

Urban Change; its dimensions and its causes

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Statements about urbanization in recent reports

- The health of hundreds of millions of people is threatened by an urban population explosion in developing countries
- *Urban growth in Africa, Asia and Latin America is "explosive" and "out of control"*
- The speed of urban change is unprecedented with new cities mushrooming everywhere
- *Large cities have the worst environmental problems*
- Mega-cities are growing rapidly and will dominate the urban future
- *The historically unprecedented fact that most of the world's largest cities are now in Africa, Asia and Latin America*
- Urban poverty is a major cause of environmental degradation

But all these statements are inaccurate or incorrect

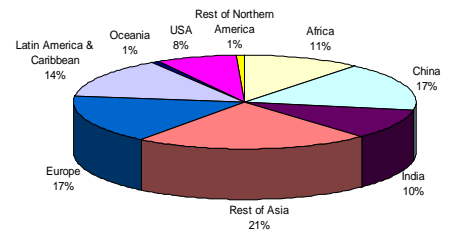
Urbanization's economic and demographic importance:

- Around 2007/2008, for the first time in history, more than half the world's population will live in urban areas
 - Two less well-known milestones
 - Around 1980* more than half the world's economically active population worked in industry & services – not agriculture, forestry, mining & fishing (today around 65%)
 - Around 1940* more than half the world's GDP was generated in industry and services, not agriculture, forestry, fishing and mining (today only around 97%)
- (Urban areas as the sites where most new investments are concentrated)

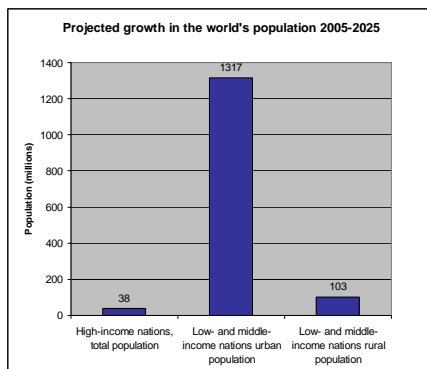
* NB the exact dates for these milestones are not certain

Most of the world's urban population now in low- and middle-income nations

Distribution of world's urban population 2005



Most of the world's growth in population will be in urban centres in low- and middle-income nations



Urbanization generally seen as:

- **A problem for development**
 - The scale of urban poverty and its rapid growth; more than 900 million urban dwellers living in 'slums' and informal settlements
 - 700 million urban dwellers lacking adequate water and 850 million lacking adequate sanitation
- **A problem for the environment**
 - Cities as centres of resource use, waste, pollution and greenhouse gas emissions
- **But most urbanization is associated with stronger/wealthier economies**
 - Rapid urbanization in the past in many nations associated with the removal of apartheid like controls
 - Urban areas have some strong environmental advantages

What is urbanization; what drives it?

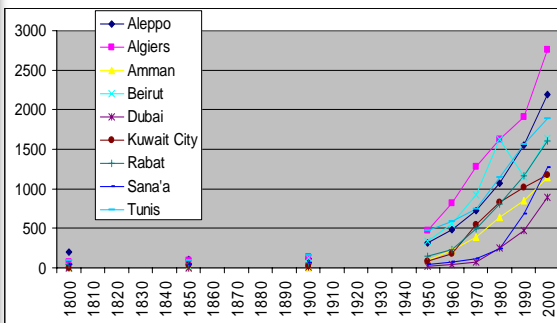
- **Urbanization:** an increasing proportion of a nation's population living in urban areas
- What drives it?
 - **Economic growth** which concentrates new investment and economic opportunity in urban areas
 - (TO PUT IN ANOTHER WAY): *Concentrations of profit-seeking enterprises in urban areas*
 - because of the advantages these provide such enterprises in access to markets (consumers and producers), labour, sub-contractors, information, infrastructure, services, government.....
 - Concentration of secondary schools, higher education and government jobs in urban areas (Economic/political/social change pushing people out of rural areas - including disasters and civil strife/war)

Speed of growth in the world's urban population

| World's total urban population | Years taken |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 0 to 1 billion urban dwellers | 10,000 years (c. 8000 BC-1960) |
| 1 to 2 billion urban dwellers | 25 years (1960-85) |
| 2 to 3 billion urban dwellers | 17 years (1985-2002) |
| 3 to 4 billion urban dwellers | 15 years? (2003-2018) |

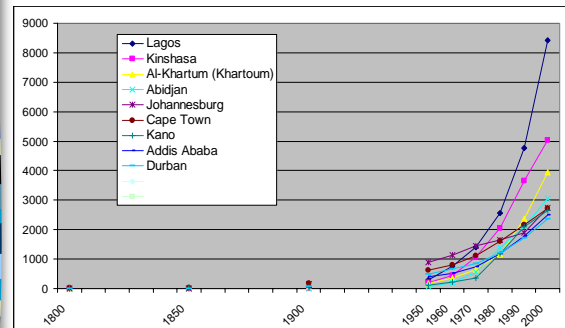
Growth of major cities; Arab World, 1800-2000

(thousand inhabitants)



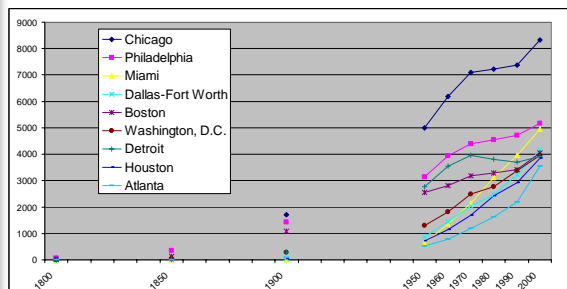
Growth of major sub-Saharan Africa cities, 1800-2000

(thousand inhabitants)



Growth of some major US cities, 1800-2000

(thousands of inhabitants)



Few valid generalizations about urbanization

- Great diversity between nations in:
 - The scale of the urban population and its growth rate
 - The distribution of urban population between different size urban centres (and how this is changing)
- Many of the world's largest cities are not growing rapidly including Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Buenos Aires, Calcutta, Seoul.....
 - Many of the world's fastest growing cities over the last century are in North America!
 - Mega-city myths
- International and inter-city comparisons often misleading because of different criteria used to define urban centres and city boundaries
 - If India adopted Sweden's definition of 'urban' it would be predominantly urban
 - Urban populations under-estimated in more nations than they are over-estimated

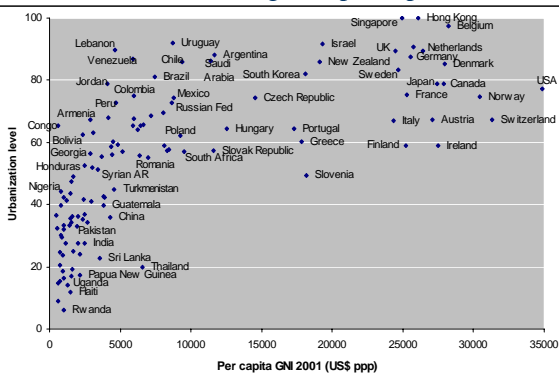
Lack of rigour in using urban statistics

- World Bank report in 2000 saying that sub-Saharan Africa was unusual in that it had urbanized rapidly during the 1990s without economic growth
 - BUT this report's analysis had NO census data for any sub-Saharan African nation on its urban population for the late 1990s or 2000
- Doubtful accuracy of most figures on urban poverty
 - Very few poverty lines make allowance for many of the most expensive non-food items for poor urban dwellers eg housing, transport, informal payments needed to keep children at school or be allowed to pursue livelihood

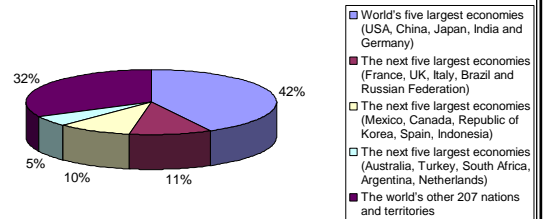
What do we know about urban change?

- The wealthiest nations are the most urbanized nations
- The fastest growing economies are the economies that urbanized most
- Growing importance of industry and services in GDP and in employment in virtually all growing economies
- Political independence often brings a major 'urban boost' but its influence diminishes over time
 - Removal of apartheid like controls
- Most large cities are in the world's largest economies (an economic logic to where urbanization and large city development is taking place)

Urbanization level against per capita GNI



Distribution of the world's 380 "million cities" 2000



Cannot understand urban change without strong local knowledge

- Pakistan: current size and spatial distribution of its urban population has been greatly influenced by:
- India's Partition in the late 1940s (which created Pakistan and which also caused very large migration flows to particular locations, especially to Karachi);
 - Pakistan's division (as what was formerly East Pakistan became Bangladesh)
 - The Green Revolution (and the locations where it was concentrated)
 - The Afghan Civil war (3.7 million Afghans came to Pakistan including some 600,000 settling in Karachi)
 - Chinese imports.....
 - All the above influencing city politics as well

Links between globalization and urbanization

- Nations with prosperous bases/niches in the world economy generally wealthier, more urbanized, have most of the largest cities
- Most large cities have key roles in global economy
 - (as has long been the case?)
 - Some as key command and control points for more globalized production systems; others articulate links between the global economy and national or regional economies
- Can change very fast
 - Dhaka and most large Chinese cities now strongly linked to global production; not so 20-30 years ago

Is rapid urbanization a problem?

- **An economic problem for nations?**
 - But rapid urbanization associated with economic success
- **A problem in relation to development because of rapidly growing urban poverty?**
 - But this more the result of inappropriate government policies and the 'shunning' of urban by aid agencies
 - Many examples of well-managed rapidly growing cities with high life-expectancies/low infant and child mortality
- **A problem in relation to rural areas?**
 - But urban demand for rural produce and rural-urban remittances a key underpinning of rural prosperity (and many rural households draw some income from urban areas)
- **A problem for the environment?**
 - With poor urban management yes but not inherent to urbanization; urban areas actually having many potential environmental advantages
 - Urban poverty not a major cause of environmental degradation

IIED URBAN RESEARCH LINES

- **Rural-urban linkages** (and why one cannot understand urban change without understanding rural change)
- **Definition and measurement of urban poverty**
- **The 'local' dimensions of urban poverty reduction** and the institutional means to support grassroots-driven initiatives to reduce urban poverty
- **Under-estimation of deficiencies in provision for water and sanitation** and the contradictions between 'international' discourses and local needs
- **Environment and Urbanization**
 - To support a far more detailed understanding of urban change and its implications for development and environment
 - World's largest circulation international urban journal
 - 600 papers published to date
 - Three quarters written by authors from Africa, Asia and Latin America
 - Around 45 percent written by practitioners
 - 1700 institutional subscribers in low- and middle-income nations

Difficult to compare city populations because of different places boundaries can be drawn

- The size of city populations depend on boundary definitions
 - **London** with 4,000, 2.3 million, 7 million or 12.5 million depending on boundaries chosen
 - **Beijing** with 2.3 million (4 inner districts), 5.4 million (core city), 6.3 million (inner city and inner suburbs) or over 11 million (including outer suburban districts and 8 counties)
 - **Mexico City** with 1.9 million (central city), 8.3 million (federal district), 15 million (metro area) or 18 million (megalopolis) in 1990

What we know: Most nations have more than half their GDP generated by industry & services

