Jan Sturesson
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Cities of the Future

By Atique Naqvi, Dubai

Cities must stop backstabbing one another and pave the way for healthy competition, says Jan Sturesson, Global Leader – Public Sector and Partner at PwC.

A few years ago we spoke of globalization and localization. Now, there is only one term: glocalization. And then a combination of competition and cooperation is called coopetition. How has 2014 been in terms of glocalization and coopetition?

We are getting more and more global on one scale and at the same time going very local, creating a new dynamic. The glocal perspective is about local leaders taking advantage of this new situation. Companies earlier had a matrix for nations, products and services.

Today they have it for cities, products and services. And so global – which is the world – and local, ie., the cities, have been redefined.

I look forward in the future to seeing nation states becoming less important. Having said that and looking into coopetition, we have – honestly speaking – too much competition between cities, regions and nations.

We need healthy competition, and must stop backstabbing and competing. We really hold back growth and development in a region when that happens.

Do you see cities being pitched against one another in the future?
Absolutely. I think there are a number of new clusters and networks being formed to compete globally. Different nations are using their cities as fronts for cutting-edge development in this process.

How do you think technology will play up in terms of cities becoming smarter in the future?
We will see Cloud, crowd sourcing and crowd solutions becoming important. Cities will apply completely new technologies for everything from parking to electricity and transportation. We will see cars without drivers and so on and so forth. The future is a technology-driven process and we can create new values for citizens. So the future is not smart cities, it is smart citizens.

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Will future economic growth also be driven by technology?

We can debate if it will be technology-driven or technology-enabled and process-driven. Because I think that there is a great awareness from citizens that they would like to take steps to become more connected, transparent, agile and be innovative.

Of course hypertechnologies are creating a framework for the future of growth, there is no doubt about it.

Are you optimistic or pessimistic about 2015?

That is a hard question. I am an optimist, I hope for the best but I plan for the worst. We are having problems in some of the really big cities because they are so big, and so there is a risk of an implosion. I foresee that small big

cities that have populations of between one and five million people have an interesting position.

We need to watch out for people getting too individualistic. I think that cities, governments and future development is about people living together and finding ways for a sustainable future. This means we need to focus not only on finance, but on social capital, intellectual capital, human capital, cultural capital and political capital. These will together create a new capitalism, which has a lot to do with technology capital, because that will enable the future.

Does this apply in the global context or are there some differences between the developed countries and the emerging markets?

Today we have a situation where the

global economy is relying too heavily on the emerging economies. We need to find a balance and look at how we can stay together, collaborate – not compete, and figure out what is the best value for people living in our cities and countries so that we embrace the future.

Glocalization and collaboration – do they have to come from the governments or from the private sector?

I think this is about having a cross sector play, which means it is the government, the corporate sector, the universities and the non-profits.

And sometimes also the hybrid organizations who have a task of boosting growth and creating jobs. To me it is about sector configuration, working together cross sectors, cross issues for a better future. ■