



Urban Development in Asia

Retrospect and Prospect

Edited by
Yue-man Yeung

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
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To
Norton, Terry and Fu-chen,
who have helped shape my
views on Asian cities

Preface

The establishment of the Urban and Regional Development in Pacific Asia Programme of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong in 1990 coincided, fortuitously, with a mounting worldwide concern about the development and daily life in cities in developing countries. Despite the astonishing scientific and economic progress made by humankind since 1945, many families and individuals in these cities were eking out their existence in a deteriorating habitat seriously lacking in basic urban services and bases of livelihood. However, increasing attention and resources have recently been marshalled to address the urban predicament in the developing world.

As the 1990s began to unfold, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) both unveiled their plan and vision to make it a decade of opportunity and positive change for cities in developing countries. Their intentions were made explicit in their respective policy statements, in 1991, in *Urban Policy and Economic Development* and *Cities, People and Poverty*. The Ford Foundation, which made definitive contributions to Third World urbanization in the 1970s, renewed its commitment to the subject. It chose to fund, also in 1991, a series of urban research studies in Africa, Asia and Latin America. The network project, aptly called the Global Urban Research Initiative (GURI), was coordinated by Richard Stren of the University of Toronto. That year also marked the beginning of an ambitious regional research study of world cities in Pacific Asia sponsored by the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo. The Urban Management Programme (UMP), funded by UNDP and bilateral donors and executed by the World Bank and the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS), began its second phase of five years in 1992, after preparatory and consultancy studies the year before.

It is transparent in reference to these global and regional research and policy-relevant activities that the present decade is one in which cities loom ever larger in change and development in developing countries. They come particularly to the fore in Asia, which has witnessed sustained rapid economic growth over the past several decades.

I have the singular good fortune of being associated with virtually all the activities mentioned earlier. I was a member of the Panel of Advisors of the UMP (Phase 2) and GURI and, through my participation in their meetings, travelled to many cities in the world and deepened my understanding of cities. Chapters 7, 8 and 9 are direct research outputs of GURI. With Fu-chen Lo, I coordinated the UNU-sponsored study of world cities. In addition, I was invited by a large number of international agencies, government departments and universities to prepare research papers and deliver addresses on dimensions of urban development.

Some of the results of my efforts have found expression in the selected pieces in this book. Others may be found in the companion volume, *Globalization and Urban-Regional Change in Pacific Asia*. For my essays included in these pages, I wish to thank the following organizations for their invitation and support: the World Bank, UNCHS, UNDP, UMP, the Ford Foundation, the University of Toronto and the Hong Kong Housing Authority. Three of my pieces (Chapters 5, 6 and 14) were initially prepared as keynote addresses presented in Hong Kong (1996), Jakarta (1996) and Hanoi (1995), respectively. Chapter 4 is adapted from a commissioned "think piece" for the World Bank.

All the papers in this book stem in one way or another from the Programme which I have been directing at the Institute. Since 1993, the Programme has carried forward most of its activities on the basis of the Lippo Urban Research Fund, and has annually received a generous donation from the Lippo Group. I wish to extend my heart-felt gratitude to the Group, in particular to Mr J.P. Lee, OBE, MBE, JP, who has been most supportive and encouraging in every way. Four chapters (1, 3, 12 and 13) in this volume resulted from direct support from the Lippo Urban Research Fund. As well, the Fund underwrites the publication of this volume. The Programme has also received generous funding from the University through the service of a full-time research assistant. Over the years, Irene Lai, Lui Siu-yun, Joanna Lee and Polly Chui have rendered their able and devoted service, for which I reiterate my apprecia-

tion. Their much valued efforts and conscientious work are reflected in part in my and co-authored essays in this book.

Most of the pieces here have been published as occasional papers of the Institute at different times. Several papers have been heavily abridged and adapted for this book. Their collection in one volume not only enhances their relationships and mutual relevance, but also chronicles a partial record of achievements of the Programme. In this respect, thanks are due to other contributing authors in this volume for their contributions to the Programme and to this book project. Special mention should be made of David K.Y. Chu and Wing-shing Tang, my colleagues in geography, who have matured with me as the Programme has continued to grow and prosper. The Programme could not have achieved as much without the dependable and loyal service of my personal secretary, Janet Wong, who has doubled up as my project manager and liaison officer in keeping up with many institutions and researchers spread across the world.

Above all, my research and perspectives on Asian cities would not have acquired the breadth and depth I hope I have at least touched, without the sound advice and wise counsel of numerous friends I have the fortune of being associated with over many years. Nonetheless, I wish to dedicate this volume to three in particular: Norton Ginsburg who taught me to appreciate the special character of Asian cities, Terry McGee who worked empirically with me in cities in Southeast Asia, and Fu-chen Lo who recently strengthened my understanding of the economic role of world cities in Asia.

YMY

December 1997



This aerial view of Tsim Sha Tsui of the Kowloon Peninsula in Hong Kong shows the effective use of limited urban land and the convenient access to the harbour.



The urbanscape of Singapore is one largely dominated by public housing development, shown here in Bishan with well articulated building styles and heights and provision of greenery.



As Pakistan's largest city, Karachi is highly diversified in function and architecture. This view of the Jobli market area shows mixed functional uses of residence, retailing and the mosque, and different transport modes.



Capital of Uttar Pradesh in northern India, Lucknow is a historical urban centre noted for its architecture and its role in the 1857 Indian Mutiny. This picture of an architecturally striking building is punctuated by an unusually quiet street deserted in the fiercely hot afternoon sun in June.



These two high-rise apartment blocks along the banks of the Chao Phraya, with others in the background, testify to the feverish pace of development that has been witnessed in Bangkok in recent years. Note, however, the traditional barge traffic laden with goods in the river.



Nepalese cities often are planned with well-placed urban space where religious symbolisms, basic functions and human life are integrated. The stone monuments in front of a temple in Bhaktapur, the third largest city in Nepal, not only guard the spirit Nepalese worship but also reach out to the populace.



Water supply in spontaneous settlements always poses one of the biggest problems for the residents as well as the authorities in Asian cities. The maze of rubber hoses for distributing water from the public taps to individual houses in this picture of Kampung Keranci in Kuala Lumpur can be extremely perplexing, as the look on this boy's face reveals.



Like many large Chinese cities, the ancient capital of Xian in China has been transformed into a modern metropolis, with wide streets, trees and greenery, and effective traffic management through mode separation. This view from the Bell Tower at the heart of the city also shows the banners which have the dual function of informing the public as well as creating an atmosphere of festivity on special occasions.



Guangzhou, the capital and largest city of Guangdong province in China, has physically and economically transformed itself since 1978. In two decades, Guangzhou has become a modern city, as the skyline in this picture fully portrays, with increasing openness and internationalization.



The market economy has speeded up development and change in cities in Vietnam. This picture of hawkers in Haiphong highlights the role of the informal sector in the distribution of goods and the provision of gainful employment.



Shanghai as China's largest city has seen an economic and cultural resurgence since 1990. Among the many physical changes the city has witnessed is large-scale housing development for an emerging free market, as this recent project shows.



Shenzhen was set up in 1980 as the first of five Special Economic Zones in China to embark on its open policy. In two decades, Shenzhen has seen unparalleled growth in population, wealth and other aspects, as this picture of the point of entry from Lo Wu in Hong Kong conveys a sense of urbanity.

Introduction

Yue-man Yeung

By any standard, Asia's economic growth in the postwar years has been astounding. In the Asian economic transition, its cities have played a vital role in spearheading economic change, effecting material improvements in the quality of life and accelerating globalization. A study on urban development is part and parcel of the breathtaking and revolutionary changes that have been witnessed across the continent, initially in its cities but through them to the countryside as well.

As a continent, Asia has been urbanizing over the past few decades at only moderate rates. In 1950, 235 million people lived in cities, accounting for only 16.8 per cent of the total population. By 1995, the urban population had soared to 1,197 million, with a level of urbanization at 34.6 per cent. At century-end, the urban population is projected to reach 1,407 million, at an urban level of 37.7 per cent (United Nations, 1995). It is thus obvious that while the urban population in Asia has continued to grow unabated, the overall level of urbanization has been at best moderate compared with other developing regions.

Apart from being the most populous continent with the largest urban population, Asia has also distinguished itself by having the largest number of mega-cities. Of the world's 25 largest cities in 1995, 14 were concentrated in Asia. These were cities with a population of over 8 million each, and Tokyo was the largest urban agglomeration with a population of 28.7 million. Both the huge urban population and the largest number of mega-cities in Asia have grave implications for the continent's governments and cities in having to keep soul and body together for their teeming millions and to aspire to sustainable development for the present and future generations.