



## 2 THE COMMON GOOD: ASSESSING THE PERFORMANCE OF CITIES<sup>1</sup>

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The question of the state has recently reappeared on the development agenda. After nearly three decades of neo-liberal rhetoric, in which the state figured as Enemy No. 1, even the World Bank has come around to acknowledge that, without a strong and active national state, sustainable development is impossible. "An effective state," thus the World Bank in its updated collective wisdom, "is vital for the provision of the goods and services—and the rules and institutions—that allow markets to flourish and people to lead healthy and happier lives" (World Bank, 1997, 1).

Its *World Development Report* for 1997 is unquestionably a tour-de-force, giving a detailed treatment of the state and its multiple failings in all the major world regions. Not surprisingly, its focus is on the national state (the number of United Nations member states stands currently at 185). I say "not surprisingly," because the Bank, along with all other United Nations agencies, continues to believe in the mantra that economic development is best revealed in national statistics: it is the national state that is invariably taken as the "natural" unit for analysis.

This picture is rapidly becoming obsolete, however. The actual geography of the world economy is coming to resemble more and more the geography of the United States, where it makes little sense to speak of, say, the economy of a Rhode Island, North Dakota, or even California, because the states of the Union are so tightly interlinked that their economic performance cannot be properly assessed *except as a function of these linkages*. This is not to argue that sub-national policy measures are unimportant, especially when they are focused on those metropolitan regions—a Boston, Miami, Chicago, Los Angeles, or Seattle—that serve as vital command centers, switching points, and global investment hubs through which the nation's economy is articulated into the global *space of flows* (Castells, 1989; 1996). Quite to the contrary. What the World Bank has not yet dared to say is that the global space of flows is more accurately modeled by articulating it through a network of city-regions that function as the new core areas of the world economy (Sassen 1994; Knox and Taylor 1995; Friedmann 1996).

Once we accept this point of view, it follows that, important as is the role of national states in setting the institutional and policy parameters of all developments within their borders, it is the governance of their cities or, more accurately, of major city-centered regions, that, in the final analysis, will be decisive for how well they perform, not only in the global economy geared to capital accumulation but also in providing for the life and livelihood of their inhabitants. Perhaps the best way to understand the functioning of the actually existing world economy is not as an ensemble of 185 national states but as an archipelago of some 30 or 40 quasi-city-states that

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are linked to each other in a global system of economic, social, and political relations.

The question of good city governance is thus a direct counterpart of the question of governance posed by the World Bank at the level of the national state. While good governance nationally will undoubtedly benefit domestic city-regions, the performance of cities is not merely a reflection of structure and processes at the national level. We will have to look at the city-regional level on its own terms. And that is the premise with which I shall begin this paper.

## Posing the Question

When shall we say that a city is well governed? Having posed this question leads me to ask two more. If governance concerns political process, what of a city's management—its ability to translate plans into action—and, beyond that, what about the desired outcomes of good governance and good management? What should be the characteristics of a good city, which is our ultimate destination?

As a friendly critic (Roger Keil) has pointed out to me, this tripartite division is problematical because, so he argued, governance and management are intersecting, overlapping categories. Many government agencies wield more power than the city's executive authority or deliberative assembly; national ministries wield power over and may even preempt local decisions; and privatization has removed many traditional urban services from direct public scrutiny. The political moment and the bureaucratic moment, therefore, should not be separated.

This is no doubt a valid way of looking at the problem of "performance." I have nevertheless decided to retain the distinction. Although the concept of governance is inclusive of both corporate sector and organized civil society, it is the state that is ultimately responsible for political decisions and their outcomes. And it is the state's bureaucracy—its management arm—that is supposed to transpose political decisions into facts on the ground.

Taken together, my three questions pose the even broader issue of urban performativity. How well would any actually existing city or city-region stack up against criteria of good governance, good management, and good outcomes?

My questions raise major issues in political philosophy, but my deeper interests are practical. Given that our cities, especially our large cities, both East and West, are in a sorry state—I do not wish to rehearse the litany of urban problems yet again—what shall we hold out as a vision, so that political practice (and planning) do not merely chase after problems, making small improvements here and there as opportunities arise, but move coherently towards an agenda of a truly human development? (For the current state of our cities, see United Nations Centre for Human Settlements 1996).

I am fully aware of the utopian character of any project that

seeks a broad consensus around a vision of "the good city." Self-styled realists will argue that all we can ever hope to accomplish is to solve problems pragmatically with whatever resources are at hand. May they continue to do what they are doing. I will pitch my remarks to those who crave a different approach, who are not afraid to look beyond the visible horizon as a source of inspiration. We, too, want to be problem-solvers. The question is, how shall we define the problem so that, when we move towards ostensible solutions, we can be reasonably confident that, step-by-step, we are getting out of the woods rather than become more deeply entangled in the wilderness?

## Economic Space, Life Space, Political Space

Up to now, I have used the term city in a very loose, general sense. On one hand, "city" can refer to a municipality. This is the simplest case. In other contexts, it can mean the densely built-up urban area, regardless of politico-administrative boundaries. But given the character of actual urbanization processes world-wide, I would like "city" to stand, at least for purposes of this essay, for the more encompassing concept of "city-region" that consists of a core city and its surrounding *urban field* which, together, constitute an *integrated functional/economic space* (Friedmann and Miller, 1965; McGee 1995). Urban fields typically extend outward from the core to a distance of more than 100 km; they are the spaces into which the core city expands; they include the city's airports, new industrial estates, watersheds, recreation areas, water and sewage treatment facilities, intensive vegetable farms, outlying new urban districts, already existing smaller cities, power plants, petroleum refineries, and so forth, all of which are essential to the city's good functioning. City-regions on this scale can now have many millions of inhabitants, some of them rivaling a medium-sized country. This space of functional/economic relations may fall entirely within a single *political/administrative space* as is the case of the Hong Kong SAR and Toronto; more likely, however, it will cut across and overlap with a number—in some cases a very large number—of political-administrative spaces of cities, counties, districts, towns, provinces, and so forth. *Political/administrative space is the primary space of governance.*

Both spaces, functional/economic and political/administrative, overlie a set of smaller, loosely bounded, more intimately constructed spaces of social relation which I call *life space*. Life space is the space of everyday domesticity, of residential households in their social relations with neighbors, friends, family, and basic service providers. Often, it is centered on religious institutions and will typically include convenience stores, sport fields, pubs, local cafes, playgrounds, and parks. It will also be served, well or badly (and sometimes even not at all), by public facilities such as transportation, health posts, police posts, and the like. *Life space is the primary space of social reproduction.*

Although all three of these spaces can, in principle, be mapped,

precise boundaries are often arbitrary, frequently blurred, and, because of the internal dynamics of the city, may require repeated revisions to reflect continuous changes “on the ground.” Moreover, cities do not exist in isolation but are interconnected with both near-by and distant, non-contiguous city-regions. *Cities form parts of systems of cities.*

## The City as a Political Community, or Why a City is not a Hotel

Cities are real physical spaces in which our lives as urbanites unfold. The question that I now wish to pose is this: How do we relate, first, to the urban habitat; second, to our fellow urbanites; and third, to those in authority who claim to govern us? These three questions ultimately boil down to this: what does it mean to be an urban citizen?

In medieval Europe, to be a burgher was to be a citizen of a fortified city. Burghers were the inhabitants of a self-governing, chartered city and, as such, entitled to privileges not granted to the more numerous peasantry that served their feudal overlords in the surrounding countryside (Martines 1979; Braudel 1992). As the familiar saying went, “*Stadtluft macht frei*”—city air makes free—and this tradition of the city as a self-governing commune survives to this day: witness the loose association of some 70 major cities in the European Union that calls itself *Eurocities* and is engaged in cooperative research, information exchange, and policy coordination (Eurocities 1996).

Much has changed, of course, since self-governing cities first emerged in the European heartland during the 12th and 13th centuries. With the rise of the national state following the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648, cities lost much of their autonomy. The democratic revolution that began in the latter part of the 18th century and is still ongoing, resurrected the idea of citizenship but lodged it squarely in the national state, imagined as a sovereign political community. This weakening of city autonomy entailed a sharp decline of interest in local governance. In the United States, for example, where local councils are elected, citizen participation in local elections involves typically less than a third of those eligible to vote. Most people are content to pay their taxes and live in the city as though it were a hotel.

Let me elaborate on this metaphor and try to show where, I believe, it goes wrong. Let’s assume that the city would, indeed, be like a hotel. As a hotel, it would be managed as most of them are, primarily in the interest of its well-paying guests who influence management and occupy the top floors of the tower, especially its penthouse suites. (The cheaper rooms are always in the lower stories, with single cubicles set aside for the poor in crowded basements, whilst numbers of homeless people jostle in the alleys behind the kitchen, feeding off food scraps.) The management reports annually to a distinguished Board of (mostly male) Directors and an anonymous body of shareholders, most of whom have given their proxy vote to the Board. At these meetings, everyone’s

attention is focused on a single question: is the hotel profitable; what is its share of the local market; how can operating costs be further reduced?

Contrary to its glossy brochure, Hotel Metropole—which is what I shall call this run-down city hotel—is not the five-star facility it imagines itself to be. Although its management has become deeply corrupted, the elevators still work in a fashion, the water—increasingly of a dubious color—still runs from the faucets, the garbage still gets collected from most of the floors, albeit on an irregular schedule, the hallways are uncomfortably drab, smelly, and noisy. Over time, the hotel is getting ever more crowded, and new structures are being added haphazardly here and there. Guests are continually switching rooms: those who can afford it move up to higher floors which are reputed to have better service, others respond to the advertisements of competing hotels in the chain, still others move to different rooms on the same floor: there are rumors that things may be a bit more tolerable further down on this or that corridor. Despite increasingly appalling conditions, the Board of Directors has decided to keep the hotel running. Profits from its operations are helping to finance new hotels elsewhere. Hotel Metropole has become a cash cow.

What, if anything, is wrong with this story? The overall picture is surely a familiar one, and yet, something is not quite right. There are, in fact, three fatal flaws. No one can be said to “own” the city in the sense that stockholders own a capitalist enterprise;<sup>1</sup> cities are not supposed to be “profitable;” and many of the city’s inhabitants, especially among the older generation, harbor strong attachments to the small corner of the earth that they regard as their “life space:” the city, or at least their urban neighborhood or borough, forms a facet of their collective identity. But if the city is not a capitalist enterprise, and there is no distinguished Board of Directors, then what is it? And to whom should the city’s management team report? If the city is not out to make a profit, then what purpose does it serve? And if the city’s inhabitants are not paying “guests,” then what are they, and what are their rights and obligations?

I shall cut directly to the core of my argument. In my view, the city is not a “hotel,” because it is, potentially at least, a *political community*, that is to say, a collective entity whose management is ultimately accountable to its long-term residents, its “citizens.” In the final analysis, it is citizens who constitute its putative “Board of Directors,” with the implicit power to “hire and fire” the city’s management. A well-run city makes possible and enhances collective life. It creates the conditions for the integration of economic activities within the functional space it controls, and it supports the cluster of life spaces within which civil society and individual human lives flourish. The city’s management can open up new economic and cultural opportunities and mediate conflict within the city’s political space. But it is its residents who make the city productive. They constitute the city as a polity.

Nevertheless, I am aware that many, perhaps even most of us would prefer to inhabit the city as though it were, indeed,

something like a hotel. It would certainly be a lot more convenient. We may be long-suffering "guests," but getting involved in the mire and muck of urban politics is not worth the trouble with so many more immediately pressing or amusing things to do. In the United States, as I already mentioned, voter turnout in local elections is typically very low. People may grumble and complain but, so long as minimal services are provided, at least to their own neighborhoods, they remain largely unconcerned with the city as a political community.

Here, I shall argue for a more politically engaged position. The concept of *local citizenship*—practiced in a small federated republic such as Switzerland to this day—is not yet in currency world-wide, partly because citizenship is still thought to be tied exclusively to the national state. But this tight identity relation, nation-citizen, is beginning to crumble: in a dynamic, global economy, with mobile capital and labor, changing technologies, and shifting markets, multiple citizenship with all of its attendant ambiguities is becoming more and more the rule. In Europe, citizens of the European Union elect the parliament sitting in Strasbourg but they elect members of their own national legislatures as well: in some sense, they are already citizens of both, the European Union and their respective national states. Why should they then not also assert their right to be *local* citizens of the city or town where they reside?<sup>2</sup> And are we not, all of us, at least informally, already global citizens, concerned with world poverty issues, peace-keeping missions, the adjudication of international conflicts, global warming accords, species survival? Granted that global, macro-regional, national, and local claims on individuals may be in conflict, and this presents a practical, that is a political problem. But, whatever the difficulties in the specific case, I believe that formal recognition of local citizenship is now merely a matter of time.<sup>3</sup>

### Some Preconditions for a Political Community

The concept of a political community and its associated ideas of (local) citizenship derive from the liberal democratic traditions of western Europe and North America, whose intellectual roots can be traced to ancient Greece, the Roman Republic, European humanism, and the democratic revolutions in the late 18th century in the American colonies and France (Skinner, 1978). Although there were long centuries, even millennia, when democratic thought and practice were at low ebb, philosophers of the Enlightenment such as Locke, Montesquieu, Rousseau, Madison, J.S. Mill and others still carry a vital, contemporary message.

It is not my intention here to argue that democratic ideals are universally desirable, or indeed that they have ever been fully realized. Moreover, these ideals vary substantially, from those of liberal democracy on the right (Berlin 1969) to those of radical (participatory) democracy on the left (Barber 1984). Some uphold individualist, others more collective conceptions

of justice as the foundation of political order (Walzer 1983; Young 1990). There are also important feminist perspectives (e.g., Pateman 1989). Political traditions follow different trajectories, and political systems in the Middle East and China, for example, would probably not support all of the performance criteria for cities I will propose in this essay. It remains to be seen to what extent, for example, Islamic or Confucian political traditions will devise performance criteria based on different principles (see, for example, Hsiao 1979; Du and Song 1995). Nevertheless, it is clear that democratizing forces are presently at work in many parts of the world outside the European heartland. The globalization of capital is partly responsible for this insofar as it is justified by an ideology of possessive individualism (MacPherson 1962) and requires the free circulation of information for its own long-term survival. Global media and the Internet are also contributing to this diffusion of political ideas. I shall therefore persist with my argument, leaving it for future resolution whether broadly democratic or some other set of criteria should be universally adopted (Davis 1995).

A political community, then, has *institutional correlates* without which it ceases to be a meaningful concept. I shall merely list some of the major ones, since a full discussion is, in the present context, impossible. They include: universal suffrage and free periodic elections; freedom of speech, assembly, and association; freedom from arbitrary arrest; public media independent of state control; and a non-partisan legal system. It is these and similar conditions that make possible the vibrant life of a political community and undergird the role of citizens in the governance of cities.

### Human Flourishing as a Universal Human Right

Allow me now to return to my main topic. Criteria for assessing the performance of cities require a normative foundation without which any further discussion would become incoherent. These founding principles should be so clearly formulated that they can be communicated even to people who are not philosophically inclined but make their living as carpenters, domestic workers, or construction workers.

As a norm, they must also be powerful and persuasive enough to serve as a beacon for governance and public policy. Here is how I would formulate this foundational value:

*Every human being has the right, by nature, to the full development of their innate intellectual, physical, and spiritual potentialities in the context of wider communities.*

I call this the *right to human flourishing*. It has never been universally acknowledged as an inherent right of being human. Slave societies knew nothing of it; nor did caste societies, tribal societies, corporate village societies, or totalitarian states. And in no society have women ever enjoyed the same right to human flourishing as men. But as the fundamental



right of every person, human flourishing is implicit in the democratic ethos.

Human flourishing underlies the strongly held belief in contemporary western societies that privilege should be earned rather than inherited. Human beings should accordingly have an equal start in life. Over a lifetime, individual and group outcomes will, of course, vary because of differences in innate abilities, family upbringing, entrenched privilege, class formation, social oppression, and other reasons. Still, the idea of a basic equality among all of their citizens underlies the mild socialism of western countries with their systems of public education, public health, the graduated income tax, anti-discriminatory legislation, and so forth, all of which seek some sort of leveling of life chances among individuals and groups.

## The Common Good

It would be foolish, however, to insist, as Margaret Thatcher did when she reportedly dismissed the notion of “society” as a fiction, that human flourishing is largely or even primarily an individual achievement, independent of any social context. Flourishing does not depend on us alone as individuals—it is not only a matter of individual achievement—for the simple reason that we are all profoundly social beings as well. As individuals ultimately responsible for our actions, we are constrained in what we do by (1) our social relations with family, friends, work mates, and neighbors, in short, by an ethics of mutual obligation within civil society and (2) the social settings of our lives, by which I mean the set of socially produced *conditions* that may and often do inhibit human flourishing. Although the first set of constraints can be very powerful indeed, I will not further address it here because, for the most part, it lies outside the public sphere. Rather, I will turn to the second set which is the primary focus of this essay.

Briefly, my argument is that local citizens do not merely *use* the city to advance their personal interests—some will do so more successfully than others—but also contribute, as members of their political community, which is the city in its political aspect, to establish and maintain the *basic conditions—political, economic, social, and physical—for the human flourishing of all citizens of the community*. I refer to these basic conditions as the *common good* of the polity, or the *good city*, because without them, human flourishing would be impossible. The “common good” therefore implies something akin to *citizen rights*, that is, to the rightful claims that any local citizen can make on her or his political community based on the inalienable right to human flourishing.

The “common good” may sound today like a concept coming from an earlier, more benign era. In a neo-liberal age and a globalizing economy, where the untrammelled pursuit of self-interest has been raised to the level of an unassailable virtue, it has a distinctly old-fashioned ring. While neo-conservatives

in the West raise the banner of possessive individualism unconstrained by social obligations, progressives decry the “common good” as a rhetorical trick of the hegemonic class that merely serves to hide their own class interest. Post-modern critics, for their part, argue that ours is an era of social fragmentation, and that meta-narratives proposing to offer a basis for social coherence are simply no longer possible (Tagg 1996). Their refuge is a regressive aestheticism. Against neo-liberals, political progressives, and post-modernists, I would argue that a political community has no purchase except as it invokes a conception of the “common good.” Unless we can agree that, for a given social formation, a common good can, at least in principle, be defined, we would have to be content with our fable of the Hotel Metropole; we would have to be satisfied to live as “guests” in a city on which we have no special claims.

## Towards Criteria for Assessing the Performance of Cities

Let me review the logic of my argument so far. I have posited human flourishing as a universal human right. To make this right operational, certain conditions of a political, economic, social, physical, and environmental character must exist. Although these conditions are, in principle, enabling, they also impose social constraints on the individual. The primary site for establishing/creating these conditions is the city, constituted as a political community. In this context, the right to human flourishing appears as a right that can be claimed by local citizens. Becoming a member of a political community, and thus an active local citizen, should be facilitated for newcomers to the city.

Continuing this line of argument, the facilitating conditions for human flourishing must be available on an equal basis to all citizens who, in turn, assume a civic obligation to help bring about and sustain these conditions. Although this equality principle is unassailable as such, the unequal treatment of women, ethnic and religious groups, lower castes, the invisible underclass, and groups marked by certain phenotypical characteristics is a fact in virtually every major city of the world. As a principle in the political order, however, egalitarianism cannot by itself dissolve the remaining, stubborn inequalities in the civil order. In addition to the formal declaration of rights in the political order, therefore, a concurrent struggle must take place to secure an equality of rights in the civil order as well.

An unresolved question concerns the correct balance between individual, self-interested striving and one’s obligations towards groups and collectivities, including one’s political community. The Anglo-Saxon variety of capitalism has always leaned far to the side of individualism, leaving little more than a yearning for community among many people. Socially, it has been a disaster. Chinese communism of the Mao Ze Dong variety leaned far in the other direction, where the demands of the collectivity all but swallowed up individual striving. It, too, was a disaster. The golden mean obviously

lies in the difficult balance between the one and the many. The problem is that whatever equilibrium between self-advancement and social obligation may be momentarily attained, it will never be a stable one. At present, there is considerable debate in the United States about the importance of so-called family values, communitarianism, and relations within civil society based on trust, face-to-face relations, and mutuality, often referred to as *social capital* (Putnam 1993). But mainstream America continues to be enthralled by the promise of an unfettered individualism and fails to connect its rampant and pervasive problems of social alienation to the absence of precisely this lack of social engagement, this blind denial of the social nature of human beings and the deeply felt human needs that spring from that source.

## Defining the Criteria

I now turn to the identification of the criteria for assessing the performance of cities. As I hinted at the start, criteria can be divided into three groups: good governance, good management, and good outcomes. *Good city governance* refers to the political processes of allocating resources and “steering” the collective life of the political community. It involves the triad of state, corporate sector, and civil society joined in various forms of collaborative local action.<sup>4</sup> *Good city management* concerns the administration and use of common resources in bringing about those minimal conditions of urban life that make possible individual human flourishing. Finally, *good city outcomes* concern those which further the common good of the city, including the strengthening of good governance, thereby completing the circle.

The specific criteria I would propose follow below:

### I. Criteria of Good City Governance

- *Inspired political leadership*: leaders capable of articulating a common vision for the polity, building a strong consensus around this vision, and mobilizing resources towards its realization.
- *Public accountability*: (1) the uncoerced, periodic election of political representatives and (2) the right of local citizens to be adequately informed about those who stand for elections, the government’s performance record, and the overall outcomes for the city (see III below).
- *Inclusiveness*: the right of all citizens to be directly involved in the formulation of policies and programs whenever consequences are expected significantly to affect their life and livelihood.
- *Responsiveness*: the fundamental right of citizens to claim rights and express grievances; to appropriate channels for this purpose; to a government that is accessible people in their neighborhoods and districts; and to an acknowledgment by government that citizens’ claims and grievances require an attentive, appropriate response.

- *Non-violent conflict management*: refers to institutionalized ways of resolving conflicts between state and citizens without resort to physical violence.

### II. Criteria of Good City Management

- *Accessibility, transparency, responsiveness*: the city bureaucracy should be equally accessible to citizens from all walks of life, transparent in its manner of operation, and responsive to citizen complaints and initiatives.
- *Effectiveness*: programs launched to attain specific, politically-sanctioned results should also come close to achieving them. Privatized urban services should be carefully monitored for their compliance with performance standards.
- *Efficiency*: in striving for maximum effectiveness, government-sponsored programs should use resources as efficiently as possible.
- *Honesty*: in carrying out public programs, all concerned parties should be treated fairly, without favoritism. Basically, this criterion speaks to the honesty and incorruptibility of public officials.

### III. Criteria of Good City Outcomes

- *A productive city*: provides the right to adequately remunerated work for those who seek it.
- *A sustainable city*: ensures the right to a life-sustaining and life-enhancing natural environment for every citizen, now and in the future.
- *A livable city*: guarantees all citizens their right to decent housing and associated public services, including health and personal safety, in neighborhoods of their choice.
- *A safe city*: ensures each person’s right to the physical integrity and security of their body.
- *An actively tolerant city*: protects and promotes citizen rights to group-specific differences in language, religion, national custom, sexual preference, and similar markers of collective identity, so long as these do not invade the rights of others and are consistent with more general human rights.
- *A caring city*: acknowledges the right of the weakest members of the polity to adequate social provision.

I call this listing of criteria a *minimum agenda* for the “good city”<sup>5</sup>. Although it does not place extraordinary demands on existing institutions, it does entail a vibrant civil society, an active praxis of democratic citizenship, and an independent press prepared to support responsible, investigative journalism. These are, you might say, preconditions before the “good city” can make an appearance. Once these preconditions are met, however, how should the criteria be used, and by whom, towards what end? First, I want to emphasize what I would consider to be an inappropriate use. The criteria of good city governance, management, and

outcomes are not designed for a comparative analysis of city performance. To look for and construct quantitative indicators by which to measure and compare city performance would be a misguided effort. This is so for two reasons. Even if it were possible to construct plausible indicators for each criterion, it would be virtually impossible to combine them into an aggregate performance index for the simple reason that there will never be agreement on the relative weighting of the separate criteria. Secondly, quantitative indicators are normally read as standing for the whole they are supposed to "indicate," but such a reading would be invalid in this case. An actively tolerant city, for example, cannot be adequately measured, say, by the number of violent acts committed against so-called minority groups. Whereas reducing violence against certain sectors of the population may become an immediate objective in one situation (though not necessarily in others), it cannot replace the continuing search for a more actively tolerant city everywhere, which will always have a more encompassing meaning than can possibly be captured by any single indicator or set of indicators, particularly one of negative performance. What is needed, then, in place of performance indicators is a *critical, narrative account* of the way that the civil and political rights of different socially and culturally specific groups are adequately protected and promoted in a given city.

No actually existing city would, in any event, score high on all of the criteria I have enumerated; no city is ever likely to be called a "good city." But every city can try to better itself on some dimensions of its performance. The criteria are thus intended to be used by the citizens of each city—its organized civil society—as a tool for mapping actually existing states of affairs, and for setting an agenda for civic struggle and action (Douglass and Friedmann, 1998). For I believe that it is, in principle, possible to obtain substantial agreement among the general population on criteria that propose to tell us what we have the right to hope for in a "good city."

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> But see Isin (1992) for the contrary review that modern cities in Europe and North America are best understood as corporations.
- <sup>2</sup> Denmark is one European country where even non-Danish nationals obtain the right to vote in local elections after a residency of three years (Garcia 1996).
- <sup>3</sup> See Held, 1995, for a similar argument.
- <sup>4</sup> There are numerous attempts to define "governance." But a core meaning to all is the conjoining of state and civil society in the process of making decisions in the public domain (McCarney 1996). To this dyadic formulation, I have added as equally indispensable the corporate sector, thus forming a triad. See Berg, et. al., 1993.
- <sup>5</sup> In the April 1998 Asia-Pacific Intercity Network workshop on urban-regional governance held in Taipei, where I presented this paper, Professor Won-Bae Kim pointed out that my "good city" criteria concerned citizens rights to the exclusion of obligations. I concur with this observation. On reflection, however, I would venture the following generalization. Whereas western political theory is, indeed, primarily a theory of individual rights, east Asia philosophy has elaborated a complex theory of obligations. First articulated in the *Analects* of Confucius, the latter is based on a "bottom-up" system of reciprocal obligations (i.e., beginning with familial relations) that extend, step by step, all the way to the King or Emperor (the state). A correlative theory of rights is foreign to this conception, just as rights theory (as formulated, for example, in the U.S. Bill of Rights) has little to offer on the question of citizen responsibilities. The Bill of Rights is essentially the individual citizen's principled line of defense against the encroachments of the state. Such a conception is difficult to graft onto Chinese political theory

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