

The Metropolitan City-State: International and Comparative Perspectives

Introduction to the Special Issue of *The Regionalist*

Lenneal J. Henderson

The Challenge of Global Metropolis

Now that the 21st century has arrived, clear changes in the settlement patterns and quality of life of the human species are abundantly evident. The greatest ethical, financial, technical and ecological challenge facing humanity is how to build, reformulate, and manage sustainable communities capable of both comfortably accommodating current and future human populations and doing so without continuing, and ultimately lethal, damage to the biosphere. Chatterji argues that, "the greatest problem facing humanity is how to raise the standard of living of the majority of human beings now living in poor countries."¹

Whether changes in human settlement patterns are a policy consequence of democratization or a response to autocratic decision-making,² rapid industrialization around the world and the continued displacement of millions of people from agriculture and rural existence have contributed to burgeoning metropolitan areas teeming with increasingly large and sprawling neighborhoods, barrios, quartos, and even entire municipalities of desperately poor people. Simultaneously, an expanding middle class, both in poor and not so poor nations, consumes millions of acres of green space annually for new housing subdivisions, commercial and retail shopping centers, and industrial parks.

More than half of the world's six billion people live in or very near a metropolitan megaplex. Although currently 45 percent of the world's population reside in urban areas, by the year 2025, two-thirds of humanity will permanently settle in the metropolis and most will be in Asia, Africa, or Latin America. Indeed, of the world's 28 mega-cities with populations of eight million or more, 22 will be in developing nations and five will be in Latin America. New York will drop to eleventh in rank among the world's metro city-states and Tokyo, Bombay, Lagos, Shanghai, Jakarta, Sao Paulo, Karachi, Beijing, Dhaka, and Mexico City will dwarf the New York metro area. Bombay will approach 28 million and metropolitan Tokyo will exceed 30 million.³ Clearly, the survival of humanity is inextricably intertwined with its ability to manage successfully the ethical, financial, technical, and ecological dimensions of the metropolitan region. Therefore, the objectives of this essay are:

- to provide a brief conceptual introduction to this issue of *The Regionalist* focused on the international and comparative aspects of large metropolitan areas;
- to offer comment on several salient characteristics of metropolitanization around the world; and
- to place metropolis worldwide in the context of human survival, not just a secondary, passing artifact of the global human condition.

Defining Key Terms and Concepts in the Study of Metropolis

Both in this article and in this volume, a number of terms and concepts are introduced to define and to explain metropolitan in a global context. This article refers to large and expanding metropolitan areas around the world as "metroplex," "megaplex," metropolitan areas, urban areas, and metropolitan regions. Clearly, "metropolitanization" is the process of moving from large city to multinucleated metropolis bound together by an oppressed transportation, telecommunication, energy, and public works infrastructures. Some authors refer to intensely urbanized provinces or regions as city-states or, as Peirce and his colleagues have argued, "citistates."⁴

Fundamentally, what these concepts and definitions share is a depiction of large, sprawling, and expansive metropolitan regions characterized both by increasing demographic density and spatial growth capturing most of the population increase in a nation.

However, these varied terms also suggest a typology of metropolitan regions ranging from the intensely dense but spatially compact metro areas like Bombay or Calcutta, India or Cairo, Egypt to independent or semi-autonomous city-states like Hong Kong, Dubai, or Singapore. This is no idle exercise in classification but an essential task of distinguishing key features and dynamics of comparative metro regions.

Policy and Management of the Global Metroplex

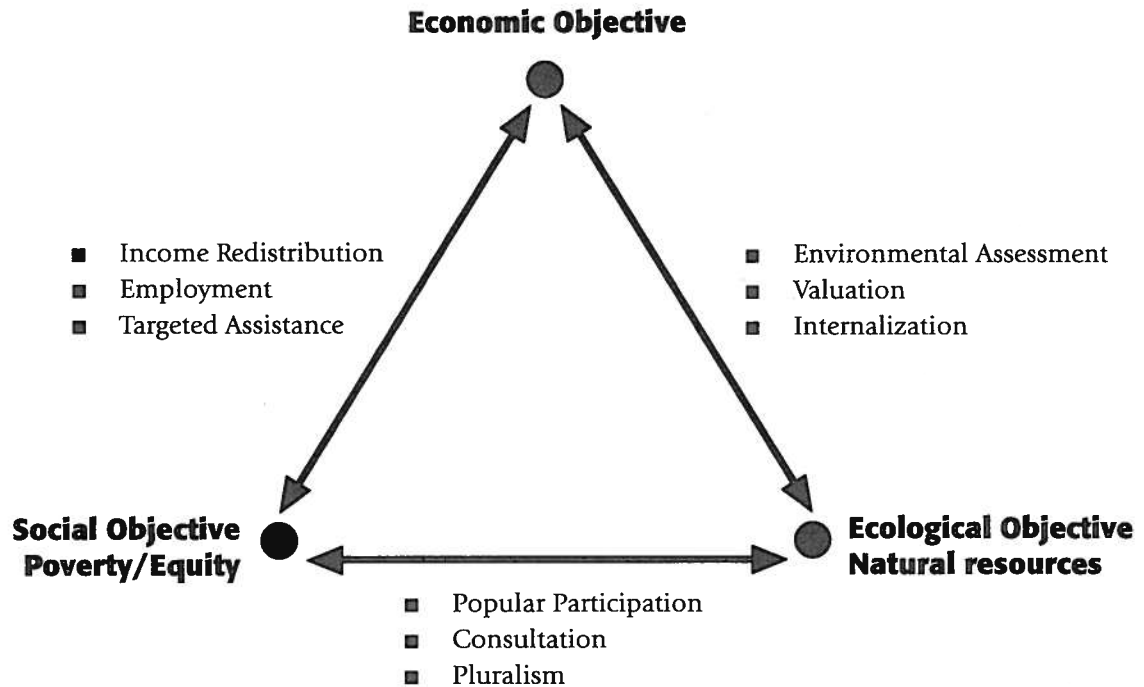
Given these definitions and terms, at least six interrelated ethical issues attend the emergence of the metropolitan city-state:

1. How to address socioeconomic inequities and their associated racial, ethnic, regional, gender, and national manifestations. "Haves and have-nots," North and South, whites and nonwhites, indigenous and imperial now act out severe economic and political power struggles on a tenuous urban stage. Beyond clear cultural variations, can a Universal Declaration of Human Rights

incorporate an urban or metropolitan dimension?

2. The protection and development of children and youth. According to the Population Reference Bureau, an increasingly large proportion of the world's metropolitan population is under the age of 25. Education, health care and criminal justice issues are significantly correlated with this emerging young population.⁵
3. The protection of other life forms we humans share with the biosphere. Rapid and uncontrolled urban growth is directly connected to egregious environmental problems. Ninety percent of raw sewerage is now dumped directly into rivers, tributaries, streams, and lakes comprising large watersheds surrounding, adjacent to, or pervading metropolitan regions.⁶
4. The creation of new ethics of finance and economics based on the economic incorporation of marginalized metropolitan populations. This ethical reality more accurately appraises the cost of excluding or devaluing any human population and adjusts the culture of wealth and opulence to confront the needs of entire human communities.
5. As James Mitchell has indicated, "Urbanization, especially rapid large-scale urbanization, is a major contributor to the rising global toll of disaster losses."⁷ Consequently, the metropolitan region is increasingly the arena for large-scale catastrophic disaster and emergency management challenges. Epidemiological,⁸ chemical, environmental, nuclear, terrorist, transportation, earthquake, weather-related, and other forms of human and ecological disaster can have apocalyptic consequences for the metropolitan region.
6. Accountability of public management for the performance of the metropolitan city-state. New imperatives and impulses focused on outcome-based performance systems are now reaching many parts of the world but may not fully appreciate the complex and expansive problems of the metropolitan megaplex.⁹ A related issue is the strategies of many nations, many with the urging of the World Bank, to decentralize gov-

Figure 1. Tradeoffs Among the Three Main Objectives of Sustainable Development



Source: Mohan Munasinghe

ernment so that substate institutions like provinces, states, small cities, and large urban areas assume more responsibility for the generation and management of public policy and for the successful performance of public sector programs.

The Universal Metropolitan Challenge

Even the metropolitan regions of North America face these ethical issues. For example, although Rothblatt, Sancton, and others acknowledge significant differences in the physical, socioeconomic, and managerial characteristics of American and Canadian cities, they are quick to point to the increasingly grave and complex challenges associated with large poor and increasingly nonwhite populations.¹⁰ Many of these challenges arise from the ownership, distribution and use of land and property.¹¹ The institutional patterns arising from these land-use patterns

combined with cultural differences among the populations comprising the metropolis raise serious issues about the financial structure and capability of metropolitan city-states.

Indeed, in American cities, the incorporation of large, low-income, inner-city communities into the progressive economic structure of the larger metropolitan region is among the early 21st century's most significant challenges.¹² This is comparable to the inclusion of large nonwhite and low-income townships into the metropolitan reconstruction of post-apartheid South Africa.¹³

Thus, the first and foremost challenge to the 21st century metropolitan region is its ethical structure and values as we seek truly sustainable communities. This is captured well by Mohan Munasinghe in Figure 1, the tradeoffs among the three major objectives of sustainable community in what we might refer to as the Munasinghe triangle.

Table 1. List of Indicators

- GDP per capita
- Number of hospital beds per 10,000 persons
- Average green space per 10,000 persons
- Number of cinemas and theaters per 10,000 persons
- Average expenditure on education per person
- Dwelling space per person
- Number of telephones per 10,000 persons
- Average wage per employee
- Number of doctors per 10,000 persons
- Population density
- Average water consumption per person
- Average electricity consumption per person
- Number of urban public transport vehicles per 10,000 persons
- Number of scientists and engineers per 10,000 persons
- Number injured and killed in traffic accidents per 10,000 persons
- Average savings per person at the end of the year
- Ratio of food to living expenditure
- Disposal rate of water waste
- Disposal rate of gas waste
- Disposal rate of solid waste
- Number injured and killed in fire accidents per 10,000 persons
- Number of color television sets per 100 families
- Percentage of families with gas
- Inflation ratio

A second essential element of the 21st century metropolitan city state is its financial condition. Mikesell has argued that, "governments exist to provide people valuable services that businesses or individuals are unwilling or unable to provide independently."¹⁴ In the mega-metropolitan regions of the world, the role of national and urban governments in highly concentrated economic and commercial activities is frequently driven by complex and

variegated fiscal policies. Huge metropolitan regions pursue tenuous budgetary, revenue, and public financing schemes seeking to hold together the physical infrastructure of the metropolis (roads, highways, rail transit, telecommunications, electricity, and other systems), fractured and desperate social systems, burgeoning and diverse industrial and commercial institutions, and connections to foreign sectors both resident in and beyond the boundaries of the metropolis.

Both the domestic fiscal policies endemic to global metropolitan regions and national monetary and trade policies are the tripartite foundations of sound metropolitan public finance. These foundations are invariably connected to the capacity of national governments to accommodate metropolitan needs for employment, education, housing, food, health care, water, and other basic social necessities. A recent report of the World Bank provides a global sampling of the varieties of national (largely metropolitan) strategies and experiences in balancing monetary, trade and fiscal policies.¹⁵

Another key challenge to global metropolitan regions is the management of their technical resources. Their ability to utilize complex information systems is among the key elements of metropolitan technical mastery. Huge databases containing vital demographic, socioeconomic, health, education, housing, industrial, commercial, transportation, and environmental information are critical sources of urban intelligence informing every particular of policy-making in the metropolis. More and more metropolitan areas are employing complex geographic information systems to plan and model alternative policy options.

Finally, as Michael Cohen and Kyu Sik Lee argue, "the strategy for protecting the urban environment is not inconsistent with that of improving urban productivity."¹⁶ Accommodating current and future urban demographic growth and the continuing rise of quality of life expectations among most of the populations of the metropolis will continue to pose grave ecological challenges. Intensity of fossil, hydro, forest, nuclear, and even renewable energy use, the concentration of urban waste, emissions, chemicals,

and noise and the impact of metropolitan mega-ecological function on the health of individuals, households, communities, and ecosystems is manifested in traffic congestion, air and water pollution, inadequate sanitation, erratic waste collection and disposal, destruction of green space, and degradation of marginal lands.¹⁷ Ultimately, both public policy and market-driven goals seek a better quality of life for all metropolitan citizens. Indeed, Chen Jingke and Henk Voogd have provided us in Table 1 with a list of working indicators of quality of life generated for their work on cities in China but applicable to most metropolitan regions throughout the world.¹⁸ ■

Lenneal J. Henderson is currently distinguished professor of government and public administration and senior fellow in the William Donald Schaefer Center for Public Policy at the University of Baltimore. He is co-managing editor of *The Regionalist* and a former associate editor of *The Urban Affairs Quarterly* (now *Urban Affairs Review*). He is on the part-time faculty of the human and organizational development program at the Fielding Institute and has lectured, taught, consulted, or conducted research in India, the Czech Republic, South Africa, Brazil, Hong Kong, Israel, the Netherlands, the People's Republic of China, and Australia.

NOTES

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2. See, for example, David S. Brown and Wendy Hunter. 1999. "Democracy and Social Spending in Latin America, 1980-92." *American Political Science Review*, Volume 93, No. 4, December 779-807. See also, Alan Gilbert, Editor. 1996. *The Mega-City in Latin America*. Tokyo, New York, and Paris: The United Nations University Press.
3. Population Reference Bureau. 1999. *World Data Sheet, 2000*. Washington, D.C.
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5. Chatterji, op.cit., p. 1.
6. The World Bank. 1998. *World Development Report, 1997*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank. Washington, D.C.
7. Cohen, Michael and Kyu Sik Lee. "Urban Development Policies in the 1990s: A Summary of World Bank Urban Policy Paper and Research Update," in Chatterji and Kaizhong, op. cit., pp. 7-15.
8. Mitchell, James K. 1999. "Natural Disasters in the Context of Mega-Cities," in James K. Mitchell, Editor, *Crucibles of Hazard: Mega-Cities and Disasters in Transition*. Tokyo and New York: United Nations University Press. pp.15-16.
9. See Bradley, David, Carolyn Stephens, Trudy Harpham, and Sandy Cairncross. 1992. *A Review of Environmental Health Impacts in Developing Country Cities*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank Urban Management Program.
10. See Henderson, Lenneal J. 2000 (forthcoming). *Performance and Accountability in Government.*
11. Henderson, Lenneal J. 1997. "Diversity Management in the Regional Metropolis." *The Regionalist*, Fall.
12. See Farvacque, Catherine and Patrick McAuslan. 1992. *Reforming Urban Land Policies and Institutions in Developing Countries*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank Urban Management Program.
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14. Mikesell, John L. 1991. *Fiscal Administration: Analysis and Applications for the Public Sector*. Pacific Grove, California: Brooks/Cole Publishing Company, 3rd Edition, p. 1.
15. The World Bank. 1998. *World Development Report 1997*. Washington, D.C.: The World Bank, p. 56.
16. Cohen and Sik Lee, op. cit., pp. 10-11.
17. See Naess, Arne. 1989. *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*. Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press.
18. Jingke, Chen and Henk Voogd. "Quality of Life and Regional Development in China." Manas Chatterji and Yang Kaizhong, Editors, *Regional Science in Developing Countries*, op. cit., p. 137.