



News release

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Sustaining a city's competitiveness requires new kind of urban leadership

8 June 2016 – Leadership lies at the heart of enabling and delivering sustainable urban competitiveness and is critical to place-based strategy development and implementation. It is also increasingly shifting from being in the sole hands of strong individual public sector leaders towards a more collaborative approach with leadership distributed across lead firms, knowledge institutes and engaged citizens as well.

These are some of the key findings of a new report produced by the European Institute for Comparative Urban Research (Euricur) and PwC. The report entitled 'Enabling sustainable city competitiveness through distributed urban leadership' focuses on the evolving challenges of urban leadership in the 21st century and contains ten case studies from Amaravati, Coimbra, Detroit, Dubai, Dublin, Manchester, Rio de Janeiro, Singapore, Stockholm and the Randstad region in the Netherlands.

As the challenges facing cities in the 21st century magnify, new types of urban leaders are needed who feel comfortable connecting to other stakeholders. Cities do not have CEOs in the same way that companies do. The urban context is often much more complex. It depends on intertwined relationships among a myriad of stakeholders who co-construct urban development but often lack clear mandates to do so.

For example, in order to deal with new urban agendas such as digitalisation, climate change, migrations, social inclusion and economic renewal, there is a need for a more inclusive approach to those who can help make change happen – such as the private sector, universities and civic movements.

Hazem Galal, PwC's Global Cities and Local Government Sector Leader, says:

“Distributed leadership doesn't mean individual urban leaders have become less powerful or important. On the contrary, the range of stakeholders co-creating and leading urban development actually requires more skills from urban leaders, with social skills of equal importance alongside technical knowledge and organisational position.



“The distribution of urban leadership needs to be done in the context of the city’s DNA – what works in Amsterdam or London may not be as successful in Dubai or Singapore. This means urban leaders also need to be situationally aware and able to adapt to different cultures and changing circumstances.”

In many places around the world, responsibilities for public services and economic development are being devolved from the national to the regional and local levels. This is adding to the pressure to achieve results, negotiate public-private sector deals, and find new ways of solving problems locally.

To rise to the challenge, the report argues urban leaders need to clearly define a sustainable competitiveness framework in the context of their city’s DNA which inspires stakeholders and connects different organisational visions and cultures. This starts by seeing the bigger picture beyond the boundaries of the local public administration, and by ensuring that the vision for a place is owned by all stakeholders – politicians, officials, businesses and residents.

Hazem Galal adds:

“City leaders should act as institutional entrepreneurs who empower different types of leaders within and outside the local public administration, valuing their different roles and abilities to exert collective urban leadership. This in turn will provide confidence to investors that the emerging challenges in a place are understood and will be managed.

“In a globally connected marketplace, where cities compete with each other for scarce investment funds, successful urban leadership will ultimately be reflected in the ability to attract internationally mobile capital – as well as talent. Cities which embrace a more distributed leadership are most likely to be the ones to succeed in future.”

Notes to editor:

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2. At PwC, our purpose is to build trust in society and solve important problems. We’re a network of firms in 157 countries with more than 208,000 people who are committed to delivering quality in assurance, advisory and tax services. Find out more and tell us what matters to you by visiting us at www.pwc.com.

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