

angles; and it will require a science-policy process that while grounded in a realist conception of environmental change, embraces the plurality of partial, cultural perspectives held on any issue, with explicit recognition of the political or economic agendas which may inform them. This highlights the challenge to develop greater understanding of the culture and politics of global science and policy institutions, with a view to defining where room for manoeuvre or space to recast debates might lie. And it recasts citizen participation and the sustenance of cultural diversity in far more political terms, with self-determination in knowledge, ideas and organization at their core.

#### Notes

1. K. S. Milton, *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology*, London, Routledge, 1996, p. 13.
2. This position differs from the pure cultural determinism which is sometimes associated with ethnology, and which holds that there is no 'environment' independent of cultural constructions of it.
3. See J. Fairhead, *Indigenous Technical Knowledge and Natural Resource Management in Africa: A Critical Review*. (Paper prepared for SSRC Conference on African Agriculture, Dakar, January 1992.)
4. See M. Leach, *Rainforest Relations: Gender and Resource Use Among the Mende of Gola, Sierra Leone*, Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, and Washington, Smithsonian Institution, 1994.
5. See J. Vansina, *Paths in the Rainforest: Toward a History of Political Tradition in Equatorial Africa*, London, James Currey, 1993.
6. See J. Fairhead and M. Leach, *Misreading the African Landscape: Society and Ecology in a Forest Savanna Mosaic*, Cambridge and New York, Cambridge University Press, 1996.
7. J. P. Brosius, 'Endangered Forest, Endangered People: Environmentalist Representations of Indigenous Knowledge', *Human Ecology*, Vol. 25, No. 1, 1997, pp. 47–69.
8. A. Agarwal, 'Dismantling the Divide Between Indigenous and Scientific Knowledge', *Development and Change*, Vol. 26, 1995, pp. 413–39; see also Brosius, *op. cit.*
9. See M. Thompson, M. Warburton and T. Hatley, *Uncertainty on a Himalayan Scale: An Institutional Theory of Environment Perception and a Strategic Framework for the Development of the Himalaya*, London, Ethnographica, Milton Ash Publications, 1986; J. Ives and B. Messerli, *Himalayan Dilemmas: Reconciling Conservation and Development*, London, Routledge, and New York, United Nations University, 1989.
10. See, for example, B. Latour, S. Woolgar and J. Salk, *Laboratory Life: The Construction of Scientific Facts*, Princeton, New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1986.
11. See, for example, R. Bhaskar, *Scientific Realism and Human Emancipation*, London, Macmillan, 1986; D. Haraway, 'Situated Knowledge: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective', *Feminist Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 3, 1988, pp. 575–99.
12. Partly based on S. P. Kapitzka, 'The Phenomenological Theory of World Population Growth', *Uspekhi-Physics*, Vol. 39, No. 1, 1996, pp. 57–72.
13. E. Roe, 'Except-Africa: Postscript to a Special Section on Development Narratives', *World Development*, Vol. 23, No. 6, 1995, pp. 1065–70.
14. 'Discourse' has a variety of connotations in academic debate and everyday usage; the sense meant here is closest to that in the work of Foucault (e.g. M. Foucault, 'Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972–1977', Brighton, The Harvester Press.
15. See Milton, *op. cit.*
16. J. Burgess, 'The Production and Consumption of Environmental Meanings in the Mass Media: A Research Agenda for the 1990s', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, N.S. 15, 1990, pp. 139–61.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 141.
18. For example, W. Sachs, *Global Ecology, Conflicts and Contradictions*, London, Zed Books; M. Miss and V. Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, London, Zed Books, 1993.

## Chapter 7 Cities, culture and globalization

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### Urbanization in a global era

Since Babel, the city has been the symbol of the tension between cultural and linguistic integration on the one hand, and diversity, confusion and chaos on the other. The city has also been the symbol of change and innovation. Current processes of globalization undoubtedly impact on cities and their cultural life. What happens to cities with the changes in communications, information and transport technologies? How do demographic patterns of urbanization, new forms of urban poverty and environmental threats combine their influence with the technological revolution?

This chapter will look at cities through a cultural lens. Everyday city life involves a constant interplay between the global and the local. Furthermore, cities are the meeting places of diverse peoples: 'natives', migrants and tourists, groups with various levels and depths of belonging. The chapter will show cities as the loci of cultural diversity and interculturality, and therefore of cultural creativity.

The twentieth century is the century of urbanization and city life. Never before in the history of humanity has urban life been so prevalent, and the turn of the century will find us in an urban world, with pockets of rural life. The passage from one situation to the other is a complex phenomenon,

involving major technological, economic, social, political and cultural dimensions.

In 1950, 29.3% of the world population lived in urban areas; in 1994 it reached 44.8%, and the estimates for the year 2025 are that 61.1% of the world population will be living in urban areas.<sup>1</sup> That change is coming about through three mechanisms: the massive movement of people from the countryside to towns and cities; 'natural' population growth of city dwellers; and the spatial expansion of cities and towns, incorporating adjoining rural areas to urban growth.

There are wide variations among countries and regions: the most developed areas of the world became urbanized earlier, and by now three-quarters of their population live in urban areas, a proportion that is expected to grow to 84% in the next thirty years. The least-developed countries have 21.9% of their population in urban areas, and this proportion

will grow to 43.5% in 2025. Thus, the process of world urbanization is still in the making.

Obviously, mega-cities (here taken to mean cities with more than 8 million people) differ from those of less than 500,000 inhabitants. The mega-cities of the world are growing rapidly, particularly in Asia. In 1950, only New York and London fitted the category. In 1994, there were 22 cities of that size, and 16 of them were in the less-developed regions of the world.

Actually, a double process is under way: urbanization, implying growth of towns and cities, and 'metropolization', i.e. the growth of the largest urban concentrations. In some parts of the more developed world, a counter-trend is also taking place, namely the de-concentration of population from some mega-cities into suburban areas or smaller cities, first experienced in the United States and later in some European countries and Japan. Thus, some important cities in Europe and the United States have reduced their populations in the last twenty years: Milan reduced its population by 23%; Naples by 17%; London by 10%; Pittsburgh by 7.4%, and Cleveland by 8.4%. In the future, this counter-urbanization may occur in less-developed areas of the world. In fact, the rate of growth of mega-cities in Latin America already slowed down during the 1980s.

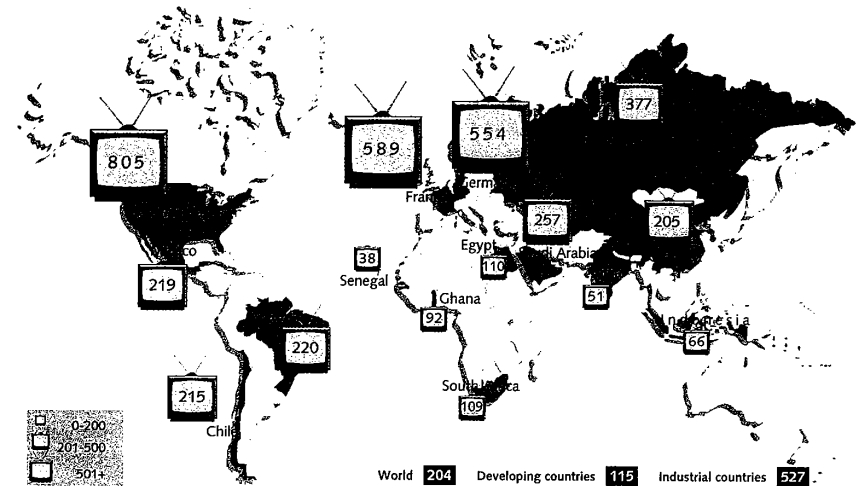
What difference does it make whether one lives in a rural area, in a small city, or in a mega-city? Because of better communications and global access to new technologies, differences tend to blur in some respects, provided rural residents have the opportunity to access this global communicative network. Gaps are still extremely large. UNESCO's statistics show that in the early 1990s, there were about ten TV sets per 1,000 inhabitants in the least developed countries in the world. Rural illiterate women have practically no access to TV, radio or movies. More than continuums and gaps, what we have is clefts and ruptures.

There is nowadays a global system of cities, and this requires us to look at the world as 'one world'. At the top, a transnational business class is

TABLE 1  
MEGA-CITIES OF THE WORLD: POPULATION  
(MILLIONS) IN 1994 AND 2015 (ESTIMATED)

Rank	1994	2015
1.	Tokyo (26.5)	Tokyo (28.7)
2.	New York (16.3)	Bombay (27.4)
3.	São Paulo (16.1)	Lagos (24.4)
4.	Mexico City (15.5)	Shanghai (23.4)
5.	Shanghai (14.7)	Jakarta (21.2)
6.	Bombay (14.5)	São Paulo (20.8)
7.	Los Angeles (12.2)	Karachi (20.6)
8.	Beijing (12.0)	Beijing (19.4)
9.	Calcutta (11.5)	Dacca (19.0)
10.	Seoul (11.5)	Mexico City (18.8)
11.	Jakarta (11.0)	New York (17.6)
12.	Buenos Aires (10.9)	Calcutta (17.6)
13.	Osaka (10.6)	Delhi (17.6)
14.	Tianjin (10.4)	Tianjin (17.0)
15.	Rio de Janeiro (9.8)	Metro Manila (14.7)
16.	Lagos (9.7)	Cairo (14.5)
17.	Delhi (9.5)	Los Angeles (14.3)
18.	Karachi (9.5)	Seoul (13.1)
19.	Paris (9.4)	Buenos Aires (12.4)
20.	Cairo (9.4)	Istanbul (12.3)
21.	Moscow (9.2)	Rio de Janeiro (11.6)
22.	Metro Manila (9.0)	Lahore (10.8)
23.		Hyderabad (10.7)
24.		Osaka (10.6)
25.		Bangkok (10.6)
26.		Lima (10.5)
27.		Teheran (10.2)
28.		Kinshasa (9.9)
29.		Paris (9.6)
30.		Madras (9.5)
31.		Moscow (9.3)
32.		Shinnying (8.6)
33.		Bangalore (8.3)

Source: United Nations, 1995.



GRAPH 5  
TELEVISIONS PER 1,000 PERSONS (1995)

Source: Statistical Table 2 in Part Seven of this report.

Television is increasingly displacing radio as the primary means of receiving information and entertainment, even in developing countries. In 1995 there were 115 televisions and 185 radios for every 1,000 persons in developing countries. In 1980, there were over 16 times more TVs in industrial countries than in developing countries; in 1995, the ratio had fallen to little more than 5.5 times more.

The highest density of TVs is in the United States, i.e. 805 sets per 1,000 persons. Other industrial countries, such as France and Germany, have significantly fewer, and Russia has 377. The increase in TVs has been slow in industrial countries – only 1.7% per annum between 1980 and 1995. Some relatively poor countries, such as China, now have at least 1 TV for every 5 people. In many such countries, TVs are increasing dramatically. Between 1980 and 1995, televisions per person in China increased annually by 145%; in India, by 71%; some countries in sub-Saharan Africa saw comparably high percentage increases: 126% in Ghana and over 200% in Senegal.

developing, with new cultural patterns associated with these globalizing trends. The work culture of this class is cosmopolitan, embedded in the internationalization of cities. One of their multiple identities is 'global', which is in fact a very local and restricted category. They may show a concern with tradition, with identity and with indigenization. As King puts it in reference to architects and urban planners (but it could be generalized to apply to

others), there is a 'themization and diffusion of "universal" ideas concerning the appropriateness of being unique in a context' (King, 1995, pp. 226–7).

Global norms and forms of institutional, spatial and symbolic signs of the international business class conform in most ways to the norms and forms manifest in the same institutions of the hegemonic states in the world order (United States, Japan, Germany). These spatial signs are the 'landscapes of

## Urbanization and globalization

At the beginning of the twentieth century, 150 million people lived in urban settlements, representing less than 10% of the world's population. As the century draws to a close, the world's urban population has increased twentyfold to nearly 3,000 million, i.e. almost half the world's population. Asia accounted for the lion's share (47.5%) of the world's population in 'million' cities and had 143 of such 'million' cities. Asia also has thirteen of the world's twenty-three mega-cities of at least 8 million inhabitants.

Three major urban trends have been observed at the close of the present century. First, contrary to most predictions, population growth rates have slowed down for many cities in developing countries. The largest cities in these countries grew far more slowly in the 1980s than during the previous two decades.

Second, the world is less dominated by very large cities than had been forecast. Less than 5% of the world's population lived in mega-cities in 1990. The prediction that cities such as Calcutta and Mexico City would grow to gigantic conurbations of 30 to 40 million inhabitants has not come true.

Third, the links between urban change and economic, social, political and cultural change are not clear. Some large and rapidly growing cities have been well-managed and serviced, while some of the worst physical conditions have beset small towns.

Several tendencies in shaping the urban future of the third millennium can be discerned. First, the progressive urbanization of the globe is certain. It has been estimated that in the first decade of the twenty-first century more than half the world's population will be living in urban settlements. Second, there will be growing

interaction between urbanization and globalization. Globalization is a multifaceted process of drawing countries, cities and people ever closer together through increasing flows of goods, services, capital, technology and ideas. The world cities have come to the fore because they perform special functions in the new global economy. The third characteristic of the urban future is the likely continuing devolution of powers and responsibilities to local authorities and civil society. This process began in the 1990s when traditional modes of urban governance were found wanting and existing institutions could not adequately deal with the old and new urban problems.

In a globalizing world, countries and cities are increasingly linked in interdependent and interlocking relationships. While world cities are important in their own right in a world order in which national boundaries fail to stop cross-border flows of capital, people and ideas, subregional economic entities have emerged. Called 'growth triangles', some neighbouring territories involving several countries have sought creative economic co-operative development. Examples of successful growth triangles in Asia are those known as Southern China, with the participation of Hong Kong, Guangdong, Fujian and Taiwan, and SJORI, including Singapore, Johor (Malaysia) and Riau Island (Indonesia). These two growth triangles are centred, respectively, on the world cities of Hong Kong and Singapore. A variant of this theme of subregional development is what some scholars call region-states. They produce sound economic development in some regions that may be parts of a country or may involve several countries.

Another spatial expression of rapid economic development in the global economy are the urban

corridors which have been observed in East Asia, Europe and elsewhere.

Globalization has not been a boon to all cities. While it has brought new opportunities and wealth to some cities, it has marginalized others. The marginalized city can be found anywhere in the world, but especially in Africa. It is outside the cyberways, lacks the requisite information infrastructure and is generally not able to plug into the global economy.

Four common features characterize cities in all parts of the world.

First, urban unemployment remains high. This explains the phenomena of 'area boys': unemployed, able-bodied men, sometimes drug-dependent, in Lagos, and 'parking boys', in Nairobi.

Second, urban infrastructure is often inadequately maintained even in developed countries. Water and sewer systems fail in Chicago and Washington, and electricity on the Eastern seaboard. In developing countries the problems are often much worse. Poor infrastructure has led to problems in water supply, urban sanitation and transport. The urban poor suffer most.

Third, environmental problems, especially air, water and noise pollution have grown in many cities of the developing world.

Fourth, growing social conflicts, such as homelessness and crime, plague many cities. These are the result partly of growing competition for jobs and partly of the freer movement of people.

In the next century, the relevant unit of economic production, social organization and knowledge generation will be the city. World cities will be especially influential in shaping the development of the global economy. Technological advances and easy access to information will enable cities to evolve more efficient

ways of production, capitalizing on the cheapest sources of materials.

In the information age that has just begun, cities act as generators, processors and depositories of knowledge. Knowledge is generated by research, discovery and innovation. As knowledge is a highly valued resource, cities will be in competition to generate knowledge. The knowledge industry, science parks, technological development zones, technopolies and others will be further developed in the cities of the future.

Cities of the future will have more freedom. Greater freedom will be enjoyed by individuals and institutions because they will be networked electronically. Wired interactions will supplement face-to-face contacts. This will affect urban lifestyles as people can work at home, shop by computers and travel with credit cards. The clamour for greater participation and democracy will see more attention and resources devoted to non-governmental, community-based organizations. Cities of the future will have the opportunity of reorganizing themselves socially and institutionally. With the knowledge and wisdom that humankind has inherited from our ancestors and with new technologies and resources, there is no reason to believe that we are not prepared to face our urban future which is both a daunting challenge and a window of opportunity.

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power' (Zukin, 1991), reproducing transnational symbolic forms and styles, often designed by the same international architects, furniture and appliance designers, and fashion trends (King, 1995, pp. 225-6). In terms of lifestyle, the new social aesthetic in everyday life linked to higher income implies a 'new vision of good life. Hence the importance, not just of food but of cuisine, not just of clothes but of designer labels, not just of decoration but of authentic objets d'art' (Sassen, 1991, p. 335). Cosmopolitanism implies the idea of de-territorialization, not only of international capital but of ethnic groups and political forms transcending territorial boundaries and identities (Appadurai, 1990).

What happens with the rest of the social structure? Are middle and working classes also globalized in the same sense? The changes in the global economy, including increasing flexibility in patterns of capital accumulation imply changes in the structure of the labour market and in the organization of production (Harvey, 1993). There are new forms of industrial organization, as well as the return of older forms of subcontracting and informal work. Yet, these patterns of organization have very different meanings in different places, and may intensify the segmentation of the labour market. They constitute subordinate forms of integration of populations into the process of globalization – through employment in global industries and through migrant labour. Seen from the top, these labour conditions imply 'flexibilization' of labour markets. From the bottom, they are experienced as uncertainty in lifestyle and life chances. Integration into the global economy for these workers is not accomplished through the use and consumption of global technology, but rather through putting together the chips that will allow the informational globalization of the others. At times, they involve strategies of survival of the unemployed or peoples discriminated against (e.g. Haitians in New York), while at other times they are mostly new immigrant

groups, trying to enter the capitalist system or to evade taxes. As will be discussed below, these patterns usually involve the reinforcing or even the recreation of ethnic lines.

This 'double bind' of globalization is what Castells (1995) discusses as the 'informational city': an interconnected world, where societies and spaces relate to each other through new networks of communication. The space of flux of capital and of the transnational business class coexists with the space of the experience of daily life for the majority of the people. This second space is each time more local, more territorial, more tied to an identity, a neighbourhood, an ethnicity or a nation. While the space for identity is each time more local, the space for function is each time more global. These processes imply the existence of a 'dual city' with contrasting social and economic structures. Structural dualism pervades a series of areas or dimensions: growth in information, industrial decline, degradation and requalification of the labour force, differentiation between formal and informal labour – all these produce different lifestyles, different patterns of family life, different uses of the urban space. However, it does not produce two different social worlds; rather a variety of social universes, fragmented and with no clear definition of boundaries, but with little communication between them.

At the higher end of the social scale, there is a connection with global communication . . . At the other extreme, local segmented networks, often ethnically defined, use their ethnicity as their most valued resource to defend their interests and their very being . . . This leads to socially discriminated, territorially segregated and culturally segmented communities . . . (Castells, 1995, p. 321)

This perspective of the world economy and of the process of globalization leads towards spatial differentiation, towards dualisms and fragmentation, diversity within and among cities in the world, but with some principles of order: a global capitalistic

system, a global hierarchy of power and control.

Diversity is not chaos: there are power relations that transcend nation-states and territorial units; there is a 'geography of cultures', grounded in historical traditions and local identities. The current historical challenge is not to allow this diversity to degenerate into tribalization, fragmentation and xenophobia.

### Cities in history

Aksum (in northern Ethiopia) was established in the first century A.D., and was linked to commerce in the Roman world, with a port on the Red Sea (Adulis). Conversion of its kings to Christianity (fourth century) brought the city and its cultural elites into the European world (with translations of the Bible and of literary works from Greek, Arabic and Syriac into Ge'ez). (Gugler, 1996, p. 214)

Spain imagined its colonial empire as a network of cities. . . . From its very inception, the city already had this role assigned to it. Establishing a city, more than just erecting a physical city, meant creating a society. And that compact, homogeneous and militant society had to produce its surrounding reality, matching its elements – natural and social, indigenous and exogenous – to those of the pre-established design, forcing and limiting them wherever necessary. . . . The network of cities had to create a Hispanic, European and Catholic America; but above all, it had to create a colonial empire in the strict sense of the term, that is, a dependent and expressionless world, a periphery of the metropolitan world, which it had to reflect and follow in all its actions and reactions. (Romero, 1976, pp. 9-14)

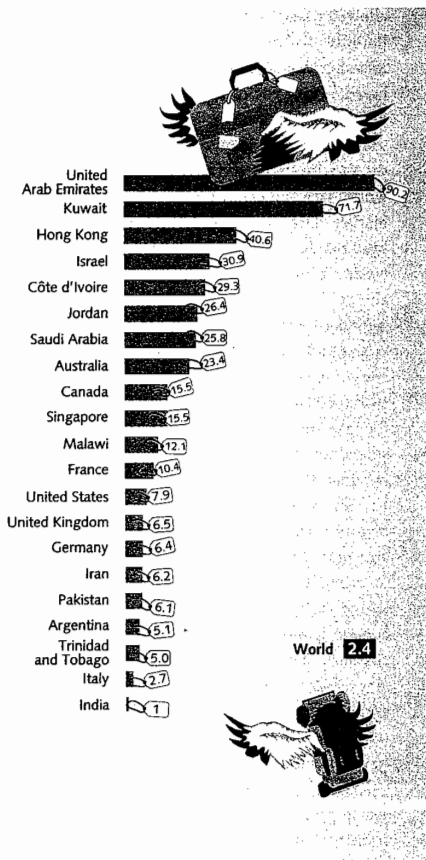
In a historical perspective, internationalization and globalization are not new phenomena in the world. Neither is their link to cities and urban settlements. Cities were established at crossroads of long-distance trade, especially where trade arrived after having crossed a major obstacle – the sea, deserts or mountain ranges. They derived their power and resources from control over long-distance trade and from control over production processes for that trade. The arrival of European traders in other parts of the world led to the development of ports, and

allowed coastal states to control production for trade. Both the control of trade routes (the silk route in Asia, for instance) and colonial rule were urban-based, setting the patterns for the development of different urban systems, linked from their inception to international phenomena.

In the first place, urban life emerged in the world with commerce and exchange, from local market places linking cities with their immediate hinterlands to world trade centres managing the world distribution of some goods. Second, cities were always the sites of government and power. The imperial cities, East and West, with their palaces, courts and sponsorship of artistic developments, could only exist on the shoulders of bureaucratic structures and administrative sites geared to collect the taxes needed to support city life and imperial splendour. Third, cities were also the places of freedom, where people could escape personal bondage and feudal attachments and (according to historical circumstances) slavery and serfdom. Cities are, after all, the cradle of citizenship, of autonomous individuals bearing rights and duties to each other and to the legitimate state authorities. Armies and conquest were always part of the story: fortified citadels to defend the locality from invaders; armies accompanying the tax collectors in the hinterlands and in the subjugated cities. Often, demands of religious hegemony and conversion were the fellow travellers of invading armies.

Economics, politics, culture (including religion) and force have been the ingredients of the emergence and transformation of cities and systems of cities, and some patterns show the strength of historical continuity.

Amidst rapid economic, social, political and demographic change, there are some elements of continuity in settlements. The average size of the world's largest cities may have changed enormously but their location has changed much less. For instance, in most of the world's regions, there is a perhaps surprising continuity in the list of the largest cities and metropolitan areas; more than



**GRAPH 6**  
**INTERNATIONAL MIGRANTS: PERCENTAGE OF TOTAL POPULATION (1990)**

Source: Statistical Table 26 in Part Seven of this report.  
Between the middle of the nineteenth century and the start of the Second World War, about 60 million people moved overseas from Europe – 40 million to the United States alone. Until 1914, governments imposed almost no controls on migration. Between 1914 and 1945, however, migration was discouraged, principally for security reasons. After the war, migration rose again because of labour shortages in Europe and elsewhere. But with recession in the 1970s, restrictions were again tightened and continue to be applied. Migration has slowed appreciably in the 1990s.

Nevertheless, international migrants are a large share of the total population in many countries. In Australia, for instance, this share is over 23%, and in Canada over 15%. In other industrial countries, the shares are lower: about 6% in Germany and the United Kingdom, for example. In the United States, the largest recipient of migrants, the percentage is about 8%.

A number of developing countries are host to a large number of migrants. This is especially true of the Arab States because of their labour shortages: in Kuwait international migrants make up almost three-quarters of the population, and in Jordan and Saudi Arabia about 26%. There are also large proportions of migrants in a number of countries in sub-Saharan Africa. In Côte d'Ivoire, the largest recipient in the continent, the share is about 29%, and in Malawi about 12%.

Many of the migrants are motivated to move for economic reasons. The falling cost of travel facilitates their movement. Migration should be viewed positively, not only economically but also as a basis for cultural interaction and interchange. However, the reality that migrants often face is resentment from native-born populations – supposedly for taking their jobs – and discrimination.



two-thirds of the world's 'million-cities' in 1990 were already important cities 200 years ago while around a quarter have been important cities for at least 500 years. (UNCHS, 1996, pp. 13–14)

The effects of economic, political and demographic forces have always been dependent on the development of communications and transport technologies. Whatever side one takes in the debate as to whether we are living through a unique period of globalization or whether there were times when global integration (both economically and politically) was more intense than now, there is no doubt that the technological revolution in communications and transport changes the nature of the phenomenon. In fact, as the pace of communications and transport hastened, space and distance became less central, and cities could grow. Nowadays, when face-to-face communications can be replaced by electronics, will spatial location lose its significance altogether?

**People and flows: migration, ethnicity, identities**

Movements of people to cities, be it from other places of the same country (internal migration) or from other countries (international migration), has been a constant feature of urban history.

People move in the search for better employment opportunities, for more and better services, for the 'push' factors implied in a worsening of rural conditions in large parts of the world (Africa south of the Sahara, especially). Studies show that there is a growing flow of female rural-to-urban migration, especially young women who migrate to enter the labour force as domestic servants (a trend that was common in Latin America a few decades ago and that is becoming more dominant in Africa and parts of Asia). In areas where Islam is the dominant religion, women tend to migrate as part of their family role, i.e. following their husbands. In general, decisions to migrate are the result of a more complex set of circumstances among women than

men, including economic reasons (a growing trend), family duties, and the search for personal autonomy and greater opportunities, including education (FNUAP, 1996).

International migration also influences the process of urbanization and city growth. To the factors affecting internal migration should be added migration for political reasons, and the difficulties that migratory regulations may imply for exit and entry into specific countries. It is quite clear that international migration is part of the process of the globalization of labour markets. It is also quite clear that the movement is much more open and much more free for capital and for goods than for labour, where protectionist policies are widespread, and barriers to immigration are on the rise (Bhabha, 1997).

*Migration and the transformation of territorial bonds*

Migratory flows have been highly significant in history.

The slave trade and European settlers in the Americas, Indian and Chinese merchants and bonded labourers in various parts of the world, and migratory flows of all sorts, have produced the historical accumulation of layers of immigrants, creating a tradition of migrant communities in cities, with varying degrees and diverse styles of integration and segregation in the host communities. There is a wide variation in the composition of migrant communities, in their relationships to the communities of residence and to the countries of origin. All these change according to the meanings that migration has for different cultural groups and to the changes in the cost-benefit balances which come into effect (transportation is now easier and faster, while rules and regulations may be making immigration more difficult). In fact, international migration has never been synonymous with a 'melting pot'. There have been histories of assimilation – in ideology and in practice (Todd,

1996) and histories of segregation, discrimination and genocide.

Seen 'from below', that is, from the perspective of the migrants, networks and circuits in which transnational migrants and refugees are implicated constitute transnational or globalized social spaces. In these spaces, transnational forms of political organization, mobilization and practice are coming into being (Smith, 1995, p. 249). It is a form of 'transnational grassroots politics', a counterpart of the new 'global entrepreneurial class', transcending both the urban level of analysis and the reference to the nation-state.

This type of politics has strong historical and traditional roots. Internationalist ideologies – socialism and communism, international workers' organizations and various forms of grassroots Christianity and other religious movements – have travelled across continents and transcended national boundaries since time immemorial. Independence fighters in colonial times and political exiles all through history were often trained and retrained among the progressive elites in the centre, to return then to their home countries with new messages and new political strategies. In so far as movement is easier and communications are instantaneous, the spatial extension of households and ethnic communities across national borders is producing new patterns of cultural and political action and resistance by transnational migrants and refugees, who in some ways partake of two nation-states, while in other ways they may be moving beyond both. These are communities that have a 'bifocal imagination', not tied to one single territory, but rather in a constant state of drawing and redrawing images and identities for themselves (Appadurai, 1996).

With new means of communications, film, television and video bring powerful images of possible future lives into villages, besides the traditional tales of homecoming migrants (Appadurai, 1996). The imagined and talked-about

possible world may lead to further migration – one significant way to deal with increasing poverty and worldwide inequality ('Fantasy is now a social practice'). Whether dreams and expectations will be fulfilled, however, is always an open question, full of uncertainties. Human mobility offers the possibility to act out these fantasies peacefully and as an assertion of the positive side of the human condition. They may also have their dark side:

In 'Who Are the "Good Guys"?' (Smith and Tarallo, 1995), the role of global fantasies in the form of images of power, wealth and violence appropriated from Kung Fu movies was played out in the 'representations of self' and in the demands made by four young Vietnamese hostage-takers in a Good Guys electronics store in Sacramento, California, before several hostages were shot and three of the refugee youths were killed by a county sheriff's department SWAT team while acting out their global fantasies. One of the demands of these youths, who were small children when Saigon fell in 1975, was for a helicopter to allow them to fly to Vietnam to fight communists. (Smith, 1995, p. 254)

Processes of maintaining, restoring and reinventing cultural and ethnic identities are open. Diversity and heterogeneity are the rule. There are cases where the 'there' (from where one comes) exists as a possibility for returning, or even for visiting, and cases where these possibilities are non-existent. At times, migrants spread and disperse themselves in the cities in which they live; in others, processes of re-territorialization take place, in the form of ethnic neighbourhoods and streets (the 'Little . . .' and the 'Chinatowns' of the major cities of the world). There may be struggles – at times violent – to recapture spatial territories, and symbolic struggles to assert cultural identities. Circular migrants who move back and forth (between Mexico and the United States, for instance) create new social spaces for identity formation and the production of meaningful social action in their multiple territorial anchorages. There are also cases of movements that use global resources for their local politics, including international issue

networks (Sikkink, 1996) and the confluence of various movements and identities in one single place (Smith, 1995, pp. 258–63).

#### *Multiculturality and ethnicity*

The degree of multiculturalism in world cities varies, with long-term historical processes of cultural contact and struggles as a background to current reality. Demographically, in most cities there is a numerically dominant population from the host society, which at times is multicultural itself, and a usually highly heterogeneous 'foreign born' (and of foreign descent) population, coming from a variety of ethnicities, religions and cultures and arriving in different historical circumstances. To understand degrees of heterogeneity and variation among cities, one has to draw on the political economic frame of world-systems and on the culturally oriented frame of globalization. Longer-term historical processes and political frames of post-colonialism and post-imperialism are also crucial for understanding social and cultural phenomena in cities.

The political dynamics and changes in labour-market conditions may intensify cultural pressures to maintain and recreate ethnicity – or even to create one if needed. Thus, in Pakistan, where provincial 'nationalisms' offer to local populations an array of intermediate institutions, the numerically small but politically and economically visible group of people who had migrated into Sindh province after partition, excluded from claiming such provincial identity, started to construct a new sense of 'nationality' on the sole basis that their parents had been immigrants. With no shared language or ethnic affiliation, these youngsters speak of the *mohajir* nation (*mohajir* is the Urdu word for migrant). The political party representing their interests ends up filling the gap between the state and a dislocated immigrant community that does not have a coherent tradition to refer to (Shaheed, 1995; World Commission on Culture and Development, 1995, p. 56). In Mexico City, a new cultural development

involves the *concheros*, groups of young urban residents who devote themselves to music and dance based on pre-Columbian practices and names.

Ethnicities and diversity leave their marks on urban space. Yet, 'the public display of individual or collective cultural identities through the use of distinctive building types, shapes, forms, construction materials, methods, colors, finishes, and qualities has . . . differential impact on cities' (King, 1995, p. 224). When there is a dominant spatial culture, such as the grid in New York City, the impact of cultural diversity is less than in other cities, like Bombay or Delhi, that have a much wider variety of historically and culturally constructed physical and spatial environments (King, 1995, p. 224). Even the same spatial layout, like the grid with the main plaza in Latin America, may reflect different combinations of indigenous and European cultural models and meanings (Low, 1993).

New waves of foreign immigrants in large cities may appropriate working-class vernacular housing, transforming it into the 'vernacular' of the newcomers, adapting housing and community public spaces to their cultural preferences, their kinship structures, their religious institutions and their aesthetic styles. In this way, a statement about symbolic cultural identity is being made. This is the case, for instance, with the Portuguese in Toronto, Puerto Ricans in New York, and Bangladeshis in London (King, 1995, p. 226). In this context, the current wave of 'the politics of identity' gives new meaning to cultural diversity, which tends to become the currency for exchange. There is re-territorialization in ethnic neighbourhoods with their symbolic places and institutions. The notion of frontier reappears inside the city, in so far as the multiplication of ethnic identifications becomes enmeshed in the multiplicity of territories, in social inequality and in differential access to urban services. 'Here' and 'there' become highly significant, both inside the city, in reference to the 'original' territories, and in the wish to be somewhere else.

## The destruction of the Old Bridge of Mostar

In 1993 the Old Bridge of Mostar was deliberately destroyed. Extremists chose not to recognize the beauty and achievement of the bridge as a treasure of the human spirit but rather as a link between the Muslim and Croat communities and a symbol of Bosniac Muslim heritage. The ancient city of Mostar, built entirely of local materials, is outstanding for its housing and monuments assembled harmoniously over the centuries according to geographical and economic circumstances. In the seventeenth century the city contained about 1,000 houses for a population of some 12,000. Mostar is still a hive of arts and crafts and a major trading centre.

The old Mostar bridge (Stari most), one of the last monumental works to be erected under Süleyman the Magnificent, was built in 1566 by Mimar Hajruddin, a pupil of the renowned Ottoman architect Sinan. Prior to its destruction by artillery in November 1993, it consisted of a graceful hump-backed arch with an opening of 28 metres, being 30 metres long and 4 metres wide. At low water the structure stood fully 20 metres above the Neretva. This crossing-point between east and west in the old city was flanked by two fortified towers, i.e. the Halebija on the right bank and the Tara on the left, both

There is a re-territorialization brought about by de-territorialization. Displacement gives rise to new meanings attached to urban territories, and also to other cultural creations such as movies, theatre and literature. These cultural dynamics may lead to the emergence of new cultural conflicts, at times violent. At the same time, by providing new contents to artistic forms, they may become commodified in the form of ethnic neighbourhoods, ethnic restaurants, ethnic music, attracting investments from the international business community and international tourism of the new cosmopolitan elite.

In sum, there is a simultaneous growth of a

erected in the seventeenth century under Ottoman rule. From the time of its construction and in view of its original single vaulting, it was regarded as a masterpiece of art and architecture.

This unique work of art inspired poets and never failed to impress travellers. In the second half of the sixteenth century a Mostar poet compared the arch across the river to a rainbow. A French visitor in 1658 regarded the construction as a miracle, and as more daring and impressive than the Rialto in Venice. An Austrian author wrote at the beginning of this century that if he had to choose the most beautiful bridge in the world, he would name the ancient Mostar bridge without hesitation.

Prior to the Austro-Hungarian occupation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (1878), a whole wealth of tradition attaching to Bosniac Muslim culture was associated with the bridge. The memorable call to prayer was made by the muezzin from the top of the tower at the left-bank end of the bridge. The other tower contained a spacious room which provided a salon for the more cultured of the Mostar citizens: this is still so fresh in people's memories that, following the civil war, it has now been reopened as a café in an attempt to recapture some of the gaiety of the past. When the weather was good and

mass culture through the media and the flourishing of ethnic cultures. These two aspects of cultural transformations of cities are part of wider processes of construction of identities based on differential access to, and consumption of, symbolic goods – both local and global. How do the two relate to one another? Some claim that cultural differences 'persist' because different groups receive and process mass media and cultural industry products from the perspective of their own identities. Also, because there is a diversification of supply of symbolic goods, generating new cultural differences, although within the homogenized communicational framework

particularly during Muslim feasts, young people and children used to love diving from the top of the bridge into the waters of the Neretva. This daring tradition was restored in 1995.

However, the fact that the former communist regime regarded Bosniac Muslims as an ethnic group in the same way as the Serbs and Croats only made the eternal 'Balkan problem' even worse. Although they were very largely Slav in origin and language and were converted to Islam in the fifteenth century – a mass conversion that historians attribute in particular to the persecution endured by the Bogomils, a Christian dualist sect held in contempt by both the Orthodox Serb and Croat Catholic Churches – the Bosniac Muslims were regarded none the less by extremists of every hue as having been assimilated.

Such extremists wished to retain nothing of the economic and urban expansion of Mostar which was the fruit of efforts made during the Ottoman period (fifteenth to nineteenth century). In fact they regarded both religious monuments (mosques, madrasas and mausoleums) and civil ones (hammams, souks and bridges) as evidence of foreign occupation and culture.

The Old Bridge was the most famous of all such monuments and among the main features of the

determined by technology – TV and satellite communications – that, in the end, organize social relations around the world in a homogeneous way.<sup>2</sup> Diversity can also be seen as a consequence of the practices of resistance on the part of subordinate classes (Scott, 1992). There are forces towards heterogeneity within the very logic of capitalist transformation. The key issue is to look at the inherent tensions of the processes of differentiation and homogenization, rather than trying to find indicators that would show that the balance is tipped in one or other direction.

The celebration of diversity and policies of

Ottoman city. It was tragically marked down for destruction as the locality's chief symbol – the symbol of a culture and of a blend of cultures – although it was no longer of any economic or strategic importance. It is conceivable too that this symbol was amplified by the image – raised to the status of a myth at the gates of Western Europe – of a city with oriental overtones and which was much vaunted to tourists and universally admired by them at a time when tourism in former Yugoslavia prospered under Marshal Tito.

The Old Bridge was destroyed, not for military reasons, but to obliterate people's cultural roots. The highly symbolic sense of the destruction of the Old Bridge lies not only in the fact that it constituted a physical linkage between two communities and, through these, between two cultural and historical references, the East and the West: the bridge actually represented, in the fullest sense, the connection that today's communities still maintained with a period when, despite their diversity, they had a common past.

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multiculturalism cannot answer the question about the practical meaning of these ethnic identifications. The vast majority of unskilled workers share an excluded social space, highly fragmented in terms of ethnicity, building defensive communities that struggle against each other to gain a larger share of services and to preserve the functional basis of their social networks – a significant resource in low-income communities (Castells, 1995, p. 320). Economic restructuring leads to the configuration of a series of socially discriminated communities, territorially segregated and culturally segmented, that cannot constitute a class because of the extremely



high diversity in the evolving relations of production. It seems to be easier to develop fundamentalist (tribal-like) affirmations of identity, culturally and territorially defensive, protective and limited, than to engage in open conflict with the powerful, whose power is expressed in domination through flows rather than through the control of specific spaces (Castells, 1995). The geography of cultures may then degenerate into tribalization, fragmentation and xenophobia.

Cities are the places of diversity, of encounters with strangers, of recognition of an 'I' distinct from the 'them'. The trend towards globalization, towards an interconnected and interdependent 'one world', implies simultaneously and as part of the same process a reaffirmation of cultural differentiation and of localized and national identities. This is always the case, in so far as the human condition involves a sense of belonging to a political community. In fact, human beings are part of communities, not of the human species in the abstract. What this means is that

there is no other road towards universality besides the one that passes through particularism. Only those who master a specific culture have the opportunity to be understood by the whole of humanity . . . Command of one culture is indispensable for individuals to thrive and flourish: acculturation is possible and at times beneficial; de-culturation is always a threat. (Todorov, 1991, p. 434–5)

### Spaces and places

Building a city depends on how people combine the traditional economic factors of land, labour and capital. But it also depends on how they manipulate symbolic languages of exclusion and entitlement. The look and feel of cities reflect decisions about what – and who – should be visible and what should not, on concepts of order and disorder, and on uses of aesthetic power. (Zukin, 1995, p. 7)

Building a city means building spaces of dialogue and interaction, of interdependence, of co-ordination and of power relations. Urban culture is a collective creation. Interaction and encounters are its base, encounters that occur among different people,

among strangers, encounters that take place in 'public'.<sup>3</sup> In so far as globalization processes entail the spread of market relations, the question is who will ensure the vitality of public debate and public dialogue, as conditions for collective creativity and cultural vitality.

The vitality of the public sphere, expressed in the creativity of public spaces, is a converging point of consideration for people from different disciplines and commitments: democratic theory and practice based on public deliberation about the goals and means of society and about the role of the state and the contents of citizenship; the concerns expressed by many (from communications to social policies, from feminism to human rights) about the shifting boundaries between private and public; the constant redefinition of the realm of public goods, the responsibilities for the global commons and for collective services, so much influenced by the push towards 'privatization'. More specifically, urban planners and local authorities, concerned with their ability to shape (literally and metaphorically) public spaces and public activities.

There are many examples of local activities and policies geared to foster this vitality. Fiestas and ethnic festivals in cities are not a new phenomenon. Since flows of migration began, ethnic groups have maintained their ties to their origin through two types of rituals: going back to their communities for the ritual festivals and occasions; introducing urban-based festivals that recreate their ethnic identification. Urban festivals of minority groups, however, are not a simple reproduction of what went on before in their communities. They have new contents and new meanings. They express diversity in the large cities; they also are a message directed to the 'others', mainly to the dominant culture from which the group feels estranged.

For more than twenty years, each October, Bolivians in Buenos Aires have been celebrating the Fiesta de Nuestra Señora de Copacabana. The day of the Fiesta, about ten thousand people, coming from different parts of the city,

concentrate in a neighborhood where Bolivians have been a majority for over thirty years. In the morning, there is Mass in the Nuestra Señora de Copacabana church, and then small rockets go up in the sky, carrying Bolivian, Argentine and Vatican flags. There is a procession, and then dances (around thirty-five different groups) representing different historical moments and diverse ethnic, class and regional origins. The Fiesta is an occasion for cultural identification in the urban scene, expanding each year, and attracting increasingly Argentine visitors. It is not the conservation of an ancestral past but the staging of the lived relationship between that history and the migratory present. It is a way to relate to the dominant society, an act of affirmation of a visible presence in the city, counteracting the daily experience of discrimination, stigma and invisibility. What makes this Fiesta especially interesting is that the Virgin of Copacabana has been designated as the 'patron of Bolivian immigrants to Argentina'. Yet there is no 'national' patron Virgin in Bolivia. Actually, multiculturalism and ethnic pluralism are defining traits of Bolivian society, and this diversity is also present among the migrants. As with the dances, the surrounding Fair offers food and crafts typical of a variety of regions of Bolivia. What is not conceived and perceived as a unity in the country of origin (it is not easy to imagine 'Bolivianness'), is culturally constructed 2,000 kilometers away, in Buenos Aires. (Grimson, 1997)

What begins as an in-group activity – the fiesta as an affirmation of cultural identity, restaurants, groceries and neighbourhoods as tools to maintain and carry on daily patterns of living – can easily turn into something different: attracting outsiders as 'customers of ethnic difference', 'invading' other parts of the city to assert more firmly the presence and visibility of the group. Based on celebrating difference, be it ethnic or other (including newer cultural identifications such as gender, sexual orientation and others), there are a great number of events that combine private profit enterprises, community organizations and city government sponsorship. Fifth Avenue in Manhattan is now the scene of a growing number of parades, with growing numbers of people participating in them. And the

gay parade in Sydney has become a major tourist attraction in the Pacific region.

### Urban violence: a cultural phenomenon?

It is not the city that generates violence: poverty, political and social exclusion, and economic deprivation are all working against the solidarity that would enable city inhabitants to live together peacefully despite their conflicts. (Pinheiro, 1993)

Data indicate that at least once every five years, more than half of the world's population living in cities are victims of a crime of some kind. The most common one is crime against property (UNCHS, 1996, p. 123). Yet, urban violence (including murder, assault, rape and domestic violence) is on the increase throughout the world, with large variations according to regions. It is lowest in Asia and highest in Africa and in some parts of the Americas.

Urban violence is the result of many factors: inadequate incomes, overcrowded housing, insecure tenure and lack of social support that generates conditions of exclusion and tension. The attraction of goods continuously on display and the ostentatious display of luxury generate frustration. There is also the anger generated by oppression in all its forms, including the destruction and debasement of cultural identities, racism and discrimination. On the other hand, guns are increasingly easy to obtain, there is violence on television, and there is drug trafficking: they too generate violence. Beyond these factors that are usually mentioned and analysed in the literature, there is a highly significant effect of the nature and quality of street life, including the physical design of housing areas, informal supervision of public areas, and a clear visual definition as to who has the right to use it and is responsible for its maintenance (UNCHS, 1996, p. 125).

The levels of urban crime, both against property and people, are bringing about changes in the spatial arrangements of cities, increasing social



and spatial segregation. There is a new economics of privatized security and a new 'aesthetic of fear'. For example, during the early period of growth of São Paulo (1890–1940), there was considerable urban concentration. Social heterogeneity, discrimination and segregation were based on housing type, with moral concerns about hygiene and illness (one new middle-class neighbourhood was called Higienópolis). Cleaning up the centre of the city implied pushing working classes to the periphery. The next stage (1940–80) brought about a clear centre-periphery differentiation: spatial segregation of rich (in the well-serviced centre) and poor (in the outskirts) coupled with some movements to improve living conditions in the periphery. The 1980s witnessed economic recession, an increase in violent crime and fear, bringing about a new model of segregation based on the notion of security.

From 1980 to 1987, 217 buildings were constructed in Morumbi [a rich area of São Paulo], corresponding to 49,972 units, mostly luxury. However, the novelty there is not only the volume of construction, but more importantly the type of buildings. Most of them are residential complexes of either houses or high-rises called 'closed condominiums'. They offer the amenities of a club, are always walled, have as one of their basic features the use of the most sophisticated security technology, with the continual presence of private guards. Moreover, because they were competing in a restricted market, the developers used their imagination to endow each apartment complex with 'distinguishable' characteristics: in addition to imposing architecture and foreign names with an aristocratic touch, they have exotic features such as one swimming pool per individual apartment, three maid's bedrooms, waiting rooms for drivers in the basement, special rooms for storing crystals, and so on. All this luxury contrasts with the view from the apartments' windows: the thousands of shacks of the *favelas* on the other side of the high walls which supply the domestic servants for the condominiums nearby. (Caldeira, 1996, p. 63)

Fear of crime is helping to create distance and separation among social groups. At one level, the fear

of violence and crime is associated with the 'talk of crime' (commentaries, narratives, jokes) which contributes both to counteract and to magnify violence. It establishes polarities (good versus evil) emphasizing prejudices, creating a distance and excluding whatever is different. At another level, people's reaction to the increase of fear, in a context in which the institutions of order become violent themselves and are perceived to be unreliable, is to adopt private means of security, such as hiring private security guards, adopting new surveillance technology and supporting vigilante operations. Streets are empty, not for walking. Encounters in public areas become increasingly tense and even violent because they are framed by people's fears and stereotypes. Tension, discrimination and suspicion are the new marks of public intercourse.

As the spaces for the rich face inwards (not only their homes but also office and shopping complexes), the outside space is left for those who cannot afford to go in. The modern public space of the streets is increasingly the area abandoned to the homeless and the street children. Contrary to the modern public space constituted in accordance with ideals of equality, commonality and the reference to a notion of universality, the new public space which is being formed in São Paulo is structured on the basis of principles of separateness, and an emphasis on irreconcilable differences. (Caldeira, 1996, p. 65).

São Paulo is not alone in this pattern. In the United States, there is a real threat to public culture coming from the 'politics of everyday fear'. The modern egalitarian principle of open access is destroyed. Common popular answers include a call to 'get tough with crime', and a growing privatization and militarization of public space. Currently, private security firms exceed in employment the public law-enforcement agencies. In California, there are 3.9 private security employees for every public security employee. Also, as a feature of the shift towards privatization, partnerships between private and

public security are growing significantly, including 'private' patrolling of public parks (Zukin, 1995).

There are informal etiquettes for survival in public spaces, including 'street-wise' scrutiny of passers-by. Ethnicity – a cultural strategy for producing difference – survives on the politics of fear, by requiring people to keep their distance from certain aesthetic markers. These markers vary over time. Like fear itself, ethnicity and race become an aesthetic category, in a move that identifies body and moral soul, skin colour and the forms adopted by cultural life (Todorov, 1989).

#### Public policy: towards new partnerships

Cities have been blamed for many evils and hardships in human life. There are also blessings, advantages and assets in city life. The challenge is to act so as to eliminate evils and enjoy the assets. Who is to act? How?

Three urban and political processes come together in Barcelona: the democratization of municipal government, the physical transformation of the city and the formulation of a city project that meets with the broad approval of civil society. . . . Geographical decentralization through the creation of districts was undoubtedly the most important political act of the early years of municipal democracy, together with the urban policy of creating public spaces and amenities in all barrios. . . . The democratic city government quickly made a special effort to restore or create an attractive urban environment by many different means: improving the city's appearance and security, creating small parks wherever possible, encouraging neighbourhood and city-wide festivals, reviving traditions (such as processions and carnivals). . . . Cultural projects (such as museums, exhibitions and concerts) and sporting events – later to culminate in the 1992 Olympic Games – constituted a particularly important feature of this policy of integration and promotion. . . . The aesthetic aspect of urban projects . . . fulfil three functions, the first being to give the city, as a whole and at neighbourhood level, a sense of unity. . . . The second function is to demonstrate the quality of public administration. . . . The third

function of urban aesthetics is to bring out the most distinctive and attractive features of the city – an invaluable element in city marketing. . . . The embellishment of a city is not just a good thing: it is a sound investment. . . . (Borja, 1996)

The current debate about policy and action is based on a tripartite model: the state, market forces and 'society' (often with the added 'civil', often referred to as 'the third sector'). There is no single formula that will assure success in combining the three actors; the actors themselves are quite different in nature, according to historical, political and economic conditions. And the issues they have to confront and act upon are also diverse. Can anything be said under these conditions?

Current world political and economic conditions have led to a heated debate about the role of governments. The demise of centrally planned economies does not involve the disappearance of governments. The state is the final guarantee of citizenship rights and responsibilities for everybody. For the urban inhabitant, so dependent on public goods, on collective services and collective consumption for everyday life, the quality of city administration and governance are paramount.

Most human activities take place outside the direct realm of government action, although regulated by state norms and institutions. It is the role of the state to provide an 'enabling environment' that supports and encourages the development of multiple forms of human activities, of individuals, households, communities, businesses and voluntary organizations (UNCHS, 1996, p. 424).

The emphasis of 'enabling policies' has received considerable support from the growing recognition that democratic and participatory government structures are not only important goals of development but also important means for achieving such development. Participation and enablement are inseparable since popular priorities and demands will be a major influence on the development of effective and flexible enabling policies. (UNCHS, 1996, p. 424)



## A case of local democracy: the 'participatory budget' of Pôrto Alegre (Brazil)

Pôrto Alegre is a large city in southern Brazil (population 3.5 million in the mid-1990s). Like many urban areas of Brazil, during the last decades it has experienced an exponential growth of its population, a significant increase in economic performance and a major change in the organization of everyday life. Since 1989, the city government has developed a very interesting institution, the *orçamento participativo* (participatory budget). It involves a process by which a good part of the municipal budget of each year is decided by bodies that deliberate and discuss, with representation according to city district and to five thematic areas (city planning and urban development; economic development and taxation; education, culture and leisure; health; and transportation). The process is evolving and is gradually altered each year, so that it cannot be said to have a definite and final structure.

The process started in 1989, when the PT and its allies won the municipal elections. The newly elected city government and neighbourhood organizations jointly decided to carry out a survey of urban demands. In the first surveys, the accumulation of societal demands was much greater than the budgetary and administrative capacity of the government. Faced with this hard fact, the city developed a participatory system to set priorities and decide expenditures of a significant proportion of the city budget. The structure involves a Budgetary Council, composed of delegates of each of the sixteen city districts, specialists in five thematic areas, and delegates of some specialized agencies, which bring to the Council the demands of their constituencies, who participate in assemblies to discuss the issues involved. On the basis of a process of negotiation, the Council establishes (and constantly reviews) the criteria for decision-making (evaluating proposals according to priorities given to areas or themes, to the degree of poverty of the city district, to the number of people to be affected, etc.). After several years, the experience is described by actors and observers as a success, a model to be developed in other urban contexts.

Active participation of the citizenry implies recognizing the multiplicity of actors and the web of social and political forces at work, improving the transparency of decisions and the accountability of public officials. Yet no city government by itself, whatever its political commitments, could have achieved what the Pôrto Alegre experience did without counting on societal actors – in this case based on pre-existing but changing neighbourhood organizations. One of the unforeseen features of the process is that, given the discrepancy between pre-existing districts and the spatial scope of neighbourhood organizations, city districts were re-drawn. As a consequence, traditional community leaderships were reshuffled, a feature that turned out to be crucial in the democratization process. Community organizations now gained their legitimacy on the basis of their ability to mobilize and persuade, and not solely on their links to official recognition and political patronage. In the new institutionalized open spaces for debate and decision, a leader has to be able to discuss proposals in open assemblies, and not in the back alleys of traditional power or hidden in the offices of bureaucrats.

What can the presentation of this case show us in more general terms? In the first place, there was a pre-existing experience of neighbourhood organizations that started to press their demands. This was already a step in the direction of empowerment. Second, accountability and transparency of governmental action (in this case, at the city level) are achieved through active participation 'all the way', rather than through centralized decision-making that is then 'monitored' or 'audited' by independent expert bodies. Rather than confront the different actors – political leaders, city officials, experts in urban services, popular movements – the strategy is one of sharing responsibility in decision-making and in the implementation of such decisions. And third, as some authors have claimed (Baierle, 1996), the experience entails the seeds of new ways in which power is instituted and politics is enacted.

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Good governance means setting the rules and establishing the spaces where the various demands and interests (often with conflicting goals) can be expressed, and where negotiation and implementation can be accomplished. It does not directly refer to investment capacity, but rather to the capacity to manage change and to set the framework for democratic processes of community-based decision-making.

Cities are growing, and the world population is going to be increasingly concentrated in urban areas. Cities are, therefore, becoming the most important spaces for cultural diversity, cultural contact and cultural creativity. This diversity presents the challenge to find the institutional means to ensure peaceful and democratic interculturality.

### Notes

1. These and the following quantitative data are taken from *World Urbanization Prospects: 1994 Revision*, New York, United Nations, 1995.
2. In several parts of the world, ethnic minorities and migratory groups are using the new communications technologies — from radio, music CDs and video-clips to Internet — as vehicles for their effort to revitalize or recreate 'traditional' identities.
3. From a theoretical perspective, a key concept is that of the *public sphere*, the symbolic open arena where people engage in a dialogue and debate about the meaning of their shared life conditions (Calhoun, 1991). Although the concept has strong roots in liberal democracies of the West, it has much wider implications, in so far as it brings into question issues concerning *who* is entitled to discuss and decide *what* is to be discussed and decided in societal collective realms. Issues of citizenship and the contents of rights and duties are at the heart of the matter (Jelin and Hershberg, 1996; Jelin, 1997).

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## Chapter 8 Culture and democracy

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### Democracy and a 'democratic culture'

Does democracy have to rely on a 'democratic culture' in order to exist and endure? And, if so, are particular cultural patterns either more or less compatible with such a 'democratic culture' and accordingly conducive or counter to democracy?

In one view, i.e. 'non-culturalist', culture exerts no causal power with regard to democracy. No democratic culture is needed for a country to establish democratic institutions and none to sustain them. In the 'weakly culturalist' view, a democratic culture is required for democracy to emerge or to endure, but the question of the compatibility of this democratic culture with the traditions of particular societies is moot, since these traditions are malleable, subject to being invented and reinvented. Thus, the democratic culture can flourish even in those cultural settings that appear hostile to it. Finally, in the 'strongly culturalist' view, some cultures are simply incompatible with democracy. Different countries, therefore, must seek different political arrangements.

What is thus at stake is whether democratic institutions can function in all cultural environments or whether we must accept that some cultures are compatible only with various forms of authoritarianism.

This is a hard question to answer. It is subject to strongly held conflicting beliefs and the evidence

required to adjudicate between them is difficult to come by. All we can do is to reconstruct these rival views and to cite some facts. Our general conclusion is sceptical. We think that economic and institutional factors are sufficient to generate a convincing explanation of the dynamic of democracies without any recourse to culture. And we find empirically that at least the most obvious cultural traits, such as the dominant religion, have little relevance for the emergence and durability of democracies. Hence, while there may be good reasons one should expect cultures to matter, the available empirical evidence provides little support for the view that democracy requires a democratic culture.

We begin with a brief history of culturalist views and then analyse them more systematically. The question here is whether democracy can emerge and endure only if it is supported by some definite cultural patterns. Are some specific aspects of culture necessary for democracy and, if so, which and how? We also develop an explanation that does not rely on