

Cities: Statements

<http://www.economist.com/debate/days/view/641/print/all>

Closing statements



Defending the motion

Paul James 



PAUL JAMES

Director, Global Cities Institute, RMIT and Director, UN Global Compact, Cities Programme

Paul James is director of the Global Cities Institute at RMIT University and director of the UN Global Compact, Cities Programme. He has been invited to deliver addresses in over 20 countries and is author or editor of 24 books, including, most importantly, "Nation Formation" (1996) and "Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism" (2006). He has been an adviser to a number of agencies and governments including the National Economic Advisory Council of Malaysia, and the Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor. His work for Papua New Guinea's minister for community development became the basis for the country's Integrated Community Development Policy.

Director, Global Cities Institute, RMIT and Director, UN Global Compact, Cities Programme

Limiting the never-ending growth of cities—particularly mega cities—as I have made clear from the start, does not require restricting the intensification of urbanisation or limiting the percentage of those who live in urban settings.



Against the motion

Chetan Vaidya 



CHETAN VAIDYA

Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

Chetan Vaidya has been director of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in India since February 2008. He is an architect and urban planner with over 30 years' experience in urban planning, finance and management. He works closely with the Ministry of Urban Development and assists various city and state governments in implementing reforms. He co-ordinates a number of urban studies, including City Cluster Economic Development in the Delhi region, Sustainable City Form in India, Property Tax Reforms, City Sanitation Plan Preparation and State of Cities Report. He also serves on the editorial boards of *Environment and Urbanization Asia* and *Urban India*. From 1995 to 2008 he was deputy project leader of the Indo-USAID Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion Programme (FIRE), a major objective of which is to develop commercially viable urban infrastructure projects with a focus on the urban poor.

Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

The growth of cities could be planned with an appropriate mix of land use and density that is efficient, effective and equitable. Thus, I go back to my original premise that managing cities well is far more important than restricting their growth.



The moderator's closing remarks

Jan 19th 2011 | [Adam Roberts](#) 



ADAM ROBERTS

South Asia Bureau Chief, The Economist

Adam Roberts joined *The Economist* as an intern in the foreign department in June 1998. From December 1998 until May 2001 he worked as a writer on foreign affairs, based in London, with a particular focus on developing countries and transnational issues. From 2001 to 2005 he was the Southern Africa correspondent, based in Johannesburg. From 2006 to 2010 he was the news editor of *The Economist* online and a regular podcaster. Since 2010 he has been the South Asia correspondent, based in Delhi. He has written a book about a failed coup attempt in Equatorial Guinea, "The Wonga Coup", published in Britain, America and South Africa in 2006.

It is rare for these debates to be so evenly divided: the voting for most days, so far, shows a 50:50 split among those following and contributing to the discussion. Some see a polarised discussion, yet a great deal is agreed upon. Our pro-camp favours restrictions on city sizes, but then defines these in a relatively soft way (no barbed-wire fences to keep the rural types away, no authoritarian state to order urban folk out to the fields).

Our anti-camp makes a strong case for the benefits of urbanisation and cities, though concedes that big problems (huge numbers of people living in slums, miserably bad public transport and the like) may accompany fast-growing big ones. So the anti-camp proposes "careful management" of cities, meaning planned and organised centres that are designed for the well-being of those within them.

How, then, to make a rather fine distinction between soft restrictions on the size of cities favoured by one camp and the careful management of larger cities proposed by the other side? This is not an argument about urbanisation—despite technology, the growth of service economies and some limited flight from large cities in rich countries, people like to huddle together and create wealth near to each other.

According to the 2009 World Development Report, from the World Bank, on this subject (many thanks to one of its authors, who pointed me to it), half the world's production is crammed on to just 1.5% of its land. As long as being economically productive continues to matter, we are likely to keep squeezing closer and closer in urban areas, not spread ourselves apart. The question, then, is whether this means more mega cities, or lots more medium-sized ones.

Some would make the decision on environmental grounds. But it is not clear whether (in rich countries at least) those in the biggest cities, especially the ones who make use of public transport and live in smaller and newer houses, have a worse environmental impact than, for example, the residents of medium-sized towns who get around by car and live in larger houses.

Big public-transport schemes such as the metro in Delhi, where I now live, are expensive to build and are unlikely to be economically worthwhile unless there are huge populations to serve. Perhaps bigger cities, rather than medium-sized ones, have more options in developing the sort of systems that citizens like.

Some would argue that, in future, economic demands will change: Paul James, the proposer of the motion, suggests that the search for continued growth—economic, demographic—is not sustainable. Restrictions on cities, therefore, would come along with efforts to temper economic growth and limit the consumption of finite resources, and with a greater awareness of the costs (to the climate, to biodiversity and the like). This would help to discourage the sprawling and bloating of cities.

But such a case is easier to make when one already lives in a wealthy society and enjoys a long life expectancy. In the developing world where most rapid urbanisation will happen, and most mega cities will appear, the priorities for most people are to get some sort of lifestyle and standard of living that is typical in richer places. The creation of massive cities may be the most efficient way for Africans, Indians, Brazilians, Chinese and other people in emerging economies to get the sort benefits that most Europeans, Americans and Japanese—even those in small towns—take for granted.

This is reflected in the view of Chetan Vaidya, the opponent of the motion, who makes a case that resonates particularly strongly in poorer countries, that bigger cities (if managed well) will bring people a higher quality of life.



The proposer's closing remarks
Jan 19th 2011 | [Paul James](#)



PAUL JAMES

Director, Global Cities Institute, RMIT and Director, UN Global Compact, Cities Programme

Paul James is director of the Global Cities Institute at RMIT University and director of the UN Global Compact, Cities Programme. He has been invited to deliver addresses in over 20 countries and is author or editor of 24 books, including, most importantly, "Nation Formation" (1996) and "Globalism, Nationalism, Tribalism" (2006). He has been an adviser to a number of agencies and governments including the National Economic Advisory Council of Malaysia, and the Commission on Reception, Truth and Reconciliation in East Timor. His work for Papua New Guinea's minister for community development became the basis for the country's Integrated Community Development Policy.

Cities have always responded to crises according to the dominant philosophies of their times—sometimes well, sometimes badly. The dominant paradigm today, admittedly one under duress, says "growth is good". This time, however, the stakes are higher. What is under threat is the very foundation that sustains our quality of life on this planet. We face unprecedented issues such as climate change, peak oil, intensifying destruction of habitat and a complex condition summarised as "alienation from nature"—all issues associated with unmitigated growth; all issues which suggest that we should choose to limit ourselves.

Limits to growth! *Quelle horreur*. One guest commentator, Gyan Prakash, enters the debate by saying that the essence of cities is growth itself. To limit growth is to "kill" cities. It is an extraordinary claim, but one consistent with the dominant conception of supply-side economics. As a crusading historian, Mr Prakash looks backwards to find painful but heroic growth stories. As a gentle planner, Chetan Vaidya focuses on the present and says that we need good planning in every respect, except for one: limiting growth. In this one area, he says, we must passively accept the hand that we are dealt. We have no choice: "urbanisation is inevitable".

I am suggesting, rather, that we can make positive social choices grounded in open democratic decision-making processes. As local, metropolitan, national and global communities we can come together to decide and act upon our futures. Limiting the never-ending growth of cities—particularly mega cities—as I have made clear from the start, does not require restricting the intensification of urbanisation or limiting the percentage of those who live in urban settings. Urbanisation and cities are not the same thing. Urbanisation is the process whereby people increasingly choose to live in urban settings. Whereas cities are particular places of concentrated habitation, some of which are more sustainable and more conducive to enhancing quality of life than others.

Another commentator, Richard Dobbs, comes into the debate to suggest that "urbanisation is an inexorable global force". And indeed, given where we currently stand in history, it seems to be thus. However, for me this does not address the main issue. I am simply arguing for limiting the growth of cities which are consuming beyond their means. Moreover, by concentrating on two dimensions of the unlimited growth of some cities—sprawl, defined as the never-ending consumption of the landscape; and bloat, defined as the ever-increasing consumption of energy, water and other resources—I have been very specific about what needs to be limited.

The "growth is good" proponents present different versions—hard and soft—of what might be called supply-side urbanism. That is, they advocate, or accept, the necessity of giving consumers as much space and resources as they want by taking away all restrictions on supply. One exquisite and qualifying sentence stands out in Mr Dobbs's contribution. He says that "governments should shape urbanisation". That is exactly what I am arguing for.

To argue against the unrestricted sprawling and bloating of cities is not to suggest that a barbed-wire fence be set around a city with perimeter guards to stop the movement of people into that city. That would be both revolting and absurd. Rather, limiting the growth of a city ideally begins with public debate about the means and processes of that delimiting. It then requires the institution of protocols, guidelines and—yes—legislation. People, of course, will continue to be free to move into cities, but that does not mean that they should be allowed by right to build their houses in green zones, in areas that have been set aside for common use, or on areas prone to dangerous flood or mud-slide risks (over 600 people have just died in Brazil).

Let us look at the issue of sprawl. Smart cities tend to use all the processes of good governance available to them. Urban zoning, for example, is a form of growth limitation used more or less successfully around the world, including in the global south. The setting of urban growth boundaries, or green belts, is just one form of such zoning, and it should be considered in the mix of many other possibilities. It has been differentially used in cities as diverse as Portland, Toronto, Oslo, London and Curitiba. Even the great sprawling megalopolis of Cairo is developing a green belt. And as Mr Vaidya has not told us, his own city of Delhi has its Master Plan 2021, which designates areas such as stretches of land along the Yamuna river not to be used for open development, as well as a green belt on the Delhi-Haryana border.

If we turn to the issue of bloat, again cities have choices. Instead of cities being extraction entities based on an ever-increasing growth in the import of consumption goods from elsewhere, citizens can choose to make their cities denser production entities, for example by "mining" and reusing their own waste, or by growing proportions of their own food. Cities can choose to limit car use by the nature of the road and mass transit systems that they build. Cities can legislate to limit the ways in which fresh water is wasted. Cities can choose to be different.

Our contemporary planet, beset by climate change, resource depletion and self-destructive growth, is a different place than it was when a world-without-limits seemed to have common-sense veracity. Rather than going back to supply-side stories from the heroic past, we need to look forward to the future. The question becomes: "How can cities shape their urbanisation and limit their future growth in positive ways?" In this process, cities will change from being part of the problem to being part of the solution.



The opposition's closing remarks

Jan 19th 2011 | [Chetan Vaidya](#)



CHETAN VAIDYA

Director, National Institute of Urban Affairs, India

Chetan Vaidya has been director of the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) in India since February 2008. He is an architect and urban planner with over 30 years' experience in urban planning, finance and management. He works closely with the Ministry of Urban Development and assists various city and state governments in implementing reforms. He co-ordinates a number of urban studies, including City Cluster Economic Development in the Delhi region, Sustainable City Form in India, Property Tax Reforms, City Sanitation Plan Preparation and State of Cities Report. He also serves on the editorial boards of *Environment and Urbanization Asia* and *Urban India*. From 1995 to 2008 he was deputy project leader of the Indo-USAID Financial Institutions Reform and Expansion Programme (FIRE), a major objective of which is to develop commercially viable urban infrastructure projects with a focus on the urban poor.

Our debate is at a turning point with the ideas from our contributors and from those who have posted comments.

Adam Roberts, our moderator, mentioned a commenter who says that Tokyo is a mega city but is safe, well-run and has good public transport, which makes it possible to function happily. So size alone is not responsible for all the problems of our sprawling and bloating cities. And Mr Roberts says that although the green belt around London has provided cleaner air and a place for recreation, it has also helped to push up house prices inside the city.

Gyan Prakash, one guest commentator, says that improving the quality of life in cities is a laudable aim, but to accomplish it by restricting growth goes against what they represent. Richard Dobbs, another guest commentator, has rightly identified four principles of effective city management: sufficient funding; accountable governance; proper planning; and the shape of urbanisation. He further adds that enormous benefits of urbanisation can be realised "if we learn to manage our rapidly growing cities effectively".

Paul James in his rebuttal says that we should get down to the core issue and work through how cities can best respond to the quality-of-life crises that we face in the world today and into the foreseeable future.

At this stage it is important to define quality of life. It is a product of the interplay of social, health, economic and environment conditions. This concept is much more comprehensive than a standard of living index, which is a measure of the quantity and quality of services and goods available.

Anil Rai comments that there is a need to recognise that within the city environment, different social groups experience markedly distinctive environmental and social conditions of life. We are focusing on quality of life in the city as a whole.

It is pertinent to list what both Paul and I more or less agree on: urban agglomeration provides opportunities for innovation and reducing cost; well-planned dense cities are economically dynamic; provision of urban services is not a function of city size; clustering of economic activities stimulates economic development; linking land-use with public transport is effective for sustainable development; and many countries have tried to control city growth without success.

Given the definition of quality of life and points on which we agree, I now focus on issues on which we do not agree.

First, "restricting urban growth of a sprawling and bloating city by democratic processes would be a possible tool for a better life for its citizens". My view is, and this true to most sprawling cities in developing countries, that this is not feasible. The decadal growth of India's urban population was 31% in 1991-2001. At the country level, natural increase has been the principal source of urban population growth, with rural-urban migration contributing around 20% of the net increase in the population. To create spatial growth and restrictions in large cities just would not work in this scenario and would lead to further informal settlement creation.

Second, "in a sprawling city, rolling out basic infrastructure costs significantly more and tends to work less efficiently than in a well-planned city with appropriate mixes of social density". Here we are assuming that unrestricted urban growth leads to sprawling cities. It is not so. The growth of cities could be planned with an appropriate mix of land use and density that is efficient, effective and equitable. Thus, I go back to my original premise that managing cities well is far more important than restricting their growth.

Third, "Is it always the case that 'doubling a city's size will hugely increase productivity' and does it not depend on a range of factors including the time frame in which the doubling occurs?" City growth is a dynamic process. Many social, economic and environmental factors work together, and the issue of time frame remains important. So, I believe that increasing city size with appropriate measures will increase productivity and quality of life.

As well as good management, sustainable urban planning and monitoring its implementation is crucial for successful cities. However, in many developing countries such as India urban planning is based on ad hoc decisions that exist only on paper and have little or no impact. Exemptions to the land use and planning regulations are made either legally or illegally and compliance remains an issue. In light of this (weak urban planning systems and lack of strong urban management), one does not jump to an impractical conclusion and charge ahead with the utopian task of restricting urban growth to achieve improved quality of life. Rather, the focus should be on creating better urban planning and management systems to tackle the challenges in a more sustainable way, especially in the small and medium-sized towns/cities that are fast becoming the growth magnets in most countries.

So, in conclusion, my position is that the challenges of urban growth call for stronger urban planning and compliance, shifting towards a sustainable urban form and ensuring good governance and management in order to improve the quality of life of all citizens, rather than distribution of urban growth.

Mr James indicated that he would elaborate in this closing round of our exchange on his comment: "Limits to growth can be handled with care and deliberative democracy." I look forward to seeing what more he has to say on this.

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Comments from the floor

(1/35) [Damajah](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Allowing cities to grow at a controlled pace is a natural step in the evolution of human socialization. Urbanization allows for the consolidation of resources, transportation efficiency, water and air quality control, and shelter in case of man-made or natural emergencies. The sprawl created by "white-flight," also contributed to the expansion of government, rising taxes, and urban decay.

(2/35) [LHHS0422](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I agree with the motion and believe that the growth of cities should be restricted because the life on this planet depends on the environment of the Earth and the more this worlds cities expand, the more land we need which means the cutting of trees which supply oxygen (O2) to the Earth and its inhabitants as well as consume the carbon dioxide (CO2) in the air. The more carbon dioxide in the air due to too few trees the more the ozone layer is destroyed. The expansion of these cities will also need bulldozers, cranes, backhoes and other heavy machinery all needing large amounts of oil/gasoline which contributes to pollution and ozone depletion causing global warming which is melting the polar ice caps causing rise in sea level and extinction of species that live in the polar ice caps as well as forests. The pollution will not only affect the air but the water as well, fuel runoff will affect rivers and streams as well as its inhabitants and the consumers of the inhabitants making the food a danger to humans as well. The crops of nearby farmers can become damaged and unsafe to eat. Eventually this will lead to flooding, shortage of food, and shortage of natural resources all leading into the ultimate demise of the human race.

Lake Howell High School 9th grade

USA

(3/35) [Titian7](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

If I were king...

1. We need density. This does not mean unlimited density. We need to determine and encourage optimal density. Maybe a place like Santiago, Chile is a good model.
2. We don't need urban sprawl -- that is, we do not need not-so-dense semi-urban or suburban neighborhoods for people of wealth and means, who want to live in detached houses with private front and back yards and private parking, and be near their work.
3. We need to limit the size of the the geographical area that is a city -- that is an optimally dense city.
4. Everyone should walk to work. No commuting, period. Yes, this would create problems, but the problems it would create would be better problems than the problems we have now.
5. Go vertical. No more single-family detached homes. In fact, almost no buildings should be less than 10 stories high. Residential should be 100% multi-family, and should be btw 10-15 stories high. Steel pre-fab structural frames. Using such a framing system, buildings can be constructed faster and better than by using any other framing system -- and you get good density.
6. A lot of ground level (built) space should be for retail. This will encourage a pleasant street-scape, so people will enjoy walking to work.
7. Lots of public parks and gardens -- parks for contemplation and gardens for the growing of food. Almost everyone should be engaged in some aspect of farming (maybe just a couple of hours a week).

(4/35) [Richard D. Quodomine](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

The question is how we limit them: there's a combination of smart growth initiatives, re-use of land (brownfield) requirements and incentives that can be used. With a sprawling infrastructure that is neither economically or environmentally sustainable, we need to look at using core cities and re-developing them wisely. In effect, this would limit the growth of cities by forcing areas to rebuild more wisely what is there, rather than always expanding the city. Using urban assets more intensely, creating a more people-friendly, walkable urban environment is the key to a better city, and intrinsically, a limitation on growth by forcing the tax dollars used on infrastructure to improve what's already there, rather than building anew.

(5/35) [antonio.m.andre](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I believe that the 51/49 divide in this debate is due to the fact that most of us do not realise that our lifestyle could be totally different from the one we grew used to. Most of us never experienced anything different at all. The inhabitants of, say, environmentally depleted Island of Pascoa must have felt some 800 years ago that depletion was the god given "norm" and increasing social fractures a standard lifestyle. A similar phenomena is happening with ourselves regarding lifestyle and social disfigurement in larger cities - the timely debate of the Economist notwithstanding. Will it end up differently from the Island of Pascoa paradigm this time round? May be. To think otherwise would be self defeating, wouldn't it.

(6/35) [antonio.m.andre](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I totally support the motion. Development of cities since the 19th century has been driven directly and indirectly by the interest of financial sector growth hence the mortgage industry and increasingly, in the 20th century, by the interests of the automotive and oil industries as well. The result of this private induced approach to urban development is unsustainable and socially disrupting from several points of view. However, most victims of this unbalanced development - ie., most of us city dwellers - do not realise how disfigured our world became and how it could be different...again. In our age of easier and speedier communications both physical and electronic we have indeed the chance to redress some of the actual urban imbalances and reshape the way we live in communities. And ours becoming the age of energetic scarcity as it is we have not only the chance but indeed the need to address those imbalances for mega cities are energetically ruinous too.

(7/35) [sherman](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I grew up in inner-city Chicago, lived as a student and journalist for eight years in New York City, lived as a travel writer and business journalist in Hong Kong for over thirty years, and have reported on developments in many Asian cities. I now live in Philadelphia.

What I've found are two things: That cities form around opportunities, and that both politicians and urban planners mostly react to de facto instances of urbanisation more than they create or control them. Urban slums "happen" before anyone seeks to address their presence -- as has happened in every major Asian capital city.

Big cities are almost always ports and the biggest of them usually financial centers or national capitals. They were usually built upon the promise of opportunity for disaffected rural internal migrants or foreign immigrants with little or no other economic, educational or self-expressive opportunities in their places of birth.

Secondary cities are usually inland or otherwise less accessible satellites of the larger ones or fading urban flowers of bygone eras that have been bypassed by industrial or transportation developments. Their pay scales are lower but they are cheaper, much less crowded and offer far more living space for the dollar -- a thousand dollars a month in Hong Kong buys perhaps 350 square feet of apartment versus renting a house or apartment of 1200-1500 square feet for the same money in Philadelphia, for instance. If within the right transport corridors, they often offer the same or better quality of education and entertainments as do the large cities, but the latter less often and in smaller numbers of events on any given weekend.

Neither option is intrinsically better than the other, just different and appealing to people of different attitudes or means or stages of life.

There is no need to "limit" the size of cities, which is impossible in any case without the draconian tactics of a Stalinist state. But there is an urgent need to better manage the balance of resources available to residents in all cities and the effective impact of those cities on the sprawl of adjacent "burbs" and "exburbs" and the resources that they must draw from the surrounding countryside (e.g. water, energy).

"Growth" always trumps management because land speculation and oligarchic urban business practices drive the need to churn property values. This has been true in every city in which I've resided or on which I've reported over the years. The answer to this is not contained in arguments over relative size but in limits to unbridled growth, built upon speculative interests being allowed to occur without meaningful reference to quality of life considerations.

Transparency, consumer rights, democratic processes and quality-of-life issues should be at the center of any discussions of urban "growth" or shrinkage. Only rarely does this occur within city governance practices. Inflows of hot money and immediate short-term job creation in local construction and engineering industries are powerful arguments for more and higher skyscrapers. The impact of all those new people on their neighborhoods is seldom summarised until after the landscape is irrevocably changed and any perceived "damage" has been done.

Sherman

(8/35) [HWLanier](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Perhaps this has been covered in this extensive discussion (if so please disregard) but i'm surprised that Stewart Brands' [Ecopragmatist Manifesto](#) is not in your recommended reading literature on the topic.

In regard to Cities a glass is half-full perspective apropos.

(9/35) [chairman of the board](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I have lived in Mexico City, New York, Tokyo and London. I have also lived in Madrid, Washington DC and in Brussels. No doubt there are more comforts in big cities. Sometimes better prices as more competition usually works in favour of the consumer. However, for all its glitz and countless numbers of restaurants and entertaining venues, I prefer to live in the second lot of cities I mentioned. It really depends on what stage of your life you're in and what kind of economic wealth you count with, but in general, for a middle income family smaller cities offer higher quality of life. The better the city the more people will want to join in the party or be part of the wealth it promises. So there has to be a limit on the size of the cities in order to preserve a certain quality of life. This can be in the form of taxes, lotteries, social criteria, etc. It's a difficult thing to come up with, but in the end there needs to be something that breaks the size of cities.

(10/35) [MhKCLL8pS4](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

In my view these large cities that never stop growing is a sign of failure of political and governmental institutions. On the other hand, governing a country is not an easy task. A raising population primarily has to be physically taken care of and the "easiest" way is to make use of what is already there and enlarge it. Psychologically, people seem to prefer the smaller cities or villages where they don't drown in the headless masses of people, where they are seen and known and where the speed of life usually is lower. In my view, galloping cities are a threat to mankind as such - it is like putting all the eggs in one basket. Urban vulnerability like raising crime, exposure to infections and contamination, exploitation of the environment hits all the eggs at the same time.

(11/35) [Yorkeyin Oz](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I have lived in or very near a city all my life. I am 65. I will always believe that the City is the heart of the country. It attracts a full range of people who bring a myriad of ideas. Some will go to University - maybe we should rename to Univercity - from which can be developed clusters of expertise. Yes, cities must be planned and that is Federal government's role. Large cities are able to use the power of the people to develop infrastructure and resources more efficiently than small cities and towns.

(12/35) [RrsVciD5La](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I believe a small self-sustaining city like the garden cities of UK in early 1900's is a better proposition than never ending cities which stretch across miles. Definitely the concept need to be reworked for today's and future requirements. Today's cities just seem to stretch on and on without any proper planning leading to speculative land prices even in the fringes which in turn leads to unplanned development there and the cycle goes on resulting in a never ending city. Well, the problem which exist in such a case is - time and money. You stay in a city, yet to travel from home to your work place you take a couple of hours. Imagine millions of people doing this everyday each driving his own car. Why does the US have such retail high fuel consumption? What happens in the National Capital Region of Delhi (NCR)? Ask these questions and then look at Pune with its satellite town and a CBD. All these towns are self-sustaining with office, commercial and residential. Such a model should be promoted. Development should be spread out. Living near the CBD no longer makes sense when people in cities have to allocate over 3-4hrs a day just for travel and burns gallons. The list could be longer.

(13/35) [Anjin-San](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

If we stop to think WHY people want to migrate to urban slums, we realize that the ultimate cause of urban slums is the collapse of the rural communities, either through catastrophes like natural disasters or wars, or through economic collapse of the market for their products.

Even the worst urban slums are comparatively better than collapsed rural communities, where the result of such collapse often results in starvation.

(14/35) [Mario P.](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

It is a

(15/35) [MIKE MCHENRY](#) wrote:

Dear Sir, Have you considered that cities may become irrelevant or obsolete? In developed countries there growth is very slow.

(16/35) [jackofalltrades](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Cities worldwide have encountered more problems when they reach a very large size. Frequently jobs are forced to the outer edges of the metropolitan area due to land cost. Since communications are easier and cheaper than ever before, there is no need to be located next to either you supplier or customers.

Face to face meeting are available on most computers now. Software will allow group meeting and even let all participants edit the same Word or Excel document.

Small or medium sized cities offer a better standard of live at lower cost than the bigger cities. Perhaps a cluster of medium cities would proved for better land use and shorter commute times, not to mention fuel cost and pollution.

(17/35) [Magne Salveson](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

In my opinion we will be better of concentrating the population instead of spreading. I think Eugene Tsui's Ultima Tower (a mile

high termite nest shaped tower with estimated population 1 million) is a good start - limits transportation and hence pollution.

Best regards

(18/35) [Luc Vitry](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I think the reason we are getting to a tie here is because there is less of a strong opposition between the two motions than one could think at first. Everyone recognizes what cities brought and will continue to bring to mankind, but most of us experienced some frustration living in cities which size is no longer human.

And this is where the concept of well managed cities comes in. But rather than just planning carefully the access to resources, I continue to insist on the fact that some kind of planned modular growth (which I also called "clustered" or "molecular") is the solution. In a way this is about restricting the size of cities and it is not. It is about restricting the size of an urban cluster (a module) before one hits a forest, fields, grassland etc. And give it another 15-20km before the next fast-train-connected urban cluster.

The best of both worlds, it seems to me!

(19/35) [JimfromOttawa](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

The motion is not wholly relevant. The world is moving to a fertility rate below the 2.1 replacement rate and this will in itself restrict the growth of cities. Where there are factors that cause some cities to grow, that growth should certainly be planned to the best advantage of those who live in them.

(20/35) [mountain centerist](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

For a long time it has become apparent that mega cities create greater problems of poverty.

First, every retirement recommendation I have ever seen lists the highest quality of life, lower taxes, and lower cost of living in mid to small cities--never has a NY, LA, or Chicago been recommended.

Second, anyone who lives outside of those large cities when going there for any reason gasps at the high prices.

Third, they are a magnet for some of the poorest citizens of our land and the rest of us have to subsidize their incomes.

Finally, in a recent article you wrote you mapped the areas of the country with the highest % of people living below the poverty level--not the highest number below the poverty level. AMAZING, most rural areas eg. they were farm areas. My conclusion, 24K and you are destitute in NY nit not in MI not, ND.

The poor become poorer in big cities even with government help while a more modest income in smaller cities and you are no longer poor--certainly not living high on the hog but getting by without difficulty.

Having lived in Chicago for nearly 20 years, having grown up in Muscatine,

Iowa(20,000) and now live in a city of 300,000 there is NO question where the quality of life is in a mid sized city, but if living cost were primary back to Muscatine.

(21/35) [bluntcons](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

In Ghana, there are examples such as Accra of badly managed cities, growing rapidly and sprawling uncontrolled such that few have access to good roads, piped water and in some cases electricity as utilities are expensive to install due to the spread out nature of urban development here. Yet everyone wants their own piece of land so the urban coverage extends. Despite that, figures suggest that those living in cities enjoy better access to schools and so have better literacy levels, better access to health facilities and so lower levels of child mortality and greater access to clean water and so better health. Further, living in the city (often the main reason for it) is the greater opportunity to increase earning capacity. Yet ask even an educated Ghanaian what is best, living in a city or in the rural areas and they will often say the rural area, for the romantic perception that while the man in the city can afford the foam mattress, he sleeps less well than the man with a mat on the baked earth. The former is disturbed by the worries of how to survive, how to meet the bills, how to meet the rising cost of food, whereas the rural dweller has food around him and with little effort can grow his own corn or yams and catch a grass cutter for his dinner.

(22/35) [m273dc](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I voted no since it is hard to contain the growth of cities unless you are in absolutist Soviet type system. Even the Chinese find it difficult to manage city growth. Some planned Chinese cities are now empty. Newly planned capitals are rarely successful. The Tokyo agglomeration with 30 million people is quite a livable 'city'. But few countries can manage a massive public transport system like the Japanese. The most livable cities according to various rankings are in the 750,000 - 2 million range. But that will not be an option for most developing countries. Careful management of the expansion and development and building a solid public transport network offers the best options to manage growth. Arrange funding of this public transport system with the Ricardian capital gains tax on the increase of land prices.

(23/35) [shoopshoop](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

You can have a smaller "city" and yet be so poorly managed that the standard of living is low. I second that management is the most important factor here, especially of finances/resources available.

E.g. Improving the public transport system allows more people to ditch their cars for some trips inside the city for the bus/train/ferry, etc...thus reducing the traffic/saving on gas consumption and so in a way improving standard of living. I have personally seen this in Vancouver, Canada where I (the student) was commuting happily alongside my professor from one side of town to the other...

Just my humble opinion.

(24/35) [toandfro](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

The quality of a city is more important than its size. I have lived in cities of 250,000 which are far more culturally vibrant and varied than much larger ones. Much of the difference may be attributable to history. European cities draw on centuries of accumulated culture in comparison to the bland homogeneity of many cities in newer places such as the US and Australia or the explosion in size of cities in Asia. What is new is the speed of change, and a much more activist approach to managing the growth is needed to ensure that the infrastructure can cope.

I see no sense in limiting the size of a city. Skilled planning with vision is the way to go. If a city becomes too unpleasant, it will in the end limit itself automatically.

(25/35) [Eusebius Pamphili](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I miss being able to see the stars.

(26/35) [nance45](#) wrote:

Dear Sir, Big cities can be improved, but smaller cities tend to be insular, unvaried in terms of population variety. They tend to be almost cultish and feel outside of the greater society- that's why they can be lower-middle class can support conservative programs like tax cuts for the upper class (two-percent of the population). They are isolated and don't have a vast pool of talented and educated population. You get more peripheral professionals that lack the skill to "make it" in larger cities. And at the risk of sounding petty, I have noticed you get a mixture of the attractive and the unattractive, the educated and the blue-collar crowd in big cities. In other words, you get an interesting variation in the population that are the ingredients of vitality and energy in this life.

(27/35) [PavanHegde](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

The idea of restricting growth is to build up stability and a better quality of life for the people within it, because capital gets reinvested. However, for the life of those people to get better, a city must always continue to grow, gain global recognition and earn its status. How can one exist without the other?

(28/35) [Murali Polamar](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

History proves that very few cities have successfully coped with explosive growth in a proactive manner. As competing markets organize themselves, it is not easy for city planners to understand these shifts in socio-economic trends to factor early in their planning.

Thankfully, Human beings are known to fight for their survival amidst all uncertainties. If we restrict growth of cities, it will only result in growth of a nearby city/cities - which is better in my view. Many smaller cities are easier to manage than few mega cities. Mega cities as any other mega sized enterprises are slow in adapting to change. Quality of life may be better in new cities, who will be able to incorporate the current socio-economic trends more easily than mega cities. Older mega cities in the meanwhile will continue to grow albeit at a slower pace, allowing it some breathing space to adapt.

Let us consider the example of New Delhi. Due to its geographic size limitations (restrictive - in that sense) satellite cities like NOIDA and Gurgaon have grown tremendously in the recent decades to accommodate massive migration more successfully than other mega cities in India. This is because, even though Guragaon and NOIDA are satellite cities and connected to New Delhi, they belong to different states - therefore governed by different state governments laws. NCR (National Capital Region) is in fact a cluster of 3 cities - New Delhi, Gurgaon and NOIDA. This adversity is perhaps the reason for Delhi still retaining its character in spite of explosive growth around it.

In developing countries we miss competition amongst cities. Multiple cities closer to each other tend to be competitive and will provide better Quality of Life to its citizens compared to the ONE Mega city approach.

My view is that cities have to be restrictive in some manner so that new cities can emerge. Multiple smaller cities are easier to manage vis a vis mega cities and also develop over a period in time, its own character which is unique to it - thereby attracting the type of people consistent with its character, in the process restricting explosive growth trends.

(29/35) [Martin H](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Cities in general do seem to have more problems than smaller units, probably due to the absence of a closely knit society and social contacts between different groups. Also, though there is an argument of efficiency in large cities, at some point they become unmanageable and the distance between those that rule and those that are ruled becomes too large. In some countries, such as the Netherlands it has been alleviated by creating city districts with their own administration. This though, seems to square the circle.

(30/35) [Aditi S Ray](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

The cause and effect relationship implied in the poser needs contemplation. Why do cities grow? They grow because of economic opportunities they provide to the migrants. Restricting the growth of cities do not by itself guarantee improvement in quality of life, the latter is a direct function of urban governance. I have been following the debate, and have voted against the motion. I am very glad that at the Closing phase of the debate Mr Paul James has at last defined what he understands by 'restriction', and that he did not imply that people should not be allowed to relocate in order to restrict growth of a city. Incidentally, the World Bank's World Development Report, 2009, on the theme of 'Reshaping Economic Geography', had stated that "growing cities, ever more

mobile people, and increasingly specialised products are integral to development”. The UN Human Development Report 2009, found migration as central to ‘human’ development. The Report stated that “for many people in developing countries moving away from their home town or village can be the best—sometimes the only—option open to improve their life chances. Human mobility can be hugely effective in raising a person’s income, health and education prospects. But its value is more than that: ‘being able to decide where to live is a key element of human freedom.’”

Every city will have its institution of ‘protocols, guidelines and legislations’, nobody could possibly have an issue with that, but proof of the pudding is in the eating. Therefore, enjoying an improved quality of life will be concomitant upon an efficient urban governance and service delivery structure in the city, and not so much on whether the city is ‘growing’ per se. Therefore I would still support Chetan, and vote against the motion.

(31/35) [Herr Michael](#) wrote:

Dear Sirs,

I think a little bit of both will be best.

(32/35) [a homo urbanus](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Joining late, some of my arguments may one way or the other already have been stated, but as a person professionally engaged in urbanization issues worldwide, I cannot resist submitting my views.

Urbanization and urban growth are inevitable. There is not a single precedent of a nation that in the longer term has been able to curb urbanization or urban growth and those who succeeded in the short run typically only did so through highly oppressive interventions.

But urban growth is not the problem - population growth is. We have to accommodate the seemingly ever-expanding numbers of human beings and there is no way that the idealized rural setting can provide the space for these on the limited land area of this planet. Concentrating people in cities is the ONLY feasible option and, as several commenters have already stated, it is rather a matter of how we shall manage these cities and urban growth.

Like there is a growing need for fresh water to sustain life on earth, there is a growing need for sustaining other human needs, including shelter and a fair, broad-based access to the global commons. Simply denying the overriding need for human beings to be provided for in population concentrations we call cities is akin to denying fair and broad-based access to fresh water, simply because we may not like that our water stocks are rapidly depleting.

Whether one like cities or not, they are here to stay and grow rapidly as an inevitability, like the sun rising daily in the east.

Ultimately, the world will stabilize at an urbanization rate of approx. 80 percent. How these population concentrations are managed and how the sustainability of these systems can be assured is our challenge. Voting against cities is simply an unrealistic position that is not defensible in any sense.

(33/35) [Diego F.](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

I believe that applies for some countries. We should focus in sustainability and equality; we should focus on having great life quality for everyone in short, medium and long term vision.

(34/35) [Anjin-San](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

Best way to control city growth may, paradoxically, be to improve the rural communities and free them of the shackles of medieval or feudal mindset.

In case of Japan, desire to escape from often stifling feudal mindset of rural communities played as much part in driving young people to mega cities of Tokyo and Osaka as the drive to escape poverty.

How such changes can be brought about is a question that will take great minds a lifetime to solve.

(35/35) [lifelong learner](#) wrote:

Dear Sir,

i support the argument that managing cities well is far more important than restricting their growth. people move to places where opportunities are available to improve their livelihoods. it has been the case historically for in-country as well as external migration. the principles of transparent, accountable and participatory government for good governance are also the key for managing the cities. they are more important than imposing any restrictions in the growth.

thanks

krishna
