THE MEGA-CITIES CONSORTIUM
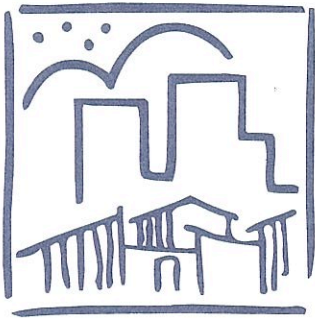## A Transnational NGO Network Transforming Urban Policy and Practice

With this document we launch the Mega-Cities Consortium. Mega-cities are our future. Their fate hinges on the problem-solving capacities of citizens, communities, and cities worldwide. We have developed a strategy that harnesses this immense resource of human creativity in a collaborative effort to transform the way cities work.

The Mega-Cities Project has now completed its first ten years of work. We are a transnational non-profit network with local cross-sectoral teams in 18 of the world's largest cities. Our work has strengthened the civil society within and among these cities, working with leaders at every level to accelerate the problem-solving process and affect urban policy.

As we approach Habitat II, the June 1996 "City Summit" in Istanbul, we are poised to make the leap to the next level of service and impact. For the past eighteen months, our regional teams and partners have been grappling with the ways to meet this challenge by creating a collective learning, research, and problem-solving institution. We have conducted a worldwide benchmarking study of successful initiatives in leadership development for complex, cross-boundary problem-solving. This culminated in a Spring 1996 Brainstorming Session at the Smithsonian Institution where top-level scholars, educators, and institution-builders conceived of the essential programmatic components for preparing the next generation of urban leaders.

We will be refining these ideas further at our Global Coordinators' Meeting, and a series of open workshops that we are convening during Habitat II. Building on this feedback, we will devise a feasibility study, work plan, and pilot program to jump-start this venture.

We have designed a transparent method of maximizing the diversity of input into our process. In that spirit, we have laid out our eight **Original Goals** as articulated in 1986; our **Achievements** during our first few years; the **Lessons** we derived from our interventions; and the logical **Next Steps** for transforming urban policy and practice from the neighborhood to the international level through **Shaping A Mega-Cities Consortium**.
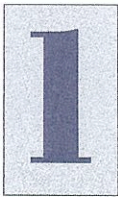
The Mega-Cities Consortium
A Transnational NGO Network Transforming Urban Policy and Practice

The Mega Cities Project
1986-1996 ⟶ **The Mega-Cities Consortium**
1996-Onward

Original Goals	Achievements	Lessons Learned	Shaping The Future

1

Focusing Attention on the World's Mega-Cities

Achievements

◆ Brought mega-cities to the forefront of public attention through 150 articles in the print media worldwide, plus radio and television coverage

◆ Shifted the image of mega-cities from one of despair to hope

◆ Raised public consciousness of mega-cities as the crucible of new social and technological solutions

Lessons Learned

◆ An anti-urban bias prevails among funders and governments alike

◆ To change perceptions and resource allocations, use mass media and opinion leaders in each sector

◆ Open democratic discourse is essential to changing the paradigms and behaviors that perpetuate the status quo

Shaping The Future

◆ **Targeted Outreach Strategy:** Utilize the full array of communication technologies to make decisionmakers at every level more responsive to the needs of cities and their diverse neighborhoods

◆ **Leveraged Funding Strategy:** Raise awareness in the business, government, and philanthropic sectors of the advantages of investing in sustainable urban communities

◆ **"Visions for the Future of Mega-Cities" Series:** Develop a book, multimedia, and television series targeted to popular audiences drawing upon the work of the best painters, photographers, writers, and poets in each city

Mega-Cities Timeline: 1986-1996

1986
■ Mega-Cities Project launched at the N Academy of Sciences.
■ *"Migration and Population Distributio* with Bruce Schearer, produced for UN

2

Building a Transnational, Non-Profit Network

◆ Built a network of fieldsite teams in 18 mega-cities (Bangkok, Bombay, Buenos Aires, Calcutta, Cairo, Delhi, Jakarta, Karachi, Lagos, London, Los Angeles, Manila, Mexico City, New York, Paris, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, and Tokyo) with a Core Office in New York

◆ Recruited outstanding professionals as fieldsite Coordinators based in host institutions, NGOs, or research centers

◆ Created new partnerships by forming Steering Committees composed of leaders from government, business, NGOs, grassroots groups, academia, and the media

◆ Convened a series of nine annual Mega-Cities Coordinators Meetings hosted by the Mayors of selected cities in the network

◆ Assembled a Global Advisory Board of pre-eminent urban leaders from each sector

◆ Linked cities directly without national government intervention

◆ There is a pressing need for a transnational independent sector, as a civil society parallel to multinational corporations and government agencies

◆ Since the poor, the disenfranchised, and unborn generations cannot pay fees-for-service, the philanthropic community must act in stewardship for them

◆ The social architecture for a transnational NGO network is maximum autonomy and flexibility for local fieldsites, bound together by a collectively forged vision and mission

◆ Authoritarian national and local governments jeopardized, but could not extinguish local Mega-Cities efforts

◆ **Expanded Mega-Cities Network:** Expand the network to include the remaining mega-cities, and to shape urban choices in the emerging democracies of South Africa, Eastern Europe, and the former Soviet Union

◆ **Regional Centers for the Transformation of Mega-Cities:** Create a system of Regional Centers that serve as research, resource, and coordinating nodes for all Mega-Cities Consortium fieldsites, and provide upward and downward linkages with the Core Office

◆ **Global Mega-Cities "Brain Trust:"** Mobilize and expand the existing Global Advisory Board and transform its function to include generating both creative problem-solving strategies, and direct contact with the next generation of urban leaders

3

Identifying, Documenting, and Disseminating Successes

◆ Developed a cross-cultural method for identifying and documenting urban innovations, and criteria for evaluating success

◆ Identified nearly 1000 innovations in the areas of environment, income generation, and democratization

◆ Documented the most successful initiatives through a database, case studies, and videos

◆ Designed a targeted dissemination strategy, utilizing different products to reach different audiences

◆ The density, proximity, and diversity of mega-cities makes them richly generative of social and technological innovations

◆ While innovations emerge from every sector, civil society is the most fertile source

◆ The most creative solutions frequently arise at the intersection of policy areas, such as poverty and the environment

◆ Identifying, documenting, and disseminating urban innovations is not sufficient in itself to create social change

◆ **Technical Assistance Service:** Offer technical assistance in the methodology for identifying, documenting, and evaluating the "best practices," and updating the database that UNCHS is creating

◆ **Multimedia Resource Centers:** Establish multimedia Resource Centers in each city to serve as archives for written and video documentation of innovations, and relevant and timely research on mega-cities

◆ **Information Product and New Technologies Center:** Create a state-of-the-art approach to disseminating and packaging information

...laris, articles, books, television documentaries, video training modules, CD-ROMs, and full use of Internet potential

◆ **New Paradigm Incentive Program:** Promote the structural changes necessary for primary innovation to occur, i.e. an open society which rewards risk and allows for system-challenging innovation.

4

Transferring and Adapting Urban Innovations

◆ Overcame the "market imperfection" in information flow on urban innovations

◆ Demonstrated that innovations can be effectively transplanted across diverse cultures, sectors, and policy areas. Transfers include:

➡ 15 cross-national transfers (starting with two from the South to the North), and

➡ 31 cross-neighborhood transfers within and between New York and Los Angeles

◆ Despite their political, social, cultural, and economic diversity, mega-cities can fluidly share solutions to the problems they face in common

◆ Innovation transfer must be driven by the "import" not the "export" model

◆ "Seeing is Believing:" Innovation transfer is best stimulated through site visits and experiential learning

◆ Transfer is most effective when based on a peer-to-peer learning approach

◆ Grassroots leaders are more receptive to engaging in cross-national transfers when they have engaged in transfers within their cities and regions

◆ **Grants Program for Social Entrepreneurship:** Establish a competitive grants program to support open society entrepreneurs and a plurality of groups and efforts toward workable cities

◆ **Integrated Problem-Solving Studios:** Undertake Integrated Problem-Solving Studios in specific communities that draw upon our database as inspirational material for new innovations

◆ **Training in Transfer Replication and Adaptation:** Create training manuals and modules to help others utilize our tried and tested methods for mutual learning

1989

■ Mega-Cities Project presented at 2nd Summit of World Major Cities in Istanbul.
■ Tokyo, Bangkok, Beijing and New Delhi join the Network.
■ **3rd Mega-Cities Coordinators Meeting** in Nairobi at UNCHS.
■ Selection Criteria and Methodology for Identifying and Documenting Innovations adopted by global network and tested in Nairobi site-visits.
■ *"Urban Infrastructure in the 21st Century"* article published in *Worldlink.*

1990

■ Citation from Los Angeles Mayor Bradley for global exchange.
■ Bombay, Jakarta and Moscow join the Network.
■ **4th Mega-Cities Coordinators Meeting** in Mexico City hosted by Mayor Camacho Solis.
■ Special Issue of *Cities,* The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning produced by Mega-Cities.
■ *"Small Steps for Big Cities"* video produced by UNDP.

Original Goals	Achievements	Lessons Learned	Shaping The Future

5

Seeking the Next Generation of Urban Solutions

Achievements

◆ Contracted experts to produce papers on promising "state of the art" prototypes and as yet untested ideas in selected problem areas:

⟹ Democratization

⟹ Poverty and income generation

⟹ Environmental regeneration

⟹ Women's empowerment

◆ Identified promising new technologies for 21st century infrastructure, such as:

⟹ Continuous process robotics

⟹ Satellite communication

⟹ Photonics

⟹ Computer Aided Design

⟹ Ceramics and new materials

⟹ Biotechnology

Lessons Learned

◆ No one expert or institution possesses sufficient knowledge and experience to compile the "state of the art" on a global basis

◆ Of our initial 16-step strategy, the four incomplete steps are:

⟹ Pinpointing unmet needs

⟹ Decentralizing the search for promising prototypes

⟹ Envisioning the desirable city

⟹ Creating integrated strategies

Shaping The Future

◆ **Regional "State-of-the-Art" Search Teams:** Decentralize the search for promising solutions by utilizing Regional Teams to explore the "state of the art" on specific urban issues in their regions

◆ **Urban Observatory and Incubator:** Utilize Mega-Cities fieldsites as a wellspring for new ideas; a greenhouse for the next generation of urban innovations, and as an incubator for new ventures

◆ **Worldwide R&D Collaboration:** Aggregate market demand to motivate R&D efforts and encourage cutting edge urban technologies

◆ **Public/Private Partnerships:** Create new relationships between business, governement, and communities, filling in the gaps in social investment and resulting in "win-win" situations for both parties

◆ **Consulting Services:** To governments, businesses, non-profits, and international agencies, with services including:

⟹ multisectoral strategic planning

⟹ corporate/community partnership development and investment planning

⟹ designing projects and programs with meaningful citizen participation

6

Achievements

◆ Developed the leadership skills of 120 grassroots leaders in New York and Los Angeles through a three-year program that included:

⟹ Celebrating their local innova-

Lessons Learned

◆ The most lasting form of leadership development involves peer-to-peer learning, not "expert trainers"

◆ Innovation transfer is not only a successful leadership development

Shaping The Future

◆ **Global Grassroots Leadership Development Programs:** Replicate our model for grassroots leadership development in all of the mega-cities as a way to strengthen civil society

Strengthening and Linking Grassroots Leadership

→ Creating the conditions for peer-to-peer learning through a mini-grants program

→ Linking them to their counterparts in government, business, academia, and media

◆ Unanticipated outcomes included:

⇒ Ongoing Peer Leadership Councils, and

⇒ The creation of Americans for Better Communities (ABC), a new organization of grassroots leaders in New York, Los Angeles, and Chicago

groups

◆ Despite perceptions to the contrary, grassroots leaders are acutely aware of the impact of global forces on their local communities and eager to find common cause with their peers worldwide

nars: Select cross-cultural, cross-sectoral cadres of promising young leaders, convening them in a different mega-city each year to focus their combined talents on a problem in a specific community

◆ **Mediation and Dispute Resolution:** Aiding communities in finding common ground and developing their own capacity for solving internal conflicts

◆ **Informal Sector and Small Enterprise Development:** Promoting domestic and community stability via affordable capital lending and business training for microenterprises, and developing the capacity of emerging trade and business associations

◆ **Building the Capacity of Local NGOs and CBOs:** Developing the institutional strengths of community and service organizations through transparent networking and an appreciative inquiry-based approach to management

1993

■ *Time* magazine publishes cover story on Megacities.

■ Manila joins the Network.

■ **7th Mega-Cities Coordinators Meeting in Jakarta.**

■ *"Mega-Cities: Global Urbanization and Innovation,"* published in Urban Management Policies and Innovations in Developing Countries.

■ *"Mega-Cities: Sharing Approaches That Work,"* video produced.

■ São Paulo's Alert II Clean Air Campaign transferred to New York City as Green Alert/No Drive Day.

7

Scaling Up into Public Policy

◆ Key urban institutions currently utilizing our approach include:

⇒ UMP: The UNDP/World Bank/UNCHS Urban Management Program

⇒ The LIFE Program (UNDP)

⇒ The UNCHS Sustainable Cities Program

⇒ UN Volunteers/UN Research Institute for Social Development (UNRISD)

⇒ German Marshall Fund's Inner City Report Card Project

⇒ National Academy of Sciences Infrastructure Committee

⇒ HUD's Urban Excellence Awards

◆ Our appreciative approach to cities has been incorporated into the structure and content of the Habitat II Conference in Istanbul in 1996

◆ Innovations can achieve scale horizontally (through multiple replications) or vertically (through policy impact)

◆ The short-term perspective and lack of continuity in local administrations makes city governments particularly resistant to risk and change

◆ National governments often see local government's independence as a threat, and to different degrees limit local autonomy and access to resources

◆ Through persistence of vision and commitment, relatively small non-profits can have major policy impact

◆ **Urban Performance Indicators Project:** Develop and publish cross-cultural performance indicators that measure the strength of civil society, and correlate it to the political stability and economic vitality of mega-cities

◆ **Public Policy Advocacy Campaigns:** Advocate for a climate more conducive to civil society in mega-cities through several measures, such as:
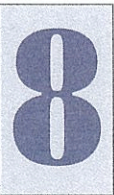
⇒ Tax incentives for philanthropy

⇒ Removing obstacles to the incorporation of non-profit organizations, and

⇒ Opening new channels for funding micro-level initiatives

◆ **Inter-City Collaborative Task Forces:** Create mechanisms for inter-

1994

■ Habitat II Secretary General Wally N'Dow endorses Mega-Cities Project initiatives.

■ Urban Innovations Exposition and Award Ceremony held in New York City.

■ Lagos, Karachi and Paris join the Network.

■ **8th Mega-Cities Coordinators Meeting in Cairo,** accompanied by community based delegation from Manila to visit the Zabbaleen Project.

■ UNDP-LIFE funds Zabbaleen transfer to Manila and Bombay.

■ Bangkok's *Magic Eyes* transferred to Rio de Janeiro as children-based anti-litter camp

■ Los Angeles' *Small Business Toxic Waste Reduction Program* transferred to Rio de Jan part of the Guanabara Bay De-pollution Project.

immigration, crime, drugs, or AIDS

8

Deepening Our Understanding of Deliberate Social Change in Cities

◆ Produced analytical articles, monographs, and books exploring the issue (see sample references, below)

◆ Refined our self-reflective learning process and derived conceptual tools based on our experience

◆ Integrated our work into the current discourses on global urbanization, the diffusion of innovations, and social capital / civil society

◆ "Learning by Doing:" Breakthrough thinking occurs through direct engagement and concrete, structured experience

◆ To grasp the complexity of urban systems requires a great diversity of perspectives—the more heterogeneous the better the chances of creative problem-solving

◆ **The Mega-Cities Institute:**
Create a Mega-Cities Institute explicitly devoted to cross-sectoral, cross-cultural, cross-disciplinary experiential education and research. This will involve:

⇒ Bold, proven, participatory methodologies for teaching and training mid-career professionals, community leaders, and graduate students

⇒ Linking academic urban programs and research centers worldwide

⇒ Setting out a sequential and cumulative research agenda, while starting with a cross-cultural research framework on mega-cities and civil society

⇒ Exposing young people to catalytic experiences through internships and innovation site visits in other cities

⇒ Translating the cumulative learning of the Mega-Cities Consortium into a curriculum adaptable from secondary school through graduate school

This Institute will spark the creativity and multiply the impact of diverse types of emerging and existing urban leaders in meeting the complex challenges of the world's mega-cities in the 21st century

We invite you to join us in the new endeavor to strengthen open society locally and globally.

For circulation at the celebration of the 10th Anniversary of the Mega-Cities Project at the Habitat II "City Summit" in Istanbul and the launching of the Istanbul Mega-Cities Project

Mega-Cities Citations for Original Goals: 1. "Mega-Cities: Global Urbanization and Innovation" in *Urban Management: Policies and Innovations in Developing Countries (1993)*; "Mega-Cities" (cover story) in Time Magazine (January 11, 1993); 2. *The Mega-Cities Project* (original 1988 Proposal); 3. The Mega-Cities Project Methods Packet, The Mega-Cities Project Innovations Catalogue/Database, *Environmental Justice: Promising Solutions at the Intersection of Environment and Poverty* (forthcoming); 4. "Sharing Approaches that Work" in Cooperation South (May 1995); "The Mega-Cities Project and the Diffusion of Innovations" a commissioned paper by Everett Rogers; 5. "Megacities and Innovative Technologies" in *Cities* (May 1987), The Mega-Cities Project "State of the Art" paper series; 6. *Urban Leadership for the 21st Century: Scaling Up and Reaching Out from the Neighborhood Level*; 7. "Scaling Up into Public Policy: Lessons Learned from the Mega-Cities Project," a paper presented at the EcoHab Conference (January 1996); 8. "A Dual Strategy for Deliberate Social Change" in Cities: The International Journal of Urban Policy and Planning (February 1990).