

BOOK REVIEW

State of the World's Cities 2012/2013: Prosperity of Cities

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*State of the World's Cities 2012/2013:
Prosperity of Cities
Un Habitat
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The 2012/2013 State of the World Cities Report – Prosperity of Cities – recently released by the United Nations (UN) introduces the notion of prosperity that goes beyond the idea of economic growth or economic development or even that more recent concept of sustainable development. With this notion of prosperity the UN explores and discusses how cities, when the world becomes urban in the sense that more than half of its population now lives in cities, can create and distribute in an equitable way the benefits and opportunities. In other words, in this report the UN examines how cities can ensure the three pillars of sustainable development – economic wellbeing, social cohesion, environmental sustainability and quality of life for all.

The UN Report identifies and discusses the factors and conditions responsible for the crisis confronting cities worldwide. The emphasis placed in the recent past on financial success has led to increased inequalities within the city, was responsible for the malfunctions of numerous urban systems and in the limit had profound negative impacts in the environment.

Building on the findings of this critical analysis, the UN Report offers the United Nations new vision on urban prosperity, seen as the paradigm for urban policy and urban planning in the years ahead. The Report adopts a new concept – prosperity – to guide public policy in urban areas around the world. This new UN vision takes a new look at the notion of development, advocating a transformative change towards people-centered sustainable urban development, and calls for a new engagement with a fresher notion of prosperity in their agendas.

The Report is organized into three main parts. In Part one, the report defines and discusses the concept of urban prosperity. This is followed in the next section by an analysis of

the different dimensions of the concept of city prosperity, highlighting five main dimensions responsible or likely to impact on the level of prosperity experienced by cities and countries: productivity; urban infrastructure; quality of life; equity; and environmental sustainability. In the third and last part, the report explores policies for prosperous cities and the role planning and design can play in that process. The new role assigned to urban planning within the wheel of prosperity is a key facet of this new approach, a fact that every practitioner in the field of Urban E-Planning ought to have into account, in particular in developing countries,

such as the case of African cities. The report includes a statistical annex with the city prosperity index and its components and an extensive bibliography that will certainly prove useful for students and researchers in this field.

In sum, this new UN Report on the state of world cities points out the kind of urban policies cities around the globe ought to adopt in order to meet the needs of the urban population in the 21st century. For that reason, the UN “2012/2013 State of the World Cities Report: Prosperity of Cities” is compulsory reading for all those working in the field of urban e-planning.

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