



WHY THE MEGACITIES FOCUS? MEGACITIES IN THE NEW WORLD DISORDER

Manuel Castells¹

INTRODUCTION: LOOKING AT MEGACITIES AS IF PEOPLE MATTERED

At the end of the second millennium of the Christian era the world is undergoing dramatic changes. Most of these changes are taking place in cities. Cities themselves are changing to the point that the category (“the city”) has become theoretically and practically obsolete. The most important change is the formation of what we call “mega cities”, that is human settlements of a gigantic size (about 10 million inhabitants could be a significant albeit arbitrary statistical threshold) that work as magnets for people, functions, and organizations, structuring the country and the world around their social and economic dynamics.

Mega cities are not just cities of a large size. They are a new, distinctive spatial form. Neither are they megalopolises (in the sense defined by Gottman) or conurbations. They have a strong internal coherence. The functions and activities performed in their territory are spatially interconnected. They are not a juxtaposition of different areas, even if we can differentiate analytically spatial subunits. They are one single area in a very fundamental sense: they constitute a complex unit of production, a single labor market and a specific system of power, beyond their extreme cultural and social differentiation. Their territory, even if it is of gigantic size, is used daily by millions of people within the boundaries of the mega city. As for the rest of the country it increasingly becomes the hinterland for the functions and power that emerge from mega cities.

Mega cities are the directional centers, the centers for technological innovation, the senders of symbolic messages, images and information, the producers of producer services, the collective factories of the new manufacturing, as well as

¹ This paper was first prepared for delivery at the Mega-Cities 7th Annual Coordinators Meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia, August 1 to 7, 1993. It grew out of my role as a member of the Global Advisory Board of the Mega-Cities Project since its inception in 1987, and out of intense intellectual exchanges with my colleague, Janice Perlman, the Founder and Executive Director of the Mega-Cities Project. The lines of thinking and analysis developed here evolved from our collaboration, exchange, and discourse over many years on this subject.



depositories of the remnants of traditional manufacturing. Mega cities are the nerve centers of our interconnected global system.

They are also the most poignant expressions of our social contradictions and social problems. The sites of extreme poverty and neglect, the shop floor of crime and violence, the locus of human abuse and human destruction. They are the amplified portrait of ourselves.

Most often, the size of the problems of mega cities and the feeling of their incredible power lead us to treat them as non-human constructions, as entities that have a life of their own. Mega cities become objects-subjects, that impose their logic, their goals, their reality, on any other interests or values. In solving their problems such as transportation, economic dynamism, housing, and environment, mega cities are treated as a collective body that lives and works independently of its dwellers. Yet, however impersonal such human settlements have become, there remains a fundamental linkage between the interests, values, and strategies of societies and their spatial forms, including mega cities. If we introduce this point of view, namely, that mega cities, as cities throughout time, are produced, shaped, managed, fought, suffered, constructed and deconstructed by people, then new policies can be designed and new politics can be induced that could reorganize such settlements to make them more livable.

If people mattered, if they could participate in the decisions that shape the processes and forms of mega cities, economic strategies suited to their real needs could be implemented, even under the constraints of the global economy. If people mattered, environmental problems would be included in the economy of mega cities; transportation would be made easier by the planned settlement of work and residences; housing would be adapted to the real market and not just to the narrow world of the upper middle class; the informal economy would be treated as the real economy; the ethnic differences would be considered as the foundation of a multiracial society; the fight against crime and violence would start at the level of homes and neighborhoods; and the government of the mega city would be the micro government of its citizens. But if people mattered the world would have already changed in a fundamental sense.

This paper explores such non-utopian possibility by putting forward one single and fundamental argument: there is no other choice. Either the mega cities of the 21st century are governed by their citizens for their citizens, or they will become dysfunctional, non-livable settlements that would signal the beginning of the end of civilization. Not out of a nuclear holocaust, as we feared until now, but as a consequence of the daily, human holocaust that is taking place in the space of mega cities through the destruction of all forms of social coexistence in a world of ferocious individualism, collective tribalism, and senseless violence.



To understand the roots of destruction and the paths of hope for our future mega cities we must start with the sources of the transformation of our world, to follow up with the spatial expression of such transformation, and to conclude with the forms of social organization and political governance that correspond to such society and to such space.

THE NEW GLOBAL ECONOMY AND THE END OF THE THIRD WORLD

Mega cities are the nodal points of a new, global economy that characterizes our time. A global economy is not a world economy. A world economy has existed since the origins of capitalism, as Braudel and Wallerstein have demonstrated. But the global economy is something different and new. It is a system characterized by the fact that all economic processes and elements, production, consumption, management, information, capital, markets and labor are organized worldwide and work as a unit on a planetary scale in real time. This is obvious for multinational corporations, but this is also the reality for many small and medium businesses that are connected to larger firms through networks. As for national governments, they are powerful agents in the marketplace, but they have to act on the international economy, since most of the key economic factors escape their national boundaries. In a very real sense there are no national economic policies any more, but economic policies oriented toward the international economic scene on behalf of national interests.

This historic transformation of the structure and processes of the economic system has been made possible and necessary by the new technological revolution and by the rise of what I call the informational economy. The current technological revolution is characterized by two fundamental features:

- a) As all major technological revolutions it is pervasive, that it is not concentrated in one particular area, but it concerns all dimensions and activities of human life.
- a) The specificity of this revolution is its focus on information technologies, including genetic engineering, the core of the major biological revolution that is likely to become the newest and most fundamental wave of innovation in the coming years.

The formation of a new technological system has been the material basis for the rise of the global economy. Telecommunications, information systems, advanced transportation technology, and new media systems have enabled economic processes to work as a single unit, while being located in distant places. Networking is the new organizational form of economy and society.

Furthermore, knowledge generation and information processing have become the main sources of productivity and power in our societies, regardless of their



relative level of development. The informational technological revolution has made possible the actual formation of the new informational economy, where capital accumulation and labor productivity depend on innovation in science, technology, and management. The global economy is an informational economy.

However, if all the planet is penetrated and organized by the new global, informational economy, not all the regions, not all the places, not all the people are included in this new economic system. In fact, most are not, even if the activities on which they depend are indirectly shaped by the interests and processes that organize the global economy. So, the global economy is inherently asymmetrical, with every country being part of the system, but with large areas of the country and segments of the population being excluded from that system. While the proportion of the population excluded varies from country to country, all countries in the world are characterized today by this duality between the segments integrated, even at a low level, in the global, dynamic economy and those who are excluded and, in fact redundant for the system's functional logic.

Economies, and societies, are increasingly segmented, between the "cosmopolitans" and the "locals," between the included and the excluded in the making of the new history. This is a more fundamental duality than the old distinction between the rich and the poor. What has changed is that a significant proportion of the population of the planet is shifting from being exploited in their work to a position of structural irrelevance. Of course, this is from the systemic point of view, since in human terms all living beings are relevant. This irrelevance refers to a minority of the population in some countries or cities and to a majority in other contexts. This can be explained by the combination of several factors:

- Cheap labor is irrelevant if it is not integrated into a market-oriented production or into some national or international network of supply.
- Large, poor populations present little interest as markets, particularly when the conditions for access to such markets are hazardous.
- Raw materials and agricultural products have, overall, decreasing value in relationship to manufactured goods and information services. Thus, areas and people linked to the production and delivery of such primary commodities have also decreasing value, as the stocks of overproduction of foodstuff pile up in the warehouses of advanced nations.
- From the viewpoint of the dominant powers, the last potential interest of many areas of the world was their position in the geo-political global game. This asset is being rapidly lost as, in the wake of the end of the cold war, the superpower rivalry has been replaced by universal policing on behalf of the G-7 club, the core of a system benefiting the dominant elite of all countries in the various regions of the world. Thus, factionalism,



ethnic warfare, local massacres, the spread of crime and violence, have become nuisances for the system as a whole, rather than opportunities to advance each power's pawns against the potential adversary. The consequence is a structural tendency towards a growing indifference vis-à-vis any human tragedy that cannot be marketable in the media for the sake of political advantage at home.

The new dependency is played out in terms of access to large, rich, integrated markets and in terms of technological capacity to install the informational mode of development. On both counts, the OECD countries have an overwhelming dominance that is increasing over time.

For the rest of the world, their fate will depend on their ability to integrate themselves, both technologically and in market terms, with the dynamic segments of the global economy. Thus, the Third World as such has disappeared, following the disintegration of the Second World. What we have now is a First World, made up of the dynamic, interconnected segments of the global economy, and a Fourth World, made up of the countries, regions, cities, and segments of population that are irrelevant, thus dispensable, in all regions of the world, in varying proportions of each country's population.

However, the picture is somewhat more complex, because even if people, and countries, become irrelevant for the system, they do not consider themselves so. Thus, at least three different reactions, not to be placed on the same level in value judgment, follow from such structural trends:

- a) The perverse connection to the global economy by specializing regions, countries, or segments of the society, in trades that are judged as criminal in the dominant societies, such as drug production and trafficking, illegal arms deals, smuggling, and traffic of human flesh (particularly women, children, and human organs for transplant in the clinics of "the North").
- a) The rise of ideological and political fundamentalism (either in its religious or in its strictly ideological version) as a reaction to exclude the excluders, breaking down any ties with a system whose logic denies the actual right of existence to a segment of humankind. This is not to excuse the threatening trend of fanaticism and political fundamentalism, but to understand it in the context of a global trend in which the civilized, democratic world only pays lip service to foster a model of development inclusive enough for the whole population of the planet.
- a) The increasing importance of nationalism, national identity, and national interests, as well as regionalism and regional interests, as the foundation for defending the interests of historically concrete societies against the historical logic of the market-oriented global economy.



In this paper I will lay out the context in which localities struggle with the issues of poverty and environment within the mega cities, and I will explore the possibility for national, regional, and metropolitan governments to act on behalf of their citizens to countervail the global trends described above. But before we are able to analyze the issues of governance or community action that emerge in the new social context, we need to examine the spatial forms and processes that emerge from the new informational, global, dual economy.

THE SPACE OF FLOWS, THE SPACE OF PLACES, AND THE FORMATION OF MEGACITIES

The new system of production and management is expressing itself in spatial terms through the formation of what I have defined as the space of flows.² The space of flows relates distant locales through electronic circuits supported by a telecommunications and computer infrastructure. Functions of management, of capital flows, of high technology manufacturing, of commercial distribution, of media diffusion, are performed through the space of flows.

Most of the power and management operations in our societies are performed spatially through a combination of territorial concentration and territorial sprawl. Major directional functions, research, innovation, and the sending of symbols and messages are concentrated in some major nodes and hubs around the world, and each country and region have sub-centers that connect electronically and through high speed transportation to the other levels of the command and control system. On the other hand, routine operations, low-level services, residence, and consumption are scattered through the territories of regions, countries, and continents in an increasingly decentralized pattern. The connection between the two processes (concentration and diffusion) is performed by an information technology infrastructure that constructs the space of flows.

At the same time, the upper level social groups cluster in secluded spaces, while residential communities retrench themselves either on ethnic or social enclaves or in the ultimate inner frontier of the individual home. The space of flows connects these different worlds, but in an asymmetrical manner that mirrors the asymmetrical structure of the global economy and of the informational society. The nodes and hubs of the space of flows are also interconnected through secluded places along the axes of transportation and communication, from the airport's VIP lounges to the international hotels that keep the same style and physical environment across countries while cutting themselves off from the surrounding societies, so that they can form the enclaves of the space of flows within the space of places. The space of flows is formed by interpersonal micro-

²See my book *The Informational City*, Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1989; see also, for a more theoretical definition and discussion of the theory my paper "The space of flows, elements for a theory of the new urbanism," to be published by the Princeton University Series in Architecture.



networks that provide the information and the commands for telecommunicated macro-networks at the global level.

Alongside the emergence of the space of flows is the persistence of the space of places, rooted in history, culture, and social specificity. Indeed, people do live in places. But power rules through flows, and functions are also performed via the networks of the space of flows, be it capital flows, managerial decision making, or labor migration in an increasingly internationalized labor market.

Furthermore, we are not witnessing the shrinking of the world economy. While it is true that a substantial proportion of the human population lives in poverty, and while in absolute numbers the number of poor people grows over time, with their poverty being more and more striking in contrast to the technological potential of our civilization, it is also true that we are in the midst of an extraordinary process of industrialization and economic growth in many areas of the world. In contrast to the starvation of central Africa and to the misery of many regions all over the world, is the impressive industrialization of China and of East and Southeast Asia; the dynamism of Mexico and Chile; and the potential revitalization of Eastern Europe. Thus, we are in fact witnessing one of the greatest waves of industrialization in history, if we measure it by the sheer numbers of workers being thrown from the countryside into factories and craft shops.

Under the impact of this new process of development, as well as a result of the ruin of traditional agriculture under the new conditions of international trade, the rural masses of the world are being pushed into major urban centers within the same metropolitan area. These major urban agglomerations, in all countries, concentrate both the dynamic activities linked to the global economy and the survival activities often organized around the informal economy, the informal economy encompassing both semi-legal and criminal activities. Both economies, the global and the informal, are connected functionally, although their workers live different worlds, both culturally and spatially.

This merciless competition to thrive in the global economy and to survive in the local economy is pushing to its limit the compatibility between the production process and the natural environment. The new industrialization is taking place, as it did in Europe, the USA and the Soviet Union, without much social or environmental control, and it is taking place on a gigantic scale, with potentially devastating environmental consequences, repeatedly denounced in international meetings without much effective results in adopting conservationist measures. Under the current conditions of industrialization and urbanization, the world is on the edge of returning to the era of plagues, in spite of the tremendous improvement in medical knowledge and public health infrastructure. This is because primary health care and public hospitals will not be able to tame the epidemics resulting from the lack of sewage treatment or from the absence of control of chemical production or genetically engineered agriculture.



Mega cities concentrate all these processes in a given territory. As in the writings of Jorge Luis Borges, megacities represent the "Aleph", this point in the universe where everything from all times and all spaces comes together. Megacities are the nodes of the global economy, concentrating the directional, productive, and managerial upper functions, as well as the media, the real political power, and the symbolic capacity to create and diffuse messages. But they also function as magnets for their hinterlands, that is the whole country where they are located. Megacities should not be seen only in terms of their size, but in terms of their gravitational power toward a given region of the world. Thus, Hong Kong is not just its six million people, but also Canton and the Pearl River Delta, that is about 60 million people whose jobs, income, and symbols increasingly depend on Hong Kong's connection to the world economy (e.g.: Hong Kong firms employ 700,000 manufacturing workers in Hong Kong itself and 2 million in the Pearl River Delta).

Megacities articulate the global economy, link up the informational networks, and concentrate the world power, either as centers of it or as providers of the financial, symbolic, or voting power to the political leaders. But they are also the depositories of all these segments of the population that fight to survive, as well as of those groups that want to make visible their dereliction, so that they will not die ignored in areas bypassed by communication networks. Megacities concentrate the best and the worst of their societies, the most powerful functions and people, and the structurally irrelevant people who are ready to sell their irrelevance or to make "the others" pay for it.

In spite of all their problems, megacities will continue to grow, both in their size and in their attractiveness for the location of functions and for the life of people. This is because:

- They are the centers of economic, technological, and social dynamism.
- They are actual development engines of their own countries. If they go down, the countries will go down with them.
- They are the connecting points to the global network on which everybody relies in the new economy.

To be sure, some factors will slow down their pace of growth, depending on the accuracy and effectiveness of the policies designed to limit megacities growth. Family planning is working, so we can expect a continuation of the decline in the birth rate that is already taking place in most of the major cities in the world. Policies of regional development may be able to diversify the concentration of jobs of population in other areas of the country. And, I believe, the decline in the survivability of life in megacities will make them less attractive and even increase the morbidity and mortality rate in spite of the diffusion of medical advances.



However, overall, megacities will grow in size and power because they will keep feeding themselves both in population and in functions performed in their territory, because they are the nodal points of the dynamic, dominant global network. Thus, in a fundamental sense, the fate of humankind, and of each mega city's country, is being played out in the evolution and management of megacities. And this, ultimately, will depend on the political process that is building up in such new socio-spatial context.

EFFICIENCY AND DEMOCRACY IN THE MANAGEMENT OF MEGACITIES

The characteristics of the new global economy and the scale of the economic and environmental problems to be reckoned with make national governments increasingly powerless in the management of economic policy in general and urban policy in particular. This is not to say that national governments do not have an important role. They are critical actors, still hardly the main players in the management of problems in everyday life. This is for several reasons:

- a) In a world dominated by global economic flows, they are too small to confront and control such flows, and too big to be flexible enough, adaptive enough to evolve according to the changing economic conditions.
- b) National governments in various contexts have experienced an erosion of their legitimacy at different levels:
 - The end of the Cold War has removed the potential interest of many national governments for the major powers in their geopolitical strategies.
 - The growing social, ethnic, and territorial diversity of the political basis of national governments makes it increasingly difficult to keep together the social coalition necessary for cohesive, sustained policies.
 - The crisis of the cohesive ideologies of the social movements of the industrial era (such as the labor movement) has weakened the universalism of political values. The new ideologies (feminism, environmentalism, nationalism, and the like) emphasize identity and therefore weaken the basis for unitary political representation in an increasingly diversified society.
 - People excluded from the dynamic segments of the system in the Fourth World areas all over the planet tend to reconstruct their identity defensively, asserting their primary identity, ushering in an era of fundamentalist reactions, thus weakening any form of State that does not become itself the expression of such fundamentalism.



- a) In broader terms, the State, and particularly the national States, are losing control over their societies, characterized by a combination of individual withdrawal and of identities proclaimed outside the sphere of the State. The crisis of mass political parties as a form of channeling participation, and the lack of any viable alternative to replace them, is cutting off the population from their States and fueling a spiral of lawlessness and violence that is taking over the everyday life of major cities around the world.

There is indeed grassroots resistance to the sheer capitalist logic of the space of flows and to the crisis of political systems. This grassroots resistance often takes the form of community organizations. Their role is critical, both for survival and for the reconstruction of local networks of support and problem solving. They are probably the most positive development for the revival of social life in cities around the world, as can be seen in the nine case study narratives detailed in this book. However, they lack effectiveness in influencing major policy changes; they tend to be captured by activists or co-opted by bureaucracies, and, most of all, they are too often prone to withdraw into a localistic view of problems, that makes them inadequate to tackle the fundamental issues of the new urban world. In a word, they are a necessary but not sufficient condition for the management of the urban crisis.

Local governments are perhaps the key agents for development and democracy under the current conditions of the world we have described. They are small enough to be flexible to the economic and cultural variations that shake up societies. But for local governments to be a factor in managing crisis and change, several conditions must be met in a given context:

- Decentralization of power and resources from the national to the regional and local levels.
- Municipal decentralization within the urban unit.
- Citizen participation in government, based on a network of community organizations.
- Local governments able to combine technical competence with political vision.
- A strong Mayor system of government, with executive capacity, under the democratic control of an elected council.



- The relentless fight against corruption in the local governments by making them more democratic and giving access to the media, critical sources of information.

Is the analysis applicable to a new urban condition such as the one represented by megacities? Certainly, but with some important specifications that are critical to understand the policy recommendations I would propose for the management of megacities.

Bearing in mind that the two main features distinguishing megacities are their size and their role as nodes of the new global economy, the general elements proposed for the fostering of the effectiveness of local governments are as follows:

- a) Referring to their size, megacities have special problems for their management and for their democratic representation.
- b) On the issue of management, the size of megacities calls for a strong metropolitan government, internally decentralized, as the only effective instrument at the scale of the problems to be treated. The major difficulty for the existence of such metropolitan government is political: it might represent a formidable challenge to the authority of the national government. The way to overcome this obstacle, according to international experience, seems to be the creation of joint management committees between the national government and the metropolitan government to establish a system of issue-focused, strategic planning agencies in which both levels of government have their say. Thus, the national sources of power are preserved, but the actual management units are metropolitan.
- c) Concerning democracy, the size of megacities increases social segregation, concentrates social problems, and fosters localism, as communities tend to shrink their horizon to the level of the territory they can control. To avoid the growing distance between a technocratic metropolitan government and increasingly parochial local communities, the spatial structure of megacities should emphasize a multi-nuclear system in their settlement pattern, based on some self-sufficiency of each nucleus and reinforced with a variety of centers and sub-centers in the metropolitan structure. Finding support on such territorial basis, the structure of the metropolitan government should address the issue of democracy in megacities through three major lines of action:
 - The formation of citizens' "task forces" by issues.
 - The fostering of public life and of the urban centrality functions.



- The development of media policy connecting local life and electronic means of communication.
- a) Regarding the function of connectedness linked to megacities, the governments of megacities should take the initiative in the innovation of management and governance. Such innovations could include:
- Networks of metropolitan governments, sharing access to metropolitan data banks on policymaking issues, enabling them, for instance, to negotiate collectively with multinational companies around the world;
 - Networks of nonprofit and community organizations using international meetings, publications, newsletters, e-mail, conferences, etc.;
 - Close connection to the media both nationally and internationally;
 - Connection of megacities governments to the centers of strategic thinking on global issues and urban management;
 - Linkage to main international institutions; and
 - Ad hoc meetings and conferences between megacities' governments and multinational corporations on issues and policies of common interest.

Finally, in the development of this connecting function is absolutely critical the role of informal think tanks emerging from the civil society, such as the Mega-Cities Project. Both the strength and the weakness of such institutions is their fragility. They always risk either disappearing or becoming another international bureaucracy. At any rate, such informal, strategic organizations should not withdraw into the communities or, alternatively, establish themselves as a corporation. To be most effective they should go on with suffering an endless identity crisis, living in the twilight zone between system-challenging and powerless innovation and between sustainable changed agents and subsidized wishful thinking.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SOCIALLY SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF MEGACITIES

The emergence of megacities as a new form of human settlement raises fundamental challenges for policymakers. On the one hand, they are critical socio-environmental systems whose productivity becomes essential to position countries, regions, and cities in the new international division of labor. On the other hand, they concentrate social problems and political tensions to the point that institutional stability and civil coexistence depend on the political



management of megacities. Indeed, for megacities to unfold their economic, cultural, and institutional potential, they must fulfill the conditions of ecologically and socially sustainable development.

For most of the world, economic and technological development is still a fundamental goal, particularly when we are in the midst of a major technological revolution that could be put to the service of meeting the dramatic human needs of the majority of the population. The zero-growth ideology is simply the rationalization of the selfish interests of the privileged elite of the developed world. But our knowledge and our historical experience emphasize the need for the new model of development to be ecologically and socially sustainable.

By environmentally sustainable I mean that the model of growth should be based on parameters such that the underlying conditions of stability and development in a historically given society and in a given eco-system are renewable. By socially sustainable I mean a model of development that includes in its characteristics a set of social conditions that allow the model to renew itself while reaching out to the whole population. Social sustainability is not just a matter of social justice. Environmental conservation, democratic values, peace, and social stability depend upon the inclusiveness of the model of development vis-à-vis the large majority of the population, particularly under the conditions created in megacities. Indeed, megacities are becoming the epitome of the socially explosive situation created by the one-dimensional emphasis of developmental goals on certain functions and on a few social groups, as examples all over the world, from Caracas to Los Angeles, show in increasingly violent displays.

In order to make megacities viable human entities, policymakers must target the main issues to reckon with and select the tools to deal with such issues. The main sets of issues are techno-economic, spatial, social, and political.

First of all, megacities must be able to fulfill their role as engines of development of the new economy. This implies the building and maintenance of an infrastructure to make them able to keep their role as nodes in the global network of wealth and power: telecommunications, communications, and information systems. It also requires a technological transition in the megacities, setting up science and technology systems, diffusing new technology, and ensuring the linkage between technological development and the educational and human resources necessary to implement such technological development.³

Secondly, the spatial organization of megacities should help to make them dynamic and powerful, yet functional and manageable. The key tool to reach

³See on this particular matter the analyses and policy recommendations presented in my book with Peter Hall, *Technopolis of the World*, London: Rutledge, 1993.



such goals is the construction of a multi-nuclear megapolitan structure, based on a mass transit oriented transportation network. This structure requires the formation of new centers as quasi-self sustained, sub metropolitan units of significant size, fully integrated into the metropolitan structure (thus, not following the traditional pattern of new town decentralization but the actual historical experience of new towns as recentralizing elements within the same metropolitan area). Functions and residence should be spread out as much as possible to avoid excessive social and functional segregations so that the whole territory becomes multifunctional and integrated in its social composition (e.g.: mixing middle-class housing and low-income housing in the same broad area, so to avoid the concentration of urban crime and violence in the central area of the city, the only frictional point between extreme social groups.) The symbolic dimension of the city should be a fundamental matter of urban policy in megacities, since “new monuments and community oriented urban design together may provide a material basis for the expression of a shared identity in the otherwise anonymous space of megacities.”

The third major issue to be considered in policies towards megacities is the fostering of social integration, strengthening community organizations, connecting them to the political system, establishing a recognizable system of social and political rewards in influencing the system and in having greater access to decision-makers on the basis of the active involvement of people at the community level. A social integration policy should include also the active support of the vitality of the family structure, since family continues to be the fundamental form of social organization to prevent the disintegration of society under extreme tensions. Thus, it is important to revise welfare, the school system, health policy, housing design, neighborhood development, etc., taking into consideration the overarching goal of empowering the family structure and making it the pivotal form of social organization in megacities, for the time being.

Fourthly, on the political dimension, a new set of policies should be organized around the goal of creating or reinforcing a strong, democratic, decentralized, participatory, competent, and clean megapolitan government. As possible ways to make progress in such direction, I suggest::

- A strong mayor, directly elected by the whole population of the mega city.
- Joint task forces of the national and megapolitan government to deal with the main issues (e.g., housing, urban redevelopment, crime, technological policy, etc.).
- An influential megapolitan council elected on the basis of existing local governments in the spatial area of the mega city.



- Decentralization of megapolitan power through transfer of competencies and resources to the municipal governments and through the establishment of neighborhood councils with advisory status.
- Participation by citizens, both as members of community organizations and in the management of urban services at the local level.
- A competent megapolitan government that is based on highly professional and quasi-independent planning departments at the level of the mega city as a whole. Such departments should be appointed by the mega city's mayor, but report regularly to the mega city's council.
- To ensure a clean government, ad hoc legislation must be introduced, government operations must be fully open to media access, decentralized town meetings should be given the opportunity to expose wrongdoings by local officials, and judicially appointed committees of inquiry should be established to follow up on reasonable allegations about corruption or misconduct in the megapolitan government.

Finally, in order to design and implement these instruments for the management of megacities, it is necessary to develop new urban management technology at the scale of the problem. There is an urgent need for new thinking and new managerial strategies in the public sector, particularly at the local and regional level. Some initiatives could be adopted at the international level that could help to pave the way for organizational innovation in megacities. Among such initiatives we could consider: the creation of an International School of Metropolitan Management, like the Mega-Cities Institute currently under discussion, with a light central structure, networked to various centers, tapping into the support of public and private resources from various countries; the creation of a cooperative metropolitan data bank, working online, formed by the governments of megacities; the reinforcement of the existing networks of local, metropolitan, and megapolitan governments, and the creation of a flexible structure for their cooperation with each other and with the global nonprofit networks.

The implementation of this new management approach to megacities will not take place spontaneously. It will be the result of the pressures, demands, and decisions of some key social actors, supported by some key constituencies. Main actors interested in these new policies are the governments of megacities themselves, as well as their networks and associations. Among key constituencies to be mobilized toward the design and implementation of new megacities' policies are the metropolitan and local governments around the world, the media (whose role in influencing the population would be decisive), private foundations, major corporations, international institutions, the academic community, and networks of these among the participating cities that have been developed over the past decade by the Mega-Cities Project. Each constituency



should be approached specifically to be offered a role in the rethinking of megacities and in the design of potential solutions to their problems. This task has been initiated through the internal cross-sectoral partnerships in each mega city.

Such proposals may sound utopian. I believe they are not. I think that what is utopian is to believe that we can continue forever to live in a world characterized by an exclusionary model of development, by extensive environmental damage, by the dualization of societies, by the rise of fundamentalism, by the increasing de-legitimization of political systems, and by the growing inability of new values to bridge the gap between non-communicable identities, while all these processes take place in an era dominated by powerful technologies and communicated worldwide by live, manipulated media systems. We are already living in such a world, of which megacities are the most acute expression. If the kind of policies I have tried to discuss in this paper are not thought, considered, and implemented, the direct extrapolation of current experience could lead to a new, dark age for humankind. What is utopian is to think that without a new departure in policy design and policymaking, human life in megacities will be able to continue to muddle through. We are indeed at a breaking point in the urban experience.

Image: Megacities. Currently, Tokyo is the world's most populous city, but Jakarta is predicted to reach 35.6 million people by 2030 to become the biggest megacity of all. African cities will experience the fastest population growth, with Dar es Salaam and Luanda set to be among the six new megacities predicted to emerge by 2030. But while the populations of newer megacities are growing faster, the biggest cities in the developed world remain far more affluent, a trend that looks set to continue. Financial capitals. According to Euromonitor, finance centers such as London, New York, Tokyo and