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Urban Research in Asia

Problems, Priorities, and Prospects

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Yue-man Yeung

Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies
The Chinese University of Hong Kong
Shatin, New Territories
Hong Kong

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Director : Yeung Yue-man, PhD(*Chic.*), Professor of Geography
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About the author

Yue-man Yeung is the Director of the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies and Professor of Geography at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

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Abstract

Urbanization has been a powerful and persistent factor that has contributed to development and modernization in postwar Asia. This paper reviews salient regional urban trends in Asia since 1970. Urban research problems over time are highlighted and research priorities addressed, with a brief survey of research institutions. It concludes with a tentative urban research agenda for the 1990s.

I. Introduction

The objective of this overview is twofold. First, it attempts to draw together some of the common threads in the four chapters on Asia that follow and highlights some of the more salient features. Second, it paints on a larger canvas a panorama in which urban research in this exceptionally large and heterogenous continent may be viewed. In both cases, setting the four country and sub-regional chapters in a regional context aids comparison and easier understanding.

The four Asian chapters consist of two country studies (China and Indonesia) and two sub-regional studies (India and Nepal, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka). The justification for both approaches is easy to find as China, Indonesia, India, and Bangladesh are four of the six countries with a population of over 100 million, with Japan and Pakistan being the remaining "population giants" in Asia. These six countries, in fact, account for four-fifths of Asia's total population and two-thirds of its urban population. Consequently, there is a measure of representativeness in the studies

undertaken, covering Eastern, South-eastern, and Southern Asia, leaving out only Western Asia.[1] By the sheer size of the urban population involved, each of the studies can claim distinctiveness. Yet, as later chapters will show, the similarities of the urban experience and paths to amelioration or solution are strikingly similar.

This chapter is divided into four major sections. It first reviews some of the salient regional urban trends and patterns in Asia over the past two decades, with projection to the year 2000. Then, urban research problems as they evolved since the 1960s are highlighted and traced. The third section deals with the critical questions of research priorities and the setting of the research agenda. What are some of the premier research institutions? Is there any link between research results and policy intervention? Finally, the chapter concludes with a tentative perspective of what the urban research agenda in the 1990s might appear to be and what efforts are being mobilized, particularly at the international level, towards shaping a more sustainable and equitable urban future for Asia.

II. Trends and Patterns

In a global context, Asia has been a rapidly urbanizing continent. Between 1970 and 1990, the world's urban population was augmented by 1,038 million, of which Asia accounted for 589 million, or 56%. By the end of the century, one in two urban dwellers in the world will be domiciled in Asia. It is also noteworthy that, by that time and for the first time in human history, more people in the world will be living in cities than the countryside. To be exact, it has been forecast that by year 2000 51.1% of the world's population will be living in urban place; the figure for Asia will be 42.7% (see Table 1).

Within Asia, there are considerable intra-regional differences in both the size of the urban population in individual countries

Table 1 Asia's Urban Population, 1970-2000

	1970		1980		1990		2000	
	Population ('000s)	%	Population ('000s)	%	Population ('000s)	%	Population ('000s)	%
World	1,352,449	36.6	1,757,265	39.5	2,390,170	45.2	3,197,679	51.1
Asia	481,104	22.9	687,336	26.3	1,070,375	34.4	1,585,438	42.7
Eastern Asia	243,952	24.7	322,215	27.4	526,784	39.4	776,832	51.4
China	144,537	17.4	195,370	19.6	380,803	33.4	614,514	47.3
Hong Kong	3,534	89.7	4,614	91.6	5,507	94.1	6,065	95.7
Japan	74,294	71.2	88,995	76.2	95,040	77.0	99,782	77.7
Korea	20,784	44.7	32,064	56.9	43,817	67.9	54,253	74.8
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	7,789	53.3	10,387	56.9	13,023	59.8	16,479	63.1
Republic of Korea	12,995	40.7	21,678	56.9	30,794	72.0	37,773	81.4
Macau	238	97.0	317	98.2	473	98.7	649	98.9
Mongolia	556	45.1	854	51.3	1,145	52.3	1,569	55.1
South-eastern Asia	57,894	20.2	86,571	24.0	132,824	29.9	197,214	36.9
Brunei Darussalam	80	61.7	111	59.9	153	57.7	196	59.0
Cambodia	812	11.7	659	10.3	959	11.6	1,460	14.5
East Timor	62	10.3	63	10.9	97	13.1	157	17.9
Indonesia	20,534	17.1	33,514	22.2	56,293	30.5	86,401	39.5

Table 1 (Continued)

Lao People's Democratic Republic	261	9.6	431	13.4	770	18.6	1,372	25.1
Malaysia	2,929	27.0	4,769	34.6	7,701	43.0	11,255	51.2
Myanmar	6,190	22.8	8,108	24.0	10,316	24.8	14,523	28.4
Philippines	12,380	33.0	18,064	37.4	26,602	42.6	37,775	48.8
Singapore	2,075	100.0	2,414	100.0	2,723	100.0	2,997	100.0
Thailand	4,750	13.3	8,088	17.3	12,609	22.6	18,738	29.4
Viet Nam	7,820	18.3	10,350	19.3	14,600	21.9	22,340	27.1
Southern Asia	147,441	19.5	218,757	23.1	328,157	27.3	490,473	32.8
Afghanistan	1,503	11.0	2,514	15.6	3,021	18.2	5,884	22.2
Bangladesh	5,074	7.6	9,968	11.3	19,005	16.4	34,548	22.9
Bhutan	32	3.1	49	3.9	81	5.3	149	7.8
India	109,616	19.8	158,851	23.1	230,269	27.0	336,542	32.3
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	11,661	41.0	19,291	49.6	30,953	56.7	43,621	63.4
Maldives	16	13.5	35	22.3	63	29.4	106	37.5
Nepal	450	3.9	909	6.1	1,837	9.6	3,446	14.3
Pakistan	16,354	24.9	23,946	28.1	39,250	32.0	61,477	37.9
Sri Lanka	2,736	21.9	3,196	21.6	3,679	21.4	4,701	24.2
Western Asia	31,817	43.2	50,794	51.5	82,609	62.7	120,920	70.3
Bahrain	173	78.7	279	80.5	428	83.0	583	85.4

Table 1 (Continued)

Cyprus	251	40.8	291	46.3	370	52.8	455	59.7
Democratic Yemen	481	32.1	687	36.9	1,078	43.3	1,741	50.8
Gaza Strip (Palestine)	287	82.1	397	90.2	554	93.6	721	94.9
Iraq	5,254	56.2	8,799	66.2	13,488	71.3	19,843	75.3
Israel	2,504	84.2	3,435	88.6	4,214	91.6	4,973	93.5
Jordan	1,162	50.5	1,753	60.0	2,725	68.0	4,105	73.9
Kuwait	579	77.8	1,240	90.2	1,949	95.6	2,565	97.2
Lebanon	1,466	59.4	2,016	75.5	2,261	83.7	2,895	87.0
Oman	33	5.1	72	7.3	159	10.6	329	15.1
Qatar	89	80.3	197	86.1	329	89.5	456	91.3
Saudi Arabia	2,796	48.7	6,265	66.8	10,928	77.3	16,933	81.8
Syrian Arab Republic	2,713	43.3	4,110	46.7	6,321	50.4	9,941	55.8
Turkey	13,571	38.4	19,455	43.8	34,274	61.3	49,445	74.0
United Arab Emirates	94	42.3	824	81.2	1,236	77.8	1,518	77.8
Yemen	364	7.5	970	15.3	2,295	25.0	4,418	33.4

Source: United Nations (1991, 106-28), *World Urbanization Prospects 1990.*

and the level of urbanization. Western Asia, for example, is notable for its overall high level of urbanization (in 1990, it reached 62.7%), and for the exceedingly high levels of urbanization in some individual countries. The other sub-regions are much lower in their levels of urbanization, but the urban populations can be huge, such as China (380 million in 1990), Japan (95 million), Indonesia (56 million), and India (230 million) (see Table 1).

Echoing the earlier statement that Asia as a whole has been urbanizing fast during the last two decades, Table 2 highlights annual growth rates in urban population in quinquennial periods. In all the periods shown since 1970, Asian annual growth rates in urban population have been consistently higher than world rates. The sub-regional and country growth rates have reflected peculiar development patterns within them. In Eastern Asia, for instance, the annual growth rate increased markedly from 1970 to 1990, when it peaked. The higher sub-regional growth rates here must have been boosted by China's open policy and economic reforms since 1978. Thus China's urban population growth rates increased almost 7% per year during the 1980s, at radically higher rates than earlier periods. Similarly, in Southern Asia Afghanistan's urban population suffered negative growth during the period 1980-85, when urban dwellers left the cities to avoid warfare. With the recent resumption of more peaceful conditions, people are returning to the cities, and the annual growth rate of urban population is projected to be at an all-time high of 8.51% during the 1990-95 period. Finally, in Western Asia the newly-found wealth in some of the Gulf nations since the early 1970s has accounted for phenomenally high rates of urban population growth, with double or near double-digit annual growth rates recorded by countries such as Oman, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen. Many of the cities in these countries became magnets drawing large numbers of workers from less endowed countries of Asia to partake of the growing fortune attributable to oil. Cities in these countries grew rapidly, as did their populations (Blake and Lawless 1980).

Table 2 Average Annual Growth Rates of Asia's Urban Population, 1970-2005

	Average annual growth rate (%)						
	1970-75	1975-80	1980-85	1985-90	1990-95	1995-2000	2000-05
World	2.61	2.63	3.06	3.09	3.00	2.82	2.55
Asia	3.33	3.54	4.58	4.54	4.18	3.68	3.09
Eastern Asia	2.47	3.09	4.85	4.98	4.31	3.46	2.49
China	2.09	3.94	6.72	6.63	5.41	4.16	2.89
Hong Kong	2.39	2.94	1.88	1.66	1.05	0.88	0.44
Japan	2.55	1.06	0.81	0.51	0.50	0.48	0.44
Korea	4.71	3.96	3.47	2.78	2.34	1.93	1.58
Democratic People's Republic of Korea	3.67	2.09	2.38	2.15	2.39	2.31	2.00
Republic of Korea	5.31	4.92	3.97	3.05	2.31	1.77	1.40
Macau	1.34	4.39	3.96	4.05	3.53	2.82	2.07
Mongolia	4.38	3.85	2.94	2.92	3.09	3.21	3.25
South-eastern Asia	4.15	3.90	4.33	4.24	4.09	3.82	3.47
Brunei Darussalam	3.73	2.72	3.07	3.40	2.52	2.40	2.24
Cambodia	-2.09	-2.07	3.54	3.96	4.19	4.22	4.30
East Timor	2.33	-2.01	4.08	4.46	4.76	4.83	4.27
Indonesia	4.92	4.88	5.37	5.00	4.56	4.01	3.36
Lao People's Democratic Republic	5.52	4.50	5.58	6.03	6.00	5.55	5.12

Table 2 (Continued)

Malaysia	4.99	4.76	4.87	4.71	4.11	3.47	2.88
Myanmar	3.25	2.15	2.13	2.69	3.23	3.62	3.84
Philippines	4.02	3.54	3.97	3.77	3.61	3.40	3.17
Singapore	1.73	1.30	1.15	1.25	1.07	0.84	0.63
Thailand	5.59	5.05	4.66	4.22	4.02	3.91	3.70
Viet Nam	2.86	2.75	3.22	3.66	4.16	4.35	4.39
Southern Asia	4.00	3.89	4.15	3.96	4.03	4.01	3.87
Afghanistan	6.11	4.17	-0.47	4.15	8.51	4.83	4.50
Bangladesh	6.74	6.76	6.57	6.33	6.14	5.81	5.37
Bhutan	3.95	4.24	4.72	5.43	5.90	6.25	6.13
India	3.76	3.66	3.80	3.63	3.82	3.77	3.66
Iran (Islamic Republic of)	5.35	4.71	5.43	4.02	3.20	3.66	3.49
Maldives	8.69	7.33	6.17	5.91	5.43	4.91	4.38
Nepal	6.72	7.35	7.21	6.86	6.48	6.11	5.51
Pakistan	3.76	3.87	5.01	4.87	4.48	4.50	4.28
Sri Lanka	1.83	1.28	1.23	1.58	2.19	2.71	3.16
Western Asia	4.95	4.40	5.14	4.59	4.09	3.53	3.11
Bahrain	4.42	5.19	4.56	3.97	3.37	2.82	2.38
Cyprus	1.06	1.95	2.43	2.35	2.16	1.96	1.78
Democratic Yemen	3.31	3.82	4.32	4.68	4.85	4.74	4.42
Gaza Strip (Palestine)	3.32	3.17	3.66	3.00	2.74	2.51	2.36

Table 2 (Continued)

Iraq	5.05	5.26	4.48	4.06	3.95	3.77	3.56
Israel	3.57	2.75	2.13	1.96	1.73	1.59	1.42
Jordan	4.27	3.96	4.43	4.39	4.26	3.93	3.44
Kuwait	7.53	7.71	5.24	3.80	3.04	2.46	1.98
Lebanon	5.17	1.21	1.25	1.05	2.69	2.25	1.93
Oman	6.83	8.70	8.36	7.45	7.35	7.17	6.95
Qatar	9.40	6.44	5.73	4.49	3.65	2.87	2.60
Saudi Arabia	8.40	7.74	6.02	5.11	4.56	4.20	4.04
Syrian Arab Republic	4.23	4.08	4.15	4.46	4.56	4.49	4.35
Turkey	4.09	3.11	6.11	5.21	4.17	3.16	2.34
United Arab Emirates	29.04	14.32	4.84	3.26	2.24	1.87	1.81
Yemen	9.58	10.04	9.08	8.15	7.08	6.01	5.68

Source: United Nations (1991, 154-59), *World Urbanization Prospects 1990.*

The above depiction of regional urban trends is necessarily brief, but a much more detailed analysis of urban transition has been attempted elsewhere (Mathur and McGee, 1993). The analysis of regional trends can be attempted by different sub-regional groupings of countries, which can also be divided by income levels. Indeed, the divergent paths of urban development, approximately by sub-regional clustering, have been observed (Armstrong and McGee 1985). In the same vein, but as a broader portrayal of uneven development and rural-urban relations, a basic macro-spatial model has been developed in which are embedded three dualistic relationships, namely North-South, urban-rural, and formal-informal (Lo, Salih and Douglass 1978). Using this model, country and regional differences in resource endowments, technology, demography, and development ideology can be taken into account before regional types are identified. Three sub-regional types have been identified for Asia.

At the same time as the Asian population becoming more urban, the proportion of the urban population concentrated in large cities is also increasing. Take cities with a population of one million or more as an illustration. There were only 24 "million" cities in Asia in 1950, but the number increased to 77 in 1980 and 115 in 1990. There is a heavy concentration of these cities in eight countries in Asia; their growth in numbers over the years has been especially dramatic in China and India and has taken place in a less spectacular manner in the Republic of Korea, Indonesia and Pakistan (Table 3). A related phenomenon, prominent in some Asian countries, is the excessive concentration of population in the largest city, the so-called primate city. Thus, in 1990 more than one-half of Thailand's urban population lived in Bangkok, and one-third of the urban populations in the Republic of Korea, Bangladesh and the Philippines lived in Seoul, Dhaka, and Metro Manila, respectively. Istanbul, Jakarta, Karachi, and Teheran accounted for almost 20% of the nation's urban population (UN 1991).

Table 3 Asia's "Million" Cities, 1950-2000

Selected Countries	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990	2000
China	8	13	25	33	38	38
Japan	3	5	5	6	6	6
Republic of Korea	1	2	3	4	6	6
Indonesia	1	1	3	4	6	6
India	5	7	9	10	24	24
Iran	1	1	1	1	5	5
Pakistan	1	2	2	3	6	6
Turkey	1	1	2	3	4	4
All Asia	24	38	59	77	115	115

Source: Calculated from United Nations (1991, 187-94), *World Urbanization Prospects 1990.*

If one examines the largest urban agglomerations, or mega-cities,[2] in the world, the prominence of Asia over time is even more pronounced. In 1990, 17 of the 28 largest urban agglomerations in the world were located in Asia. Cities such as Beijing, Bombay, Calcutta, Jakarta, Seoul, Shanghai, Tianjin, and Tokyo had a population of close to or above 10 million. Some of these perform key functions in the global economy and may be called "world cities" (Friedmann 1986). Indeed, many world cities have been identified in Pacific Asia, and urban corridors are in their early stages of formation in several areas along the western Pacific rim (Yeung and Lo 1992). Posited as a variant of urban agglomeration, Terry McGee (1987) and Norton Ginsburg (1990) have drawn attention to a peculiarly Asian phenomenon that has been observed in many longstanding and rich agricultural regions of Asia centred on a number of large cities. These are extended metropolitan regions, or *desakota*, a term coined from Bahasa Indonesian capturing the sense of rural-urban integration. *Desakota* reflects a process of urbanizing the countryside where rural

people do not have to change residence or move to the cities. Simple transport modes like the bus or the scooter have been effectively extending the ambit of the cities to as far as 100 kilometres around them, resulting in increasing saliency of rural non-farm jobs as a source of employment and income, and substantial circular migration between city and countryside. This process has been noted to occur in Java, Taiwan, China, India, and probably other regions in Asia.

III. Research Problems

Although urbanization was concomitant with economic development in postwar Asia, the subject did not receive systematic or widespread attention until the 1960s. Over the past three decades, the study of Asian urbanization, not unlike that of the Third World as a whole, has reflected notable shifts in emphasis and conceptual underpinnings. It is instructive to trace how urban research in Asia has evolved during this period.

A systematic search of the urban literature in some countries, a task facilitated by this Ford Foundation project, has revealed that, contrary to popular belief, considerable urban research has been undertaken as gauged by published works. In Indonesia, a total of 1,126 titles on urban subjects has been counted for the period 1960-90; the tally of urban published titles in India for the period 1961-91 came to a staggering 25,500. In China, too, the upsurge in urban interest and research since 1978 has been very considerable notwithstanding the lack of a systematic count (Yeung and Zhou 1991). It is generally difficult to gain systematic access to the national, much less regional, literature on urban research. Only a few literature guides exist, such as Gerald Breese's (1973) and Y.M. Yeung and C.P. Lo's (1976) for South-east Asia. Even national urban research bibliographies are hard to come by, with the possible exception of India which is much better served with bibliographic aids (Hoselitz 1962, Bose 1970, NIUA

1988). This Ford Foundation project has at least yielded the most complete bibliography on urban Indonesia (Bibliography 1993). For much of the urban literature in developing countries as of the mid-1960s, in particular India, Japan, China, and South-east Asia, Norton Ginsburg's (1967) meticulous efforts are exemplary, citing many unpublished sources.

P.M. Hauser's (1957) volume and the companion volume by R.B. Textor (1956) must be viewed as the earliest studies on Asian urbanization. At this time, South Asia was the most actively studied of all the sub-regions of Asia, and in the 1960s studies such as *India's Urban Future* (Turner 1962), *Urbanization and Urban India* (Sovani 1966), and many others, were published. For other parts of Asia, there have been very few regional studies on urbanization, but national and individual city studies have been appearing with increasing frequency.

In the early studies of Asian urbanization, the correlates of the process — demographic, social, economic, political, and institutional factors — were emphasized and analyzed. There was an overriding concern for urban form, structure, and pattern, a focus that was more than justified when so little was known about Asian cities and the way they had come about. The concerns at this stage were more traditional: the role of cities (Dotson 1969), urban system (Sendut 1965), migration (Dwyer 1964, Ng 1969), ethnicity (Hodder 1953, Castles 1967), city size (Withington 1963, Berry 1971), and rural-urban relations and structure (Reddy 1961; Khan and Khan 1961; Hattori, Kagaya and Inanaga 1960). Many of these enquiries provided information and data with which to understand Asian cities for the first time.

At the same time, there were early attempts to probe the interplay between urbanization and the larger process which was at work in changing the country and society at large. McGee's (1967) pioneering study on the South-east Asian city, with its thesis of pseudo-urbanization, created much interest in the subject. Together with Warwick Armstrong, McGee expounded a theory of urban involution on the conceptual basis of economic dualism, a model that Clifford Geertz originally employed to

describe the dual economy of an Indonesian town (Armstrong and McGee 1968). The dualistic framework was found to be of service in the study of urban planning and regional planning (McGee 1970) and retail distribution (Yeung 1973).

As the 1970s unfolded, a new orientation emerged in policy-relevant urban research, propelled by three important outside factors. In the first place, the World Bank, through its 1972 Presidential address by Robert McNamara, declared its determination to attack urban poverty in the developing world. For Asia, the assistance came initially through shelter programmes such as sites-and-services and slum upgrading programmes in countries ranging from India, Indonesia, and Thailand to the Philippines. The Kampung Improvement Programme in Indonesia was a good example of a successful indigenous initiative that was to improve the worst living conditions in poor Jakarta neighbourhoods, later flowering with substantial external assistance into a gigantic multilateral programme across the nation. By 1989, the programme had reached 398 cities. Since then, World Bank involvement in the urban sector has broadened considerably, both in terms of scope of assistance and in terms of countries assisted (Cohen 1983).

The second external factor giving a fillip to urban research in Asia came, curiously, also in 1972, when the International Development Research Centre (IDRC) of Canada supported urban research soon after it had come into existence two years earlier. Its explicit mandate was (and still is) to build capacity in human resources in developing countries through funding of locally-based research, including urban and regional development. For two decades, this became a major source of external funding for urban research in some countries in Asia and a large number of path-breaking projects have been supported with valuable publications: low-cost housing (Yeh 1975, Tan and Sendut 1979, Wong 1978, Yeh and Laquian 1979, Yeung 1983), hawkers and vendors (McGee and Yeung 1977), urbanization in Bangkok (TURA 1976), low-cost transport (Ocampo 1982), small-scale industries (Sanguanruang et al. 1978), resettlement and transmigration (Kansakar 1979, Guinness 1977), urban food markets (Hongladarom et

al. 1985), poverty eradication (Fong 1984), participatory urban services (Yeung and McGee 1986), and so on. For a variety of reasons, more of these projects focused on East and South-east Asia than on other sub-regions. They formed a major part of the growing literature on urban development.

Thirdly, in the early 1970s the Ford Foundation supported a large-scale International Urbanization Survey with thematic and country coverage that has had an important impact in the field. For Asia, only two countries — India and Turkey — were objects of enquiry (Rosser 1972, Keles 1972), as most of the country studies were focused on Latin America. Nonetheless, the Survey generated considerable interest in urbanization in developing countries for many years.

During the 1970s, important urban publications stemmed from several sources. They came from commissioned research; for example, the volume edited by Leo Jakobson and Ved Prakash (1971) that addressed many key urban problems such as the role of cities, slums and squatters, and city size in South and South-east Asia. They also came from major academic meetings, with the "Conference of the City as a Centre of Change in Asia" being an excellent example (Dwyer 1972). On a more continuing and institutional basis, the leadership role played by the United Nations Centre for Regional Development (UNCRD) in Nagoya was notable, with periodic meetings bringing researchers together from different parts of Asia to address such diverse issues as small cities (Mathur 1982), growth poles (Lo and Salih 1978), uneven development (Lo, Salih, and Douglass 1978), and national development and regional policy (Raza and Kundu 1979). It was a thriving forum for urban and regional research in Asia.

The 1980s began with heightened interest in urban research in Asia when the Pacific Science Inter-Congress was held in Singapore in 1981 on the theme of "Pacific Basin Cities of the Eighties." Although the subjects covered ranged far and wide, an attempt was made to delineate a regional urban research agenda for the 1980s, and the international dimension of urbanization was identified as an emerging and critical factor affecting urban and

economic change (Yeung and Ginsburg 1981). The intensification of the international production process was recognized as an important aspect of urbanization in Asia, with, for example, export processing zones established in many countries and cities. Towards this end, Alan Gilbert and Josef Gugler (1982) distinguished a paradigm shift in which contemporary Third World cities, including those in Asia, had to be viewed in the global economy. They used the world system framework to situate dependent urbanization, peripheral capitalism, deepening inequality, and regional disparity in developing countries. Discarding their earlier conceptual positions based on the dualistic economy, Armstrong and McGee (1985) perceived, likewise, cities in developing countries as "theatres of (capital) accumulation." As the decade proceeded, it became increasingly clear that urban development — under the influence of financial markets, information, technology, environmental problems, AIDS, and so on — was becoming globalized.

The overwhelming bias in the contemporary Asian city, Michael Douglass (1993) argues, is to treat it as an economic engine of growth rather than as habitat for all of those drawn into living its expanding sphere. Despite obvious prosperity, grinding poverty persists in many Asian cities. Three of the four Asian chapters (Bangladesh, India, and Indonesia) in this volume point to horrendous proportions of their urban populations living in absolute poverty, ranging from 20% to 44%. For the most part in the 1980s, the International Monetary Fund and World Bank structural adjustment programmes treated poverty alleviation as a secondary issue; their impact on women and children in Asian countries was assessed to be deleterious, with deepening poverty leading to increasing health problems and other family and community crises (Douglass 1993).

A new factor in urban change in Asia during the 1980s was the re-entry of China into the community of nations through its open policy and economic reforms. Its cities, in particular those along the eastern coastal areas, have witnessed revolutionary changes in form, functions, and ways of life. The literature on Chinese cities

has been burgeoning in both the Chinese and English language (Ma and Hanten 1981; Leung and Ginsburg 1980; Yeung and Zhou 1987, 1989). The recent Chinese development experience has led Gavin Jones (1991) to speculate on a new conventional wisdom, with efficiency fostering equity. Needless to say, this hypothesis needs verification.

In fact, Jones (1991) also noted the general failure of urban governments to recognize broad macroeconomic or sector policies that might have greater spatial impact than the strategies generally adopted. Some of these macro strategies designed to restrain metropolitan growth for East and South-east Asia have been considered to be of limited success (Yeung 1986). It has, however, been suggested that, for Asia in the 1980s, the major thrust of policy intervention veered from growth control to urban diffusion, with smaller cities and off-farm employment being some of the vehicles to channel urban growth (Rondinelli 1991). What, then, are the links between research priorities and policy intervention?

IV. Research Priorities

Research priorities in urban Asia is a subject that has been unevenly or scarcely touched on in the papers in this volume. It is the intention here to raise some broad questions about urban research and its relation to policy-making. I also wish to highlight some of the leading institutions in urban research in Asia.

The first and foremost question one might raise concerns who sets the priorities for urban research. This is a crucial issue for every country, yet one that cannot be generalized for as diverse a region as Asia. However, it is fair to say that over time there has been a greater recognition of the utility of research results to formulate policy positions. Earlier urban developments in Asia, nonetheless, did not lend support to this statement. A case in point is the development of public housing in Hong Kong and

Singapore, a decision which is now widely acclaimed, although the initial government involvement was notably lukewarm. In truth, both governments were pushed into large-scale public housing programmes by exigencies of the 1950s. Close personal involvement in these programmes over the years and informal exchanges with key policy-makers responsible for that development in both city-states, confirm that the launching of public housing development was based more on political sense than on any research. For Hong Kong, there was only a programme of public housing for many years: a policy to support this programme came into being only in 1972 (Yeung 1989).

By and large, research priorities in urban development are set by the countries and cities themselves. There is usually a national development ministry of some description which deals with urban development. In research, some countries see fit to establish research institutes to provide support data and other needs. The National Institute of Urban Affairs set up in 1980 in New Delhi is an example of a research institute having close links with policy-making bodies. Other research institutes may be situated in universities, but their research findings are not certain to make direct inputs to policy-making. With some policy-makers and politicians becoming better educated, appreciation for research findings has been growing. (For example, it has been reported that 80% of the members of the present cabinet in Taiwan hold doctoral degrees.) It is to be expected that under such circumstances the links between research and policy formulation are stronger than usual.

Notwithstanding the desirability of research results feeding into the process of policy formulation, this does not often happen. It is extremely difficult to pinpoint the links, even if a research project has been designed with policy relevance and involves policy-makers. I have been involved, for example, in dozens of such projects in Asia, with support from IDRC since 1972, and despite formal project evaluation at the conclusion of those projects, it was not possible to identify any positive impact on policy arising from any project. But even if no direct links are

established between research and policy, one should not underestimate the imperceptible influence such project findings might have on policy-makers, especially when the results are disseminated through policy seminars, easy-to-read publications, and other vehicles. At the very least, policy-makers have been made aware of problems, and goodwill has been established between researchers and policy-makers.

Another key issue in urban research in Asia is the extent to which priorities have been influenced by outside factors. In much of the research on Asian urbanization, McGee (1991), in a recent address, has drawn attention to the strong influence of Eurocentrism in the early days. However, with more Western researchers like him having a long-term commitment to Asia, and other talented and well-trained researchers from the region, a new model of Asian urbanization appears to be developing. Even so, the external influence in shaping the urban research agenda has been noticeable for some time. In Calcutta, for example, a strong American influence was felt in the 1950s and 1960s, when the Ford Foundation supported studies on the management and institutional restructuring of the moribund city. Some external assistance came via country requests, as the long-term concept plan for Singapore in the early 1970s was essentially a product of a team of United Nations advisors working with local planners. Since 1972, Asia has been the beneficiary of many urban assistance efforts by a large number of international assistance agencies, in terms of new ideas, additional capital, information sharing, and technology transfer (Yeung and Belisle 1986). During this period, the external input has been particularly useful in experimenting with new ways of improving housing and other infrastructure services for the urban poor (Yeung 1991). The recent rapid development in South China, for example, has been dependent on external financing for its infrastructure projects (Yeung 1993).

The positive impact of external influence on urban research apart, a tension often exists between indigenous and foreign researchers. In Nepal, the tension between the two was perceived on my trip in 1991, when the calibre of some of the foreign experts

was questioned and their work was seen by some as not really relevant to the critical issues in Kathmandu and the rest of the country. In Karachi, I was even told that not only foreign consultants but Pakistani professionals, were too woefully out of touch with what was happening in the city to make any meaningful recommendations to improve its management.[3] In Bangladesh, it has been observed that the infusion of external funds for supporting urban research has had the effect of crowding out some of the more basic types of investigation which, for lack of funding and other reasons, have been relegated to a low priority position. There is also the problem of too many projects chasing after too few qualified researchers — an important concern in some other countries as well.

In terms of the generation of knowledge on urban research, a number of institutions in Asia should be noted. One should perhaps begin with two regional institutions: UNCRD in Nagoya, referred to previously, and the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) with its Human Settlements Division in Bangkok. The latter is largely a training establishment which draws students and mid-career professionals to its Master's degree programme. Master's dissertations arising from this programme are largely based on urban and regional problems in Asian countries. Another important research establishment that has made important contributions to urban research in Asia despite its peripheral geographical location, is the East-West Center and its constituent Institutes in Honolulu. Over the years, many Asian students, professionals, and academics have benefitted from their training, research, and seminar activities.

Within Asian countries, it is difficult to cover the many research institutions that have contributed to urban research. In the countries represented in this Ford Foundation study, it is pertinent to recognize, in India, the contributions by the National Institute for Urban Affairs; the Indian Institute of Public Administration; the Centre for Studies in Regional Development at the Jawaharlal Nehru University; the Institute of Economic Growth, Oceania University; and the architecture and planning

schools in Delhi and Ahmedabad. In Nepal, no research centre is identified exclusively with urban research, but the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning has initiated many studies. The main research organizations are located within Tribhuvan University in Kathmandu, namely the Centre for Economic Development and Administration (CEDA), New Era, Himalayan Studies Centre, and the Central Departments of Geography and Economics. These units have been taking a growing interest in urban research, although they also focus on other concerns. In Bangladesh, the Centre for Urban Studies at the University of Dhaka is the only one in the country dedicated to urban research. There are several government-sponsored institutions, such as the famous Bangladesh Institute of Development Studies, the National Institute of Local Government, and the Housing and Building Research Institute, in addition to independent and professional bodies. In Sri Lanka, several government agencies have been established related to the work of housing, planning, and development. However, interesting and important studies related to the urban sector have been conducted by the Marga Institute and the Centre for Regional Development Studies, both non-government organizations (NGOs). In Indonesia, there has been an overwhelming concentration of urban research and capacity in Java, particularly Jakarta. Thus important actors in urban research have been Indonesian Institute of Science (LIPI), National Development Planning Board (BAPENAS), the University of Indonesia with some of its research centres and departments, Institute for Social and Economic Research (LP3ES), and so on. Outside Jakarta, the Institute of Technology Bandung has trained generations of urban planners in the country and undertaken urban research. In Yogjakarta, the Population Institute and the Institute of Rural and Regional Studies at Gadjah Mada University have also produced influential studies. Finally, in China there has been an upsurge of research institutions since 1978, many focused on urban development. It has been estimated that, by the late 1980s, as many as 500 government research institutes devoted to urban science had been established. There are also many academics who undertake urban

research based in the universities, especially in departments of geography, architecture, economics, and management.

Beyond the Asian countries directly covered in this project, some research centres are noteworthy for their contributions to urban studies. To cite just a few: the College of Public Administration, the Planning School, and the Faculty of Economics at the University of the Philippines; the Faculty of Urban and Regional Studies at Seoul National University; the National Institute of Development Administration and the Faculty of Economics at Thammasat University in Thailand; the Centre of Urban Planning and Environmental Management at the University of Hong Kong; and the Hong Kong Institute of Asia-Pacific Studies at The Chinese University of Hong Kong.

V. Prospects

With the onset of the 1990s, the convergence of interest in and attention on the urban sector in Asia has been unprecedented, particularly at the international level. The sense of an urban crisis, the cry of urban poverty, and the degradation of the urban environment have been more sharply focused than ever before. Yet, urban opportunities are beckoning as the Asia-Pacific region is predicted to continue to be the fastest growth region in the world in the remainder of this century and beyond. In this ambivalent situation, what should the research agenda be for Asia in the 1990s?

In the countries surveyed in this volume, the dilemma of cities as being engines of growth and cesspools of human misery is mirrored in India in the way the future is viewed. The focus ahead will be on practical urban concerns and improvement of information, data, and inventories. For Bangladesh, the overriding concerns will be empowerment of the urban poor, (especially women), urban poverty, the urban environment, informalization, and the study of other cities besides Dhaka. The Indonesian

priorities will be on gender sensitivities and equitable planning, "at risk" groups like street children, urban poverty, land and management, and urban development outside Java. The shared urban agenda of the 1990s for these three countries thus revolves around poverty, women, and management. China, having experienced its first taste of economic reforms premised upon market principles, will target the experimentation, then systematization, of market mechanisms in its cities as a priority. The market orientation of Chinese cities, begun in the coastal region, is becoming current, but has yet to be put on firm systemic and legalistic foundations. The restructuring of cities is seen as a vehicle to achieve these ends.

Some of these perceived emphases on the future have taken their cue from the policy pronouncements of key international assistance agencies. The World Bank, for example, has viewed the 1990s as a decade of opportunity for cities in developing countries, which, with appropriate national and city-wide policies and institutional developments, can improve urban productivity, alleviate urban poverty, and protect the urban environment (World Bank 1991). Similarly, UNDP has proposed a five-pronged agenda for the 1990s, with an accent on a people-centred orientation going beyond economic concerns (UNDP 1991).

For a more specific Asian urban development agenda for the 1990s, there have been at least two propositions. Ernesto Pernia (1991) suggested that a strategy for urbanization and sustainable development should include four components: an economic policy that is conducive to labour-intensive growth; a social policy that is concerned with the provision of essential social services; an urban management policy that deals with major problems such as transport, water, and housing; and an environmental policy that will promote sustainable development. A similar prognosis has been offered by Rondinelli (1991, 801) as follows:

> Strategies for the 1990s will focus on expanding private investment to generate employment opportunities; improving the efficiency of metropolitan economies; providing the services and infrastructure necessary to

stimulate economic diversification and growth throughout the settlement system, especially in smaller cities and towns; and strengthening economic and physical linkages between cities and towns and rural areas.

In order to find out more about the urban condition in Asia, the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) commissioned a number of papers on such subjects as urban trends, urban productivity, urban poverty, and urban environment — the findings of which were presented to a Ministerial Conference on Urbanization in Asia in late 1993. The Asian Development Bank has also launched a seven-country study on urban poverty in Asia, with the aim of improving data and understanding for policy formulation.

The translation into reality of many of the goals and strategies as outlined above has been facilitated by the establishment of a plethora of mechanisms, with largely external funding, to advance the cause of the urban sector. Thus ESCAP has established the Regional Network of Local Authorities for the Management of Human Settlements, called CITYNET, to promote better urban management. The Asian Coalition for Housing Rights (ACHR), a network of non-governmental organizations and community-based organizations has cooperated with ESCAP and CITYNET in a number of activities, such as workshops, study tours, and an exchange programme for community leaders. The Urban Management Programme for Asia and the Pacific (UMPAP) was established in 1993, as part of a global programme, based in Kuala Lumpur. Asia-Pacific 2000 was set up recently to provide financial, technical, and administrative support to urban NGOs and NGO coalitions which work on a wide range of issues including poverty and the environment. Finally, a Metropolitan Environmental Improvement Programme (MEIP) has been ongoing for some time, involving five Asian cities, to work collaboratively to improve their urban environment. Almost all of these programmes have received the bulk of their funding from UNDP.

It is clear from the foregoing account that Asian governments and scholars, as well as international agencies, have spared no efforts in attempting to tackle the challenges and problems posed by Asian cities in the immediate years ahead. With a shared vision and concerted determination, the likelihood of really improving Asian cities and the well-being of their inhabitants in the next decade has never been better. Only time will tell the outcome of these endeavours and whether the sanguine urban outlook towards 2000 is justified.

Notes

1. The regional subdivisions are drawn from *World Urbanization Prospects 1990* (UN 1991), particularly in discussion relating to Tables 1 to 3.
2. Mega-cities are normally defined as having a population of 10 million or more.
3. In July - August 1991, I undertook a three-week trip as a UNDP consultant to Pakistan, Nepal, Indonesia, and China, to recommend the way forward for the Urban Management Programme Phase II. These views were distilled from discussions with local professionals.

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亞洲城市研究

問題、優次選擇與前景

楊汝萬

（中文摘要）

城市化對戰後亞洲的發展與現代化構成強大並持久的影響。本文回顧了自一九七〇年以來顯著的亞洲區域城市發展趨勢、勾劃不同時期城市研究的問題和重點、簡介亞洲區的重要研究機構，並嘗試提議九十年代城市研究的議程。