

INTERNATIONAL STUDIES IN  
DEMOGRAPHY

# URBANIZATION IN LARGE DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

*China, Indonesia, Brazil, and India*

*Edited by*  
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PRAVIN VISARIA



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**Urbanization in Large Developing Countries**



The International Union for the Scientific Study of Population Problems was set up in 1928, with Dr Raymond Pearl as President. At that time the Union's main purpose was to promote international scientific co-operation to study the various aspects of population problems, through national committees and through its members themselves. In 1947 the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population (IUSSP) was reconstituted into its present form.

It expanded its activities to:

- stimulate research on population
- develop interest in demographic matters among governments, national and international organizations, scientific bodies, and the general public
- foster relations between people involved in population studies
- disseminate scientific knowledge on population

The principal ways through which the IUSSP currently achieves its aims are:

- organization of worldwide or regional conferences
- operations of Scientific Committees under the auspices of the Council
- organization of training courses
- publication of conference proceedings and committee reports.

Demography can be defined by its field of study and its analytical methods. Accordingly, it can be regarded as the scientific study of human populations primarily with respect to their size, their structure, and their development. For reasons which are related to the history of the discipline, the demographic method is essentially inductive: progress in knowledge results from the improvement of observation, the sophistication of measurement methods, and the search for regularities and stable factors leading to the formulation of explanatory models. In conclusion, the three objectives of demographic analysis are to describe, measure, and analyse.

**International Studies in Demography** is the outcome of an agreement concluded by the IUSSP and the Oxford University Press. The joint series is expected to reflect the broad range of the Union's activities and, in the first instance, will be based on the seminars organized by the Union. The Editorial Board of the series is comprised of:

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## Preface

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This book is based on a seminar held by one of the scientific committees of the International Union for the Scientific Study of Population, the Committee on Economic Consequences of Alternative Demographic Patterns. The seminar was held in Ahmedabad in September 1989, and hosted by the Gujarat Institute of Development Research. As well as those giving papers from each of the large developing countries under discussion (China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil), other members of the IUSSP committee and discussants attended the seminar.

It was agreed during the seminar that the quality of the papers was sufficient to justify the preparation of a book based on them. However, in recognition of the fact that books of conference papers tend to lack a clear theme and focus, the two editors undertook to prepare introductory and concluding chapters, and also to send detailed comments and requests for revision to the chapter authors. This helped both to draw themes together and to improve the quality of papers. With the passage of time it was also necessary to update some of the data in a number of the chapters.

The editors wish to thank the support staff at their respective institutions—the Demography Program, Australian National University and the Gujarat Institute of Development Research—for the assistance they have given over the course of preparing this volume. In particular our thanks go to Daphne Broers-Freeman, the Publications Officer in the Demography Program, Australian National University.

Finally, the editors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who made useful comments on the earlier draft of this manuscript and thus enabled it to be substantially improved in its final version.

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# 1 Urbanization of the Third World Giants

GAVIN W. JONES AND PRAVIN VISARIA

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Anybody familiar with the development literature will know that the world is rapidly urbanizing, and that by the year 2005 (less than a decade away) more than half the world's population will live in urban areas (United Nations 1994). This figure, however, hides enormous inter-country variation. Urban growth is the most visible manifestation of the enormous population upsurge of the past four decades. It is one of the major concerns of the planners and governments of most developing countries, because with limited budgets they are finding the task of providing even basic levels of infrastructure and urban services quite daunting. This, along with concern about the political volatility perceived to be focused in cities and, frequently, a class-based concern that migrants to the cities seem to be mainly drawn from the ranks of the rural poor and uneducated, has generated a fundamentally negative attitude to urbanization in most developing countries.<sup>1</sup> In the two largest developing countries, China and India, anti-urban attitudes have historical roots in concepts of the city as parasitic in Maoist and Gandhian thought; such notions are common, too, in the third-largest developing country, Indonesia.

As Montgomery (1988) notes, 'the anti-urbanization perspective achieved its high point in the declarations of the 1974 World Population Plan of Action at Bucharest; since that time, it has gradually been supplanted by more balanced assessments of the contribution made by cities to economic growth'. These more objective assessments of the urbanization process, however, have not characterized all developing countries, and the more complex set of attitudes which has emerged has been more characteristic of planners and academics than of politicians. Certainly, urbanization is more frequently perceived these days as a potentially beneficial or, at worst, neutral process, but urban primacy, or the excessive concentration of the population in one city or the few largest cities in a country, is a source of concern. There are varying degrees of recognition of the dynamics of urban growth: that it is due not only to rural-urban migration, but also (in equal or even greater measure) to the high rate of natural increase of the urban population itself (Jones 1991: 9-10).

<sup>1</sup> Examples of attitudes favouring a rural rather than an urban lifestyle are too numerous to stem from too many countries to require documentation. Academic writings blaming urban biases for many of the ills of the development process are represented by Lipton, 1977 and Brown and Jacobson, 1987. An alternative view is given by Lowrey (1989: 2): 'Most of the ills that are blamed on urbanization can be more accurately attributed to population growth, industrialization and prosperity.'

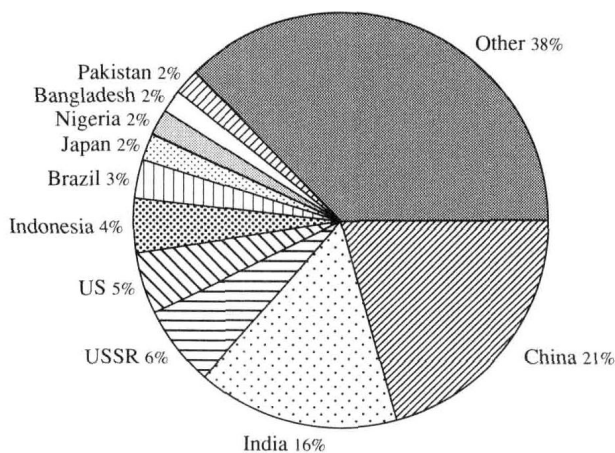


The general interest and concern with issues of urbanization in the developing world tend to focus on the following six aspects:

- rapid rates of growth of urban population
- rising share of urban population in total population
- growth of large metropolises and urban primacy
- problems of providing minimal urban infrastructure
- issues in rural–urban labour transfer and employment
- the linkages between urbanization and regional development issues.

This book analyses urbanization trends and issues in the four largest developing countries—China, India, Indonesia, and Brazil, whose total population of 2.4 billion constitutes over 40 per cent of the world's population (see Fig. 1.1). The justification for writing a book about these countries hinges on two characteristics they share: they are large, and they are developing. In terms of population, they are not equally large, of course; China and India are the giants. But in territorial extent, they differ less, if Indonesia's maritime interstices are included, as we believe they should be for this purpose. (The Indonesian archipelago covers a larger area than India.) Their levels of development are not identical: Brazil is much more industrialized and urbanized than the others. But they all face a range of problems in relation to urban and regional development that are typical of countries generally classified as 'developing'. These problems include, among others, sharply poorer living conditions and levels of human development in rural than in urban areas, but at the same time difficulty in providing even minimal levels of urban infrastructure and services; equity problems of implicit subsidization of living costs in urban areas; and issues relating to the most effective approaches to integrating urban areas into their regional economy.

As will be pointed out below, these four countries are distinguished by many differences in political and administrative systems, level of economic development,



**Fig. 1.1.** Distribution of the world's population by major countries

Source: United Nations, 1990