

Lecture 23: Theories of Urbanization and Development

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URBANIZATION AND DEVELOPMENT

In demographic and economic literature urbanization is frequently used as an indicator of development. There is a very intricate relationship between urbanization and development. *State of World Population 2009* shows that the more developed countries are all highly urbanized countries; the least developed countries are all low on urbanization. However, while the level of urbanization in the more developed has almost stabilized, in the less developed countries urbanization is occurring at a fast rate. A high rate of growth of urban population in the least developed countries shows that their urban populations are growing due to both natural increase (births – deaths) and rural to urban migration. Several of them are urbanizing at a rate which is higher than the rate at which the developed countries had urbanized when they had similar level of urbanization. The report establishes exhibits the following:

- In year 2009 the world is around 50 percent urban.
- The level of urbanization in the more developed countries is 75 percent.
- The level of urbanization in the less developed countries is 45 percent.
- The level of urbanization in the least developed countries is 29 percent.
- The urban population in the world is growing at 2.0 percent per year.
- The urban population in the more developed countries is growing at 0.6 percent per year.
- The urban population in the less developed countries is growing at 2.6 percent.
- The urban population in the least developed countries is growing at 4.1 percent per year.

In the history of urbanization the year 2009 is specially marked. In 2009 the world is half urban and as the trends show in the coming years more than half of the world population will be living in urban areas.

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Urbanization, industrialization and development are concomitant processes. It is difficult to say what exactly is the cause of what. The changes are symmetrical. Agricultural society was a village society. Industrialization caused urbanization by providing better opportunities to work in the urban areas. Better employment situation, better wages and charm of city life attracted people to move towards cities and urbanization started. This is the reason why the more developed countries which started urbanizing in 19th century are the most urbanized countries today. Less developed countries most of which were colonies of the developed countries did not experience industrialization and remained less urbanized. It was only in the second half of the twentieth century when they became independent that they started building infrastructure, providing various services to their population and developing industry. Then they started urbanizing. Several of their cities have now developed as business, service and administrative cities. On the other hand cities too promote development and industrialization. The reasons are associated with high density of population, economy of scale, culture that promotes creativity and innovation and frees individual from traditional institutions, greater participation in global processes, better transportation and communication facilities, better infrastructure and conditions that promote need for achievement.

Yet, there is a huge difference between urbanization and development. Urbanization is quintessentially a demographic phenomenon while development is an economic phenomenon. Urbanization is a process of population concentration. When people move from rural areas, where density of population is lower, to urban areas, where density of population is higher, urbanization takes place. Looked at from this perspective when wanderers and food gatherers developed settled agriculture and started living in villages urbanization started. Gradual increase in the size of village/habitation led to more urbanization. In the developing countries where urbanization is occurring quite fast this is because people are moving from rural areas to urban areas, and also from smaller urban areas to big cities. On the other hand, development requires huge investments and improvement in productivity.

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Some political analysts see the relationship between urban and rural areas as exploitative. They focus on urban-rural conflict and ways in which urban areas grow at the expense of rural areas. According to this thesis, growth of urbanization may not lead to development of all and growth and expansion of urbanization may simultaneously lead to marginalization and exploitation of rural masses.

DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION AND URBANIZATION

It is also possible to argue that in developing countries demographic transition, and not the development, contributed to growth of cities, weakening the correlation between urbanization and development. When the population of developing countries started growing at a fast rate (above 2 percent) due to fall in the death rate it could not be absorbed in agriculture which was almost stagnant. Therefore, the surplus population started moving towards cities, whether there was any need for them there or not. This led to rapid growth of urbanization, though without development. Undoubtedly, India, a developing country has one of the oldest civilizations and has had a long history of cities. Old cities of India were, however, fort cities or places of pilgrimage and were small in number and size. Their functions were political and religious. The large cities of today are so large that their population is larger than the population of many countries. Administration, trade and commerce, industry, and transport and communication have emerged as the new functions of cities.

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Studies of urbanization in the less developed countries, therefore, contradict that there is a positive correlation between urbanization and development and produce the **overurbanization thesis**. According to this thesis the present day less developed countries are more urbanized than the developed countries were at the same level of development and the quality of urban population in the developing countries is very poor.

In the less developed countries three things were especially marked:

- Rapid growth of large cities
- Division of city into two different parts, one modern and developed, and the other as traditional and poor
- Overpopulation in the urban areas, particularly large cities, leading to creation of large squatter settlements and slums

Data show that the large cities are growing faster than the smaller cities. As a matter of fact many tiny towns have experienced a declining trend (Registrar General, 2009). This phenomenon produces **city primacy**, i.e., a situation in which large cities have disproportionately more population than smaller cities and towns, making them unmanageable by city planners and requiring large investments to keep them liveable. For development planning, a good option would be to develop smaller cities and towns and restrict movement of people towards the largest cities.

Consequently, though cities are still the places and sources of modernization, and, yet, they have a traditional part, slum areas or squatter settlements, where the rural social institutions and arrangements are maintained. Most of the Indian cities including Delhi have a new city (e.g., New Delhi), or a civil lines area, and an old part (e.g., old Delhi, old Hyderabad, old Lucknow). Thus they may be called dual cities. In the old city one finds continuity of traditional kinship, caste and regional networks. The new, poor migrants depend upon them for decisions regarding the choice of destination and also for their adjustment to the harsh conditions of urban living (De Souza, 1983).

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In this context, there are a few new concerns:

- Growing size of slums, informal sector and its role in modernizing economy
- Influence of kinship, caste, religion and region of origin on the migrants' adaptation to the new situation
- The condition of urban poor and structural and cultural marginalization: income, savings and loan pattern organization, health, education, welfare and self reliance among the poor
- Slum improvement programmes
- Consequences of urban poverty for women and family
- Identity and social stereotypes

Based on an ethnographic study in steel town of Bhilai, Parry (2004) writes:

It is true that even forty years on, regional identities continue to be marked in terms, for example, of diet, dress, the worship of deities and the language of home. It is in the 'home' rather than the 'world' that the distinctions are most manifest, and the maintenance of them is significantly gendered. Even after years in Bhilai, the Hindi spoken by many south Indian women remains rudimentary. In the masculine space of the plant, regional ethnicity is the focus of legitimised joking; but outside the topic is more touchy and ethnic stereotyping has a harder edge. Malayalis are clever, cunning and clannish, and always get on; Telugus are feckless and often inebriated, and generally do not. Where there are Bengalis there is *netagiri* (political boss-ism), and where 'Biharis', *dadagiri* (gangsterism). This last identity (which includes people from eastern Uttar Pradesh) is particularly strongly freighted and Bhilai's social problems are routinely laid at their door.

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FUTURE OF URBANIZATION IN INDIA

There are diversities between cities and towns. Large cities have grown faster. Diversity in employment is one important factor. Table 7.3 shows the differences in proportion of employed persons in urban areas of different sizes (Government of India, 2009). In the future more people may move to larger cities and towns which have better employment potential.

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TABLE 7.3: PROPORTION (PER 1000) OF USUALLY EMPLOYED PERSONS (OF AGE 15 YEARS & ABOVE) ACCORDING TO USUAL STATUS (PS+SS) FOR EACH SIZE CLASS OF TOWN DURING 2004-05

Class 1 City/ Size Class of Town	Male	Female	Person
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Class 1 cities			
Agra	833	147	494
Ahmedabad	795	214	516
Bangalore	841	202	549
Bhopal	782	151	490
Chennai	749	168	471
Delhi	714	112	442
Faridabad	726	118	464
Howrah	779	158	469
Hyderabad	770	190	472
Indore	835	283	557
Jaipur	766	377	573
Kalyan-Dombivili	730	203	486
Kanpur	776	77	435
Kolkata	751	190	496
Lucknow	695	93	399
Ludhiana	834	128	528
Meerut	790	51	434
Mumbai	786	267	545
Nagpur	720	289	515
Nashik	610	187	411
Patna	528	18	313
Pimpri-Chinchwad	774	212	525
Pune	712	291	512
Surat	876	182	591
Thane	736	223	499
Vadodara	717	197	447
Varanasi	860	411	667
All Class I Cities	762	198	498
Size Class II Towns Combined	756	218	498
Size Class III Towns Combined	777	276	530
Urban India	763	227	506

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There are several factors also which would provide further impetus to growth of some selected cities. Sharma (2008) shows that there are significant differences in amenities between cities and towns of different sizes and the Class I cities are more attractive than other towns (Table 7.4). Cities participate in global network of exchange of capital, technology, labour and information. There is a synergistic relationship between international markets and cities. Globalization and modernization will promote migration further and lead to more urbanization.

TABLE 7.4: PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH BASIC AMENITIES BY
SIZE CLASS OF URBAN CENTERS IN INDIA, 2001

India	Toilet	Drinking water	Kerosene	LPG	Drainage
Class-I	80.38	89.07	21.63	56.56	56.85
Class-II	66.75	81.48	13.76	43.78	73.09
Class-III	63.06	78.08	12.17	35.88	67.06
Class-IV	57.58	78.83	12.61	29.82	63.78
Class-V	53.05	78.77	9.24	26.04	57.63

For people migrating from population surplus areas to cities there was a hope of better life though for some it turned out to be a nightmare and they were pushed back. Increasing regionalism and son-of-soil politics may prevent the growth of urban areas in the future. This is clear that India will urbanize further. There is no doubt about this. Yet, it is difficult to say what model of growth it will follow. Future is uncertain and unpredictable. There will remain diversities in levels and patterns of urbanization between various regions of the country. At the same time, decentralization, and transfer of fiscal authority and responsibility for services from national to local units of the government implies that smaller towns play increasingly more important role. Central and State governments are increasingly concerned about rapid growth of large cities and would like to decelerate migration towards them. This can be done by adopting policies aimed at development of rural areas. Policies such as National Rural Employment Guarantee programme may reduce need to migrate to cities by providing wage employment at the village level.

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In addition, there are other factors which may retard the process of urbanization. Identity politics, hostility towards 'outsiders' coupled with contractualization of labour and mass unemployment, lack of open space in large cities where the migrants built illegal settlements in the past, expansion of IT industry, improved city planning, and increasing vulnerability of migrants to various risks in the cities would also discourage people from migrating towards cities. This will mean that the migration flows may change direction. Potential migrants would find Delhi, Bangaluru, Mumbai, Chennai and Kolkata less attractive than in the past and move towards other cities where they have a greater chance of finding employment and facing less hostility.

To quote the Committee on Population (2003):

A paradox of globalization is that, while creating more linkages and interdependencies, it also underscores the importance of comparative advantage of the subnational and local levels. Transnational corporations become increasingly aware of the niches where cheap and reliable labor can be found, and learn in detail of the constraints of local transport and infrastructure. Hence when seen from a global corporate perspective, the cities of low-income countries are likely to appear increasingly diverse.

Questions and Exercises

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1. Define urbanization. What are the causes of urbanization in less developed countries?
2. What is the relationship between urbanization and demographic transition, i.e., changes in birth and death rates?
3. Write an essay on urbanization in India.
4. How does census define urban and rural localities in India?
5. Distinguish between:
 - a. push and pull factors of migration
 - b. urbanization and overurbanization
6. What is urbanism? How is it different from urbanization?
7. Write an essay on the character of cities in the less developed countries.
8. On what factors depends the future of urbanization in India?
9. Can you identify how urban areas can exploit rural areas?
10. Why have the larger cities grown faster than smaller cities and towns?

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