

is replacing dilapidated houses. Older loft-type buildings are being converted to live-work housing, popular with artists and young professionals. But while greater density can better support a diversified transportation system and also help solve some problems of sprawl, questions of life quality as well as energy use remain. Such questions are not unique to Los Angeles.

## Worldwide Urbanization

Los Angeles is the stereotypical example, but unprecedented growth is by no means limited to one city or even to the United States. It is a worldwide phenomenon. The U.S. Census Bureau projects a global population by 2050 of over 9 billion people.<sup>5</sup> This increase is a major force driving the growth of cities. In 1950, only 8 countries in the world, half of them in Europe, contained at least one city of 5 million or more. By 2015, 34 countries are projected to do so, on every major continent except Australia.

Such extraordinary growth raises worldwide questions of energy sustainability and life quality. The United States, for example, is reliant on the rest of the world for its energy supply. Net imports of oil are projected to grow to 68 percent of demand by 2025.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, as people leave farms and villages to live in cities, there is often an effect on the human spirit. Many cities still offer beauty and delight but far too many have lost the time-rich connection to nature that has always given a sense of belonging to and with the places they have traditionally occupied.

Writer Erla Zwingle observes, “Irresistible lure for dreamers, doers, and the desperate, urban areas will soon hold half the world’s people.” She gives the following numbers: in 1950, only New York contained 10 million people, but by 2015, there will be 25 cities of roughly 10 million or more, 6 of those over 20 million. The number of urban areas with populations of 5 to 10 million is also pro-

jected to burgeon from only 7 in 1950 to 37 in 2015. And by 2030, 60 percent of the world's people are expected to occupy cities.<sup>7\*</sup>

The impact of worldwide urbanization is not only a matter of number and size but of rate. Never have urban populations expanded so fast. Zwingle comments on Bangkok's transformation within living memory. Older residents recall a graceful town, an "earlier tropical character [of] low wooden sheds, two-story houses with large breezy windows . . . and stretches of emerald trees . . ." now transformed to a sluggishly moving, "thickening, spreading metropolis wrapped in a gray film where air should be."<sup>8</sup>

All over the world, people are abandoning farms and villages for the opportunities offered in cities. Huge numbers of people were not born in the cities they now occupy. Today in São Paulo, a 3000-plus square mile area (7770-plus sq km) of 18 million people, half the population was born somewhere else. Still, the trend seems inevitable. Marc Weiss, chairman of the Prague Institute for Global Urban Development observes: "There's the crazy notion that the way to deal with a city's problems is to keep people out of them . . . but cities are the fundamental building blocks of prosperity."<sup>9</sup> It is clear that the quality of life for most people will be determined by the quality of life in cities.

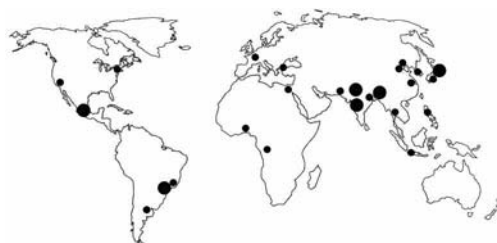
\*Different sources give slightly different projections, and these change as they are updated. For example, one U.N. website ([www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2003/2003UrbanAgglomeration2003-Web.xls](http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/wup2003/2003UrbanAgglomeration2003-Web.xls)) projects the 2015 New York population as 19.7 million while Zwingle projects only 17.9 million.



1950: • Cities of 10-million or More. (New York)



2000: • Cities of 10-million or more; ● Cities of 20-million or more.



2015: • Cities of 10-million or more; ● Cities of 20-million or more.

Urban Population Growth:  
1950; 2000; 2015.