

# Megacities: success beyond the centre

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If the watchword of the city 2000s was exclusivity, in the 2010s it has become sociality. Urban planning is once again concerned with the majority, with the ordinary citizen's quality of life, work and leisure. The periphery is now the centre of attention. The periphery is where 90% of the population live, and it is where the fate of the megapolis is being decided.

From Greater London to Greater Paris, New Rome to the New York agglomeration, the entire civilised world is trying to solve problems of the periphery. Large cities are experiencing significant growth, with the majority of their populations living away from the city centre, in districts that vary both in the character of their buildings and local governance. More and more, planning, transport and housing policies are being integrated together, taking into account regional development needs, thus making balanced, high-growth development possible. This is what we see in Shanghai, Istanbul, Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo and other major cities.

The growth of the megapolis brings with it its own complications, which show up most acutely at the cities edge — in the first instance, problems of social disintegration and crime.

The suburban 'uprisings' in Berlin, Paris and London in the 2000s demonstrated to us that the civilised world has yet to find a solution to these problems. If it is a challenge for cities in rich and powerful nations, it is even more of a problem for the megacities of developing countries, such as Mexico City, Cairo or Seoul (each with populations over 20 million people). The 'Challenge of the Slums' was the title given to a 2003 UN report, recognising that every sixth person on Planet Earth now lives in slums.

Developing the city's periphery can unlock huge potential, but it won't be done by itself. Cities need to be looking for their own answers to many questions of development: Can large cities become more polycentric? How can infrastructure be used to help development at the periphery? How can problematic districts be regenerated? How can we create and improve an attractive visual identity at the periphery? How can we ensure local government is working for these areas, as well as including the community in solving the problems?

All of these questions are to one extent or another relevant to Moscow today.

Moscow is a rich city. The Soviet legacy left the city with technically well-developed districts and comparatively high social standards. There are no slums in Moscow. But problems of the city's periphery are critical here too.

Moscow has a tiny historical centre. The city is now ten times the size of what it was at the start of the twentieth century. And yet people still think of the city only in terms of its old historical centre. Moscow means the Kremlin, Red Square, the boulevards, Gorky Park and the Stalin skyscrapers; Moscow does not mean Bibiryevo, Biryulyevo, Zhulyebino or Zyuzino. It is quite normal to ignore 85% of the city's territory, writing it off as a grey zone, deprived of all identity. Moscow has a very compact centre, a centre that actually combines five centres — political, cultural, finance, trade and business. Each of the centres support each other, but they do not have a lot of room to co-exist.

Moscow has a very busy centre: some 80% of the city's workspaces are located in just 7% of its territory. The hyper-development of the city centre has brought with it traffic, ecological and logistical problems. It has also seen property values skyrocket. Practically the entire city centre is closed for development: any significant demolition or building creates an upheaval felt across the entire country.

The periphery has thus become the main resource for our development. But it is also our main problem. We have two types of periphery — industrial zones and residential suburbs. Industrial zones need to be converted; residential suburbs need to be reconstructed. We already have amassed some experience in developing the periphery. The scale of the programme to redevelop 5-storey Krushchev-era housing blocks is without analogue in the world; and we have built academic (Moscow State University, the Academy of Sciences), business (Moscow City) and trade (Crocus City) centres on the periphery of the city. We have begun work on large-scale new projects on the periphery (the ZIL cultural centre and Skolkovo centre for innovation). But we have yet to create districts on the periphery that are of comparable value to the centre; while the dimensions of Moscow's periphery mean that any development is bound to fade into insignificance compared to the work that remains to be done.

How can we go about creating or increasing the value of the periphery? How can we create new urban centres? Which development approach is most sensitive to contemporary realities? How can we create a new quality of urban environment? How do we reconcile the interests of residents and the priorities of development? Where do we move to in order to develop — to New Moscow, to the old residential suburbs, to industrial zones? How do we resolve transport problems? How can we disperse workplaces?

Politically, Moscow's periphery represents 7 million voters. Economically, it represents 200 million square metres and 1 trillion dollars in property value. We need a programme to develop this periphery. Essentially, what this means is that we need to create a national plan for middle class, post-Soviet housing. We need to move away from faceless standardisation; we need to create necessary infrastructure and services; and we need business to be motivated to build such housing. Solving this problem this problem will open up new horizons for the periphery in cities across Russia and the world.