

CHAPTER 3

Diversity of Urbanizing Situations¹

The crisis in the provision of shelter in most developing countries today is the product of a number of factors. These include, in particular, the rapid rate of population increase throughout the Third World. However, as long as most people remained in rural areas, the problem of their shelter provision, though serious, was not critical. The crisis situation has arisen as a result of the massive rural-to-urban migration of large numbers of relatively poor individuals, with low educational attainment and scanty technical skill. The convergence of so many streams of migrants on a limited number of urban centres has forced the problem to the forefront of public consciousness and has made the urbanization process one of the most potent factors affecting both the efficiency of shelter provision and the general environmental conditions in developing countries today.

THE CONCEPT OF URBAN STABILITY

As a generalization on a continental scale, the preceding description has considerable validity. However, the position differs greatly from one country to another. In reviewing the situation, it is important to consider the likely trend, and indeed the potential for a worsening of existing conditions. A useful concept in this regard is that of *urban stability*. This refers to *the potential capacity of a country to continue to urbanize*, given the size of its population, its level of economic development, the pattern of demographic growth, and the current balance between rural and urban residence. A relatively industrialized country such as Argentina, with a relatively high per capita income, low birth rate and a high percentage of its population already urbanized, can be termed 'stable', whereas a country like Upper Volta with low per capita income, high birth rate and a high proportion of its population still rural would be classed as 'very unstable'.

The aim of this chapter is, therefore, to present a classification of Asian, African, and Latin American countries according to their levels of urban stability. The intention is to emphasize that the level of urban stability in a country is not independent of its socio-economic situation.

It is very hard to make generalizations that are valid for the three continents due to the considerable variation that exists in the characteristics of the various countries. Nonetheless, it can be said that urban centres in Latin America, Asia and Africa present with different degrees of intensity certain common characteristics such as the low average income of their inhabitants (aggravated by an inequitable income distribution in each country), incipient industrialization, unemployment and under-employment, illiteracy, food shortage and inadequate access to housing and other social services.

The data used have been obtained from various United Nations documents and refer to the year 1970. The indexes derived from these data have been analysed separately for each of the three continents due to their distinctive characteristics. The typology presented here assumes that urbanization takes place within the political and administrative boundaries of each country; that is, international migration is regarded as having no significant impact on the national urbanization process and urbanization, from the demographic point of view, is a consequence only of the natural growth of urban population and of internal migration.

The typology, however, has some limitations. One is the lack of an indicator reflecting, for different dates, the incidence of internal migrations on the urbanization process. The other is the absence of an indicator showing the distribution of the internal consumption of some essential services such as education and health care. In spite of this, the typology of levels of urban stability has the advantage of allowing not only a classification of the countries according to their present degrees of urbanization but also the incorporation of the dynamic factor of prospective urban growth. This last indicator reflects a projection up to 1985 of the behaviour during earlier decades of the two essential elements of urban growth, namely natural increase and migrations from the countryside to the cities.

URBAN STABILITY INDICATORS

Urban stability has been measured by means of four indicators:

- (1) the percentage of rural population in 1970;
- (2) the annual growth rate of rural population in 1970 (a measure of the potential contribution of rural areas to the future growth of the urban population, on the assumption that migrations towards the cities will continue);
- (3) the annual growth rate of urban population in 1970; and
- (4) the difference between the annual growth rate of the urban population in 1985 and in 1970, which reflects the effect of both natural increase within cities and the impact of migration to them.²

These indicators were transformed into a single measure of urban stability for each country using the following method. The range of values, (i.e. the difference between the lowest and highest values) of each of the four indicators, irrespective of the continent, was identified. This range was divided into ten deciles and the deciles ranked from 1 to 10 in order of size. New numerical values for each country based on its position on the decile scale were then assigned for each of the indicators. The addition of the four individual decile values for each country yielded a new value. The range of these values was ascertained and then divided into quartiles. The countries falling in the lowest quartile are classified as stable (I); similarly the others are classified as fairly stable (II), unstable (III) and very unstable (IV).

This method was used for all countries in the three continents (Tables 3.1, 3.2, 3.3) in order to enable comparisons between countries on different continents in terms of their level of urban stability.

Table 3.4 shows the distribution of countries in Latin America, Asia and Africa on the basis of this classification. Very few countries in the three continental regions can be said to have reached a situation of urban stability. These countries include,

TABLE 3.1 Latin America. Classification of Countries in Four Groups According to Their Levels of Urban Stability

Country	Proportion of rural population, 1970 (1)	Annual growth of urban population, 1970 (2)	Annual growth rate of rural population, 1970 (3)	Difference between predicted 1985 and actual 1970 urban population growth rate (4)	Index of urban stability (1) + (2) + (3) + (4) (5)	Group according to level of urban stability (6)
Haiti	9	6	8	9	32	IV
Honduras	8	7	10	7	32	
Costa Rica	6	6	10	7	29	III
El Salvador	6	5	9	9	29	
Paraguay	6	5	10	7	28	
Guatemala	7	4	9	7	27	
Nicaragua	6	5	8	8	27	
Ecuador	6	6	9	6	27	
Dominican Republic	6	8	8	5	27	
Panama	5	6	8	7	26	
Bolivia	7	4	7	7	25	
Mexico	4	6	8	5	23	
Peru	4	4	8	6	22	II
Colombia	3	7	6	3	19	
Brazil	4	6	5	4	19	
Jamaica	6	6	6	1	19	
Cuba	4	2	6	6	18	
Venezuela	2	6	5	2	15	
Trinidad	4	5	4	1	14	I
Chile	1	3	3	4	11	
Uruguay	1	1	1	5	8	
Argentina	1	1	1	4	7	

Notes: (1) Values in columns 1 to 4 are in deciles, as explained in the text.

(2) The following countries in the region are omitted from the analysis: Puerto Rico, Guyana, Surinam, French Guinea, British Honduras (Belize), Canal Zone, Windward Islands, Martinique, Guadeloupe, Barbados, Netherlands Antilles, Leeward Islands, Bahamas, Virgin Islands, Cayman Islands, Turks and Caicos Islands.

TABLE 3.2 Asia. Classification of Countries in Four Groups According to Their Levels of Urban Stability

Country	Proportion of rural population, 1970 (1)	Annual growth of urban population, 1970 (2)	Annual growth rate of rural population, 1970 (3)	Difference between predicted 1985 and actual 1970 urban population growth rate (4)	Index of urban stability (1) + (2) + (3) + (4) (5)	Group according to level of urban stability (6)
Southern Arab Countries	9	9	9	7	34	
Cambodia	9	6	9	7	31	
Nepal	10	6	8	7	31	
Southeast Asia	9	8	8	6	31	
Pakistan	9	6	10	6	31	IV
Saudi Arabia	8	9	8	6	31	
Middle South Asia	10	5	8	7	30	
Afghanistan	10	4	9	7	30	
Thailand	9	6	10	5	30	
Northern Arab Countries	1	10	9	9	29	
Philippines	7	6	9	7	29	
Syria	7	6	8	8	29	
Indonesia	9	5	9	5	28	
Democratic Republic of Viet Nam	9	6	7	5	27	
Jordan	5	5	9	8	27	
Mongolia	9	6	8	4	27	
Burma	9	4	8	6	27	
Iraq	5	6	8	7	26	III
India	8	5	8	5	26	
Iran	6	6	8	6	26	
Sri Lanka	8	4	8	5	25	
Turkey	7	8	7	3	25	
People's Republic of China	8	6	6	4	24	
Republic of Viet Nam	8	5	7	4	24	
Lebanon	6	8	7	3	24	
Democratic Republic of Korea	6	8	6	3	23	
Republic of Korea	6	7	6	3	22	
West Malaysia	5	7	5	3	20	II
Taiwan	3	3	5	4	15	
Cyprus	5	3	3	3	14	
Israel	1	2	6	3	12	I
Japan	2	1	1	3	7	

Notes: (1) 'Northern Arab Countries' means Gaza Strip and Kuwait. 'Southern Arab Countries' means Yemen, Southern Yemen, Muscat and Oman, Bahrain, Trucial Oman, Qatar. 'Southeast Asia' means East Malaysia, Laos, Portuguese Timor, Brunei. 'Middle South Asia' means Bhutan, Sikkim, Maldives Islands.

(2) Values in columns 1 to 4 are deciles, as explained in the text.

(3) The following countries in the region are omitted from the analysis: Hong Kong, Singapore, Ryuku Islands.

TABLE 3.3 Africa. Classification of Countries in Four Groups According to Their Levels of Urban Stability

Country	Proportion of rural population, 1970 (1)	Annual growth of urban population, 1970 (2)	Annual growth rate of rural population, 1970 (3)	Difference between predicted 1985 and actual 1970 urban population growth rate (4)	Index of urban stability (1) + (2) + (3) + (4) (5)	Group according to level of urban stability (6)
Uganda	10	10	9	8	37	
Kenya	10	9	9	8	36	
Tanzania	10	8	9	9	36	
Other West Africa	10	9	8	8	35	
Other Southern Africa	10	9	7	8	34	
Sudan	10	5	10	8	33	
Rhodesia	8	10	9	6	33	
Mali	10	5	8	9	32	
Ethiopia	10	5	8	9	32	
Madagascar	9	6	9	8	32	IV
Democratic Republic of Congo	9	8	7	8	32	
Zambia	8	9	8	7	32	
Cameroon	9	8	7	8	32	
Other East Africa	10	5	8	9	32	
Other Middle Africa	9	7	7	8	31	
Libya	8	6	9	8	31	
Angola	9	7	7	8	31	
Nigeria	8	6	8	8	30	
Ivory Coast	8	8	7	7	30	
Sierra Leone	9	4	8	9	30	
Somalia	8	3	8	10	29	
Ghana	7	8	8	6	29	
Morocco	6	7	9	6	28	
Senegal	8	4	8	8	28	III
Algeria	5	8	7	6	26	
Tunisia	5	5	8	7	25	
Egypt	5	5	8	6	24	
South Africa	4	3	7	8	22	
Mauritius	5	3	8	6	22	II
—	—	—	—	—	—	I

Notes: (1) 'Other East Africa' means Mozambique, Malawi, Rwanda, Burundi, Réunion, Comoro Islands, French Territory of the Afars and Issas, Seychelles, British Indian Ocean Territory. 'Other West Africa' means Upper Volta, Guinea, Niger, Dahomey, Togo, Liberia, Mauritania, Portuguese Guinea, Gambia, Cape Verde Islands, St. Helena. 'Other Middle Africa' means Chad, Central African Republic, People's Republic of the Congo (Brazzaville), Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Sao Tomé and Principe. 'Other Southern Africa' means Lesotho, Namibia, Botswana, Swaziland, French Southern and Antarctic Territories.

(2) Values in columns 1 to 4 are deciles, as explained in the text.

(3) The following countries in the region are omitted from the analysis: Spanish North Africa, Spanish Sahara, Ifni.

TABLE 3.4 Categories of Urban Stability

	Latin America	Asia	Africa
I	Chile Uruguay Argentina Trinidad	Israel Japan Cyprus	
II	Venezuela Cuba Brazil Colombia Peru Jamaica	Taiwan Republic of Korea West Malaysia	South Africa Mauritius
III	Mexico Bolivia Panama Dominican Republic Ecuador Paraguay Nicaragua Guatemala El Salvador Costa Rica	Mongolia Democratic Republic of Korea Lebanon Turkey Republic of Viet Nam People's Republic of China Iran Sri Lanka India Democratic Republic of Viet Nam Iraq Jordan Indonesia Syria Burma Northern Arab Countries	Egypt Algeria Tunisia Morocco Senegal Somalia Ghana
IV	Honduras Haiti	Thailand Afghanistan Middle South Asia Saudi Arabia Pakistan Southeast Asia Nepal Cambodia Southern Arab Countries	Sierra Leone Nigeria Ivory Coast Cameroon Angola Libya Zambia Democratic Republic of Congo (Zaire) Rhodesia Other Southern Africa Ethiopia Mali Madagascar Other West Africa Sudan Other East Africa Tanzania Kenya Uganda Other Middle Africa

in Latin America, only Argentina, Chile, Uruguay and Trinidad and, in Asia, Cyprus, Israel and Japan. With the exception of Japan (which in any case is no longer considered a developing country) and Argentina, all the other countries in this class are relatively small. The total population (excluding Japan) is only about 40 million, about 2 per cent of the population of developing areas. In these countries, the rural population accounts for no more than 25 per cent of the total and its rate of growth is very small, or in a number of cases is actually declining, so that the source of rural-urban migration can be thought of as already drying up.

Eleven countries are classed as *fairly stable*, six in Latin America, three in Asia and two in Africa. Their total population represents less than 10 per cent of the population of the Third World (excluding China). In this category of countries, rural populations now account for no more than half the total populations and their rate of growth is slowing down to less than 1 per cent per annum. A few of these countries, notably Cyprus, already have declining rural populations, although a few others, notably those in Africa, have rates of growth of rural population over 1 per cent per annum.

Countries with *stable* and *fairly stable* urbanizing situations account for two-thirds the total population of Latin America. In other words, this is a continent where the urbanization process is very advanced and where the problem of shelter provision is already acute. These are countries where solutions are urgently needed, but in which there is less prospect of future massive city growth caused by rural-urban migration.

By contrast, the category of countries with *unstable* urbanizing situations is dominated by Asia. These are countries where the rural-urban migration stream is in full spate. The proportion of rural population is still considerable — generally between 60 and 80 per cent — and its rate of growth is invariably higher than 1 per cent per annum. The annual growth rate of urban areas is generally between 4 and 5 per cent per annum. In other words, these are countries where the urban population is likely to double every two decades for some time to come. Since this category contains some 54 per cent of the total population of Third World countries (excluding China) its unstable urban situation has alarming implications for shelter provision. The position in India, especially in some of its metropolitan centres like Calcutta, has already hit the world's headlines. Yet it is important to remember that over 75 per cent of the Indian population is still rural. If a significant proportion of these people were to join the cityward movement in the foreseeable future, the problem of providing adequate shelter, already virtually unmanageable, would become completely impossible by present methods.

The group of countries with a *very unstable* urbanization situation includes only Honduras and Haiti in Latin America but the great majority of African and a substantial number of Asian countries. In all these countries the rural population still forms the largest proportion of the population, generally over 80 per cent and in a number of them it is over 90 per cent. The rate of growth of this rural population is also high (usually over 2 per cent per annum) and growth of the urban population is also very considerable, varying between 5 and 7 per cent. These are countries where the urbanization process is in its initial phase; because of the small population base in the cities the rate of growth already appears excessive. However, the main problems of these countries, in terms of shelter provision, are still in the future and the temptation to continue to emphasize unrealistic approaches to their

solution is great. Although the position is likely to change rapidly, these countries do have an opportunity to prepare in a meaningful way for the future.

NOTES

1. The analysis presented in this chapter is developed in much more detail in Jorge E. Hardoy, 'Un ensayo de interpretación del proceso de urbanización en América Latina', in Ramiro Cardona G. (ed.); *América Latina: Distribución espacial de la población*, Bogotá, Corporación Central Regional de Población, 1975, pp 39-99; and Jorge E. Hardoy, 'Notes on the problems of human settlements and the environment in Africa, Asia and Latin America', a paper presented to the SCOPE-UNEP Symposium on Environmental Sciences in Developing Countries, Nairobi, February 11-23, 1974.
2. The statistical source for each of these indicators is the same, viz., United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division (1970), 'Urban and Rural Population: Individual Countries, 1950-1985, and Regions and Major Areas 1950-2000', ESA/P/UP.33/Rev.1, New York.