



Thought Leader Summary

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Currently, around 50% of the world population live in cities and this number is expected to rise to 60% by 2030. This will multiply the challenges we are already facing in making cities retain their role as the main driver of economic growth while improving the quality of life of their citizens and reducing their environmental impact. Concrete responses should be already formulated now.

In 2010, Europe launched the Innovation Union Communication, a strategy to restore competitiveness and create jobs through an increased support to innovation, key to ensure a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The EU has also developed a shared European vision of sustainable urban and territorial development, which sees European cities as places of advanced social progress and environmental regeneration, as well as places of attraction and engines of economic growth based on a holistic integrated approach in which all aspects of sustainability are taken into account. In this context, the Commission has launched a number of initiatives to enhance European innovation capabilities:

The Smart Cities European Innovation Partnership launched in 2012, seeks to demonstrate and scale up at least 20 major innovative solutions that combine energy, transport and ICT technologies and enable pioneering cities to outperform EU 2020 targets for reducing carbon emissions, use of renewable energy sources, and for increasing energy efficiency.

A new award, the European Capital of Innovation—iCapital Award, was also launched on 3 September 2013, to recognise and scale up one innovative initiative addressing the city's innovation ecosystem with a view to encouraging and incentivising the role of the city as a place of systemic innovation. The city as a system links the citizens (People) with the built environment (Place) and public organizations and policy-makers (Public) through business (Private) - creating the interactive innovation ecosystem of the city.

Being a system means that the four Ps join together and changes in one part affect other parts too. The role of the cities in this is therefore multiple: they provide the support environment for firms, entrepreneurs and institutions within them to innovate; they help the flow of ideas, facilitate localised knowledge spill-overs and enable innovation; they foster the creation of knowledge.

The ultimate purpose of these and other such initiatives is to acknowledge the role of city as game-changer, able to respond to citizens' needs through a multifaceted approach, aiming at empowering, engaging, enhancing and enabling.

However, in the face of increased global competition, cities will need to re-invent and make themselves more attractive. Creating dedicated areas, designing new buildings, promoting and testing new urban solutions will no longer be a limited vision of some pioneer cities: it will be a key factor of an efficient economic development strategy.

Remaking Cities Congress

How can we for example leverage more open models of innovation and increasing access to the web, which will connect billions of new users by 2020, meaning an enormous worldwide community of do-it-yourself innovators with new relationships such as crowd-funding, to help develop cities as interconnected hubs of innovation?

For this, visionary leadership is crucial. Governments and administrators should be fully committed to set up their mission for the future now, based on shared values aiming at enabling, inspiring and nurturing innovation.

Do cities and city administrators have a sufficiently systemic perspective to drive innovation, and if not, what should be done to incentivise such system thinking that includes the citizen?

Being an attractive place implies in fact that ways to further involve citizens must be better explored. There is a growing demand of people to feel part of the game: they no longer care exclusively for “what I can get from my city”, but also “what I can do for my city”. No vision can leave this aspect aside: being an ‘effective’ city is not enough, if it is not ‘affective’ too.