

POPULATION, URBANIZATION AND MIGRATION

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Summary

The process of urbanization is rather recent since it occurred mainly from the 20th century onwards. But it is a radical change in civilization ; by the beginning of the 21st century, the majority of the population of the world will be urban. Gigantic and congested megacities are growing in all continents, but the most important feature is the rapid spurt in developing countries ; huge conurbations raise special management problems and tend to absorb the substance of poorer regions, thus aggravating natural imbalances. Internal migration is only one facet of the move of people : with the growing demographic imbalances, the fall in transport price and the era of information technologies, millions of people are in search of opportunities outside their country.

1. Introduction

Urban growth is one of the major characteristics of the modern era. Big agglomerations were until recently only located in the European sphere and old civilizations of Asia (China, India and Japan).

2. Two centuries of urbanization, 1800-2000

Before the XVIIIth century, no city had reached the threshold of one million inhabitants, except Roma during the Antiquity : the population had culminated at 1.3 million. In 1800, there is only one city with a population above 1 million : Beijing ; in

1900, there are fifteen. Table 1 provides the list of the ten largest cities in the world in 1800, and 1900, and 2000, with the corresponding estimated population.

| | 1800 | | 1900 | | 2000 |
|-------------------|-------|--------------|-------|----------------|--------|
| 1. Beijing | 1 100 | London | 6 480 | Tokyo-Yokohama | 26 400 |
| 2. London | 861 | New York | 4 242 | Mexico | 17 900 |
| 3. Canton | 800 | Paris | 3 330 | Sao Paolo | 17 500 |
| 4. Constantinople | 570 | Berlin | 2 424 | Bombay | 17 500 |
| 5. Paris | 547 | Chicago | 1 717 | New York | 16 600 |
| 6. Hang-Tcheou | 500 | Vienna | 1 662 | Shanghai | 12 900 |
| 7. Edo | 492 | Tokyo | 1 497 | Calcutta | 12 700 |
| 8. Naples | 430 | Petersbourg | 1 439 | Buenos Aires | 12 400 |
| 9. Sou-Tcheou | 392 | Philadelphia | 1 418 | Rio de Janeiro | 10 500 |
| 10. Osaka | 380 | Manchester | 1 255 | Seoul | 9 900 |

Table 1 : Population of the 10 biggest cities, in thousands inhabitants

In 1800, the ranking of big cities reflects the demographic hierarchy. Among the ten most populated cities, four are Chinese (Beijing, Canton, Hang-Tcheou and Sou-Tcheou). After a period of political trouble, China under the Qing dynasty experiences a long period of peace and of demographic expansion. In 1800, Beijing is the first city after Roma (under the peak of the Roman empire) to have exceeded the number of 1 million inhabitants ; Beijing is then number one in the world ; Constantinople had been surpassed and was still in decay. London and Paris are then emerging (second and fifth rank, respectively). But the urban tradition of Japan is manifest in this world ranking, since Edo (Tokyo) begins the 19th century with a population of half a million, close to that of Paris, and Osaka is among the top ten.

In 1900 , the rise of the European world is clear ; among the 10 top cities, 9 belong to the European sphere, whatever the side of the Atlantic (Europe proper, USA). The four largest metropolitan areas of China (Beijing, Canton, Hang-Tcheou, Sou-Tcheou) have disappeared from the list, thus confirming the decline of the chinese empire. Other regression : that the above-mentioned Constantinople. On the contrary, cities like London or Paris extend at an accelerated speed : their population is multiplied by 7 or 8 between 1800 and 1900. The London metropolitan area has 6.5 million inhabitants, that is more than the total population of countries such as Sweden or Netherlands. The growth of cities like Berlin or New York is even more spectacular. Thus, in 1800, New York, with its 63 000 inhabitants did not have the dimension of a capital city but of a simple borough ; one century later, its population exceeds 4 million. Among the top ten metropolises of the world, only one -Tokyo- is located outside the sphere of European peopling.

By the end of the XXth century, the population of the largest metropolises is close to 20 million inhabitants. Tokyo has still expanded to the point that it has become the most gigantic urban concentration of the earth, with 5 million inhabitants more than New York city. New York, which had for a long time been number one, is now only number four. Whereas in 1900, among the ten largest urban areas only one was outside the European sphere, the present situation is totally reversed, since only one (precisely New

York) belongs to the European world. The nine largest agglomerations are either Asian (Tokyo, Shanghai, Calcutta, Seoul, and Bombay) or Latin American (Mexico, Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro). Buenos Aires which was still a village at the beginning of the XIXth century was number six by 1998, with a total population of 11 million. However, the most explosive growth is that of Seoul where the population has increased tenfold during the last half-century. Sub-saharan Africa has no urban tradition ; it is only at the very beginning of its catching up process in terms of urbanization.

3. About 2.8 billion city dwellers in 2000

In 1900, only 10 % of the population of the world was living in towns, in 1950, it was 29 % and by 2000, 47 %. The urban population of the world followed an impressive path : 160 million in 1900, 735 million in 1950, 2,8 billion in 2000.

The urban inflation is a universal phenomenon ; it is very rapid in Africa where the size of certain cities tend to double every decade : this is the combination of the population explosion and of an intense rural outmigration. In 1950, in almost every country of sub-saharan Africa, the share of the urban population was below 25 % ; in 1985, this situation was still prevailing in only one third of the countries and seven nations had a majority of city-dwellers. In Latin America, by contrast, urbanization is rather ancient and advanced ; it peaked during the first half of the 20th century ; the urban population is still a minority in very few cases among the poorest countries of Central America and the Caribbeans (Guatemala, Honduras, Haïti). In the most populated countries, the percentage of urban population is similar to that of the developed nations of the West (above 75 %).

The situation in Asia is radically different. In Pakistan, for example, 2/3 of the inhabitants are rural ; in India, China and Indonesia, 3/4 ; in Bangladesh, above 4/5. Rural masses are largely predominant ; the vast majority of people still live in villages. Urban concentrations are limited to a few areas of the Middle East and of the industrial Eastern Asia (Japan, Taiwan, Korea). It seems that high rural densities limit isolation and thus prevent excessive urbanization.

4. The emergence of megacities

The urban-dwellers are gradually more and more concentrated in gigantic agglomerations. In 1900, the number of urban metropolises with at least one million inhabitants was 17 ; nearly all of them were located inside the European world, whether in Europe proper (London, Paris, Berlin), in Russia (St Petersburg, Moscow) or in the North American offshoot (New York, Chicago, Philadelphia). The only exceptions are a few cases related to an old history of centralism and of light industry, which are characteristic of thousand-year-old Asia with heavy human densities : Tokyo, Beijing, Calcutta.

Half a century after, by 1950, the urban landscape had deeply changed. The largest urban agglomerations are indeed still in the European sphere, but Tokyo has progressed from the 7th to the 4th position ; and the best symbol of the Western decline is the

relative fall of both Paris from the 3^d to the 6th rank (between Shanghai and Buenos Aires), and of London : number one in 1900, number eleven in 1990.

5. Cities and Slums in the third world

In Latin America and even more in Africa, where the drift away from the land is sudden, the urban crisis is deep. The pace of urban development is two to three times faster than that of population growth ; urbanization did not follow the speed of urbanization and now there is an aggravating factor : the acceleration of technical progress and of globalization tends from now on to limit the capacity to create enough new jobs, just when the school and university system is pouring millions of graduates on the labor market. Hence, a growing frustration which feeds political instability. Among the 33 agglomerations with more than 5 million in 1990, 22 are in the developing world ; cities of the poorest countries tend to become the largest in the world. Due to its excessive and anarchic growth, this urban pressure implies an explosion of slums and shanty towns, an overloading of infrastructure and an aggravation of social plagues like unemployment, crime, insecurity, drug abuse, etc.

6. A further proliferation of megapolises: recent past and future

One of the most striking features of urban growth is the formation of mega-cities, namely in the less developed world. According to the U.N. definition, mega-cities are towns with at least 8 million inhabitants. The growth of big metropolitan areas is a new phenomenon which occurred during the last half century. In 1950, only two cities (New York and London) were in this category ; by 1990, the number of megapolises was 11 : three were located in Latin America (Sao Paulo, Buenos Aires and Rio de Janeiro), two in Northern America (New York and Los Angeles) two in Europe (the same as above : London and Paris) and four in Eastern Asia (Tokyo, Shanghai, Osaka and Beijing). In 1995, 16 megacities among a world total of 22 are in the less developed countries (twelve in Asia, four in Latin America and, two in Africa : Cairo and Lagos). According to the U.N. population prospects, by the year 2015, the number of mega-cities will have further increased to a total of 33 ; among them, 27 (that is 82 %) will be in the third world and only 6 in the more developed countries ; the vast majority of these megapolises (21 out of 33, that is approximately two thirds) will be in Asia.

However, the meaning of hyper urbanization varies from continent to continent and from country to country ; demographic profile, nature of economic activity, type of housing, quality of infrastructure, rate of growth, history of population differ. For example, the cities of Africa have no past, and they are suddenly flooded with massive and continuous inflows of poor rural migrants (mostly peasants) and also expanding through high natural increase.

Their speed of growth is approximately double the world average, but the context is very fragile. In Eastern Asia, where human densities are extremely high, huge conurbations-sometimes covering very wide areas and incorporating a network of surrounding villages-have appeared, thanks to the improvement in economic conditions. In the Indian sub-continent, megapolises like Bombay, Calcutta, Delhi, Dacca or Karachi tend to expand under the impact of rural poverty and excess fertility. In Latin

America, the picture is somewhat different : urbanisation took place much earlier and slowed down since the 1980s ; structural adjustment policies seem to have played a key role in this reversal (BRENNAN, 1997).

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Biographical Sketch

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