



The new urban world 2050: perspectives, prospects and problems*

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Abstract. World trends about the problems and prospects of cities are discussed in the context of the present time and up to the year 2050. In 2010, urbanization grew to encompass about 52 per cent of the world's population, and the United Nations projects the percentage of the population living in cities to increase to about 67 per cent by 2050. The distribution of cities within each nation is changing as are the spatial structures of population and employment locations within cities. Government organizational structures are also evolving in many areas of the world. As the likelihood of natural disasters increases over time and resource constraints become more binding, cities of the future will see themselves striving for a triumvirate of goals 'efficiency, sustainability and resiliency'.

JEL classification: R11, R14, H70, Q00, I31, J11

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1 Introduction

The benefits of cities accrue to consumers via employment, social interactions and variety in consumption and amenities, and to firms in terms of agglomeration economies. The costs of cities are well-known to include pollution, congestion and crime. Other costs may include concentrations of poverty with substandard housing, education and health outcomes. What follows is a closer look at some of these elements in the context of today's cities and then a short discussion about what we need to know in order to project the economics and quality-of-life in the world's cities in 2050.

My task as a participant in the WRSA session, 'The new urban world: A place for 4 all', organized by Peter Nijkamp, Karima Kourtit and Mark Partridge, was to synthesize the discussion from nine presenters in the first part of the session titled 'The WRSA symphony of urban voices'. The nine presenters were David A. Plane, Henk Folmer, Ryohei Nakamura, Jouke Van Dijk, Hiroyuki Shibusawa, Hans Westlund, Marlon Boarnet and Hans Lööf. In the session, we

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