



# Emerging cities



Since the Cities Summit organized by the United Nations in 1996 in Istanbul, cities have been acknowledged as one of the international community's major challenges in terms of economic and social development, as well as the future of the planet. Indeed, as predicted by demographers, one in two people now live in cities.

Throughout the developing world, cities have very different characteristics: compact in Asia and the Middle East, sprawling in Latin America and rural-urban in Africa. Some have very dynamic economies, while others lack any real engine for growth. This variety nevertheless presents certain parallels, and the aim of this book is to identify their principal characteristics and to offer people the possibility of acting at their own level in the field of their interest.

To produce this book, some of the leading French specialists met as part of an editorial board to propose an overview of knowledge according to 12 themes agreed between them. In order to make these presentations accessible to as many people as possible, as opposed to a limited circle of initiates, the wording of the book was entrusted to a team of journalists, development experts who used everyday language to portray an area that remains the province of specialists. Numerous illustrations are also provided to improve understanding of a process that remains obscure or even worrying for many.

The result is the product of the political will of two French ministries – the ministry in charge of urban issues and its directorate of economic and international affairs, and the ministry of Foreign and European Affairs – along with the commitment of different contributors, including professionals, researchers and experts, who were willing to accept the imperfections inherent in any generalization of specific situations.

The intrinsic risk of such an exercise lies in taking a movement – urbanization – which is by nature global and interdependent, and slicing it up into different approaches. Different people, with their specific cultures and histories, approach cities according to patterns that are deeply rooted in the collective memory, a place filled with dangers for some, and

*A view of the city of Cairo (Egypt).*

**Population of the 24 megacities in 2003**

Developed cities	Estimated population 2003
Tokyo	33 600 000
New York	20 100 000
Osaka / Kyoto / Kobe	17 200 000
Los Angeles	16 900 000
Moscow	13 200 000
Seoul	12 400 000
London	11 380 000
Paris / Ile-de-France	11 130 000
Developing cities	Estimated population 2003
Mexico City	19 650 000
Mumbai	18 300 000
São Paulo	17 900 000
Delhi	13 800 000
Shanghai	13 700 000
Calcutta	13 500 000
Lagos	12 800 000
Karachi	12 500 000
Dhaka	12 400 000
Cairo	12 300 000
Jakarta	12 100 000
Buenos Aires	12 100 000
Rio de Janeiro	10 970 000
Manila	10 950 000
Beijing	10 800 000
Istanbul	10 300 000

with possibilities for others. Typifying cities in this way may appear somewhat simplistic.

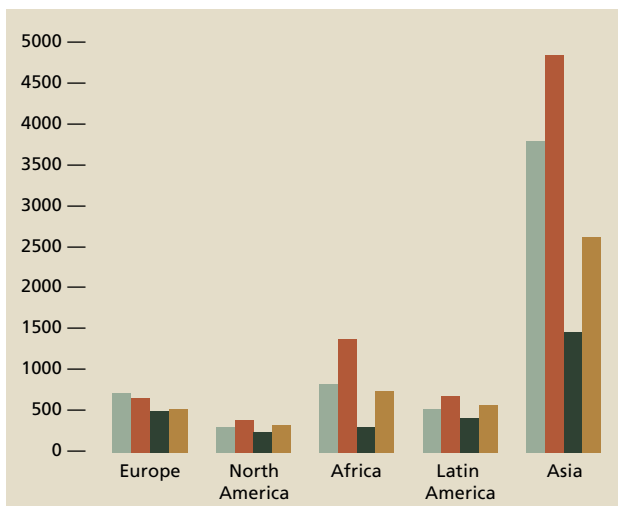
However, disseminating the information available – especially that gathered over the last 50 years by the French “Developing Cities”<sup>1</sup> documentation and information center – to an ever-wider public seems essential. In this respect, selecting 12 thematic presentations is an attempt to make the data now available on the Internet available to a growing number of users, especially in the Urbamet documentary database.

Cities are attracting more and more interest. The media now publish city rankings in terms of standard of living and residential attractiveness. However, this trend only applies to a few of the world's cities, the global cities defined by Saskia Sassen, while the greater part of urbanization concerns smaller cities. Auditing companies draw up financial rankings for cities, whose local governments now constitute special customers for financing organizations. Finally, comparative studies of development in different countries contain a growing number of indicators on how cities function; focusing on human development, they provide a complement to macroeconomic rankings.

The most recent of these developments, the approach based on the governance of countries and cities, questions the position of the local authorities responsible for these cities and their ability to reduce the difficulties their inhabitants encounter, especially the poorest, who are often in the majority. National elections are now won and lost in cities, the core of national political, economic and social elites.

The globalization of the economy and the increase in international migration weigh on all cities in developed countries, but also on regional cities in Southern countries. **New subjects, such as urban security or the impact of cities on the local and global environment, are mobilizing political representatives in all countries and also at the global level.**

Finally, and above all, the real universal urban transition underway, the inevitable and necessary consequence of demographic transition, constitutes one of the main challenges of this century, as reflected by the Millennium Development Goals adopted by the United Nations in 2000.

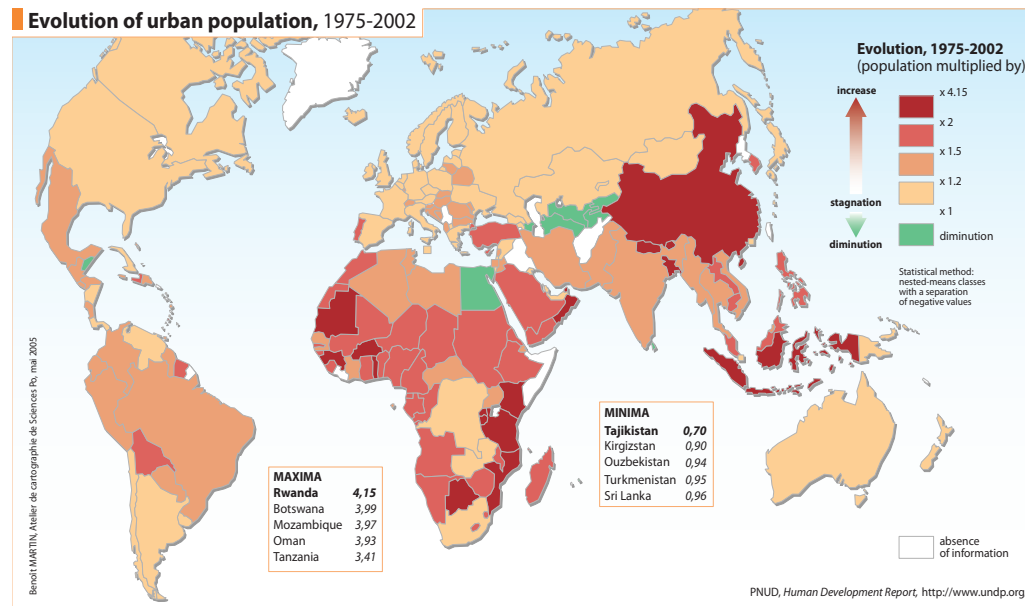


Source: Gilles Antier, 2006.

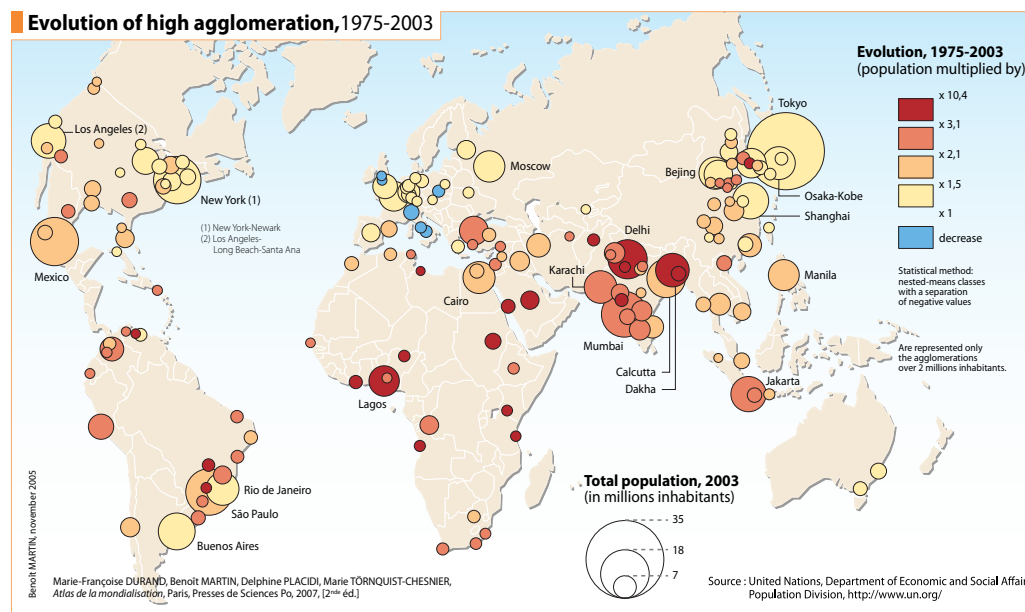
- Population in 2005
- UN estimation of the population in 2030
- Urban population in 2005
- UN estimation of the urban population in 2030

<sup>1</sup> www.isted.com/villes-developpement/accueil\_documentation.htm

**Evolution of urban population, 1975-2002**



**Evolution of high agglomeration, 1975-2003**



**The emergence of a world of cities**

The latest UN estimations<sup>2</sup> reveal considerable growth in the urban population: 3.1 billion (compared to 1 billion in 1960 and 2 billion in 1985), or 50% urban dwellers in 2007. Forecasts based on the model used by the UN (4 billion in 2020, perhaps 5 billion in 2030) remain uncertain and have already overestimated the speed and scope of urban concentration in Southern countries: the estimate of 60% urban dwellers in 2030 thus remains to be seen.

<sup>2</sup> World Urbanization Prospects: the 2005 Revision, UNDESA/Population Division, New York, March 2006.



*Cities and urban areas are expanding more and more, both upwards (densification) and outwards (the "urban sprawl").*

However, there is no doubt that humankind is currently entering a new phase, combining the urban explosion with population growth. The annual growth rate for the urban population is now 1.9%, and the equivalent of a city of 160 000 inhabitants appears every day in the world.

Within this immense urban system, 940 million people are living in major cities – with a population in excess of 2 million people – with just over a third (around 350 million) living in the 24 megacities of over 10 million inhabitants. Two out of three are developing cities, whereas in 1960, only New York and Tokyo counted over 10 million inhabitants.

Today, the urban world is characterized by a dual movement:

- moderate growth in the North since the turn of the 1960s, contrasting with the previous phase of economic dynamism that had lasted since the industrial revolution of the mid-19th century. This slowing is more noticeable in Europe than in North America.
- very high overall growth in the South, also since the 1960s, but differing in pace from region to region: this growth is tending to slow down in Latin America, is particularly fast-paced and high-volume in Asia, and could follow an exponential curve in Africa. This subject is still open to question: in any case, according to the UN the proportion of urban dwellers in Africa will reach 50% by 2030, compared to 84% in Latin America.

**Cities and urban areas are therefore expanding more and more, both upwards (densification) and**



**outwards (the "urban sprawl").** And in the developing world, the more cities expand, the more concentrated young and underprivileged populations become in their outskirts, in insecure housing areas that are poorly covered by transport networks and roads, and rarely covered by water and sanitation networks. This urban sprawl thus makes populations more insecure in terms of access to land and housing. This dramatic land tenure insecurity for tens of millions of people in Southern cities is a leading cause of tension.

*Transport congestion is a growing problem due to the fact that the level of car ownership is escalating, the road system is too limited and the most diverse range of ve-*



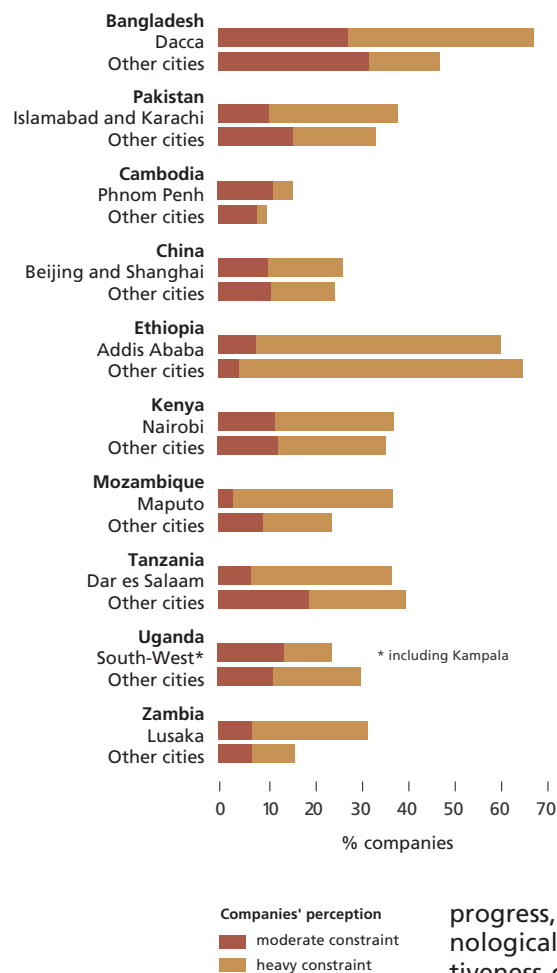
*Transport congestion is a growing problem due to the fact that the level of car ownership is escalating, the road system is too limited and the most diverse range of vehicles are competing on these roads.*

hicles are competing on these roads. A sprawling city means people are quickly obliged to own private vehicles (cars, or increasingly motorbikes), especially since this expansion also makes it difficult to run a city public transport network. Less profitable and less operational, this transport then in turn encourages exponential growth in private vehicles. The number of vehicles in Beijing has thus increased seven-fold in 13 years, while in the Ile-de-France region in France, it has increased only 2.7-fold in almost 40 years.

Air and noise pollution consequently increase. Many forms of environmental damage occur in Southern cities, especially due to rising car ownership levels and the poor quality of vehicles, fuel, checks and standards. The insecurity of living conditions in the suburbs also leads to further destruction of the urban environment: a lack of improved access to drinking water, and especially a lack of improved sanitation and waste treatment, resulting in the pollution of rivers and water tables.

This brings us to a fourth problem: the growing pressure of hazards, especially those of a sanitary nature (SARS, heatwaves, etc.), but also natural disasters (more and more hurricanes and floods linked to climate change), industrial, technological and even terrorist threats. However, it may be said that one has more chance of being helped in city or urban areas than in isolated rural areas, as shown after the earthquake in north-eastern Pakistan in late 2005.

The current geopolitical, environmental and socio-economic context contributes to a clear feeling that



*Access to land is far more than just an element of social justice. If formal businesses are to establish themselves in cities, they must be able to do so in a simple, legal and lasting manner. In many developing cities, this access is seen as a heavy constraint by entrepreneurs.*

Source: Cities Alliance, 2006.

cities and urban development are in crisis: pollution, urban violence attacks and different pressures that the public authorities are increasingly struggling to control (see transport, housing and urban services), everything contributes to an impression of crisis, especially in Southern cities. It is perhaps better to speak of diverse tensions: some are specific to these cities (such as land tenure insecurity and access to water and sanitation), while others are shared by Northern cities (traffic congestion and its environmental impact, but also increasing hazards).

However, at the same time, the current state of development clearly shows that cities and urban areas are its principal engine: the provision of facilities and infrastructure facilitates mobility and access to culture, and access to basic services is broader in cities, as are sources of income. Even more than before, all the elements are combined to make the urban environment a unique place for innovation and

progress, whether cultural, socio-economic or technological. Indeed, cities demonstrate their inventiveness on a daily basis. The situation of Southern cities makes this challenge even more difficult, and it is therefore imperative to understand their local and global workings in order to attempt to improve them.

Although the urban issue is now on the international political agenda, as was housing at the beginning of the industrial era, a great deal of progress remains to be made in order to define its framework. This book, along with many others, both existing and forthcoming, attempts to provide insights enabling those who wish to act to do so in better conditions than before.

Let us hope that on the basis of this book, new initiatives will be taken towards an ever better understanding of the concept of developing cities, for which the resulting knowledge and collective action are only just beginning. ■

