopia's population still lives as subsistence farmers in the countryside. One of them is TILAHUN AYELEW, who is in his mid-forties. With archaic means, he and his family cultivate a very small area of arable land. Now he is betting on the model town "BuraNEST", which is being built in his area. To buy into the bottom-up approach, he is even willing to sell his working ox. Tilahun's 19-year-old son FITALEW throws all his father's warnings to the wind. He is drawn to the city, where he makes his own though experiences.

At the origin of the model town were the ideas of FRANZ OSWALD, an 80-year-old Swiss architect and urban planner. For years, Oswald passionately pursued the realization of his vision, which was modelled after medieval European networked rural towns. Now, as he attempts to hand over the project as planned to his Ethiopian architect colleagues, the authorities and, above all, to the village community, he encounters resistance. He struggles with bureaucratic hurdles, corruption and cultural differences.

HELEN, an architecture student from Addis Ababa follows the development of the project closely since her bachelor thesis. In her view it offers Ethiopia's young generation a future.

Titel	URBAN GENESIS
Genre	Documentary
Language	English, Amharic, German, Swiss German
Subtitles	English, French, German
Year of Production	2022
Length	96 Min
Shooting Format	2K, Flat, SMPTE
Format	DCP
Ratio	1:1,78
Audio	5.1 Surround
Director	Dodo Hunziker
Writers	Dodo Hunziker Yared Zeleke
Producers	DokLab GMBH Corinna Dästner Urs Schnell
Contact DokLab GmbH, Corinna Dästner	mail@doklab.com www.doklab.com

GENERAL INFORMATION

CREW

Directed by **Dodo Hunziker**

Written by **Dodo Hunziker & Yared Zeleke**

Producers

Corinna Dästner, Urs Schnell

Commissioning Editor SRF

Urs Augstburger

Editors

Anja Bombelli, Gisela Castronari-Jaensch

Director of Photography

Frank Schwaiger (BVK), Pierre Reischer

Additional Cinematography

Efrem Mekonnen

Composer

Ivo Ubezio

■ **Berner
Filmförderung**

■ **Pro cinéma
Berne**



Schweizerische Eidgenossenschaft
Confédération suisse
Confederazione Svizzera
Confederaziun svizra

Eidgenössisches Departement des Innern EDI
Bundesamt für Kultur BAK

**Kanton St.Gallen
Kulturförderung**



suisseimage

MEDIADESK
SUISSE

ERNST GÖHNER STIFTUNG



Burggemeinde
Bern



Schweizer Radio
und Fernsehen

SRG SSR

Sound Design, Sound Editing & Mix

Peter von Siebenthal

Color Grading
Pierre Reischer

WITH

Tilahun Ayelew

Fitalew Tilahun

Agegno Tilahun

Tigabnesh Bayley

Helen Zeray

Franz Oswald

Benjamin Stähli

Temesgen Atnafu

Bizuayehu Jembere

Fasil Giorghis

Zegeye Cherenet

Kafyalew „Kafe“ Hailu

Mastewal Chanie

Tega Berhie

Shetahun Yirsaw

Dominik Langenbacher

Monika Oswald





DIRECTORS' STATEMENTS

DODO HUNZIKER

«The 21st century is going to be remembered for the great, and final, shift of human populations out of rural, agricultural life into cities. The movement engages an unprecedented number of people, and will affect almost everyone in tangible ways...»

Doug Saunders, Canadian Author and Reporter

The urgent necessity to search for solutions of how to deal with the greatest mass migration in the history of mankind, has grown enormously in recent years. This problem is a permanent political issue. It influences not only our daily public discourse, but also my own thinking and my work as an author and director. During the pre-production of the film in 2017, Chancellor of Germany Angela Merkel declared at the G20 summit in Hamburg that improving the living conditions in Africa is considered a top priority. Without immediate action, she stated, there will be «naturally young people who say that we must seek a life elsewhere in the world». Germany is focusing on Africa's development with several hundred million Euros in mind. There is a lot of talk about a so-called "Marshall Plan with Africa".

While in this context terms such as "job market oriented education", "sustainable agriculture", "agricultural economy and food securing" or "biodiversity" are buzzing around in the air, I stand on a poor piece of land in the village of Bura and watch how urban planners from Addis Ababa and a Swiss architect together with farmers turn the "Marshall Plan" upside down. So far, the experts in the field of major migration streams have focused primarily on the so-called "anchor cities", the metropolises that migrants have in mind as land of promises. The Canadian author Doug Saunders, whom I quoted above, has impressively shown this through the example of Chinese and South American cities. At first, the urban planners in Ethiopia took the same path. Their idea was to adapt the totally overpopulated Addis Ababa to the capacity of hundreds of thousands of newcomers every year.

But then Franz Oswald, a professor emeritus at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology (ETH), joined in and proposed a different direction. The local urban planners and politicians took on the challenge. I have never encountered another project that aims at realizing a sustainable small-scale urbanization in the immediate living environment of the farmers. The approach is radical.

«Instead of the farmers going one by one to the city, the city is coming to the countryside.»

Fasil Giorghis

As a European author, I am closer to Franz Oswald's perspective in my interpretation of reality. However, I regard the Ethiopian perspective as most important for this motion picture. We are therefore involved crew and cast of both continents. In the development of the script the collaboration with the Ethiopian co-author, Yared Zeleke played an important role. In Yared I had a creative partner at my side who understands the complex cultural codes of his country. During the shooting on site, we worked entirely with an Ethiopian production crew. The simultaneous, literal and cultural translation of the Interpreter Hannah Getachew, allowed me to react instantly to the unfolding events. In the editing suite, we are having support from editor Efrem Mekonnen. And the architecture student Helen from Addis is not only protagonist, but also narrates the film and thus adds her own interpretation.

In our film, I want to bring to life the challenges faced by those involved in realizing this project – a farmer's family, the planners from Addis and Switzerland, the politicians in from the region and the capital. With my crew, I immerse myself into the microcosm of the village of Bura, and I follow a family of farmers, urban planners from Addis Ababa and politicians in the region. I show their work, their passion and their conflicts. They are all working towards the realization of the New Ethiopian Sustainable Town (NESTown). In «Urban Genesis» I am putting the development of this village in a context of rapid political developments in Ethiopia and the global challenges of migration. And while at the end of the film the situation of the farmer Tilahun has improved, the political situation in the country is worsening and violent conflicts are escalating. All the more reason to enable the people at the grassroots level to develop a perspective for themselves.

To this day, world politics has hardly taken note of this kind of sustainable small-scale urbanization. Our film will contribute to the discussion of the results at the right time.

BIOGRAPHY & FILMOGRAPHY

DODO HUNZIKER – DIRECTOR, AUTHOR



Biography

Dodo Hunziker (born in 1973) is a filmmaker/producer based in Bern (CH), owner of the production company DokLab and directing and producing films for TV, cinema and the new medias since 2006. His first feature length documentary TIBETAN WARRIOR (2015) has screened in cinema and TV and has been translated by Netflix into eight languages. He also worked as a producer and creative director on the award winning film BOTTLED LIFE (2012). After studying graphic design he studied film in Prague, an advanced training 2016 at Winterclass Serial Writing von EPI/HFF in Berlin and 2017 with documentary campus masterclas and sources2 program.

Selected Filmography

- | | |
|--------------|---|
| in progress: | Garbage Ho! documentary CH, 60 Min., director, writer, camera, editing |
| 2015 | Tibetan Warrior cinema-documentary CH, 84 min., director |
| 2013 | The ultimate River-Ride TV-docu: SRF Summer-Challenge CH, 28 min., director, editor |
| 2013 | Ikarus at the Eiger TV-docu: SRF Summer-Challenge CH, 30 min., director, editor |

YARED ZELEKE – CO-AUTHOR



Biography

Born in Addis Ababa in 1978, Yared Zeleke has written, produced, edited and directed several short documentaries and feature films. In 2013, he obtained a Master of Fine Arts in Writing and Directing from New York University. His first feature film LAMB (Ephraim and the Lamb) was the first Ethiopian film to be officially selected at the 2015 Cannes Film Festival. In 2016, the film made the Oscar shortlist for Best Foreign Language Film. Prior to pursuing filmmaking, Yared obtained a bachelor's degree in international development with a focus on natural resource management for sub-Saharan Africa from Clark University in Massachusetts.

Selected Filmography

- 2015 LAMB (feature film) Ethiopian-French-German co-production with ZDF/ARTE and CNC. Sold in over 30 territories. Cinema distribution Switzerland: Trigon Film. World premiere: Cannes 2015: Un Certain Regard, followed by over 100 festivals. Awards: Milan IFF 2015: Best Feature Film, Arte Prize 2014, IFF Innsbruck: Best Fiction 2016, LA Pan African FF 2016: Best Debut, NY Rural Route: Best Narrative, Morocco Festival of African Cinema 2016: Grand Prix.
- 2013 LOTTERY BOY (short film)
- 2011 BUCK (short fiction film)
- 2010 ALLUJA (short documentary)
- 2009 HOUSEWARMING (short fiction film)
- 2009 FULL (short fiction film)
- 2007 TIGIST (MEANS PATIENCE) (short documentary)



DOKLAB GMBH

At DokLab we are passionate about producing documentary films that are focused on geopolitical, social or cultural topics. We aim to create films that stimulate thought and action, but which also stand the test of time. Meticulous story development and engaging analysis lie at the heart of everything we do. Our goal is to reach an international audience by tapping into universal values.

DokLab was founded in Bern, in 2006, as a limited liability company, by the two filmmakers Urs Schnell and Dodo Hunziker. In 2019 Corinna Dästner joined as producer.

Selected Filmography

- 2022 URBAN GENESIS by Dodo Hunziker, cinema documentary, 96'
- 2021 OSTROV - LOST ISLAND by Svetlana Rodina and Laurent Stoop, 92'
- 2019 BODY OF TRUTH by Evelyn Schels, cinema documentary, 96'
- 2018 TO THE END OF DREAMS by Wilfried Meichtry, documentary feature , 82'
- 2015 TIBETAN WARRIOR by Dodo Hunziker, cinema documentary, 84'
- 2012 BOTTLED LIFE by Urs Schnell, cinema documentary, 90'



FRANK SCHWAIGER (BVK) – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY

Frank Schwaiger worked as cameraman for more than 40 short and medium-length films and won several prizes. From 1996-2000 he studied visual communication at the Kunsthochschule Kassel and from 2000-2007 at the German Film and Television Academy Berlin. Since 2002 he has been working as a freelance cameraman for feature films, documentaries, commercials and music videos.

PIERRE REISCHER – DIRECTOR OF PHOTOGRAPHY (SSFV) & COLOR GRADING

Freelance cameraman in the film and television industry since 1996. Further training in film camera I & II, Film workshop Münster. Various productions for SF DRS and freelance film and video projects. Course leader film at MAZ Lucerne and for Canon Switzerland.

EFREM MEKONNEN – ADDITIONAL CINEMATOGRAPHY & AMHARIC DIALOGUE EDITING

Efrem Mekonnen studied Journalism and Communication at the AddisAbabaUniversity, School of Journalism and Communication. He is an editing and cinematography professional with over 10 years of practice in the field working for Music videos, Documentaries, Series movies, Talk shows, and Reality TV shows with various private companies, non-governmental organisations and governmental institutions.

ANJA BOMBELLI – EDITOR

Anja Bombelli was born in 1962 in Männedorf, Switzerland. She studied communication sciences at the University of Fribourg and Schwarzfilmtechnik Ostermundigen. 1993-2001 she was a guest lecturer for editing at the University of Applied Sciences Basel. In 2004 she worked as consultant editor for "Project 10", a doc film series by SABC South Africa (Berlinale 2004). Ever since 1986, she has worked as a freelance editor mainly for cinema documentaries.

GISELA CASTRONARI JAENSCH - EDITOR

After her studies in art history, Gisela Castonari Jaensch started to work as a Filmeditor in 1982. With the movies „Rohe Ostern“ and „Experimentum Mundi“ she won the German Camera Award for Editing. Since 2013 Castonari Jaensch is teaching at the film academy Baden-Württemberg as a senior lecturer.

IVO UBEZIO – COMPOSER

Before Ivo Ubezio, born in Bern in 1972, started his career as a musician and composer in 2006, he studied philosophy at the University of Bern. Over the years, Ubezio composed music for various films. He studied has a "Master of Arts in Music Pedagogy" and studied Autodidactic in the fields of composition, film music, sound design and music production.

PETER VON SIEBENTHAL – SOUND MIXING & SOUND DESIGN

Born in 1958. Works as a sound editor, composer, musician and producer since the mid-eighties. 1985 to 2009 he worked with Züri West at numerous concerts and recordings. Apart from his scores for film and theatre, von Siebenthal is responsible for the sound editing and design of numerous productions for advertising, television and film. 2014 he won Best Film Score at the Swiss Film Awards for his composition for „I'M THE KEEPER“

CONTACT

PRODUCER

DokLab GMBH
Gerberngasse 34a
3011 Bern
Switzerland

+41 31 508 05 58
mail@doklab.com

Contact:
Corinna Dästner
cd@doklab.com

DISTRIBUTOR SWITZERLAND

Royal Film Luftgässlein 4 4051 Basel
+41 61 560 60 11 verleih@royal-film.ch
Kontakt: Simone Seiterle, Philipp Fink

WORLD SALES

Rushlake Media GmbH
Breite Str. 48-50
50667 Cologne
Germany

+49 221 588 321-80
info@rushlake-media.com

Contact:
Lena Bacchet
lena@rushlake-media.com