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## Urban Development: Cities in the Global South

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### CHAPTER SUMMARY

Urbanization is one of the most fundamental changes of the contemporary era. Until recently, this demographic, geographic, economic, cultural, and societal transformation, which was linked to industrialization, principally concerned developed countries. Since 2007, more than half of the world's population lives in cities, and urbanization more and more extends to developing countries, where it is characterized by informal economic activities, densely populated poor neighbourhoods known as slums or favelas, and lack of infrastructure and services. In African, Asian, and some Latin American countries, we increasingly talk about the urbanization of poverty.

This chapter examined urbanization in relation to development. In the first part, it presented major trends and patterns of urbanization occurring in developing countries, and reviewed the main factors contributing to the growth of urban populations. The second part of the chapter looked at links between urbanization and development, while the third part discussed these challenges in greater depth, examining the deepening of economic and socio-spatial inequalities, with a focus on shelter. Finally, key actors in urban development and attempts to improve the living conditions of urban dwellers were considered.

### VIDEO RESOURCES

#### Mega Cities – Mega Problem

<http://english.aljazeera.net/programmes/101east/2008/05/200861517015377831.html>

Time 14:46

By the end of this year, over half the world's population will live in urban areas. It is a trend that is set to continue. Some of the fastest growth is occurring in Asia, where mega cities are blossoming, particularly in developing countries. Take Indonesia's capital Jakarta—its population has risen rapidly from 1.2 million in 1960 to 9 million today, and that is counting just legal residents. By including Jakarta's sprawling metropolitan area, the population rises to 23 million. And it is still growing rapidly. Jakarta's popularity is putting huge pressure on the environment. Traffic is gridlocked, air quality is at crisis point, and Jakarta's rivers are choked with human waste and garbage. Poor sanitation also creates serious health threats.

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### **Increasing Rate of Urbanization in Africa**

<http://www.abndigital.com/page/multimedia/video/featured-interviews/963596-Increasing-Rate-of-Urbanisation-in-Africa>

**Time 7:27**

In only five years, the population of Lagos in Nigeria will surpass that of Egypt's Cairo. A UN Habitat report has revealed that Africa is enjoying the fastest rate of urbanization in the world. Joining ABN to discuss the report is Alioune Badiane, Director of Regional Office for Africa and the Arab States for UN Habitat.

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### **Water for African Cities**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YARDkEB-zCk>

**Time 10:36**

Water for African Cities Programme facilitates the adoption of measures to ensure access to environmentally sound water and sanitation service provision to the un-served, as well as improved access for underserved populations of the target cities. Through demonstration projects and capacity building interventions carried out in collaboration with national partners, regional and international financial institutions, the programme supports water supply and sanitation utilities, local governments, NGOs and communities to leverage resources for scaling up and replication at the country level.

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### **Water for African Cities – Mali**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2umoP0E4KSY>

**Time 10:50**

Water for African Cities Programme facilitates the adoption of measures to ensure access to environmentally sound water and sanitation service provision to the un-served, as well as improved access for underserved populations of the target cities. Through demonstration projects and capacity building interventions carried out in collaboration with national partners, regional and international financial institutions, the programme supports water supply and sanitation utilities, local governments, NGOs and communities to leverage resources for scaling up and replication at the country level.

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### **South America floods leave thousands homeless**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MD42AiLo5rs>

**Time 2:23**

Massive flooding has forced tens of thousands of people in four South American countries to take refuge in shelters. Parts of Uruguay, Paraguay, Brazil and Argentina have been affected. The Argentinian President says climate change is partly to blame, and has promised government aid.

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### **Megacities Reflect Growing Urbanization Trend**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=eFboV2m1yuw>

**Time 7:42**

The capital of the South Asian country Bangladesh, Dhaka, has a population that is booming. However, it stands as one of the world's poorest mega-cities. This report comes from a Global Post series about the rise of mega-cities.

## **REVIEW QUESTIONS**

1. Describe what is meant by the “urban crisis” and give several examples.
2. Define a “slum” and discuss why they are common features of urban landscapes in the developing world.
3. Discuss the World Bank’s approach to urban development.
4. What has been the effect of globalization on urban areas?
5. Contrast North American/European urban growth with the experience of developing countries today.
6. Discuss the conception of the decent work.
7. Explain briefly the re-emergence of urban agriculture.

## ANSWER KEY: REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. The term “urban crisis” reflects the contradictory effects of urban population growth. On the one hand, it is often fuelled by the desire for a better life. On the other hand, such growth usually has social, economic, and ecological outcomes that weaken a city’s potential to be a better place to live. Examples of the impact of urban crisis include increasing unemployment when people move to cities to find better jobs; housing shortages and associated problems establishing communal infrastructure; environmental catastrophe; slum growth; urban crime; and vulnerability to globalization. (p. 367)
2. A slum is housing that lacks one or more of durable housing in a safe location, sufficient living space, sufficient, accessible and affordable improved water, sanitation with a reasonably private toilet, secure tenure. The first reason that slums form is that population growth outstrips production of housing for low- and moderate-income families. The second reason is that the government and other urban actors cannot find the means to provide housing for the households mentioned in the first reason. This includes the inability to stimulate private developers, to generate private production of housing, or to plan settlements where informal construction would be accompanied by provision of services and better settlement planning. (pp. 371–372)
3. World Bank policies have reinforced many of the damaging trends in urban development. From the 1970s when the World Bank first included urban areas in its work, its policies have focused on limiting public intervention and instead promoting privatization of land and real estate, promoting free markets for housing, and decreasing assistance for residents. In the 1990s, the World Bank recognized the shortcomings of its approach and has since been shifting towards a local governance and urban planning approach, emphasizing citizen participation, including participatory budgeting. However, their commitment to this rhetoric is questioned by some. (pp. 374–375)
4. There are numerous spatial trends emergent from global forces, including a fracturing and splintering of cities mirrored around the world. This includes the coexistence of slums and homelessness alongside luxury condos and gated communities, the destruction of older, modest and working class neighbourhood to facilitate strategic showcase urban projects, emphasis on forms economic growth that does not create jobs, and resistance to traditional and informal ways of using urban space. There are also inequalities within cities, with a few metropolitan areas that operate as “strategic command centres,” which command and organize financial and economic activities globally, and sites of production of goods are transferred to other cities. Leading cities might occupy some of the more powerful economic activities—housing TNCs, as well as financial and public sector activities and trade and production activities. Meanwhile, export processing zones, industrial estates, and workforce housing compounds are increasing in number in developing countries. States struggle to accommodate these economic activities. The most ecologically destructive activities are increasingly exported to other parts of the world. Increasingly, cities in the Global South are integrating themselves among the fewer, more commanding metropolitan cores—such as Shanghai, Sao Paulo and Singapore, Bangalore, Lagos, and Dhaka. (pp. 368–369)
5. In Europe and North America, urban growth occurred during a period of industrialization and economic growth. Developing country environments are characterized by globalization, economic restructuring, neoliberalism and state transformation, and the impacts of structural adjustment policies. In developing countries, urbanization has been structured and accelerated around colonial relations. Exogenous factors, such as the policies promoted by major international institutions and the impacts of globalization, have also shaped urbanization in developing countries. (p. 377)

6. The ILO has coined the phrase “decent work” in its platform for action, and has pushed—in partnership with local governments, unions, and rights-based groups—to incorporate clauses protecting the health, safety, and dignity of workers into trade agreements and the MDG replacement, the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. (p. 373)
7. Growing food in urban areas is a long-standing practice, from the hanging gardens of Babylon to the present. For many years, however, urban agriculture virtually disappeared from cities throughout the world; restrictions on food production by city managers who feared associated nuisances, the industrialization of food production, and the availability of refrigeration conspired to shift food systems away from local production. Yet, beginning in the 1970s, urban agriculture began to reappear. Small home gardens and urban farms emerged in major cities of Africa, Asia, and Latin America. Community farming also blossomed in some cities of the developed world. To explain the re-emergence of urban agriculture, researchers point to the “economic worsening of the situation of the poor as a consequence of structural adjustment programs,” rapid urbanization, and a lack of inexpensive transport for agricultural products coming from rural areas. For urban households, urban agriculture is a strategy to enhance food security. Indeed, it is “one of the most important factors in improving childhood nutrition, by increasing both access to food and nutritional quality.” Moreover, it can contribute to local economies in terms of jobs and incomes, better management of waste, and improved quality of life. (p. 374)