

From megalopolis to global cities

Introduction by the Guest-Editor

Calogero Muscarà

The text on these pages is a brief introductory note by the guest-editor on the contents of Part 2 of the present issue.

Introduction

● The following section springs from an interview of Jean Gottmann by **Miloš Perović** about the Northeastern U.S. megalopolis – clearly an occasion to recall the great geographer's theories on the social and physical characteristics of contemporary urbanization. It is no coincidence that the interview concludes with the recognition that "one lesson is of general and lasting portent: the white-collar revolution driving the modern city toward a 'quaternary age.' The basic transformation of society under way will recast urban life to benefit new needs that are difficult to imagine." But if the lesson Gottmann draws from the study of contemporary urbanization is that the white-collar social revolution and the introduction of a quaternary economy are changing our way of living and building the city, the answer he gives Perović recalls the whole philosophy that inspires his thought: "Megalopolitan size and density may cover very different levels of wealth, living standards, and modes of life." Considering the megalopolis of the Northeastern United States as a model would be wrong; however, it does provide evidence of the major transformation in progress. From the first to the last question, the interview deals specifically with the Northeastern U.S. megalopolis, for which Gottmann defines boundaries as well as its characteristics and morphology.

Why then consider Perović's interview a point of departure for the articles of this section? The best answer to this question comes from the essays themselves. Although Gottmann highly recommends putting every megalopolis and urban area in its own historical and geographical context, the authors believe that he has discovered a useful model for examining contemporary world urbanization. For example, in the interview Gottmann devotes particular attention to the exclusion of states like Georgia, Virginia, and the Carolinas from the Northeastern

megalopolis. Dealing with an analogous process in Europe, he wrote that the English megalopolis must be distinguished from the European one for cultural reasons.

Two articles deal with this same theme.

● **Mami Futagami** studies how the region of Appalachia became an extension of the Northeastern megalopolis. History did not help Appalachia enter the megalopolis, but not for those cultural reasons that made Gottmann draw the boundaries of the megalopolis at Washington, DC. Its inclusion is explained by the federal aid policies that helped the peripheral fringe develop.

● **Rita Colantonio Venturelli** and **Andrea Galli**'s essay poses the question of whether the Italian region Marche could enter the potential Mediterranean megalopolis predicted by Gottmann in the area between Italy and Provence. The two authors, who refer to the studies of the Italian economist G. Fuà, conclude that the Marche should be excluded. My question then is whether the considerations proposed by the two researchers can be traced to the structural principles set by Gottmann to define the megalopolis of the United States.

If the call to the theme of megalopolitan limits helps us understand how for Gottmann the physical attributes of contemporary urbanization are not isolated, this concept appears even more explicit in the following essays.

● **François Gay**, an old friend of Gottmann's and dedicated follower of his ideas on harbors and the "hinge" function of the megalopolis, concentrates on the history of Le Havre after globalization. "The case is clear," he writes. "Geographers need to rehabilitate the notion of territory, and more precisely the notion of infranational territory as a counterpoint to globalization. *Man wants to be someone but comes from somewhere*. Spinoza, according to Jacques Lévy, tells us that man has a 'natural need for civil status' that is linked to the feeling of being active within a close-knit community."

● For **Michel Philipponneau**, Gottmann's theories regarding megalopolitan attributes help us to understand why a process analogous to that of the Northeastern United States did not develop on the European Atlantic coast. He writes, "How do we

explain that the European shoreline, which Megalopolis's founding fathers left, characterized by demographic and economic stagnation, by the scattering of men and activities, and by limited urbanization, contrasts with the extraordinary dynamism of the North American shoreline? The 'European Megalopolis,' this 'Blue Banana,' as it appears on the night satellite surveys, lies well behind the shoreline, from London to Milan, on that European isthmus where the flows of continental trade prevail on the maritime flows linked to the Atlantic seaboard."

● Also for **Lawrence D. Mann** the focus lies on the eastern coast of the Atlantic Ocean and on Europe. In his experience of the Spanish and French Basque country he finds that political conflict constitutes the greatest obstacle to the development of a potential megalopolitan area.

In short, these articles share a single belief: the megalopolis is never just a physical change in the form of urbanization; it is also a social, economic, cultural, and political process that anticipates and relates to that of globalization, and represents the evolution of the Alexandrine model for interpreting geographic space.

Case studies

The three essays that follow do not directly address the megalopolitan dimension of Gottmann's thought. In a few cases the authors do not even refer specifically to his ideas. But it is not difficult for students of Gottmann's theories on contemporary urbanization to identify references to Gottmannian studies, such as that of the capital city/state and those of political behavior/urbanization or population urbanization/movements, all cited in the bibliography, or those found in *Since Megalopolis* or *La Città Invincibile (The Invincible City)*.

● **Jacqueline Lieutaud's** article comes first not because she refers to Gottmann but because she addresses the theme of the image of the city by looking at the Universal Exhibitions and increasingly frequent Olympic Games of the global world. The "image," she writes, "is a necessary item for the city. The image is helpful to the city because it often becomes a mainspring for local development as an efficient tool for urbanism." Now "the image of the city is even becoming a target representative of cultures and ideology as a whole, as has just been demonstrated in New York, on September 11."

● Using the example of Turkey, **Ruşen Keleş** carefully examines the relationship between migration and the geographical

distribution of immigrants within a city and its effect on political behavior. He seems convinced that "realities of social and economic structure, including the characteristics and patterns of urbanization, deeply affect political development." And "in countries where rapid, unbalanced, and disorderly urbanization tends to assemble populations in major urban centers, unemployment, feelings of relative deprivation, and the manipulation of formally and informally organized political groups exert a certain impact upon rural immigrants, alienating them from centrist parties." As a result "social, economic, and political factors tend to nourish the growth of extremist or fundamentalist movements."

● Finally **György Enyedi** and **Krisztina Keresztély** study the relationship between the capital city and the state in the four stages of recent Hungarian history, from the end of the Austro-Hungarian empire to the present. The authors observe the sequence of a "dichotomy of 'openness' and 'closedness'" that refers to Gottmann's reflections on capital cities. They also confirm John Agnew's and François Gay's theories on the role of "territoriality" in Gottmannian contemporary urbanization. As Enyedi and Keresztély write, "National governments either supported 'modernization' by opening the country to foreign, especially Western, influences or tried to rely on internal potential, emphasizing national traditions and values."

On global cities

We close our urban section with the paper by:

● **István Béla Ferenc Kormoss**, of the College of Europe, who examines demographic perspectives in an analysis of the Gottmannian forecasts. Beyond paying homage to the great geographer, Kormoss recalls that similar concerns of urban concentration to those of the Northeastern U.S. megalopolis emerged in the Rhine-Scheldt-Meuse Delta of northwestern Europe, which was more confined by space but was divided by the national borders of five states. Reconsidering it today in the light of available statistical information, he concludes that "thirty years after my study on the megalopolitan urbanization of Europe, it seemed appropriate to paraphrase the same issue in a larger context." Europe is a confirmation of Gottmann's vision, as well as the belief that this is the form and character of contemporary urbanization in the world. In this sense Kormoss's accurate statistical analysis serves to close this section on urban geography.