
EVEN IN GLOBAL CITIES, THINK LOCALLY

by Jose Carlos Pellegrino, CRE

Returning from the Global Cities in an Era of Change conference at Harvard University, I considered some consequences for the city and county of São Paulo. Imagine, for instance, would be the organization of District Councils or Zone Councils, with representatives of main schools and colleges, professional associations, small commercial businesses and establishments, and ordinary men and women who would meet once a week or every other week to discuss priorities for the regions they belong to.

Of course, these Councils will not have political strength, but would have the ability to assert to mayors, planners, and politicians grassroots needs in the fields of development, health, and educational facilities, transportation changes, and things of that sort.

Within a short time these Councils would convert themselves into important political cells. This would be a natural consequence, if it is considered that the family is the cradle of everything and the Councils would be the best representative of families in a given district or sector. Obviously, city and

county governments would not want to see the creation of such Councils, specially the professional politicians, because in the long run the present system would be replaced by a better one. Here in São Paulo this idea will not be accepted, especially at this moment when we have a radical leftist government. But that is no reason to dismiss such a democratic idea as a practical goal.

The second consideration concerns relates to the risk factors in my country, as it has been set or determined by some rating agencies all over the world. In fact, if you start to think just a little bit, you might suspect these agencies are self-perpetuating and not especially helpful to the very countries they purport to assist. Why? Because, in a way, they are all linked to financial complexes; that is, they all have direct interests in their own funds and other types of investments. Certainly the record of success in South America is not a strong one.

Large banks invest in some areas and then, all of sudden, right after selling their position with big profits, they proclaim that same investment "too risky." What a shame! Corporate and financial gamesmanship is becoming a plague, with companies acting with little or no ethics at all, resulting in significant losses all over the world. I see the rating criteria as applied here lacking good technical support and largely based on guesses and assumptions.

The common threat is this: As "macro" policy is made at the governmental or corporate level, there is a tendency to miss what is actually occurring at the level where most people live and work. Let's keep our eyes on the richness and complexity that are visible locally.

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