Chapter 10
Challenges Faced by Megacities in the Future

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ABSTRACT
The advancement of science, industry, and digital technologies has shaped the lives of many people and has encouraged more people to live in cities. Since 2007, the urban population has exceeded the rural, and this amount is estimated to increase up to 60% of world habitants by 2030, according to the United Nations. Considering that these changes in people’s lifestyle can create various challenges to society, identifying and managing the potential future challenges is a vital step to ensure a dignified living without conflicts. This paper studies the challenges that cities and megacities may face in the future and provides solutions to manage and handle them. Reports and statistics from international organizations and the authors’ critical analysis have been applied to collect the necessary data. The research findings emphasize the importance of enhanced competitiveness and the quality of life and environment on the development of the city. Moreover, the major infrastructural problems facing cities in the digital world are discussed and the importance of strategic planning and sustainable approach toward resolving urban issues are emphasized.

INTRODUCTION
Overpopulation of cities and excessive emigration of people from the countryside to urban areas has caused growing problems to the cities, which if not managed properly can even cause disasters as cities continue to expand and over-populate. In their essence, cities are places for commercial, cultural, scientific, industrial and social activities. They are also considered as the driving engine of a country toward economic development. Yet, despite their rapid improvement and faster
growth rate than rural areas, cities face special economic, social, political, and environmental problems. The first step to tackle these problems is to identify the challenges of the cities of today and the megacities of tomorrow. These cities cannot reach a desired development status unless they can first recognize their current potentials and issues well. Thus, cities need to strategically point out their strengths and weaknesses, and identify their current strategic level. Only then, they can make the right decision on their future targets and pathway to a higher standard of living (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2005).

Based on the studies and discussions with world’s urban experts from different cities throughout the globe, cities’ capital and assets can be categorized into six types, including intellectual and social capital, democratic capital, cultural and leisure capital, environmental capital, technical capital, and financial capital (PricewaterhouseCoopers, 2005). Effective use of these assets can result in the successful transition of cities from current levels to their desired strategic level in the future and help overcoming challenges they face.

In the 21st century, cities are faced with numerous challenges. On one hand, they are in danger from the harmful effects of global warming. On the other hand, problems such as discrimination, inequality, and pollution have affected the quality of life of the citizens (UN-HABITAT, 2006). Nonetheless, the main challenge that remains for the cities is the “need for sustainable development”.

In recent years, the debate on sustainability and the necessity for development without harming the environment and endangering future generations has been re-emphasized (Blackburn, 2007; Cernea, 1994; Nejati, Md Shahbudin, & Amran, 2010; Robinson et al., 2006) Although there is no unique definition for sustainable development, the most widely accepted definition is the one by World Commission on Environment and Development (1987) whereby sustainable development is defined as the “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. From this definition, concepts such as equality and social justice among nations can be considered as some of the objectives of sustainable development (Ardakani, 2006).

Sustainable development is usually considered to be composed of three main building blocks: environment, society, and economy as shown in Figure 1 (Giddings, Hopwood, & O’Brien, 2002). These three building blocks must be strengthened hand in hand in order to have a sustainable society.

Despite the key roles that cities play in the development of the society, ignoring the negative aspects that might be caused as a result of modernizing and developing cities can be harmful in the long run. Thus, planning and managing strategies for a sustainable and balanced city is vital. According to UN Habitat’s World Urban Forum III, there should be a dynamic balance among the objectives of economic, environmental, and sociocultural development within the framework of a local government whereby the citizens proactively participate in the development process (UN-HABITAT, 2006).

Figure 1. Building-blocks of sustainable development