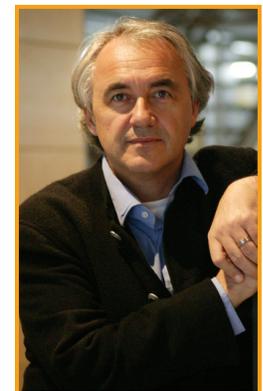




ALFONSO VEGARA, 1987 SPAIN

President & Founder, Fundación Metrópoli

“A dream come true” is the phrase Alfonso Vegara uses to describe his Eisenhower Fellowship experience. As a 32-year old architect and economist in 1987, his dream as a Fellow “was to inspire the creative transformation of cities around the world.” At that time, the disciplines that dealt with the built environment were facing unprecedented global challenges, with visible implications for the environment, the consumption and creation of energy, the mitigation of climate change, and fomenting a new digital society. These scenarios led to the emergence of the definition of sustainable development, which gradually permeated daily lives. Vegara recognized that “in light of this visible impact that humankind had on the earth over the past 150 years, the greatest challenge of the 21st century became building a sustainable future.”



Concurrently, the role of cities was gaining unprecedented prominence. Society was increasingly more urban, generating complex and dynamic living structures. A diverse range of metropolitan areas, city-regions, nodes of innovation, networked territories, mega-cities, new supra-regional areas, came to define our current global habitat.

In this context, during his fellowship, Vegara chose to study U.S. cities, and how local leaders, universities, civil society organizations, authors, and experts were facing the challenge of building a sustainable future, city by city, on our increasingly smaller planet.

“The tangible result of my fellowship”, says Vegara, “was the creation of Fundación Metrópoli, a foundation belonging to the emerging generation of ‘intellectual capital institutions’ dedicated to creating and sharing knowledge to build a sustainable future.” Fundación Metrópoli has connected major cities in over 20 countries around the globe through innovation hubs, experimental architecture, urban research, cities arts programs, eco-cities, seed capital, green funds and more. In the process, Alfonso Vegara, president and founder, was appointed as an advisor to the Government of Singapore and to the cities of Curitiba, Dublin, Bilbao, Casablanca, and Sydney. Vegara was recognized with the European City and Regional Planning Award in 2006 and in 2007, and the King of Spain presented him with the Jaime I Award for Planning, Landscape and Sustainability.

Considering the success of Fundación Metrópoli, Vegara says, “The most memorable impact of my fellowship however, was the relationship that I built with my associate Fellows, from more than 20 countries, and the global network of friends and partners that emerged as a result of the fellowship. Fellows from the 1987 class, like Philip Yeo, one of the fathers of the economic miracle of Singapore, Javier Beristain from México, Enrique Zuleta from Argentina, Donald de Buitler from Ireland, along with other Fellows and Trustees such as Jeremy Ellis from Australia, Ronnie Chan from Hong Kong, Sumio Takeichi from Japan, Eduardo San Martin from Chile, and many more made important contributions and opened doors in their respective countries for the creation of a network of cities and universities connected with Fundación Metrópoli which has made an impact, quite literally all over the world.”

Leaders bettering the world around them.