



Adding mobility, broadband and the cloud to connectivity makes ideas affordable and accessible for anyone, anywhere, anytime.  
**The Networked Society will fuel a creative explosion,** and that explosion will start in the cities.

# Redefining urban life

ILLUSTRATIONS Alexander Jansson

Cities have become the engine for humanity and are, now more than ever, shaping our lives as human beings. **Cities will drive development in all industries,** and ICT will play a key role in the ability of cities to grow economically, socially and sustainably.

**T**HERE ARE NOW more people living in cities than in rural areas. A steady stream of people is moving from the countryside to the cities; globally, almost 50,000 people move from rural to urban areas every day. The urban population increases by more than 5 million people every month, equal to the size of the population of Miami. It is foreseen that 70 percent of the world's population will live in cities by the year

2050. Today, at least 20 of the world's cities are already classified as megacities, including Mexico City, Mumbai and Tokyo. By the next decade, at least eight more cities will become megacities, and in the future, half of the world's megacities will be located in developing countries.

So what impact does this migration have on society? On the positive side are an increasing number of technological innovations and ▶

## Theme in short

▶ Cities will have a significant impact on a growing share of the world's population. ▶ Examples of how ICT can promote a city's growth, from an economic, environmental and social perspective. ▶ Connectivity plays a central role in the new creativity.

**CONCLUSION** ▶ As the number of megacities rises, decision-makers must ensure that this urban growth is sustainable. ▶ People's concerns about their security and integrity, and their need for simplicity, need to be taken seriously. We can learn from the successes of top-performing cities. ▶ Network architecture will have to be reconsidered.

These trends all point toward *cities being the focal point for the future*, from which creativity, innovation and new ideas will emerge.

## Want to find out more?

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► various forms of creativity, women's empowerment, higher standards of living, enhanced democratic accountability and economic progress. It is clear that economic growth and urbanism are strongly linked even if one can debate whether it is urbanization that drives economic growth in cities or vice versa; people living in cities have a higher per-capita income than people living in rural areas. However, the urbanization explosion will also cause problems such as increased pollution and growing slum areas with high degrees of poverty.

But one can also argue as Peter Hall does in *The Age of the City*:

*"Ever since cities became large enough and complex enough to present problems of urban management, they also became urban laboratories, places that developed the solutions – technological, organizational, legal or social – to their own problems of growth."*

The bottom line is that our expanding new cities and their aging populations will present both tremendous challenges and tremendous opportunities for society.

Due to the ongoing urbanization trend, the power of the city is increasing. In the coming decade, cities – not nation states – will dominate the world. According to the McKinsey Global Institute, the world's 600 largest cities account for more than 50 percent of global GDP but only 22 percent of the global population.

However, it is the medium-sized cities, with populations ranging from 150,000 to 10 million, that are predicted to contribute the largest growth in terms of GDP until 2025. This highlights the fact that not only megacities but also larger cities that do not qualify as megacities will drive development and help to shape society.

Urbanization is not the only trend that is having an impact on cities. Growing and aging populations, globalization, the rise of Asia and global warming are also impacting the way societies evolve. More importantly, the past 25 years have ushered in a digital age with massive computing power, high-speed data access, mobile communication and, more recently, the cloud. A new generation of digital natives is emerging.

A digital native is a young person who was born during or after the general introduction of digital technology, and through interacting with digital technology from an early age has a greater

understanding of it. This generation will find it easier to adapt to and make use of the immense opportunities generated by ICT, especially in cities.

These trends all point toward cities being the focal point for the future, from which creativity, innovation and new ideas will emerge. Cities are increasingly taking the place of nation states in the sense that they, more than countries, are now shaping the future. When young people today are asked where they want to live in the future, they don't answer with a country – they answer with a city.

### CONNECTIVITY LEADS TO CREATIVITY

Humans are creative by nature. When we meet, interact and connect with each other, we share experiences, knowledge and influences. This is where creativity originates, leading to new ideas and new solutions.

What we are seeing in cities and society as a whole today is that a new kind of creativity is taking shape. There is a distinction between the traditional vision of creativity as the result of individual genius, and the modern vision of creativity as a social process.

This new creativity has its origins in the community, in which everyone takes part in the creative process. Together, a mosaic of small ideas will form something big. We have already seen examples of this trend, with Wikipedia perhaps being one of the more prominent. Wikipedia already comprises more than 18 million articles, and is continuously expanding as more people contribute to it. And, as we look to the future, we see the potential for a continuous torrent of ideas and creativity.

Cities have always been places where creativity has flourished, thanks to the many meetings that inevitably happen in dense urban areas. In the new era of the Networked Society, connectivity will enable creativity, innovation and, ultimately, socioeconomic development.

When we connect people together, creativity and innovation occur.

When we connect things, we build an infrastructure in which new ideas and innovation can develop.

Once we add mobility, broadband and the cloud, we achieve a creative explosion as it becomes affordable and accessible for anyone, any-

where, anytime to generate ideas. This is the Networked Society. And it will have its starting point in the cities.

*“Cities have long been the vehicles for mobilizing, concentrating, and channeling human creative energy. They turn that energy into technical and artistic innovations, new forms of commerce and new industries, and evolving paradigms of community and civilization.” (Richard Florida)*

#### INNOVATION SPURS GROWTH IN THE CITIES

It is a well-known fact that innovations contribute to economic growth. Creative and talented people are drawn to places that are inclusive and diverse. These places also offer high-quality experiences and the opportunity for creative people to confirm their identities.

It is the diverse social climate of the city that powers innovation and economic growth there. Great cities are places where people from any background are welcome to turn energy and ideas into innovations and wealth. Diversity is a key characteristic that fuels innovation. When people move into a city, they contribute new energy and innovative ideas. By continuously being renewed, cities will spur entrepreneurship and creativity.

The new urban trend is dependent on the increasing number of people moving into cities, but also the power of the city itself, its inhabitants, and the spreading of urban culture and the values it has created. In the 21st century, creativity is a strong source of value creation, according to several researchers, which explains the current focus on stimulating creative activities within cities.

#### NEW DEMANDS ON NETWORKS

Connected creativity will be fundamental to building the solutions of the 21st-century city. People are becoming increasingly mobile, and do not settle for hot-spot coverage. They want 24/7 access to the internet, wherever they are.

As a result, individuals, businesses and society as a whole will demand much more of networks in terms of capacity, performance and quality. If connectivity is a strategic urban asset, then a lack of well-built communication networks in cities becomes a barrier for growth. Therefore, understanding how creativity and collaboration work in a city leads to understanding how the urban

communication network needs to evolve. Which creative places need connectivity? How are people and businesses interacting, and what new demands are emerging?

In the Networked Society, the tools that stimulate networking and creativity among individuals will also drive changes. Every day, new products and services appear. Disruptive business models are becoming the norm, and to a great extent, ICT solutions are driving this development. Connectivity enables corporate creativity to flourish.

City governments increasingly turn to ICT to solve many of the challenges posed by their growing populations, and the creative solutions vary from smart grids to traffic management and e-health.

Because cities are driving the development of society, it is clear that connectivity is becoming a strategic urban asset that will ultimately redefine urban life. ●

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