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Creating place for the displaced: Migration and Urbanization in Asia

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1 Introduction

The term ‘urbanization’ conjures up a number of different images—growth of urban population, transformation of villages into cities, agglomeration of industries, unemployment, crime, proliferation of slums, air-pollution, concerns about the provision of civic services, ethnic diversity (sometimes leading to conflicts) and many others. Naturally, the topic exerts interest for researchers in all disciplines within the social sciences and beyond. One of the aspects of urbanization which has the most direct and immediate impact on people’s lives is that of physical movement of population—sometimes out of compulsion - and their subsequent resettlement. The 2009 Human Development Report, the flagship publication of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), presents some remarkable statistics on people’s flows. Contrary to common perception, most movement in the world does not take place from developing to developed countries, or even between countries, but within the borders of their own country. According to the report, of the nearly 1 billion movers in the world, 740 million are internal migrants, mainly from rural to urban areas. Internal migration

is obviously the main driving force behind the world's population becoming more urban than rural as of 23 May 2007.¹

Asia, comprising countries of growing economic and political importance—chiefly attributable to rapid globalization reaching almost every corner of the continent - portrays the complexity of urbanization, especially the extent to which it is migration-led, in many important ways. International migrants represent a relatively small (but significant, as we show later) share of the population in the continent—e.g., that of South Asia (1.5 per cent). In India, while immigration and emigration rates are 0.5 and 0.8 per cent, respectively, lifetime internal migration rates are estimated to be 4.1 per cent. In a country with over a billion people, that implies more than 40 million people moving internally. Thus, some of the largest movements of people in the world take place internally as Indians move from the country's rural areas to its booming cities. In case of Bangladesh, the rural to urban migration has contributed more than 40 per cent of the change in its urban population. In some large cities, the figure is as high as 70 per cent. In China an estimated 136 million people have moved. In the Republic of Korea, 63 per cent of its population lived in rural areas in 1963, but only 7 per cent remained there by 2008. A similar pattern prevails in Malaysia where 80 per cent of the population was rural in 1950, but only 35 per cent in 2005. Over the same 55-year period, Malaysia's total population more than quadrupled. Thus, in terms of numbers, the transformation is even more overwhelming. Indonesia's urban population nearly doubled since 1990 to about 109 million in 2005, the latest year for which mid-census data are available. The country's urbanization rate is in the neighbourhood of 50 per cent, which is in

¹ *Science Daily*, 25 May 2007.

line with the average of low-income countries. It is estimated to rise to nearly 69 per cent in 2030.

Why do people move from rural to urban areas? In what ways does globalization affect such movement? What are the synergies between globalization, urbanization and migration? What are the challenges with resettlement, especially those of minority or less empowered groups? With the help of selected case studies, these are some of the questions we try to address in this volume. This chapter introduces a significant new collection of studies on Urbanization in Asian countries, originally presented at a major conference organized in Kolkata in December 2008 by the United Nations University's World Institute for Development Economics Research (UNU-WIDER).

Managing the migration-led urbanization process and its consequences has not, it is argued (e.g., ADB 2006), gained a central position in national policy debate in Asian countries undergoing sea changes due to globalization. Concerns about the costs of urbanization and the sustainability of Asian cities receive relatively little comment in public discussion compared to national economic, political, and security concerns (ADB 2006). This is puzzling because urbanization has been, at least *associated* with, (if not directly instrumental for) the largest reductions in poverty in history and is an area where strengthening policy development and program implementation would result in major improvements in economic productivity and welfare. One of the plausible causes seems to be the complexity of the process and its consequences, spreading widely across disciplines. As we have argued elsewhere,

It should be abundantly clear that no one discipline can encompass the proximity, density, diversity, dynamics, and complexity that characterize cities and define the urban. For a complete understanding, we need economists with their toolkits of rational choice, scale economies, and agglomeration externalities; sociologists for their exploration of group dynamics and social constraints on individual choice; anthropologists and their focus on ritual and contextualized meaning in explaining behaviour; political scientists and their analyses of coalitions and urban politics; and, of course, geographers, for whom space and place are the organizing principles of discourse and analysis (Beall et al. 2010).

If we view the process through a people's lens, we note widespread resistance to the phenomenon of migration-led urban growth, often with a political hue. Over 50 per cent of those living in Mumbai (the largest city in India located in the state of Maharashtra) are *migrants*, with the state of Uttar Pradesh constituting the largest source, according to a recent report released by the Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai (MCGM). As early as in the 1960s, there were campaigns against these so-called 'outsiders', specifically targeting immigrants from the state of Gujarat (western India) as well as from the south of India. Nearly five decades later, the 'sons of the soil' argument was also used against the influx of people from the poorer states of Bihar and Uttar Pradesh. Between 1961 and 2001, the increase in Mumbai's population was attributed largely to the influx of people from north Indian states, but migration of people from the southern states declined in the same period, the report said. Thus, while it is beyond argument that Mumbai owes its rise to prominence as the financial capital of India chiefly to migration, there are substantial barriers to the process.

This exclusionary nature of urban growth is also manifest elsewhere in policies and programmes adopted by the state to restrict the entry of, especially, poor and unskilled migrants from rural areas and across the border, particularly those with dependents. Many countries have launched programmes of rural development, creation of satellite towns and pushing out of squatter settlements along with pollutant industries to the city peripheries. Governments often respond by attempting to restrict internal movement using methods such as tying the receipt of federal public services to the location of official residence and making urban residency difficult to obtain. For example, India ties the use of the 'ration card', which allows the poor to access subsidized food, to residency. Some cities resort to harsher measures such as razing the slums where migrants live, as happened in Dhaka, Bangladesh in early 2007. At least 20 million of the estimated 136 million internal Chinese migrants lost their jobs early in 2009 (as a fall out of the global crisis), a concern for Chinese policy makers that prompted a significant stimulus package. It rekindled the discussion about dismantling the Mao-era land registration system (or *hukou* system) that ties access to public services to the place where a person is registered. Some gradual reduction in the restrictiveness of the *hukou* has taken place. For example, in 2008 measures to provide portable pensions for migrant workers were announced, and some regional governments have liberalized their systems. But fear persists that eliminating registration would unleash a flood of people into cities that would overwhelm their infrastructure and public service systems. It has been argued that such implicit and explicit resistance may have actually dampened the pace of urban growth (Kundu and Kundu, this volume) and placed a question mark next to the proposition that the urban dynamics would shift to Asia in the next few decades, notwithstanding the magnitude of absolute figures of increment due to its pure demographic weight of the region.

The composition of this volume reflects the multi-faceted character of migration-led urbanization, requiring a multidisciplinary approach. Based on our earlier work (Beall et al. 2010), we essentially have four questions in mind that help to provide a conceptual and theoretical frame: First, what is so special about the urban context? Second, why are urbanization and urban growth important for development at the present juncture? Third, what are the limitations of our current state of knowledge about urbanization and development policy? Fourth, what is the value added of a multidisciplinary perspective on the urban context for development research and policy? We have suggested the following answers to these questions—essentially from a global perspective, but also applicable region-wise, particularly to Asia.

What is so special about the urban context? Proximity, density, diversity, dynamics and complexity are the key features that characterize the urban. These key characteristics span the different disciplinary approaches. Economists focus more on density (agglomeration effects) and dynamics (migration). The broader social sciences pay greater attention to diversity and heterogeneity in the urban population, and how this interacts with density and dynamics to produce urban politics, culture, social relationships and change.

Why is urbanization important for development at the present juncture? In 1900, just 13 per cent of the world's population lived in urban areas; the United Nations (2006) projects that 4.9 billion people will live in cities by 2030, representing 60 per cent of the global population. Current trends in globalization of economic activity influence, and are influenced

by, urbanization. In a globalized world the sources efficiency and dynamic growth are increasingly in urban centres. . However, poverty in low and middle income countries is increasingly taking on an urban character. Urban centres of population concentration, particularly of the poor, will be particularly vulnerable to climate catastrophes. In Section 2 of our volume, we try to tackle some of these issues with selected case studies.

What are the limitations of our current state of knowledge about urbanization and development policy? The urban setting, towards which the world seems to be moving inexorably, presents opportunities as well as challenges. The different disciplines considered in this volume have developed a great deal of detailed knowledge about the urban setting, and about the impact of different policy instruments on wellbeing in cities. One of our aims is to bring together the diversity of knowledge on the process of urbanization in one place. That takes us directly to the question of what is the value added of an interdisciplinary perspective on the urban context for development research and policy? Urban realities, urban evolution, and urban policy imperatives are sufficiently complex and mutli-faceted to require the strengths of each of a number of disciplines to understand urbanization, urban growth and urbanism in all their fullness. There is considerable value added in using the strengths of each discipline to complement each other. But it is only a first step. *Interdisciplinarity*, the integration of different approaches to develop a deeper analysis of the urban condition, is clearly some way away in the study of urbanization and development. Critical to advancing research on urban development is for economists to inform their data analysis with insights from the broad social sciences that allows them to accommodate the messiness and complexity of city life and the urban context in which choices (rational or otherwise) are made. By the same token, sociologists and anthropologists need to scale up household and

community level studies to embrace dynamics at the metropolitan level, while political scientists need to disaggregate national level data and findings to the level of the city.

We divide the chapters into six main parts. Part Two deals with ‘globalization and urbanization’; Part Three with ‘migration and urbanization’; Part Four with ‘governance and urbanization’; Part Five with ‘women in urban settings’; and finally, Part Six with ‘infrastructure in urban peripheries’.

2 Globalization and urbanization

Globalization has probably been most rapid in Asia in the past three decades. The protagonists of economic reform argue that economic liberalization accelerates the pace of city-centered economic growth in Asian countries and leads to large scale rural urban migration. Consequently, it will boost the pace of urbanization in the next 25 years or so. The chapter by Kundu and Kundu provides a critical examination of the assumptions on which such stylized facts are based and pose a question mark against the common assertion. It draws attention to some of the possible shortcomings of popular databases pertaining to urbanization, and complements similar initiatives to be found in Beall et al. (2010).

The data concerns notwithstanding, research on the impact of globalization on urban growth generally supports a positive outcome. In the case of India, such evidence is usually based on national level data (as opposed to regional analysis in other Asian countries such as China and Philippines). Recent databases on foreign trade in goods and services, and inflow of foreign investment in Karnataka State (and on Bangalore as its capital) is an exception in India. The chapter by Narayana is the first attempt to use this database for measurement of

economic globalization, and relate globalization and urban growth for Bangalore in comparison with regional (or state level, throughout) economic growth of Karnataka State and national economic growth of India. This comparison brings out the valuable contributions of Bangalore to regional and national economic globalization and economic growth. Internal migration is a major source for changes in the population of Bangalore. For instance, net increase in population is equal to 1.21million during 1981-91 and 1.56 million during 1991-2001. In-migration contributed to this increase by about 45 per cent 1981-91 and about 49 per cent during 1991-2001. Next to migration, jurisdictional changes contributed about 33 per cent and the rest by natural increase. The chapter is thus a core contribution to the globalization-migration-urbanization nexus bringing to the fore the experience of India's 'poster child' of globalization, often touted as its Silicon Valley, the city of Bangalore.

Since China entered the era of reforms and opening up, the country's urban geography has been dramatically altered. Original residents are displaced to new homes on the urban fringes and mature inner-city neighbourhoods disappear; brand new developments emerge in their place and well-off newcomers are welcomed to enter a commodified housing market; villages are left behind and rural migrants in search of alternative livelihoods are drawn into the city. For a supposedly limited amount of time, the co-presence of splinters of urban fabric—contrasting and continuously changing in terms of condition, use, and sociocultural consistency—becomes symptomatic for China's transition, suspending existing spatial and temporal disconnections particularly on the borderland in between old and new, poor and rich, traditional and modern. Focusing on a range of individuals in a neighbourhood of socio-spatial diversity in Shanghai, the chapter by Iossifova examines the trajectories of urban redevelopment, the degrees of identification with place, and the relationship between place and identity.

3 Migration and urbanization

Shanghai, like Bangalore, is widely regarded as the best candidate for China's global city, with an ever increasing need for skilled labour. Migration of more educated young people from developing countries to fill gaps in the work forces of industrialized countries has been a feature of development in the past. There is now a reverse trend, of which cities such as Shanghai and Bangalore are important examples. Place matters for the mobility and circulation of talents—attractiveness of cosmopolitan living environment, quality of life, business, employment and education opportunities all play crucial roles in bringing talents to cities around the world. The chapter by Wei Shen aims to understand this relationship and linkage between global cities and the migration of talents. By using the case study of the circulating network and mobility of Chinese students from elite business schools in France, it illustrates the so called 'war' or 'race' for talents where the quality of urbanization is critical.

In this context, Japan faces a demographic problem that requires the serious rethinking of means to retain their working population. International migrants are becoming an option for East Asian countries in general not only in taking on economic activities but also assisting in the perpetuation of society, as seen through international marriages. Globalization of households is resulting in expanding the dimension of social interactions between Japanese and foreign residents in ways that were rarely seen before when the foreign residents were considered to be largely temporary workers. While national level immigration policy usually takes time to formulate and implement, some local communities and municipal governments have shown immense flexibility in accommodating the international residents, especially in communities where households of more than two members are comprised of international residents and/or international households are growing in number. The chapter by Ishii

concludes that if liveability issues are neglected, with the large migrant population expected in the future, there may be an uprising demanding urgent change—as witnessed in the famous examples of the 2005 civil uprising in France and the Los Angeles riots in 1992—neither scenario being desirable for the government or for the citizens. With the help of a case study of Tokyo, the chapter asserts that a culture of tolerance is not enough, and urban politics must address the questions of socio-economic inequalities and power, be they real or perceived.

In Japan again, in the fifteen years between 1915 and 1930, the number of Koreans in Osaka increased nearly one hundred fold from only 399 in 1915 to 32,806 in 1930. The particular conditions of Japan's Korean communities have been major factors in its growth and development. Just as exploring the relationship between the Italian and Jewish immigrants to New York provides an abundance of insight into the ideas of migrant preparation and adaption to a new environment, the examination of Koreans in the differing urban environments of Osaka and Tokyo allows for insight into the relationship between the city and those who choose to call it home. The chapter by Rands looks at the individual communities within the Korean minority, arguing that the study of migration or the development of identity is not accurate unless these communities are examined within the particular historical context specific to them.

4 Governance and urbanization

Efficient cities can more economically deliver housing that is *both* affordable *and* accessible to employment, schooling, and places of leisure. This is especially important to the poor, often recent migrants, whose livelihoods are dependent on affordable housing *and* accessibility to work and schooling. High-density development clustered around transit

stations enables lower cost housing (land costs per unit are lower) and accessibility, a winning combination that can be difficult to achieve in developing cities. The flow of migrants into the China's cities, while fuelling its historic success with globalization, is also placing tremendous stress on housing needs. Webster explored urban form in metropolitan China from the perspective of land efficiency. The chapter identifies the lack of integration of floor area ratios into urban plans, mechanistic implementation and/or gaming of basic protected land and land quota mechanisms, over fiscal reliance of municipal governments on land lease sales, and non-market allocation of industrial land as some of the distorting effects of current policies. Recommendations put forward relate to increasing nodality (hierarchies of sub-centres), aligning mass transit and land use planning, pricing peripheral land higher, auctioning a higher percentage of land, and utilization of new mechanisms, such as growth boundaries, to protect agricultural land and create more efficient urban form (e.g., necklace form).

Movement of poorer people from rural areas to the urban centres and their peripheries is often a response to labour market needs. The growth of infrastructure and basic amenities in the large cities of Asia and their growing linkage with the global economy have led to inflows of foreign capital as also rise in indigenous investment, accelerating, thereby, the pace of job creation. It gives further impetus to the process of urbanization since much of the investment and consequent increase in employment are within or around the existing urban centres. Even when the industrial units get located in inland rural settlements or virgin coastal areas, in a few years, the latter acquire (official) urban status, with subsequent implications for delegation of responsibility or decentralization of urban governance. The chapter by de Mello et al. deciphers how aspects of urban governance can interact with labour market outcomes (and hence migration) in interesting ways. Indonesia went through a process of administrative

decentralization in 2001 involving the devolution of several policy-making and service delivery functions to the sub-national tiers of government (provinces and districts). de Mello et al. uses a dataset of local governments for 1996 and 2004-5 to estimate the effect of the decentralization of minimum-wage setting in 2001 on urban population growth. The findings suggest that, controlling for other determinants of urban population growth, if the minimum wage had risen by an additional 81 000 rupiah (25 per cent of its initial mean value), the urban population would have risen by an additional 0.4 per cent from its initial level.

Although the permanent population is 800,000, with a land area of 3731 hectares, Colombo attracts a transient flow of nearly one million people a day, creating a huge demand on transport infrastructure. Colombo's growth has been primarily driven by two phenomena: the natural growth of population and the migration from the rest of the island. Unlike most cities however, the latter comprised not only migrants moving from the rural areas for jobs, both menial and white collar, but also refugees and the displaced from the war in the north and north east. Most of the best public schools, hospitals and playgrounds are in the city of Colombo and only few have been developed in the outstations and suburbs. One of the main criteria of admitting students to schools being the distance, many families are moving to the city in order to admit children to schools, making an unmanageable demand upon the residential facilities in the vicinities of the schools. There are in fact 210,000 students attending schools in Colombo of which 100,000 are estimated to travel from the suburbs. Not only are there the best government schools, the recent wave of private and international schools have also mushroomed in the city itself making the situation even worse.

Dayaratne argues that these are symptoms of the current emphasis on vertical growth, leaving lateral growth somewhat neglected. It seems that attention to residential spaces, slums, shanties, public spaces and infrastructure are left behind in the pursuit of high-impact mega-scale individual projects. The values of the projects are high, visually impressive and give a sense of achievement, which in the absence of lateral growth do not contribute positively to city life.

5 Women in urban settings

Gender has emerged as a central analytical construct in exploring property ownership and tenancy relationships in urban areas in South Asia. This is primarily because women currently own a negligible proportion of the region's urban landed property and are found instead in very large numbers in the lowest ranks of the residential hierarchy represented by vulnerable living arrangements such as informal renting, subletting, sharing and lodging with a family. The chapter by Barua explores the nature of landed property rights and tenure in urban informal settlements in India from a gender perspective through field research conducted in Ahmedabad, India, in collaboration with the Self-Employed Women's Association (SEWA). Enhancing women's ability to secure independent titles to urban land and housing is a long-term goal for organizations like SEWA. The chapter argues that joint titles are a step in the right direction towards establishing women's right to property although the obstacles to achieving even this small step are quite significant. Overall, policy initiatives that strengthen the ability of urban women to make land claims, such as legal education, reform of the judiciary and governance, public awareness campaigns, equality of treatment in resettlement schemes and land allocation processes, and equal access to credit and technological inputs will be extremely valuable in ensuring that land rights.

In spite of relatively high growth rates (and other development indicators), especially post-globalization, the incidence of child malnutrition in south-Asian countries is more severe than even the poorest nations of sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). This is commonly known as the ‘south Asian enigma’ and partly attributed to the relatively low status of women in south Asia. In predominantly patriarchal south Asian societies (as opposed to a number of nations in SSA which are essentially matrilineal) women lead a cloistered life, especially in rural areas. Movement towards cities is likely to change that—the presumption being urban life exposes women to more progressive norms of life.

Guha-Khasnobis and James compared the status of women between rural and urban areas of India. Their findings reveal that women in urban settings, even in slums, fare better in terms of a wide array of indicators which can serve as proxies for women’s status or decision making power in her family. The policy implication obviously is not to move rural women to urban slums, but to improve the conditions of slums in order to strengthen the benefits (externalities) that urban living otherwise bestows on women, compared to their rural counterparts.

6 Infrastructure in urban peripheries

Growth of cities and slums more often than not outpace the ability of authorities in the developing world to expand public provision of basic services. As a result, in nearly all urban centres and their peripheries, there are pockets with little or no provision of the basic infrastructure and services that are essential for public health and well being. Failure of

dealing with the urban environmental factors that influence health is obviously costly. For example, inadequate water and sanitation provision impose huge costs on those who are most directly affected, impacting on labour and productivity, and confounding the ability of communities, cities and nations to attract private investment. East Africa is prone to periodic cholera outbreaks after heavy rains that results in lives lost as well as huge financial costs. The Peruvian cholera epidemic in 1991 caused thousands of deaths; coupled with a much larger number of people who became seriously ill. The resultant economic impact was a net loss in just one year of around US\$232 million, equivalent at the time to approximately 1 per cent of Peru's GDP. The figure is equivalent to the estimated cost of providing a public stand post water supply for Peru's whole unserved population. The problem takes an added dimension in Asia due to the regions high population density in its poorer countries.

The chapter by Spencer on Can Tho City shows that health fears drive households to invest in basic services of peri-urban areas where the state is unable or unwilling to subsidize it. The findings also suggest that fears of illness are important, but that industrial pollution is a rapidly growing concern prompting household-level investments and contributions to improved water supplies. These results have implications for how urban planners might best 'market' their services to a paying public.

The chapter by Canares on the Philippines concludes that the poor in the cities in the periphery are sidelined by two different trends. On one hand, their needs and concerns are less prioritized because of the poverty targeting framework that dictates how development interventions are pursued and how development funds are allocated. On the other hand, their needs and concerns are often underinvested because of their relative low significance as an

urban centre when compared to others, in the economic landscape of the country. If these trends continue, the future of cities, more particularly those located in the peripheries of an archipelagic country like the Philippines, will increasingly become characterized by increased poverty and vulnerability.

5 Epilogue

It may be concluded that:

- a) The combined effect of the three outstanding forces of recent times, globalization, migration and urbanization, usually accompanies social and economic development, but rapid urban growth on today's scale strains the capacity of local and national governments to provide even the most basic of services such as water, electricity and sewerage.
- b) There are different dimensions of migrant exclusiveness based on class, gender composition, their predication on property holding in some form, their place of origin and so on. And
- c) Allowing people to freely move to the cities can enhance a nation's economic development experience.

Having said that, what are the lessons for managing the processes optimally? The key to incorporating the globalization-migration-urbanization nexus into overall development policy successfully is to respect the fact that the displaced are not without a place. The chapters in this volume highlight a basic thesis—that we need to view migration leading to urbanization as a *process* and not a *problem*. This process needs to be managed by understanding the realities of migrants and migration, which can be as stark as the proliferation of slums and as

delicate as the perception dilemma of the average Japanese about the ethnic identity of the (changing) society they live in. Urbanization inevitably implies displacement of people to varying extents—e.g., from one country to another, villages to cities, one part of the city to another (usually the outskirts)—caused both by push and pull factors. Income disparities among and within regions is one motivating factor, as are the labour and migration policies of sending and receiving countries. Political conflict drives migration across borders as well as within countries. Environmental degradation, including the loss of farmland, forests and pasture, also pushes people to leave their homes. Most ‘environmental refugees’, however, go to cities rather than abroad. The pull factors generally originate from the fact that cities are almost invariably the centres of (globalization-led) growth, creating opportunities for business and employment. One of the hallmarks of the globalization-migration-urbanization nexus is that the *cause* and *effect* of some of its phenomena belong to different disciplinary domains. For example, declining fertility rates, with its implication on a country or a region’s demographic pattern including labour supply, is an important driver of international migration in Japan and other East Asian countries. The ‘cause’ here lies primarily in the domain of economics. Interestingly, the ‘effect’ of such migration is the transformation of the Japanese society to a level of unprecedented multi-ethnicity which the population is yet to absorb into their psyches. Thus, the effect easily transcends economic borders and finds itself in the domain of more than one other social science and even psychology. Clearly, research on urbanization needs to be embedded firmly on inter-disciplinary rock. The various disciplines within the social sciences, and others, have plenty to offer to one another in understanding the complex dynamics of globalization, migration and urbanization.

Ensuring basic rights for migrant urban dwellers, reducing transaction costs associated with relocation to urban centres, enabling benefits from internal mobility, and making mobility

and urbanization integral parts of national development strategies are thus some of the key challenges for policy makers. Partnership with local communities and NGOs is probably important, especially to provide sufficient access to public services and legal empowerment for minority and less empowered migrants, as they tend to be less organized or represented in society. As the HDR 2009 emphasizes, access to public services should not be tied to residency. A country's citizens should be able to receive medical treatment, affordable food and housing, and enrol their children in school regardless of place of birth or registration. Migrants may be displaced, but they are not without a place.

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