

The role of cities and urban policy in promoting economic growth, jobs and social cohesion

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Professor Ivan Turok

The focus of the presentation is on the contribution of cities to economic and social development. The presentation will also discuss the role of national and local government in harnessing the potential of cities.

Part 1 will discuss three propositions about the way in which cities enhance economic prosperity:

- The sheer size and density of cities generates important efficiencies which translate in increased productivity, higher levels of external trade and faster growth
- The social networks and trust within cities stimulate enterprise and innovation
- The quality of life and cost of living within cities attracts creative talent and young professionals, which promotes investment and growth

Part 1 will also consider the evidence for these effects, including the different kinds of economic activity that seem to concentrate in cities and benefit from their advantages.

Part 2 will consider three propositions about the way in which cities contribute to social cohesion:

- The classic openness and liberalism of urban life, and opportunities for upward mobility
- The jobs and incomes available in cities, and opportunities for improved living standards, self-esteem and work-related social relationships
- The physical structure and layout of cities, and the role of public spaces and other opportunities for social interaction. (integration versus segregation)

Part 2 will also consider the evidence for these effects, including the different dimensions of social cohesion (from social order and tolerance through inclusion and justice to equality).

Part 3 will consider the role of urban policy in supporting cities to contribute to economic and social development. It will discuss:

- Explicit urban policies – their rationale and contents
- Implicit urban policies – these are often more influential, including the way resources are allocated between areas, the nature of housing policy (home-ownership subsidies), transport policy (state investment in freeways), energy policy (fuel subsidies), infrastructure policy, education policy and immigration policy
- The respective roles of national and local government in urban development and financial arrangements. And the functional city versus the administrative city.
- The challenge of promoting urban integration and compaction – densification, intensification, brownfields, infill, mixed-income, mixed-use, regeneration.
- What cities themselves can do to strengthen their economies – enhance their distinctiveness.
- The idea of the green economy and its relevance to the urban agenda.