

Sustainability of global cities held back by social factors, says new index

- European cities lead the way on sustainability, taking seven of the top ten places in the inaugural ARCADIS Sustainable Cities Index
- Frankfurt sits in first place, followed by London and Copenhagen
- North American cities show room for improvement, failing to appear in the top ten most sustainable cities
- Asian cities show the most divergence, with Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore in the top ten while others make up the lower rankings
- Developing cities have focused on economic sustainability, but must now focus on becoming centers for people and environmental stewards

(9 February 2015) Across the world cities are failing to meet the needs of their people, according to the inaugural Sustainable Cities Index from ARCADIS, the leading global natural and built asset design and consultancy firm.

The Index, which was conducted by the Center for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) explores the three demands of social (People), environmental (Planet) and economic (Profit) to develop an indicative ranking of 50 of the world's leading cities. The 2015 report finds that no utopian city exists, with city leaders having to manage a complex balancing act between the three pillars of sustainability.

Overall the top ten and bottom ten cities in the 2015 ARCADIS Sustainable Cities Index are:

Top ten

1. Frankfurt
2. London
3. Copenhagen
4. Amsterdam
5. Rotterdam
6. Berlin
7. Seoul
8. Hong Kong
9. Madrid
10. Singapore

Bottom ten

41. Rio de Janeiro
42. Doha
43. Moscow
44. Jeddah
45. Riyadh
46. Jakarta
47. Mumbai
48. Wuhan
49. New Delhi
50. Nairobi

The full rankings can be viewed at www.sustainablecitiesindex.com

In the zone

Well-established European cities come top of the overall rankings, taking seven of the first ten places. Frankfurt leads the world, followed by London, Copenhagen, Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Frankfurt also takes first place on the Profit sub-index, just ahead of the UK's capital city.

Rotterdam tops the People sub-index due to broad success including high literacy and a good work-life balance. Meanwhile two Germany cities – Frankfurt and Berlin – lead the way on Planet factors, scoring particularly well for waste management and low levels of air pollution.

Although mature cities achieve the best balance, they cannot rely on historic investment. In a rapidly urbanizing world, the way in which cities are planned, built, operated and redefined has a huge social, environmental and economic impact.

John Batten, Global Cities Director at ARCADIS comments: “Our world is changing at a faster pace than ever before. Developing technology, population growth and the emergence of a truly global economy mean that the notion of national borders is becoming less relevant. Instead, we see the concept of the ‘global city’ taking hold.

“The Sustainable Cities Index highlights the areas of opportunity for cities, to inform decision-making and hopefully make them more sustainable economically, environmentally and for the welfare of their inhabitants.”

People Come Last

Across the world, cities are performing better for being sustainable for Profit and Planet purposes than they are for People factors.

Many of the world's economic powerhouses are becoming less affordable for their citizens, with the cost of property in New York, London, Paris, Tokyo and Hong Kong penalizing their rankings. There is also a trade-off globally between strong education and poor work-life balance, particularly demonstrated in Hong Kong.

People sub-index

Top ten – people factors

1. Rotterdam
2. Seoul
3. London
4. Sydney
5. Copenhagen
6. Hong Kong
7. Amsterdam
8. Melbourne
9. Frankfurt
10. Berlin

Bottom ten – people factors

41. Johannesburg
42. Riyadh
43. Mexico City
44. Jakarta
45. Wuhan
46. Rio de Janeiro
47. Manila
48. Mumbai
49. New Delhi
50. Nairobi

Planet sub-index

Top ten – planet factors

1. Frankfurt
2. Berlin
3. Copenhagen
4. Madrid
5. Rotterdam
6. Amsterdam
7. Singapore
8. Rome
9. Toronto
10. Birmingham

Bottom ten – planet factors

41. Moscow
42. Dallas
43. Los Angeles
44. Abu Dhabi
45. Nairobi
46. Beijing
47. Dubai
48. Wuhan
49. New Delhi
50. Doha

Profit sub-index

Top ten – profit factors

1. Frankfurt
2. London
3. Hong Kong
4. Amsterdam
5. Melbourne
6. San Francisco
7. Seoul
8. Singapore
9. Brussels
10. Madrid

Bottom ten – profit factors

41. Jeddah
42. Buenos Aires
43. Jakarta
44. Riyadh
45. Moscow
46. Rio de Janeiro
47. Mumbai
48. New Delhi
49. Nairobi
50. Wuhan

Mr Batten adds: “City leaders need to find ways to balance the demands of generating strong financial returns, being an attractive place for people to live and work in, whilst also limiting their damage to the environment. To truly understand how sustainable a city is, we must understand how it ranks in People, Planet and Profit. Only then can city leaders act to assess their priorities, and the pathway to urban sustainability – for the good of all.”

North America: profit over planet

No North American city makes it into the Index's top ten, with Toronto ranking the highest overall at twelfth place. Boston and Chicago (at fifteenth and nineteenth respectively) are the most sustainable of all US cities studied.

Cities in North America perform significantly better on Profit factors than those in the other sub-indices, this is a result of strong performance on GDP per capita and the ease of doing business. San Francisco is the highest ranked at seventh place while all US cities studied appear in the top half of the sub-index.

However, whilst greater income allows some cities to improve their rankings, higher economic development does not guarantee greater sustainability. Every North American city in the Index sits in the bottom half of the rankings on carbon emissions, alongside cities in the Middle East.

Asia-Pacific: a vast difference

Cities in Asia demonstrate the greatest divergence: Seoul, Hong Kong and Singapore all make it into the top ten of the overall ranking, while New Delhi, Wuhan, Mumbai, Manila and Jakarta sit at the bottom.

Seoul performs particularly well on the People sub-index, reaching second place globally. In part this is due to strong performing transport infrastructure, which is second only to another city in the region, Melbourne. Meanwhile, Hong Kong leads the way on university education and life expectancy, and offers its people the highest percentage of green space.

Yet the Index shows that high working hours (20 per cent higher than the global average) and a consistently poor work-life balance hold Asian cities back from performing stronger on its people factors.

It is therefore unsurprising that some Asian cities perform well in the Profit sub-index, with many scoring highly on their importance to global networks. Of all the cities studied, Singapore and Hong Kong are the world's best performing for the ease of doing business.

South America: a mixed bag

The cities of Central and South America are held back by particularly weak People and Profit scores, in addition to a mixed score on Planet factors. Santiago and São Paulo are South America's highest-ranking cities in the Index (at thirty and thirty-first respectively).

São Paulo scores poorly for greenhouse gas emissions, ahead of only Nairobi and Manila. Cities South America also do not perform well on income inequality, with all those studied appearing in the bottom ten of the rankings for that score.

Middle East: a trade off

The trade-off between Planet and Profit is most starkly seen in the Middle East where Dubai and Doha score much lower on environmental factors than economic ones.

Cities in the Middle East have seen the highest real term population growth over the past five years, with Doha, Dubai and Abu Dhabi experiencing a rise of over 30 per cent, putting a strain on city infrastructure.

The Index shows that city leaders in all 50 cities must plan for population increases over the coming years, but the pressure on some will be immense.

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Notes to Editor:

The research was conducted by the Centre for Economics and Business Research (www.cebr.com) and examines 50 cities from 31 countries ranking them across a range of indicators to estimate the sustainability of each city. The cities included within this report were selected to provide an overview of the planet's cities, providing not only wide-ranging geographical coverage, but also a variety of levels of economic development, expectations of future growth and an assortment of sustainability challenges.

A detailed, evidence-based metric is derived to quantify each city's performance. The headline ranking can then be divided into three broad subcategories: People, Planet and Profit. These correspond to three dimensions of sustainability - social, environmental and economic and can be described as the triple bottom line.

About ARCADIS

ARCADIS is the leading global natural and built asset design and consultancy firm working in partnership with our clients to deliver exceptional and sustainable outcomes through the application of design, consultancy, engineering, project and management services. ARCADIS differentiates through its talented and passionate people and its unique combination of capabilities covering the whole asset life cycle, its deep market sector insights and its ability to integrate health & safety and sustainability into the design and delivery of solutions across the globe. We are 28,000 people that generate €3 billion in revenues. We support UN-Habitat with knowledge and expertise to improve the quality of life in rapidly growing cities around the world.

www.arcadis.com

Rankings

The overall 2015 Sustainable Cities Index rankings are as below, with the full rankings available at:

www.sustainablecitiesindex.com

Overall ARCADIS Sustainable Cities Index ranking

- | | |
|-------------------|--------------------|
| 1. Frankfurt | 40. Rio de Janeiro |
| 2. London | 41. Doha |
| 3. Copenhagen | 42. Moscow |
| 4. Amsterdam | 43. Jeddah |
| 5. Rotterdam | 44. Riyadh |
| 6. Berlin | 45. Jakarta |
| 7. Seoul | 46. Manila |
| 8. Hong Kong | 47. Mumbai |
| 9. Madrid | 48. Wuhan |
| 10. Singapore | 49. New Delhi |
| 11. Sydney | 50. Nairobi |
| 12. Toronto | |
| 13. Brussels | |
| 14. Manchester | |
| 15. Boston | |
| 16. Paris | |
| 17. Melbourne | |
| 18. Birmingham | |
| 19. Chicago | |
| 20. New York | |
| 21. Houston | |
| 22. Philadelphia | |
| 23. Tokyo | |
| 24. Rome | |
| 25. Washington | |
| 26. Kuala Lumpur | |
| 27. San Francisco | |
| 28. Los Angeles | |
| 29. Dallas | |
| 30. Santiago | |
| 31. Sao Paulo | |
| 32. Mexico City | |
| 33. Dubai | |
| 34. Abu Dhabi | |
| 35. Shanghai | |
| 36. Istanbul | |
| 37. Johannesburg | |
| 38. Buenos Aires | |
| 39. Beijing | |