



UN HABITAT

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE



GLOBAL REPORT ON HUMAN SETTLEMENTS 2009

FACT SHEET

CITY SIZE & SPATIAL FORMS

- Fifty-two per cent of the world's 3.3 billion urban population live in cities and towns of fewer than 500,000 people. In developed and developing countries 54 per cent and 51 per cent of urbanites, respectively, live in such cities.
- As city populations grow, so do cities expand by consuming most of the previously separated towns and cities. In some cases this results in turning such areas into metropolises, and in others into peri-urban entities. Either way, the processes present a major challenge for urban planners and urban management worldwide.
- These metropolises are created when rural lands are converted to urban uses and when large cities engulf neighbouring municipalities to form new metro areas. Some cities that have experienced this kind of expansion are Bangkok (Thailand), Beijing (China), Jakarta (Indonesia), Kolkata - formerly Calcutta - (India), Lagos (Nigeria), Manila (Philippines) and Sao Paulo (Brazil).

DEVELOPED & TRANSITIONAL COUNTRIES

- About 63 per cent of urban populations in developed countries are in intermediate and small-size cities; just 9.8 per cent reside in megacities, described as cities with at least 10 million people. Presently, megacities host 9 per cent of the world's urban population. In all developed countries urban densities are declining, which is contributing to urban sprawl.

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF CITIES IN THE DEVELOPED WORLD, BY REGION

WESTERN EUROPE

- Most cities host between 500,000 and one million people.
- Urban sprawl, resulting in high commuter traffic.
- Some countries or regions with urban sprawl problems: Belgium; the Netherlands; eastern, southern and western Germany; the Paris (France) and Madrid (Spain) regions; Ireland; and Portugal.
- Negative effects of sprawl: air pollution, traffic congestion, inefficient land use.

NORTH AMERICA

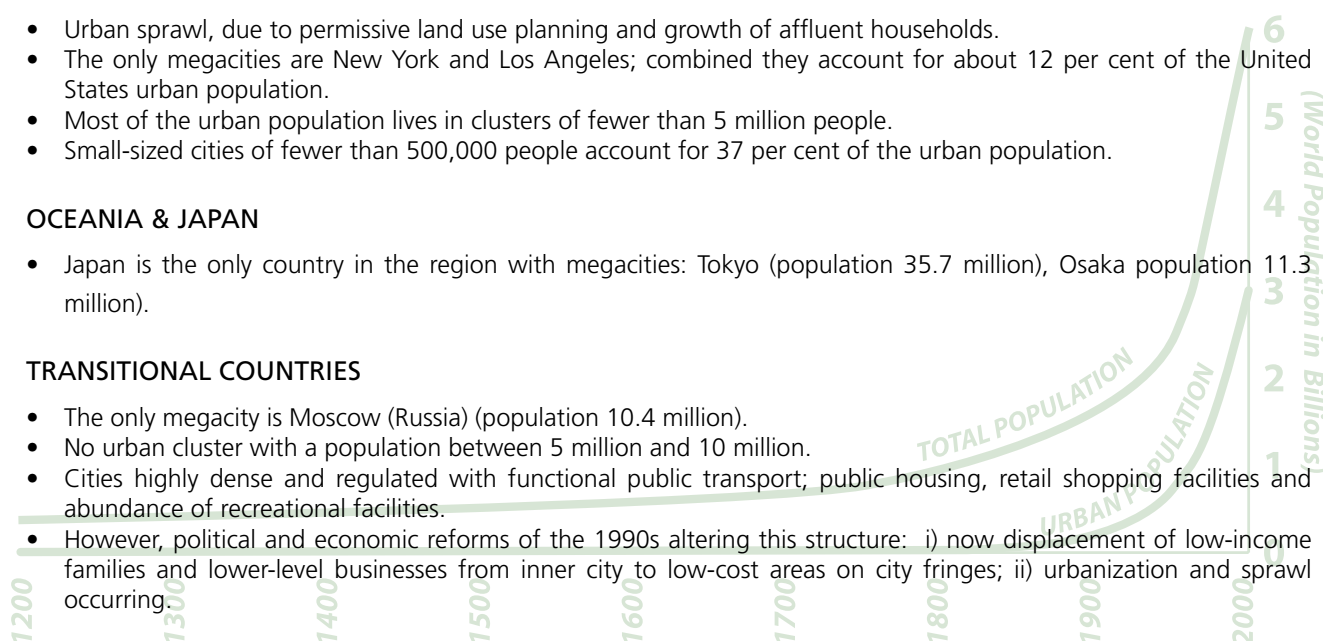
- Urban sprawl, due to permissive land use planning and growth of affluent households.
- The only megacities are New York and Los Angeles; combined they account for about 12 per cent of the United States urban population.
- Most of the urban population lives in clusters of fewer than 5 million people.
- Small-sized cities of fewer than 500,000 people account for 37 per cent of the urban population.

OCEANIA & JAPAN

- Japan is the only country in the region with megacities: Tokyo (population 35.7 million), Osaka population 11.3 million).

TRANSITIONAL COUNTRIES

- The only megacity is Moscow (Russia) (population 10.4 million).
- No urban cluster with a population between 5 million and 10 million.
- Cities highly dense and regulated with functional public transport; public housing, retail shopping facilities and abundance of recreational facilities.
- However, political and economic reforms of the 1990s altering this structure: i) now displacement of low-income families and lower-level businesses from inner city to low-cost areas on city fringes; ii) urbanization and sprawl occurring.



PLANNING SUSTAINABLE CITIES

DISTINGUISHING FEATURES OF CITIES IN THE DEVELOPING WORLD, BY REGION

- Although developing countries contain 14 of the world's 19 megacities, just 8.4 per cent of their urban population live in such cities.
- Of these countries, 61.4 per cent of the urban population live in cities of fewer than one (1) million inhabitants.
- Developing countries are also experiencing problems related to peri-urbanization, in particular the rising cost of infrastructure and provision of services.

LATIN AMERICA & CARIBBEAN

- A major feature of this region is the gigantic nature of cities.
- The megacities in this region are Buenos Aires (Argentina), Mexico City (Mexico), Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo (Brazil). Collectively they account for 14.1 per cent of the region's urban population.
- 59 per cent of the urban population reside in cities of fewer than 1 million people, which are experiencing remarkable growth.
- The region's urban clusters have expanded beyond their original boundaries.

Also, as regard the internal structure of urban areas, there has been an increasing relocation of population, industries and services from city centres to the periphery. The outcome is that it has contributed to low-density suburban growth which, in turn, has increased the cost of public infrastructure provision and service delivery.

ASIA

- Asia is the region with the most number of megacities. However, 60 per cent of the region's urban population live in cities of fewer than one million; 10 per cent live in megacities.
- Urbanization beyond metropolitan boundaries is the significant trend in region. This is leading to the formation of extended mega-urban regions that have developed along infrastructure corridors radiating over long distances from the core cities.

MIDDLE EAST & NORTH AFRICA

- The mega cities in this region are Cairo, Egypt (11.9 million), Istanbul, Turkey (10.1 million):
- The projection is that by 2010 the region will have at least 24 cities with more than one million. At least six cities will have a minimum 5 million by 2015.
- Rapid urban growth has produced large urban clusters and metropolises: for example, Mecca, Jeddah and Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) (populations are between 1 million and 5 million inhabitants).
- Cairo and Alexandria (Egypt), 200 km apart, are growing because of outside sprawl. If this continues, there is a real possibility that the two cities would merge to constitute a single gigantic Nile Metropolis.

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

- No megacities but by 2010 Lagos (Nigeria) is expected to qualify, with 10.6 million.
- Just two cities in region have populations larger than five million, which are home to 5.9 per cent of the regions urban population.
- A distinguishing feature in the growth of cities in this region is urban primacy, which rose from 2.8 in 1950 to 6.3 in 2000. This indicates that a disproportionate concentration of people, activities, investments and resources in the largest city of a country, to the disadvantage of other towns and cities.
- Another feature is towards increasing levels of peri-urbanization. The process is informal and driven by poor/low-income households to secure affordable land in a reasonable location. These sprawling urban peripheries, almost not serviced and unregulated, form the bulk of unregulated settlements.

GRHS/09/FS2

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