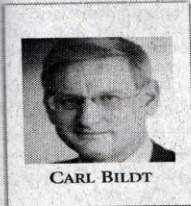


PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

Urbanisation 2.0



CARL BILD

WE are now in the final days of the industrial age. Just as the second generation of steam engines propelled the Industrial Revolution forward, so, too,

are new technologies advancing today's digital revolution. But as technology races ahead of us, it is difficult to anticipate what the future holds.

One thing we do know is that the future will be shaped by two key trends: digitisation and urbanisation. And the possibilities introduced by the former will likely help us overcome the problems associated with the latter.

When the Industrial Revolution was first gaining momentum at the beginning of the nineteenth century, only a small percentage of the global population lived in cities. The world was still predominantly rural and agricultural, as it had been for thousands of years. But as industrialisation accelerated, so did urbanisation, as impoverished farmworkers flocked to factories.

We are now in another period of epochal change, and urbanisation is accelerating again. In 1950, approximately one-third of the planet's 2.5 billion people lived in cities, whereas today, just over half of the

world's 7.5 billion people do. And by 2050, when the global population is expected to reach nine billion, an estimated two-thirds of all people will live in cities.

Urban areas are magnets for young people and entrepreneurs, because they provide a wide range of opportunities and dense professional and social networks. It is no coincidence that 80 percent of economic output originates

how quickly Africa is catching up.

At the recent Chicago Forum on Global Cities, policy thinkers and practitioners — including past and current mayors from Amman, Chicago, Prague, Lahore, Rio de Janeiro, and Toronto — met for a couple of days to discuss common challenges on the road ahead. They all agreed that many solutions to future problems will come not from national governments, but from municipal and regional-level

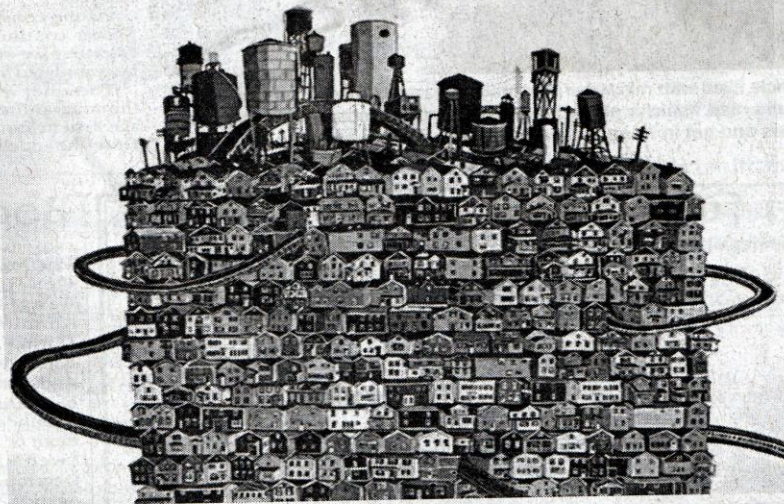


ILLUSTRATION: AMY CASEY

The future will be shaped by two key trends: digitisation and urbanisation. And the possibilities introduced by the former will likely help us overcome the problems associated with the latter.

in cities: urbanisation is the engine of economic growth.

But while it is easy to focus on success stories such as Singapore and Dubai, or on the impressive features of cosmopolitan centres such as New York or London, urbanisation is not without its challenges.

By 2050, some 600 million people will live in the world's 25 largest cities, none of which are in the European Union. Most are in Asia, followed by Africa, including Karachi, Pakistan; Kabul, Afghanistan; Khartoum, Sudan; and Kinshasa, in the Democratic Republic of Congo. And some believe that by 2100, Lagos, Nigeria, will be the world's largest city — showing

policy-makers.

Many cities and states in the United States are already bringing this point home, by ignoring US President Donald Trump's renunciation of the Paris climate agreement, and doubling down on their own efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions and achieve energy sustainability. Indeed, Pittsburgh Mayor Bill Peduto and Paris Mayor Anne Hidalgo have now joined forces to combat climate change, giving the lie to Trump's claim that he was elected to "represent Pittsburgh, not Paris."

Climate change is one of three major challenges that will confront us in this new