

Forum: Economic and Social Council

Issue: Measures to support good governance in rapidly growing megacities

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Introduction

As the world's population grows rapidly, more and more people move towards urban areas, because urban areas have more job opportunities than rural areas. In fact, according to data issued from the World Bank, around 3 billion people live in cities. 80% of the global GDP is generated in cities. Rapid urbanization, or the increasing number of people living in urban areas, is a phenomenon that results in the physical growth of urban areas, and is linked to modernization and industrialization. There are a significant number of cities around the world that have large populations. However, only urban areas with extremely high populations, or more than 10 million people, are referred to as "megacities." Improving governance in megacities is a major issue, primarily due to the fact that such a large proportion of the world lives in these cities.

Megacities have been cited to be the world's most dominant, enduring social structures. This is because they are highly concentrated demographic and economic clusters. Connectivity matter much more than size. This is what megacities offer through acting as a hub of transportation and economic growth. And with this primary purpose in mind, that cities can offer such economic prosperity, and act as attractions of regional wealth and talent, shows that good governance is key in these cities. The purpose of governance is to properly conduct policy, action, and affairs of each individual entity; with specific guidelines to model the governance of megacities, economic wealth can flourish even further. The primary difference between governance of megacities and governance of urban areas with smaller populations is the distinction of degree in size, rather than quality in governance. Megacities are often cited as unplanned, primarily shaped by the people who live in them. They involve poverty, innovation, and opportunity, and to be able to properly govern these megacities would result in the economic betterment of all parties involved. Megacities are also influential in environmental factors such as their carbon footprint.

Definition of Key Terms

Megacity

A megacity is defined as a city with more than 10 million inhabitants. As of 2015, there were 35 megacities in existence.

Population growth

Population growth is the increase of the number of people in a population. When referring to megacities, this is specifically dedicated to the increasing population growth due to urbanization and people moving to megacities. Population growth is measured and distributed through censuses, and organizations that collect this data include specific Bureaus of regions – for example, the United States has the United States Census Bureau.

Urbanization

Urbanization refers the phenomenon of a population shift from rural to urban areas, as well as the way the society and urban areas adapt to accommodate this change. This is primarily caused by the need for jobs, as people can find work more easily in urban areas.

Background Information

Developmental stages of megacities

Megacities can be categorized into three major stages by their characteristics. Depending on the stage, the type of governance needed to properly manage the megacity depends, and the key issues of development associated with each type of megacity are different as well. Primarily, low-maturity megacities obviously need more adaptation in their styles of governance, as it can be inferred that their maturity is not as advanced due to a want of manageable governance. In terms of infrastructure, standards, demographics, transportation, and other categories, megacities can be categorized by the following. This has been determined by multiple studies conducted on megacities, and is a generally accepted classification method of megacities.

Low-maturity megacities

Examples of low-maturity megacities include Dhaka, Bangladesh and Lagos, Nigeria. These types of cities, in terms of demographics, generally have much younger populations due to a more recent “population boom.” This means that low-maturity megacities haven’t had as much time to develop their infrastructure, have limited mass transportation systems, and is challenged by a variety of factors that include poverty, housing, pollution, poor health, low education, and high natural disaster risk. Low-maturity megacities should primarily focus on developing infrastructure, transportation, and education before any other aspects of governance, and the issue of corruption must be addressed within governments of these megacities.

Medium-maturity megacities

Examples of medium-maturity megacities include Shanghai, China and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. While these cities are much more developed than low-maturity megacities, especially in terms of infrastructure and urban planning, as well as transportation, they still face some major issues that need to be considered. Firstly, a partially aging population should be addressed, as well as the pockets of poverty that do exist within these communities and unequal access to services. These cities still have major pollution, which must be dealt with, and are still partially vulnerable to climate/natural disasters.

High-maturity megacities

Examples of high-maturity megacities include London, UK and Tokyo, Japan. These cities shouldn't be showing much growth in terms of population, and their governing systems are generally pretty strong. Not only so, but their infrastructure, education systems, and health system are mostly set in place. However, some issues to consider for these types of megacities is the widening inequality gaps in these cities, as citizens are generally either in the higher classes or the lower class, as well as a focus on energy-efficiency and being more environmentally friendly.

Major areas/sectors of development

Infrastructure and housing

Cities with stronger and better structured governance generally have more complex infrastructure, which includes both city planning and investment in critical infrastructure and housing. Some existing infrastructure within most megacities could likely be modified to be more beneficial for the citizens and city planning. Infrastructure's purpose is to aid and assist people, and necessary infrastructure requires secure support, which will be elaborated upon under "disaster threat and risk." In addition, more housing must be acquired and built so that all residents are able to acquire housing in some form. These are two major issues for many megacities, as the population is growing too fast for the infrastructure and housing development to catch up, which means their building aspects of the megacity are not as strong as its demographic aspects. Administration in governments generally make decisions about constructing infrastructure and allocating housing. For example, infrastructure in Tokyo, which is a high-maturity megacity, is much more developed, because the government worked on the long-term solution of developing infrastructure before the population growth grew out of control. In contrast, in cities like New Delhi, the population growth is so overwhelming that many are unable acquire housing.

Mass transit system and transportation

For newly developing megacities, many do not have as developed transit to easily access different areas. Especially for those megacities that have larger boundaries, travelling between work and home may be difficult for some citizens. Public transportation, if properly developed, can be extremely effective for revenue for the government (in small forms) and convenience for its citizens. Examples may include public buses, subways, maglevs, and more, and if development is aided in this area, transportation will become more convenient. In addition, in terms of non-public transportation such as cars, in many cities, there are so many cars on the road that traffic has become horrible. Transport services are essential in helping people become more productive citizens and aiding the demographic enhancement. Transportation can be structured into transport hubs and individual transportation systems. For those megacities that have existed for a longer amount of time, New York City and Tokyo in particular, mass transit systems may be outdated and need improvement. In addition, a lack of public transportation may cause other environmental issues that need to be addressed, such as increased pollution and health hazards.

Disaster threat and risk

The biggest issue with disaster threat and risk is that some existing or being built infrastructure is prone to environmental threats like earthquakes and tsunamis. While the location of some of these megacities are prime, in the fact that disasters have a very small chance of hitting the cities (Earthquakes, tsunamis, floods, and more, are all attributed to location), prevention of any possibility would be the responsibility of governments. Governments should take measures that help the city in case of natural disasters. Risk of negative climatological events have generally increased over the past 50 years, and the concentration of insured and important assets in areas prone to disaster have increased as well. In cities less prone to disasters and more beneficially located, such as Shanghai, this may not be that big of an issue. However, in cities more prone to disasters, such as those located on the edge of tectonic plates or by the ocean, this should be addressed to a further extent.

Demographics of megacities

The population of megacities must also be considered in defining good governance. Each megacity is unique in its demographics, therefore, the institutional settings, infrastructure development, transportation, and disaster threat assessment needs are unique for the different demographics. For a population that has a much larger proportion of senior citizens, in contrast to one with a large proportion of younger citizens, the actions that should be taken to help their development would be drastically different. Age structures between each megacity varies widely: those that have recently experienced a population boom seem to have an influx of a much younger population, due to the fact that the younger population is searching for work, while those that have been around for longer times have generally more spread out and a higher proportion of the older population. For example, in Tokyo, one in five

citizens is 65 or older. That means that streets, transport services, and road crossings must be likely adapted for the elderly. In addition, for those younger citizens, a large amount of jobs must exist for these workers to all be able to find jobs. Therefore, there are consequences in the limitations of job resources. In fact, it is harder for older citizens to get jobs in megacities because they are unable to compete with the younger generations, who are willing to work for lower salaries. In addition, other demographics such as race, gender proportions, religious beliefs, and such, may also be considered if they are influential to acquiring housing, the job market, or transportation allocation. However, age is still one of the most primary factors here, because different age groups require drastically different living conditions and standards.

Key Issues

Institutional complexity and governmental fragmentation

Megacities are generally characterized by extreme governance fragmentation. This means that institutional reforms are much further behind than special development. The higher the amount of government actors, the higher the coordination costs. Governmental fragmentation refers to the absence of development of connections within different branches of the government. To unite the government, and to reduce governmental fragmentation by reducing the complexity of the government, would promote good governance. This would result in better communication between disciplines of the government. An example of government fragmentation would be that in the United States, Kansas has a high percentage of governing bodies and counties. In fact, there are 69.6 government entities for every 100,000 people in Kansas—in contrast with only 6.1 nationally in the United States. Many of these communities are bankrupt, because the resources that the government has is limited, especially in terms of revenue. A lot of this money is also going to police departments, trash departments, contractors, and city halls, which means that the resources are strained—which will be discussed further in the next section.

Weakness of public resources

In addition, megacities don't have great access to public resources and are economically underdeveloped due to the high ratio of population to resource. It is difficult for megacities to self-generate the resources needed to finance infrastructures, housing, transportation, and more. Therefore, the limit of resources available to them becomes an issue in governance. Governments of megacities should be able to maximize production while limiting resources needed to accomplish their goals and expand on infrastructure, housing, and transportation development. Not only are economic resources strained, but natural resources and social resources must be effectively distributed as well.

Private businesses and the informal sector

Private business actors and the informal sector wield systematic power due to their control over capital investment. By having influence on the government, they have a significant say and choice in urban planning and development. Therefore, in megacities, the private sector seems to have a dominant effect in decision making and plays a significant and important role in decision making, especially contrasted to other cities, where power is not so focused in the economic sector. Unplanned urbanization through invasion of vacant land also occurs, due to the unsustainable growth of megacities. These areas then urbanize independently from state entities, and rely on self-organization to operate. Informal economic activities can influence the growth of megacities significantly, without the government playing a role in it at all.

Entwinement between local and national governments

Megacities can be understood as a complex local public economy. Therefore, localities may keep taxes on goods and services low, and act especially responsive to citizens. This results in centralized governance, which is ineffective as it does not respond to the same type of governance as the national government of the megacity. Therefore, entwinement between these two entities must exist, and their values must coincide for further development. Federalism exists, for example, in the United States, in order to more specifically cater to specific regions' needs. However, it is clear that the national government has more power—in terms of controlling the economy, military action, and such. However, the local government plays an important role of representing each subject population, which is why it is important for these two entities to communicate.

Corruption of governments

In governments, corruption is a dominant and common problem. To ensure that there is not dishonest conduct occurring within the government, systematic checks may be created and ensured to promote good governance. As megacities continue to rapidly develop, there will be an increased need for powerful figures in the government and an increased need for governance. This gives rise to an even larger chance and proportion of officials who may be corrupt. This issue must be addressed within your resolution. Megacities, in specific, are more prone to corruption in governments because the governments that exist within these entities are usually larger than governments of other regions.

Mobility

Finally, one issue posed that must be solved through good governance is the mobility of megacities. Mobility can refer to transportation, which must be developed. Transportation is the primary difference between urbanized areas and rural areas, because not only is everything condensed together, there is easy to access transportation between areas. And while mobility predominantly refers to transportation within the community, this can also refer to how well people have access to resources and their mobility within the social ladder. Mobility is an important concept and issue to consider in promoting

good governance, as without mobility, people will not be able to act with the best interests of the community in mind.

Major Parties Involved and Their Views

Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative (EMI)

The Earthquakes and Megacities Initiative is directed towards building urban resilience towards earthquakes and other natural disasters. This is a scientific organization that wants urban disaster risk reduction, and employs a structured process that aligns its programs with international standards of megacities. This organization primarily believes that infrastructure should be more focused around risk avoidance, and recommends to many cities how this is plausible.

Stakeholders (Private Sector)

The private sector is primarily interested in the governmental development of megacities in terms of their own economic benefit. However, stakeholders' interest can be utilized to benefit governments: they may be willing to provide aid or support in improving public resources, transportation, and infrastructure, because it will benefit them as well in the long run.

Local/national government

Generally, megacities will have a local government that act more specifically to their needs than the national government. For example, in the United States, this would be the contrast between the Local Government of the city, which includes the mayor, and at least two other layers of administration, and the State or even the Federal Government. The local government is extremely important in determining education, police, fire stations and human services, while the Federal and State Governments may be more involved in constructing highways, taxes, courts, commerce, and more. Therefore, while the national governments are much more influential in the economic growth of nations, local governments are still important in developing specific aspects of megacities.

The Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC)

ECOSOC believes that urbanization and development of megacities must be properly governed, or there are many issues that would arise. It is currently working towards the strengthening of governance through setting guidelines, however hasn't accomplished too much in this sector. Many of its resolutions are more directed at urbanization in general, rather than specified to governance of megacities.

Timeline of Relevant Resolutions, Treaties and Events

Not much action has occurred regarding promoting good governance of megacities, which is why there aren't many significant events in this timeline. However, future treaties of cooperation between more developed megacities (and their nations) and less developed megacities (and their nations) and other events should occur to help address this issue.

Date	Description of event
September 2, 2012	<p data-bbox="432 562 719 591">UN Calls for Policies</p> <p data-bbox="432 629 1481 860">The UN calls for policies that address rapid urbanization in developing countries. More specifically, an official wants for developing countries not to be overwhelmed by urbanization through a series of government adjustments. He compares urbanization to a tsunami, how staggering growth can overwhelm a city. Anticipation is key.</p>
May 27-29, 2014	<p data-bbox="432 904 1385 934">ECOSOC Integration Segment Focuses on Sustainable Urbanization</p> <p data-bbox="432 972 1426 1202">ECOSOC focused on sustainable urbanization as an integration tool for the community. In particular, it addresses ineffective urban planning, strong governance, and financing systems, as well as inefficient resource use. ECOSOC recommended for countries to strengthen their governments in an attempt to better address proper governance in urban areas.</p>
September 14, 2015	<p data-bbox="432 1247 1134 1276">NTSI Megacities Carbon Project 'Project to Watch'</p> <p data-bbox="432 1314 1458 1494">The 'Project to Watch' was launched to measure the carbon output of megacities. Through revealing carbon emission patterns, and determining the carbon footprint of many of these cities, NIST aims to show existing megacities their effect on the world and how this may be alleviated or changed.</p>

Relevant UN Treaties and Events

- Population distribution, urbanization, internal migration and development (**E/CN.9/RES/2008/1**)
- Documents considered by the Commission on Population and Development at its forty-fifth session (**E/CN.9/2012/8**)
- Fertility, reproductive health, and development (**E/CN.9/2011/8**)
- Population growth, structure, and distribution (**E/1999/INF/2/Add.2**)

Evaluation of Previous Attempts to Resolve the Issue

The human settlements program of the United Nations, otherwise known as the Habitat II Agenda, brought together high level representatives from both local and national governments—as well as other influential entities in the development of megacities, such as the private sector, NGOs, research institutions, and the media. This program was aimed at ensuring shelter for all human settlements, and worked towards developing the infrastructure and housing of many megacities.

There have not been many significant actions taken to resolve this issue. However, there are some organizations that exist (such as the Earthquake and Megacities Initiative), that promote and develop frameworks for specific areas of success in governance of megacities. Please refer to possible solutions, below, to craft your own solution to this issue that encompasses all of the key issues above.

Possible Solutions

The most viable solution to help promote good governance in megacities is to outline a structure to which all these cities should follow. Although this may be different for each individual megacity, especially those differing in maturity and growth potential, some major solutions to focus on are structural designs such as **spatial information management**, **models of sustainable development**, and **technological advances**. Only if the proper systems are set in place, existing governments can focus on expanding the wealth and prosperity of megacities.

Spatial information management refers to ‘actionable intelligence’ that can support more proactive decision making within governance structures. It has generally been addressed as a tool needed to improve governance of megacities, however, there has been difficulty in determining how exactly this management can be used effectively. Spatial information management includes data collecting and management, data integration, and utilizing 3D city modelling to model out megacities. This can determine how demographics, environmental data, infrastructure and network data, and other data, influence how the megacity operates and how this can be manipulated for improved and proper governance.

Models of sustainable development primarily refer to creating or referencing model megacities and how they can be mimicked through a set of guidelines for individual megacities. These models of sustainable development can be proved effective through a variety of methods. Technological advances can also be positively utilized as an aspect of a model of sustainable development. For example, in the cases of transportation and infrastructure, new and innovative designs may be able to limit resources that are needed while maximizing growth and capacity.

In addition, corruption in government officials should be limited through organizational checks and other measures. People holding governmental jobs should make a stronger effort to strengthen their own policies in order to match the growing need of megacities, especially in those megacities where development is unable to keep up with the population growth.

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