



Megacities

Our Global Urban Future

By 2015 the world may
contain as many as 60
megacities, housing
more than 600 million
people

Emerging Urban Dimensions

- In 1950 30% of the world's population lived in cities. In 2000 it was 47%
- By 2012 3.6 billion people – more than half of the world's population – will be living in cities.
- The total may reach 60% by 2030.
- Such rapidly increasing urbanisation, particularly in developing countries, creates many opportunities and challenges.

Definition

- “Megacities” are defined as urban areas with more than five million inhabitants.
- Megacities are more than just large cities. Their scale creates new dynamics, new complexity and new processes – physical, social and economic.

Problems

- In the developing world, megacities grow faster than their infrastructure.
- This uncontrolled urban sprawl can foster high traffic volumes, high concentrations of industrial production, ecological overload, unregulated and disparate land and property markets, insufficient housing development and in some cases, such extremes of poverty and wealth living side by side that social unrest may follow.

Government

- For many megacities, inadequate representative government inhibits spatial planning, building control, the delivery of services (such as water supply, sewage disposal and energy distribution), and the establishment of general order (including security and disaster prevention)
- Existing governments and their organisational structures will generally be unable to keep up with the rapidly expanding city and may simply be unable to cope with the huge scale of new responsibilities

Quality of Life

- Quality of life for many residents in megacities is commonly low – for rich and poor alike.
- Air, water and soil pollution, water and energy supply shortages, traffic congestion, environmental health problems, limited green spaces, poverty and malnutrition, social security and public safety problems place many burdens and restrictions on people.

Positives???

- Megacities are ideal places for social, environmental and medical scientists to investigate the impact of socio-economic and political activities on environmental change and vice versa and to identify solutions to the worst problems.
- Megacity research has the potential to contribute substantially to global justice and peace and thereby prosperity.

Sustainable Megacities

- Megacities require human and natural resources for energy, industry, construction, infrastructure and maintenance.
- To be sustainable, development must be treated as investment, not consumption.
- Authorities must control the fabric and land use patterns within a megacity to minimise adverse environmental effect
- This requires integrity in resource, logistics (traffic) and waste management, recycling of wastes and material and reduction of risks to health.