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**CITIES IN TRANSITION: DEMOGRAPHICS AND THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF CITIES**

*Nefise Bazoglu\*\**

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\*The views expressed in the paper do not imply the expression of any opinion on the part of the United Nations Secretariat.

\*\*United Nations Human Settlements Programme, Nairobi, Kenya



### *Attitudes towards high urbanization*

It took the development community two decades, if not more, to come to terms with high urbanization and the unprecedented urban growth rates, in the developing world. The dramatic increase in the share of urban population from 17 to 26, during 1950-1975 (Preston, 1979) was the first sign of a new order in the third world: a predominantly urban one. Yet, surprisingly, the initial response to this revolutionary trend was indifference or denial (Chamie, 2004). The world reacted to this, like they did, to the early warnings given by scientists on climate change, or on the HIV/AIDS epidemic, skepticism.

When urbanization was taken seriously, two opposite opinions emerged. While one line of thought placed emphasis on the positive, the other, on the negative features of urbanization. Proponents of economic growth were quick to realise the benefits of urbanization in terms of the dividends it brings to development, by offering the economies of scale, big concentrations of production, consumption and specialized services (UNCHS, 1996).

But a majority in the milieu of overseas development assistance, bilateral or multilateral, as well as the national and local stakeholders, saw the ill-effects, not the opportunities, of urbanization on development. By many, the cities of the developing world, with huge population concentrations, traffic jams, air pollution, crime, overcrowding, chaos, and slums, were perceived as hubs of ultimate human and physical decadence, an image very far from their utopia. Most importantly, high urbanization was seen as a threat to national integrity (Vining Jr. 1985, :496), as a majority, 70 per cent, of national and local leaders thought urbanization was a big development problem, rather than opportunity (UN-Habitat, 2006).

Another important reason why big cities received bad publicity stems from the ecological footprint they leave in and around their settlements. Cities were, still are, seen to: *“exert enormous environmental impacts, far beyond their boundaries, and face challenges in several areas.”* (Desai, 1996: 233).

More recently, the annual and quintessential reports of the United Nations Secretary General on the Millennium Development Goals, typically imply that urbanization jeopardizes biodiversity and exacerbates deforestation (UN, 2003).

Notwithstanding the various motives behind the reaction to high urbanization, the solution proposed was surprisingly uniform: to curb urbanization, either by force, slum evictions, (UN-HABITAT, 2005), or by indirect policies, aimed at encouraging the rural population to stay in their villages by pumping development funds to agriculture and other rural programmes. (Sachs, 2005).

Urbanists of the world to argued, with a collective voice that the problems created by population pressure could be dealt with, with good governance. They agree that, the problems and opportunities of city life are not simply the product of the city size, or growth, but of municipal capacity and commitment, as well as the policies of the central governments, to tackle urban poverty, unemployment, and improve the quality of life (Cheema, 1992; NRC , 2003; Gilbert, 1996; Rakodi, 1997) .

One decade later, these arguments were carried to the global public, by two recent flagship reports of the United Nations, *State of the World's Cities Report, 2006* (UN-Habitat, 2006) and the *State of the World's Population Report 2007* (UNFPA, 2007), both sending this

message: urbanization as a given, therefore, instead of trying to curb it, the world leaders should spend their energy in developing solutions around it.

In order to explore into the solutions to problems emerging from high urban growth and the magnitude of urbanization the demographic transition process in cities and components of growth merit a closer look.

*Demographic transition is far from complete in a majority of the third world cities*

Demographic transition is the process whereby high birth and death rates within a certain society, transform, over a period, into lower rates. Typically, mortality rates start to decrease earlier than the fertility rates, a phenomenon which leads to high level of natural increase at the interim phase. Coupled with the consequent decline in the fertility levels, ideally, to the replacement level, 1.89 children per women, the lower levels of mortality should lead to a zero population growth, under a scenario of no migration. Currently, a major portion of the developed world has completed their demographic transition where life expectancy almost reached the maximum possible ceiling, and fertility is generally at or below the replacement level, 1.89 per woman (Bongaards and Bulato, 1999)

In the developing world, despite the significant reductions in mortality and fertility, the demographic transition is far from complete, for reasons other than the transformation of mortality and fertility levels: age structure. Boongaards and Bulato (1999) call this the momentum factor, while Williamson (1988), the young age bias. Over the last two to three decades, the young age bias, has been the largest contributor to the growth of the world urban population currently, with the exception of Europe ( Boongaards and Bulato, 1999, p. 521), and the newly aging cities of the third world ( Cohen, 2005).

At the inter and intra national level, in addition to natural increase, migration is also a key determinant of national or sub national population growth (Chen et al., 1996). In understanding the growth of *cities*, however, the annexation of small human settlements to adjacent, bigger ones, both in administrative and in spatial terms, (Chen et al. 1996; Goldstein, 1990), is another contributor to growth.

Far from following a universal pattern, the respective role that each of these components play change by time and space. At some periods in the history of urban growth, natural increase may explain urban growth, while in others, it could be migration or annexation (Chen, 1996).

Indirect factors explaining urban growth consist of the geopolitics of contemporary history, formation of new nations following post-colonial, post-WWII period, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Israel, the Philippines and others; internal conflict and political strife, Pnom Phen, Cambodia, Beirut, Lebanon, and Kuwait.

Not surprisingly, factors that indirectly shape urban growth and city size, economic growth and global cycles, governance systems, public health and family planning policies, economic externalities, global markets, and the like, are also significant. These externalities, especially the governance systems, also play a role in mitigating or exacerbating, the ill-effects of growth.

In this article we will attempt to provide some empirical evidence to show the role of governance systems in alleviating the population pressure coming from millions, and 10 millions

of inhabitants and tries to table some common facets of cities that are successful, against the demographic odds.

### *Methodology*

The findings in this paper are based on a combination of three steps : i) review of the urban growth patterns of 119 cities, 1950-2005; ii) classification of 52 cities among the initial sample by a combination of urban growth rates and development levels; iii) desk review of best practices among a further selected sub sample of country and city experience.

The main data source, 119 cities, is a sub sample of the Global City Sample, selected by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-HABITAT), so as to report on the progress of the Millennium Declaration Goal (MDG), on cities without slums. The sample was drawn from a universe of 4000 cities over 100,000 inhabitants, of the United Nations Statistical Division, and the World Gazetteer cities. The cities initially were classified by the 10 regions defined by the United Nations, for global reporting purposes, and population size. A sample of 350 cities was then drawn, following the principle of probability proportionate to size, whereby the bigger the city, the higher is the chance of selection for the sample. In the end, 35 cities represented each region. This sample remains to be the main long-term reference for Habitat's reporting. Currently, Habitat has produced one or more development indicators on 119 cities, but eventually indicators will be estimated for all the 350 cities of the Global City Sample (UN-HABITAT, 2002).

The bigger sample of cities, 119, were plotted by their historical urban growth patterns, in order to spot the period in which the city grew at the highest pace, which, in turn were grouped by periods of highest growth peak.

The development indicators were developed, mainly by a secondary analysis of the Demographic and Health Survey (DHS) data, on several countries, over 1990 and 2003, complemented by Population Census tables, in countries and cities where DHS was missing.

The source used for urban growth rates, is the World Urbanization Prospects, 2003 revision (UNDESA, 2003).

Finally, the number of cities in the sample were further reduced to 52 (Map 1), whereby most development indicators, access to piped water, connection to sewerage, electricity and telecommunications, under five mortality rate and parity of female/male literacy, estimates were available.

### MAP 1

#### *The genesis of big and mega cities dates back to mid 20<sup>th</sup> century and earlier*

Two striking findings emerge, from the analysis of historical growth waves among the 119 cities. First, the genesis of the new mega cities, Lagos, Istanbul, São Paulo and Dhaka, dates back to 1950s or 1960s, not to mention the mega-cities that were already over the one million mark, 50 years ago, Shanghai, Mexico City, Cairo, and others. The transformation of small to big cities, Belo Horizonte, Kinshasa and others, also take the same amount of time. Therefore, reversing or curbing growth, as a widely believed solution, will only make a negligible impact, if at all, on the magnitude of big and mega cities of our day.

More than half the cities of the developing world, 49 per cent, at over 2.5 per cent annual population growth, are still far from completing the transition cycle. Arguably, a significant proportion of cities will sustain the high growth scenario, albeit with a declining growth curve, in the near future. Furthermore, a group of Chinese cities, dormant until lately, are projected to increase at a much rapid rate than their historical pace, slow or no increase.

Although city and country specific growth movements are quite considerable, there was also a global synchrony among them. Particularly during the decades following the World War II, until 1980s, an almost orchestrated city demographic transformation is witnessed.

The biggest magnitude of urban growth occurred after the Post-World War II period, 1950-1960. Although urban growth continues to be still high in many cities of the world, in terms of the growth magnitude, no other period matches the 1950s. Of the 119<sup>1</sup> cities where historical growth trends were analyzed, almost one in two cities made its highest growth peak during this period. Consequently, 1960-1980, ranks as the second with nearly 30 per cent of cities reaching their peak growth rates. The third and fourth wave of urban growth, 1980-1990 and 1990-2005, by comparison, are very weak, with only 8 and 5 per cent of sample cities, respectively, reaching their highest growth rates during these periods. (FIGURE 1)

During the 1950s, the cities of, practically all regions, contributed to global urban growth, but those of Latin America took the lead. One in four cities which made their utmost peaks, were located in this continent. The cities of Middle East and North Africa rank as the second, as one in five cities of the region, made their highest growth peaks. Surprisingly, third come the cities of the SSA region, with 15 per cent of the total growing during this stage.

FIGURE 1.

In terms of size, two types of change, occurred. While some big cities became even bigger, some small and intermediary cities grew to be big. Most big cities of Mexico, China, India, Indonesia, Egypt, Syria, and Nigeria, grew to be even bigger.

Although a number of small cities evolved into big ones due to geopolitical decisions, transfer of the capital of Brazil, from Rio de Janeiro to Brasilia; and the capital of Turkey, from Istanbul to Ankara. Others, Curitiba, Belo Horizonte, Fortaleza, Goiania, Brazil, Gaziantep and Adana, Turkey, grew due to economic reasons.

The degree of growth among the cities going through their most important transformation, stood very high, if not, extreme, with 70 and 28 per cent of cities growing at rates 4-7 and 7-10 per cent per annum, respectively. The rest grew either above 10, or below 4 per cent.

Within 5 years many cities had to absorb between 30-80 per cent, if not 100 per cent more people. The big cities of those times, Beijing, Shanghai, added one million, while Delhi and Jakarta, added nearly 500 thousand to their populations. Some intermediate cities, at the beginning of the period, Accra and Ghana became big cities, by the standards of 1950s, within five years.

Despite the context specific factors in play, a few overarching global causes for growth during this period, involving demographic, political and economic dynamics, are too strong to go without mention. First, due to the universal reduction of mortality, the role of natural increase

was immense, much more important than migration (Villa and Rodriques, 1996: 34). With the developments in contraceptive production and distribution, enhancement of public health, the successful campaigns to eliminate tuberculosis and malaria and other communicative diseases there were breakthroughs in the reduction of adult and child mortality.

Fertility levels in the third world, although still high, started to decline, with the introduction of modern contraceptive use, (Villa and Rodriques, 1996), albeit, at much slower rates than the reduction of mortality.

The second reason for this immense urban growth has to do with the political economy. The Post-World War II reconstruction efforts boosted the economy of many countries, and increased the importance of certain cities. Many Asian economies, generally following a mercantilist approach, opened up their economies to global markets, and became part of the capitalist order (Baran, 1967). Coupled with the global efforts to reduce the inequalities in development, the Marshall Aid Plan, fundamentally changed the mode of agricultural production: from subsistence into commercial. These developments explain the component of urban growth that is related to migration. According to Vining (1985, p. 498) the North African cities of Tripoli, Algiers, Tunis, and the Turkish cities received strong waves of rural-to-urban migration during this periods.

*Urban growth during 1960-80s were mostly a continuation of the first big wave, 1950s*

The second wave of urban growth among cities was much less intense because change occurred within a wider window of time, 1960-1980, and the proportion of cities at their ultimate growth peaks, 37 per cent, were much less than the first period. It should be noted that, during the early years of this period, the growth rates in some cities, were a carry over from the 1950s, with slightly higher levels of population growth. (Figure 2)

The region that was jolted most during this period, was the Middle East and North Africa, 28 per cent of all cities of the group, followed by sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia, 20 per cent each, experiencing their highest extent of growth. The well known mega cities of our day, Dhaka, Manila, Bangkok, Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, are the products of very high growth rates back then, in addition to their original population varying between 950 thousand to close to 3 million. Findings of Vining indicate that Dhaka, Bombay, Calcutta, Karachi, Delhi, Bogota, Mexico City, São Paulo, Jakarta, Bangkok, Kuala Lumpur, Manila, mostly increased due to net in migration (Vining, 1985)

## FIGURE 2

During this period, although peak growth rates of individual cities were still high, they rank lower than the previous era, 1950s. More than half these cities grew at a moderate pace, between 4-7 per cent. Approximately one in three cities grew at very high rates, 7-11 per cent per annum. Only one in 10 cities grew with extreme rates, over 11 per cent per annum.

In terms of the magnitude of urban inhabitants in these cities, the populations of Kinshasa, and Dhaka multiplied by five to four times, respectively, to become 2.2 and 3.3. The demographic saga of these cities, however, did not end here, and despite the relative decline in growth rates, these cities grew to become 5 and 13 million, respectively, by 2005. Other cities in this group also show the same pattern. Metro Manila, Seoul, Pusan, Tashkent and Uzbekistan increased about two to three times within 20 years to become 5, 8, 3 and 2 million, respectively.

But the latter three completed demographic transition, as they reached very low growth rates. In fact, the population of Seoul and Pusan, reduced since 1990s.

Those cities that doubled in population – Pune, India and Ho Chi Minh, Vietnam, currently at 1 and 5 million people, respectively, will continue with the increasing trend.

At the country level, during the first decade, 1960s, the most important component explaining high urban growth still continues to be , mostly natural increase, with the exception of countries like Turkey, Tunisia, Libya, Puerto Rico and Guyana, Republic of Korea, where more than half the growth is explained by migration. (Chen et al., 1996 :`81). In the 1970s however, the growth of the urban settlements of Kenya, Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Cuba, Bangladesh, Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand, Turkey seem to be mostly explained by, migration (Chen, 1996: 81).

These two decades were marked by the predominant development strategy of import substitution that flourished within large population concentrations, part of which supplied the labor force necessary to get the manufacturing industries rolling (Gilbert, 1996: 15; Vining, 1985: 507).

#### *After the 1980s, the city growth waves lost strength*

At this point in time, the magnitude of the city population itself was more important in determining urban development, than rate of growth itself. More recent waves of population growth within the selected cities, was weak, and likely to have had very little impact on the global trends of city transition. These settlements include the young cities of Western Africa, Ougadougou of Burkina Faso and Yaounde of Cameroon. The relatively smaller cities of India, China, Morocco and Iran made their peaks during this period, although growth had taken off in the previous era. Cities that continued with a straight line of growth, Marrakech, Morocco, Hyderabad, India, and Detong of China were exceptions, while the rest were already growing before, albeit at slightly lower levels.

The deceleration of urban growth could be explained by the impact of the structural adjustment programs globally implemented around the world which increased urban poverty, affected human development adversely (Cornea et al., 1988). UNICEF found that the structural adjustment programs, implemented widely, led to the deterioration of the situation of children in São Paulo, where infant mortality increased from 50 to 55, 1980-1985; and in urban Ghana, from 85 to 120, within 10 years, late 1970s and late 1980s (Cornea, 1988: 43, 103). Similar trends were also well documented in Chile, Peru, Botswana, Jamaica, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and Zimbabwe. Santos' study on Rio and São Paulo vividly documents the reduction in migration waves, in response to the lack of investment in the metropolitan areas (1996). The overall share of migration within urban growth reduced to 39 per cent, during this period, from the 43, of the 1970s (Chen, 1996: 81).

One significant reason why growth in cities reduced, during this period, was the declining fertility rates among the women, between ages 15-49. The Demographic and Health Surveys from various countries around the world point, very clearly, that the disparities in fertility between rural and urban settlements continued. The total fertility rate for Bangladesh, for example, reduced from 6.3, 1970, to 3.3, in 1995, with fertility in urban areas at notably lower rates, 2.45, than rural areas, 3.54. The same pattern holds for India, where total fertility in urban versus rural areas remain at 2.3 and 3.1 per woman, respectively, 2003. The lowest fertility rate is seen in Vietnam reaching below replacement level, 1.4 and 1.9 per woman, respectively in urban

and rural areas. High fertility is still the trademark reproductive behavior in Egypt, at 6 and 4.3 per woman, respectively in rural and urban areas, 1997<sup>ii</sup>.

Mortality rates for children under five years of age, U5MR, however, was still high, with the exception of Vietnam, where only 16 infants and children in thousand died before reaching age five, a rate comparable to those of developed regions. Within the urban settlements of Egypt, India, Indonesia, Bangladesh, the U5MR stood at 53, 63, 42 and 97, respectively, during early and mid-1990s. In Karachi, U5MR was 92, as at 1985.<sup>iii</sup> The disparity between the rural and urban mortality, remains to be to the advantage of urban areas (Brockhoff and Brennan, 1998, p. 102).

Although survival of children improved over the last 30 decades, the mortality levels are still high, in urban areas, something that could explain the declining curves of urban growth, during these periods.

While the rest of the world entered an era of slow urban growth, one country went against the trend, China. The striking U-turn in the Chinese development policy after the 1980s, post-cultural revolution era of the 1960-1970s, from a rural- into an urban-based strategy, made, and is likely to make more impact, on global and regional urbanization trends and the world. Although population movements were controlled and taking residence in cities is still subject to strict rules and regulations, during the late 1980s, the urbanization of China increased, radically (Goldstein, 1990). Mostly explained by the administrative reclassification and redefinition of predominantly rural settlements, as, urban, this transformation, the-Chinese-way is far from the generally understood connotation of a city. Goldstein notes that these newly created cities are actually nothing but big villages (1990: 675).

The urban areas in other countries that grew due to migration or annexation include Burkina Faso, Mali, Western Africa, and Indonesia and the Philippines.

#### *Magnitude of urban growth and human development: are they related?*

The relationship between the development level of a city and its growth rate is a complicated one. High urban growth *does* put pressure on city administrations, but experience of many big cities, growing over 2.5 per cent annually, shows that its negative impact on the quality of life of the population, namely the infrastructure, telecommunications, survival status and gender equality in literacy, could be offset with good governance, a view widely shared among urbanists.

In this paper we would like to make an empirical, albeit descriptive, overview in 52 cities in order to elaborate this statement further. These cities do not constitute a representative sample, and were selected because of close to complete availability of infrastructure and human development indicators. The access to infrastructure indicators are defined by the proportion of households connected to piped water, sewerage network, electricity and telephone lines; and human development indicators, by under five mortality rate, U5MR, and gender gaps in literacy.

There is a long-standing tradition in development studies to take U5MR as a proxy for poverty, in the absence of income data. Although not so commonly used to indicate poverty, we believe that gender disparities in literacy is also very revealing, especially, in urban life, where literacy is one of the most essential skills to survive, in the city (UNFPA, 2007). If a significant

portion of women are illiterate, it means they cannot benefit from the opportunities and services that the city offers for them and their children.

TABLE 1

Cities were first clustered into three groups, according to the status these indicators reflected: high, medium and low development. The cities with high coverage of infrastructure and low mortality and low/no gender disparity in literacy were grouped under the “high development” group. On the other hand, the cities with low infrastructure coverage and high mortality and/or high gender disparities in literacy were considered as low development level cities. The medium development level cities, fared badly on one or two indicators, and showed a patchy picture of development. In the second phase, these city groups were further divided by their population growth rate. Those which grew below and, at or above 2.5 per cent were considered to be low growth and high growth cities, respectively. The resulting city clusters were the following: i) high development and low population growth, ii) high development and high population growth, iii) medium development and low population growth, iv) medium development and high population growth, v) low development level, low population growth, and finally, vi) low development level and high population growth cities.

*Cities with high development level, and low population growth*

These are big or mega-cities with a history of high population growth at earlier phases, generally before 1980s. For some of them, growth follows, generally, a rapid, but steadily increasing pattern, until recently. Most of these cities, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, Izmir and Bursa, Turkey, have also spatially grown to become metropolitan areas, or the core of wider urban regions. Some of them are connected to each other in corridors, like the Ho Chi Minh and Hanoi development belt, Vietnam.

The infrastructure coverage among all stand at very high, 90 per cent and above, or at reasonably high levels, 80 per cent and above. The first order infrastructure, piped water and sewerage connections are higher than 80 per cent, with the exception of Hanoi, at 78 per cent of households connected to sewerage network. All cities falling under this group enjoy a universal electricity coverage. The telephone lines at households, however, vary from city to city. Some cities, Hai Pheng, Vietnam, Tashkent and Uzbekistan do not benefit from this basic telecommunications instrument, with a coverage at 45 and 64 per cent, respectively. The trend information also shows that these cities have been enjoying universal electricity coverage since the 1990s.

Another measure of success is the low child and infant death rates. Some cities, Hai Pheng, Ho Chi Minh and Rio de Janeiro, with U5MR, respectively, at 23, 19 and 19 per thousand live births, have survival rates, comparable to those of the developed world. In some of these cities, Ho Chi Minh, Hai Pheng, Izmir and Rio, low mortality dates back to the pre-1990s, period, in most others, it reduced from significantly high rates, from 77 and 89, respectively in Hanoi, and Bursa to 39 each, in 2003.

*Cities with high development levels despite a perpetual high population growth*

Still steering at relatively high growth rates, the downward trend of urban growth is also obvious in these cities. Once growing at rates of approximately 6 per cent per year, the annual growth in these cities reduced to 2.6 – 3.5 per year. Their populations standing at 1-5 million,

these cities are relatively smaller than the mega-cities that belong to the first group, albeit still qualifying as big cities in absolute terms.

The levels of development are comparable with the first group where the population growth rate is lower. Households benefit extensively from being connected to infrastructure, piped water, sewerage, electricity and telephone. The other characteristic is low child and infant mortality rates, ranging between 13 per thousand live births, Cape Town, South Africa and 32, Gaziantep, Turkey. The ratio of literate females to males is high, pointing to gender equality in literacy, among the adult population. Just like the first group, there was a vast improvement on the communication technology front, with households connected to telephone lines increasing approximately between two- to three-fold, with the exception of Cape Town. Since, in sub-Saharan Africa in general, the lack of conventional telephone connections are compensated by the vast coverage of mobile phones among the population, (UNSG, 2003) the inhabitants of Cape Town are likely to enjoy access to communication services.

*Cities with medium development levels, with low population growth*

Like others, this group also embodies cities from different regions: North Africa, Asia and Latin America. Notwithstanding the fact that most of these cities could also be considered at high development levels, the patchy picture of development places them mostly in the medium development group. For example, while the overall infrastructure in São Paulo, and the other impact indicators, mortality and education, are indicate to high levels of development, the sewerage connection, at 63 per cent is not in par with the other conditions. In Xuzou, China, access to infrastructure is very low, but IMR is good. While in Moroccan cities and Cairo, the infrastructure is good, female/male ratio in literacy shows the disadvantaged situation of women, despite the vast improvement over the last 13 years.

*Cities with medium development high population growth*

Notwithstanding the vast differences between the economic and political features of these cities, they share two common features: less than satisfactory coverage of households by infrastructure and amenities, electricity and telephone; and high U5MRs, with the exception of Bandung, Palembang, Indonesia and Fortaleza, Brazil. An additional negative characteristic of the cities of India, Srinagar and Delhi, and Morocco, Fez is that for every four literate men, there are only three literate women.

The patchy picture of development, with some indicators showing high, others low levels of development, tells that not all aspects of local governance are functioning at their best. For example, in Palembang, while human development indicators suggest a developed picture, the fact that piped water connections to households is low, 62 per cent, is suggestive of a big gap in environmental conditions for development. The same pattern is valid for Fortaleza – this time, in the unacceptably low levels of sewerage connections to households.

In Johannesburg, while all elements of infrastructure are intact, the children still die very early, with U5MR at 45 per thousand live births.

The most important feature that distinguishes some of these cities from the other medium level development cities, growing at lower rates, is that there is a decline in the extent to which households are connected to piped water, Bandung and Palembang. During the period studied, 1990-2005, the population of Bandung skyrocketed from 2.5 to 4 million, while that of

Palembang, increased less radically, from 1 to 1.7 billion. This could suggest that the rapid population growth jeopardized the services.

*Cities with low development level - low population growth*

The inhabitants of these cities suffer from with very low infrastructure coverage and much lower likelihood of children to survive when they reach age five. Mostly among small Chinese cities, these cities embody between 1-1.5 million residents. The proportion of households connected to piped water and sewerage stands at desperately low levels, at 17-50 per cent, and 6-16 per cent, respectively, seems to suggest that these settlements are more reminiscent of “big villages,” than cities in par with the image described by Goldstein. The child survival is low with 50-63 live births per thousand ending in premature deaths before reaching age five. One positive aspect is the gender equality in literacy.

Yet, surprisingly, the UN projects a much speedier population growth in the near future whereby these cities are expected to increase, between 0.5-2 times, within a decade, 2005-2015.

Two Indian, Vijayavada and Kochin, and two South African cities, Durban and Port Elisabeth, also belong to this group. By Indian standards, both cities could be depicted as intermediate, at 1 and 1.5 million, respectively. While Durban, 2.6 million, and Port Elisabeth, 1 million, are big cities, both in absolute and relative terms. Aside from telecommunications, the infrastructure, access to piped water and sewerage connection is relatively high in Vijayavada, by comparison to Chinese cities. But the access of the Kochin residents to these amenities, remain as low as those of the similar settlements in China. Power connections are reasonably high in Vijayavada, with the situation of other cities remaining unknown, due to lack of data. The likelihood of survival among children is low in Durban, Port Elisabeth at 50 and 42 per live births respectively; but the same indicator in Vijayavada, is unacceptably high, 83 per thousand, a rate comparable to that of sub-Saharan African countries.

This group also embodies an outlier from Latin America, Guatemala City. Although the child mortality and gender equality in literacy stand at reasonably high rates, the access of households to piped water and sewerage remain at unacceptably low levels.

*Cities with low development level, high population growth*

Mostly capitals of sub-Saharan African countries – Abidjan, Cote d’Ivoire, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, Dakar, Senegal, Kampala, Uganda and Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania, and from South Asia – Dhaka, of Bangladesh, and Amritsar, Jaipur and Pune of India rank as the lowest development group. They are worse off than the low growth cities belonging to the same low development group. Households with piped water and sewerage connections range from 48-90 and 15-97, respectively. Even the extent to which households are connected to power, is very low in these cities, minimum- maximum coverage of 4-87. Although access to conventional telephony is low, the inhabitants of these cities are likely to benefit from the overall trend in sub-Saharan Africa, wide use of mobile phones (UN, 2003). The same trend applies for the impact indicators, with child mortality levels standing at levels as high, 75-169 per thousand. As expected, the female to male ratio in literacy reveals the gender imbalance in having access to a very basic life skill needed, especially in urban areas, literacy.

Among all least developed cities, however, those with high urban growth rates are more vulnerable.

*Developed cities are also equipped to cope with high population pressure*

The population pressure on cities, created either by past or current high growth rates, does force the limits of municipalities and central governments' capacity to deliver infrastructure, housing and poverty alleviation programs (UNCHS, 2001). But some cities cope well, and some others do not. The review of the cities in the sample suggests that the overall development level of the city and the way in which it copes with population growth are related. That is to say, if the city is already highly developed, it could also be resilient to high population growth rates. This is in support of Gilbert's (1998) conclusion that the cities of Latin America, in general, seem to have coped with high growth, well. By contrast, the least developed cities are highly sensitive to population pressure. In such cities, every increment of increase, every year, regardless of the component of growth – migration, natural increase, or a combination- is an additional burden on authorities, and citizens, themselves. The cities of the medium development group have variable levels of performance.

If it is the development level of a city that shapes its capacity to cope with big populations, or increasing populations, then the same dynamics that make the cities developed, also equip them with mechanisms to buffer population pressure. Obviously, these dynamics range from the global role of the country and the connectivity of the city (Freidman, 1986), the global competitiveness, the political commitment to poverty alleviation, the quality of governance, and myriads of others. Good governance increasingly gains importance in explaining development levels, and the extent to which governments cope with poverty (McCarney et al., 1995; Taylor, 2004). On the other hand, political commitment, another manifestation of good governance, to equitable development policies, as well as urban poverty alleviation, is among the important dynamics explaining development of cities (UN-HABITAT, 2006).

To the aim of exploring the relationship between good governance and the capacity to absorb high population growth, we review the experience of selected cities which rank at high or medium development levels, with high population growth, Belo Horizonte, Curitiba of Brazil; Gaziantep, Turkey; Jakarta and Bandung, Indonesia; Delhi, India. A few cities that grow with low rates at the core, but continue to grow at high rates at the periphery, Cairo (Sutton and Fahmi, 2001) and São Paulo (Pasternak, 2007) and Ho Chi Minh City, Hyderabad, India, will also be included in the review.

Needless to say, most of these so-called developed cities suffer from deeply embedded inequalities, visible in segregated neighborhoods, or in invisible differentials in health and education status (Stevens, 1996; UN-HABITAT, 2006), they rank as relatively successful, some, more successful than others, in absorbing the additional population. Granted that intra-city disparities in development is the weakest point of these cities, we do not factor it in the analysis, because it cuts across all levels of population growth, high or low. Among a few low growth cities with inequalities, are the Ho Chi Minh City (ACHR, 2001), Cairo (Sutton and Fahmi, 2001) Istanbul (Guvenc, 1996), Rio de Janeiro (Pamuk and Fernando, 1998) as in high growth cities, therefore, inequalities is not considered at great length, in the frame of this analysis population.

In the sections following, we will try and explore what these cities share in common, despite the vast differences in geography, culture, economy and polity.

### *Political commitment to pro-poor development makes a difference*

Needless to say that development is a technical, as well as a political matter. Techniques of urban, physical, regional, fiscal planning, and the capacity to implement them, are essential to ease out the pressures caused by big populations, on infrastructure and services. However, the history of cities is full of such plans that are (were) not necessarily implemented. Of the 44 cities with physical development plans among cities included within the Urban Indicators, 2003, only 14 appears to have implemented them (UN-HABITAT, 2007). The saga of urban reforms in Brazil, for example, with its City Statute, 2001, the National Council of Cities, and finally, the establishment of the Ministry of Cities indicates that all government levels have accepted urbanization as a fact, and started to take the measures to tackle it, by following an inclusive urban development strategy (Fernandes, 2007).

In addition, the overall ideology behind the plans, elitist or populist, is far from being a technical matter. Marques and Bichir, drawing on a trend analysis they made on the annual expenditures in São Paulo's metropolitan areas, through 1975-2000, when the metropolitan area was managed by leaders of different political convictions, found that the infrastructure investments on the more deprived metropolitan regions of São Paulo, increased during the times of pro-poor regimes (Marques and Bichir, 2003; 821). The same political commitment is valid for Curitiba, which has been ruled by the same political group for almost 40 years (Macedo, 2004).

A similar pattern emerges also in Hyderabad, where, between 1995-2004, regional political elites Andhra Pradesh sought to shape the peri-urban dynamics in the greater metropolitan area of Hyderabad, through adopting an infrastructure-led growth model, by launching a globally oriented IT hub (Kennedy, 2007).

Without a doubt, it is difficult to generalise this relationship between ideology and investing in the poor. The political commitment in the case of Turkey finds its origins in populist, elitist and military governments since the 1970s, in a common understanding to modernise through technology and infrastructure. Almost all coming from an engineering background, the prime ministers of Turkey committed themselves to a blanket improvement in infrastructure, rural and urban included, transportation and communication, that was given a special boost since 1983 (UNICEF, 1991). This engineering-bias approach to development, with its merits and sins, is also true for Chile, across different governments, representing different interest groups.

It also goes without saying that political commitment to a pro-poor urban development agenda can also be observed in autocratic societies, Egypt, Morocco, Tunis. The progress made on the way of improving the lives of slum dwellers, Egypt and Tunis, since 1990, received praise in the *State of the World's Cities Report, 2006/7*. Although the infrastructure of Cairo and others settlements were boosted by channeling big amounts of investment into water, sanitation and housing (UN-HABITAT, 2006), one key ingredient was missing – people's participation. No doubt, consultative processes did take place in the delivering of these services to the beneficiaries, but carefully crafted through NGOs affiliated to the central governments (Bazoglu, 1998).

### *Type of decentralization in infrastructure and services, matters*

The real litmus test of political commitment to increasing the coverage of urban infrastructure and poverty elimination, however, is when leaders and legislators work to decentralise the way in which cities are ruled and managed, to the aim of improving efficiency and effectiveness of infrastructure and service delivery, not to mention other gains to be attained from an administration closer to the beneficiaries.

However, one cannot make a blanket generalisation suggesting that more decentralised the system of administration, the better the infrastructure and services, because decentralisation manifests itself in a wide spectrum of ways. The mode of relationship with the central government varies from full autonomy, Brazil (Mello, 2005) and Indonesia (Usman, 2001); medium autonomy, Turkey, to limited autonomy, Vietnam (Peterson and Muzzini, 2006). Most municipalities are responsible of a common core of activities - infrastructure, solid waste management, transportation, urban planning, environmental protection. But some are also in charge of education, health and social services, Brazil (Mello, 2005) Indonesia (Usman, 2001). The mode of decentralization has been different: more revolutionary, Big Bang approach in Indonesia (Peterson and Muzzini, 2006), while evolutionary in Turkey and Brazil.

Most countries that have followed the decentralization policies have delegated authority to local governments, but not necessarily the means to carry them out, financial resources and technical capacity. Those countries which do empower municipalities with the financial resources do so by enabling them to use the property taxes, infrastructure, service, vehicle, environment taxes, transfers from the central or federal budgets, and the autonomy to receive external funding, Turkey (Tekeli, 1993) and Brazil. In Indonesia, not only the financial means, but also technical capacity was provided by making a mass transfer of central government officials to local authorities, provincial governments or municipalities (Usman, 2001).

The relationship between the central and local governments is the key to success in rendering municipalities effective in their roles for infrastructure development and poverty alleviation. Near to two decades of experience in decentralised government in the third world countries reveal that strong links to, and coordination with, national governments and national development targets has high dividends in the realising the infrastructure investments. The Turkish experience shows that, since early 1980s, when the financial means of the municipalities was radically strengthened, most municipalities, including that of Gaziantep, took loans to invest in piped water and sanitation to cities, especially to urban poor areas (UNICEF, 1991).

*Performance monitoring is both a technical and political tool to ensure good service delivery*

The experience of these cities has also shown that the performance of the municipal and state governments were closely monitored, either in a bottom-up or a top-down fashion.

Upward accountability on municipal implementation on infrastructure is very strict in China, Vietnam and Cambodia. Peterson and Muzzini concede that: “*Vietnam has assigned priority to piped water distribution to urban areas, with implementation in the hands of provincial water authorities and, in the largest cities [Ho Chi Minh included] water enterprises attached to local governments. Despite high rates of urban population growth, coverage rates have expanded remarkably in a short time.*” (Peterson and Muzzini, 2006: 212)

Of essence in this relationship is that the central state remains as the authority to exercise performance monitoring, in general, a big void in the municipalities of the third world.

But some best practices on bottom-up performance monitoring are also budding in the developing countries, run by democracy. One reason behind Curitiba’s success story is that performance monitoring has become a lifestyle (UN-HABITAT, 2005).

Another strategy to do performance monitoring is to enhance citizen participation in planning and decision-making. The best practice in this area, among the successful cities of the

sample, participatory budgeting, on areas of housing, water, sanitation, education, health, is Belo Horizonte's trademark. The participatory budgeting is a systematic way of engaging people in series of discussions at different levels, to decide on priorities and budget allocations. Also embraced by this system is the results-based monitoring implemented indirectly by client satisfaction indicators, collected through surveys, or indirectly understood through rates of participation in budgeting (Bretas, 1996). Indonesia uses surveys, with support from the World Bank, to understand citizens' attitudes towards municipal services (World Bank, 2007).

*Citizen Participation in poverty elimination and infrastructure is important, but within a wider frame of partnership with governments*

Citizens' participation in the governing of cities, offers other benefits than bottom-up monitoring: cost sharing and sustainability.

The cities of Jakarta, Delhi, Hyderabad display an abundance of participatory programmes, where NGOs, CBOs, and the municipalities engage in a partnership exercise for poverty elimination schemes focusing on housing and primary health care for women and children. Some of these examples, also featured in UN-HABITAT'S Best Practices database, include the Garda Emas programme, Bogor, Jakarta, which ended in reducing the number of poor families from 33 to 16 thousand, 1999-2003.

NGO-driven initiatives are also common in Delhi. A best practice (UN-HABITAT, 2007) is the work of an NGO, Asha, active in 32 slums of the river basin, by forging participation with government and municipalities, to upgrade and regularize slums. Their success also lies in an integrated approach, using healthcare as an entry point<sup>iv</sup>. These types of programs are most successful in bringing women, especially the uneducated ones, on board.

The virtues of decentralisation and participatory approach being noted, there is a lot of evidence, the experience of most cities, Belo Horizonte (IBAM, 2003), Jakarta, Hyderabad, and countries Brazil, with a full record of participatory history which indicate that it does not offer an absolute panacea to development. Common cracks seen in these approaches include clientalism (Souza, 2001) and the void in disseminating best practices at a wider scale (Peterson and Muzzini, 2006). Another common finding is that, the poorest of the poor end up being excluded from the gains of participatory processes (Bazoglu, 1999), unless central governments oversee that programs have reached the very poor, and to ensure that the successful experiences are scaled up (ADB, 2007), something badly needed in the big cities. Therefore, linking the participatory capacity of people to local or central government machinery is as crucial as participation itself.

*Metropolitan expansion could help with coping with population pressure, but the timing and quality is important*

Finally, the most important means to steer the population growth of cities is through expanding functions, infrastructure and services to the metropolitan areas, or forming urban corridors, like is the case with all cities concerned in our sample. Metropolitan growth could come spontaneously or by design. It is the timing of the design that determines the success of these programs. City administrations could choose between two distinct strategies: preventive or curative. Acting according to the preventive approach, the city of Curitiba, steered the population towards the peripheries, before the situation was out of control (Rabinovitch, 1996). Cairo, on the other hand, built the new towns in the desert, only after the population concentration became a big human settlements crisis (Bazoglu, 1998). Turkey's Gaziantep, a border town with Syria, envisioning itself as a regional growth center, started using controlled expansion at its periphery,

1970s, before the anticipated population increase. Today, despite the ongoing waves of immigration from Eastern Turkey, it can maintain its status as a livable city.

The mode in which population growth is directed, is as important as timing. Steering growth to wider zones and urban corridors, does not always create livable metropolitan settlements, even if interventions are implemented at the right time. By contrast, metropolitan regions could be hubs of urban poverty which lack economic vitality. The desert towns of Cairo, for example, fall under this category where people are devoid of employment opportunities, and of an effective public transportation (Sutton and Fahmi, 2001; Bazoglu, 1998).

The most crucial element determining a functional and equitable metropolitanization is to build the economic infrastructure, and the human settlement itself, simultaneously, while establishing the connectivity of these settlements into core city, as well as other peripheral settlements. Two most remarkable examples of this is, Curitiba, where land use and transportation planning was an effective way to direct urban growth (Rabinovitch, 1996). Planning for mixed use, residence and commercial and industrial establishments, industrial parks, is another reason why there is an organic relationship between space, employment opportunities and the population (Rabinovitch, 1996). By creating the economic bases of a diverse social fabric, the social segregation was also minimized in Curitiba.

A similar pattern is also valid for the more recent plan of Hyderabad, where metropolitan growth is channeled in the directions desired, via the creation of a Hi Tech periphery, Cyberabad (Kennedy, 2007). Industry-driven settlement development is also implemented in Delhi, by NOIDA, New Okhla Industrial Development Authority (Potter and Kumar, 2004), with variable success due to the wrong choice of location.

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<sup>i</sup> United Nations Human Settlements Programme has been collecting and analysing data on a Global Sample of Cities of 124, from 10 regions of the world. The sample has been selected according to Probability Proportionate to Size, PPS principle, and therefore is biased on the big cities. The indicators thus calculated on these cities have been the core substance of the State of the World's Cities Report, 2006. The rates of urban growth, however, are taken from the United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects, 2003, Veron.

<sup>ii</sup> These figures are taken from the Egypt Demographic and Health Survey, 2000; Indian National Fertility and Health Survey, 98-99, Indonesian Demographic and Health Survey, 2002-2003; Bangladesh Demographic and Health Survey, 2000; and Vietnam Demographic and Health Survey, 2002.

<sup>iii</sup> Same surveys above, and Pakistan Demographic and Health Survey, 1990-91.

<sup>iv</sup> [www.bestpractices.org](http://www.bestpractices.org)