



A Tale of Two Cities

City Stories: Then and Now

Each city has its own story to tell. In the nineteenth century London grew from 800,000 to 6.5 million. In the same period, Paris grew from 500,000 to 3 million. By 1900, New York's population had swelled to 4.2 million.

During these exploding times, these cities were a hive of both formal and informal economic activity based around industrialization. But the cost of such rapid growth was the proliferation of slums. This is the time of *Oliver Twist* and the gangs of New York. This was the time when journalist authors such as Dickens, Riis and Zola highlighted the problems of the urban poor.

Today, since the first UN conference on human settlements, the world has seen an equivalent explosion in population and changes in the living conditions in the world's cities, especially those in the developing world.

It should be easy enough to get a picture of this growth; to tell a tale of the changes in living conditions. But the stark truth about statistics is that they are only available when and if someone has decided that it is important to collate and collect the data.

Urban Indicators

In 1976, few people had understood the full extent of the impending urban crisis, it is therefore interesting to note that there is little city level data; most statistical information is at the national level. Under the leadership of UN-HABITAT's Global Urban Observatory, urban indicators have only recently been given priority. It is also important to understand that official statistics often under-estimate the true extent of the problem of providing services to an urban population: A slum may be counted as having water and sanitation when in reality each tap or toilet is shared by over 500 people.

Two City Stories

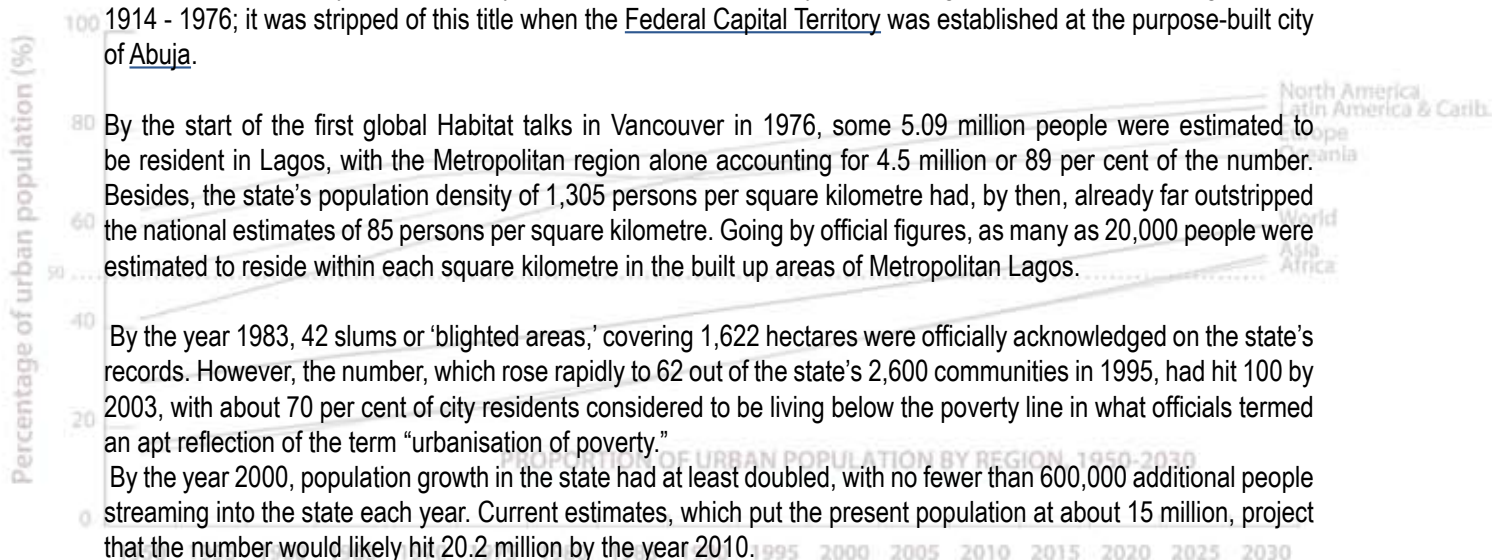
Lagos

Lagos was once a Yoruba settlement called Eko, whose name stemmed from either *Oko* (farm) or *Eko* (war camp.) During its early history, it also saw periods of rule by the Kingdom of Benin. Portuguese traders visited the area in 1472 and soon after began trading in goods and slaves, naming the area around the city Lagos, meaning *lakes*. It served as a major center of the slave trade until 1861, when the United Kingdom, which had abolished slavery in 1807, captured the city. It was formally annexed as a British colony in 1861. Lagos was the capital of Nigeria from 1914 - 1976; it was stripped of this title when the Federal Capital Territory was established at the purpose-built city of Abuja.

By the start of the first global Habitat talks in Vancouver in 1976, some 5.09 million people were estimated to be resident in Lagos, with the Metropolitan region alone accounting for 4.5 million or 89 per cent of the number. Besides, the state's population density of 1,305 persons per square kilometre had, by then, already far outstripped the national estimates of 85 persons per square kilometre. Going by official figures, as many as 20,000 people were estimated to reside within each square kilometre in the built up areas of Metropolitan Lagos.

By the year 1983, 42 slums or 'blighted areas,' covering 1,622 hectares were officially acknowledged on the state's records. However, the number, which rose rapidly to 62 out of the state's 2,600 communities in 1995, had hit 100 by 2003, with about 70 per cent of city residents considered to be living below the poverty line in what officials termed an apt reflection of the term "urbanisation of poverty."

By the year 2000, population growth in the state had at least doubled, with no fewer than 600,000 additional people streaming into the state each year. Current estimates, which put the present population at about 15 million, project that the number would likely hit 20.2 million by the year 2010.



Among the most daunting of the challenges facing the city's administrators today, is the state of urban poverty. While Lagos accounts for up to 60 per cent of Nigeria's Gross Domestic Product and about 65 per cent of national investments, some 65 per cent or two-thirds of residents are estimated to live below the poverty line, a situation only marginally better than the national average of 70 per cent. Also, statewide, the population density is now as high as 4,193 persons per square kilometre, up from 1,305 persons per square kilometre less than three decades ago.

Demand for water is also expected to rise at least six-fold from the present level of 203 million litres daily to more than 1,200 million litres each day by 2025. More than \$2 billion is required to develop the network and meet the demand for water and about \$546 million needed yearly over the next 10 years for road development.

Rio de Janeiro

The city of Rio de Janeiro wasn't founded until March 1, 1565, by Portuguese knight Estácio de Sá, who called it São Sebastião do Rio de Janeiro (St Sebastian of the January River), in honour of King Sebastian I of Portugal. The city was founded as a base from which to invade the neighboring French settlement.

When the first Habitat Conference was held, Brazil was waking up to the "economic miracle" dream. Twelve years of military dictatorship hadn't improved poor people's lives. State-sponsored projects drew workers by the millions to the cities and as Brazil reached the peak of its metropolization process, in the mid-1970s, nine metropolitan areas accounted for 44% of total population increase.

Brazilian population, past and future

Year	Total population	Annual pop. growth	Life expectancy	Urban population	Rural population
1976	105 817 600	2.9%	58	67 283 665	38 533 935
Census 2000	169 799 170	1.64%	68.6	137 953 959	31 845 211

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)

Year	Total population	Annual pop. growth	Pop. density	Infant mortality*	Life expectancy
1976	4 988 863	1.82%	4148/km ²	38	62.6
2005	6 094 183	0.75%	4 627.9/km ²	15	70.6

Source: Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE)

Presently in Rio de Janeiro, 25% of the population live in informal settlements. In the recessive 1980s, slums grew an astonishing 40%, and its population grows three times faster than the formal city's. There are now four million people living in informal settlements in the metropolitan area.

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* Per 1000 children under one year of age.
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