

First Town Hall by Qatar Foundation's Doha Debates in Latin America Explores the Future of Urban Life

Qatar's Years of Culture Brings Argentina, Chile and Qatar Together in Dialogue

27 September 2025 – Doha, Qatar – More than 400 people filled the auditorium at Usina del Arte, one of Buenos Aires' most iconic cultural venues, for the first-ever town hall organised by Qatar Foundation's Doha Debates in Latin America. The event, titled *"How Should We Reinvent the City?"*, was held as part of the Qatar Argentina and Chile 2025 Year of Culture and brought together students from Argentina, Chile, and Qatar, alongside global experts, to explore the future of urban life.

The evening opened with remarks from His Excellency Mohammed Al Kuwari, Advisor on Latin America for the Years of Culture and Qatar's former Ambassador to Mexico, who said: "In Arab culture, dialogue has always been at the heart of community life, from the tradition of the majlis to the exchange of poetry and ideas. Debate is about listening, learning, and finding common ground more than simply winning or losing. That is the spirit we wanted to bring to this town hall and the mission Years of Culture shares with Doha Debates."

Moderated by journalist Malika Bilal, the programme sparked an energetic exchange between experts Guadalupe Granero Realini, urban economist and researcher at the CIPPEC think tank, Akel Ismail Kahera, Program Director and Professor of Islamic Architecture and Urbanism at Hamad Bin Khalifa University in Qatar, and Nicholas Boys Smith, founding director of Create Streets in the UK, and a diverse group of students representing cities from around the world. Together, they debated whether competition or caring would most powerfully shape the cities of tomorrow.

The discussion addressed some of the most pressing issues facing urban centres today, including densification, equity and inclusion, organic architecture, public-private partnerships, decentralisation, and the balance between rural and urban life. A recurring theme was the tension between the pursuit of global competitiveness and the need for human-centred design.

"The future of cities cannot be built in isolation — it demands truth-seeking dialogue that bridges cultures, generations, and disciplines," said Amjad Atallah, Managing Director of Doha Debates. "At Doha Debates, we believe solutions emerge when we engage across differences. In partnership with the Years of Culture initiative, we brought together students from Argentina, Chile, and Qatar to engage with global experts on how cities must evolve to meet the needs of our rapidly changing world."

For students, the town hall provided a unique opportunity to connect across cultures and perspectives. Voices from Qatar and the MENASA region joined those from Argentina and Chile to exchange ideas on how cities might adapt to the pressures of climate change, migration, inequality, and shifting demographics.

The venue itself underscored the event's theme: Usina del Arte, a repurposed power station was a powerful symbol of reinvention and renewal, the very spirit of the dialogue that unfolded within its walls.

The town hall will be released later this year on Doha Debates' and Al Jazeera Digital's platforms.

For updates, follow Years of Culture on social media or visit the website at yearsofculture.qa.



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About Years of Culture

The Years of Culture initiative, chaired by Her Excellency Sheikha Al Mayassa bint Hamad bin Khalifa Al Thani, spearheads long-lasting cultural partnerships between Qatar and other nations. It exists to promote respect and understanding among diverse cultures and serves as a catalyst for bringing people together, nurturing connections, encouraging dialogue, and deepening understanding. At its heart, Years of Culture celebrates the power of cultural exchange, which enriches Qatar's ties with partner countries beyond the dedicated year.

Each year is organised with support from Qatar and partner countries' cultural institutions, ministries, foundations, and private and public sector partners, with assistance from Embassies in Qatar and abroad. Programmes are tailored to explore the unique nature of each partner country with a focus on cultural heritage, creative industries, social and economic development, and innovation.

Previous Years of Culture have included: Qatar-Japan 2012, Qatar-UK 2013, Qatar-Brazil 2014, Qatar-Türkiye 2015, Qatar-China 2016, Qatar-Germany 2017, Qatar-Russia 2018, Qatar-India 2019, Qatar-France 2020, Qatar-USA 2021, Qatar-MENASA 2022, Qatar-Indonesia 2023, and Qatar-Morocco 2024.

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About Doha Debates

Doha Debates engages a vanguard of intellectually curious truth-seekers to constructively debate differences in order to build a better future. We emphasize unity over division, encouraging conversations that bring us together rather than drive us apart.

Learn more at DohaDebates.com

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