

EDITORIAL. URBAN ISSUES IN ASIA

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In the last decade we have assisted at a spectacular transformation of the human settlements, as more than half of the world's population lives in urban areas. This transformation acquired significant magnitude in Asia. In 1950, Asia had only one city with a population of more than 10 millions people; by 2015, it is projected to have 23 cities (Asian Development Bank. 2008). In a region where a population of one million constitutes a small settlement, urbanization creates many challenges, especially about how to feed, shelter, and generate employment in a sustainable way. Urbanization in Asia involves around 44 million people being added to the population of cities every year, equivalent to 120,000 people each day. The huge increase in urban populations require the construction of more than 20,000 new dwellings, 250 kilometers of new roads, and additional infrastructure to supply more than six megaliters of potable water (Asian Development Bank. 2008).

In Asia, there are wide differences in the urbanization experience both between and within countries. In general, there is a strong relationship between urbanization and economic development. Higher-income countries are generally more urbanized than lower-income countries, and urbanization increases more rapidly with economic growth in lower-income countries than in higher-income countries. However, urbanization has brought enormous economic and social change and benefits to any Asian country, because it is associated with the creation of jobs for millions of people, reduction of poverty, development of new forms of housing, consumption, and social interaction for individuals and communities. Housing, water supply, power generation and transmission, telecommunications, intra-city transport, waste management, infrastructure finance, municipal governance, economic regeneration - the modernisation of Asia's urban infrastructure are some of the most profound challenging trends of the present century.

The extraordinary growth of cities in Asia, however, is coming at a price. Overcrowding has become endemic in many cities. As a result of overcrowding, urban poverty, associated with unemployment and the lack of access to adequate housing and services, is an increasing social problem. The most visible indicator of poverty in many Asian cities is the presence of slums and squatter communities. In these slum areas, water and sanitation are usually inadequate. Solid waste collection is also poor, with garbage often left decaying at street corners in uncovered receptacles (Laquian, 2004).

Even if Asia is endowed with great rivers that are the lifelines of the regional economy, as a whole, the region faces severe stress on water availability, primarily due to high population density. Other causes of low water availability in this region are directly linked to the reducing forest cover and soil degradation.

Besides water, there are several other issues related to environment, such as; global warming and its impact; intense land/use and shifting pattern of agriculture; issues related to fertilizer applications and pesticide residues in soil and water; and solid and liquid waste management particularly in industrial and urban areas.

Rapid economic growth and industrialization have caused unacceptably high levels of pollution. Air pollution is a serious problem, with Beijing, Calcutta, New Delhi, and Shanghai being among the most polluted cities in the world. Urban transport is the main cause of air pollution. As the number of vehicles on the roads increase every year, traffic congestion and pollution continue to grow, reducing the quality of life in many urban environments.

In this context, Asian policymakers at all levels must respond to the challenges and opportunities of urbanization in order to maximize its potential to improve the quality of life for all citizens.

In this special number of "Theoretical and Empirical Researches in Urban Management" we called for the study of urbanization in Asia as economic, political and socio-cultural complexities. So, this special number, under the topic "Urban issues in Asia", collects 10 papers authored by researchers from Hong Kong, United Kingdom, mainland China, India, Malaysia, Indonesia and Bangladesh. Each article explores some of the region's most important urban issues. Sherry Zhou and Helen Bao, have authored a comprehensive and thoughtful analysis of the residential, retail, and office property sectors in Hong Kong. Sheng Ying presents a vivid and powerful discussion of the Chinese reconstruction planning after the 2008 devastating Great Wenchuan Earthquake. Priya Narayanan and Ashok Hanjagi analyse the urban land transformation in Bangalore from an ecological point of view. Sanjay Rode raise critical questions about drinking water supply in Pune metropolitan region. Ismail Omar, Djurdjani Wardaya and Priyono Nugroho Djjomartono discuss the importance of land rights in providing ways and means for

the improvement and preservation of urban heritage cultural values in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Ismail Syuhaida and Md Yusof Aminah investigates the features and characteristics of infrastructure that is suitable to be provided via private finance initiative, with particular reference to Malaysia's construction industry. Ahmad Rodzi Mahmud and Vini Indriasari present and discuss the application of two greedy algorithms to establish the location of fire stations in Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia. Mastura Jaafar, Abdul-Rashid Abdul-Aziz and Muhammad-Hijas Sahari present the results of a Malaysian survey with the goal to prove the applicance of the social network theory in the housing industry. Khan Rubayet Rahaman and Md. Salauddin make a spatial analysis on the provision of urban public services, with the goal to identify the deficiencies in providing public services in three selected blocks of Khulna City, Bangladesh. In the last paper of this number, Mohammad Shakil Akther, Ishrat Islam and Md Musleh Uddin Hasan present the use of "Citizen Report Card" in the evaluation of the performance of waste management, mosquito control and certification service in some selected wards of Dhaka City.

The selected articles provide a snapshot of the nowadays Asian urbanization issues. We hope that the research problems addressed in this special number of the journal will interest researchers, academics, doctoral students as well as practitioners interested in urban issues.

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