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## ***Problems of rural migration to the city and the impoverishment of the townspeople***

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### ***Abstract***

*Urbanisation is defined by demographers as the increasing share of population living in urban areas (Poston and Bouvier). Rural-urban migration continues to attract much interest, but also growing concern. Migrants are often blamed for increasing urban poverty, but not all migrants are poor. In many cities, however, migrants form a large proportion of the urban poor with whom they share income and non-income disadvantages, including difficulties in finding adequate housing and in accessing services. Like the majority of the urban poor, they work long hours in low-paid, insecure and unsafe jobs and are exposed to a wide range of environmental hazards because most low-income and informal settlements lack basic infrastructure. In many cases when urban governments try to reduce or control rural–urban migration, this also affects low-income residents and not just migrants.*

***Keywords:*** *Rural, urban, migration, urban poverty*

## **Introduction**

*Migration and mobility continue to attract much interest, but also growing concern. The 2013 World Population Policies report states that "among 185 countries with available data in 2013, 80 per cent of governments had policies to lower rural to urban migration, an increase from 38 per cent in 1996" (United Nations, 2013a).*

*The contribution of migration to urbanisation and urban population growth Internal migration, and net migration to urban areas in particular, drives the urbanisation of a country's population. Rapid overall population growth often overlaps with rapid urbanisation, creating especially fast urban population growth. In order to better manage these transitions, it is important to understand them. In this section we start with some conceptual clarifications, then go on to provide some summary statistics on how these demographic and urban transitions are combining in different parts of the world. At the continental level, Africa has the highest rate of urban population growth, largely because it has the highest rates of overall population growth. Asia still has the highest rate of urbanisation, and in effect the highest net rate of rural–urban migration. In most parts of the world, both the rates of urban population growth and the rates of urbanisation have been declining, but the absolute number of people added to the world's urban population each year has been increasing, primarily because of the growth of urban populations in Africa and Asia. Looking forward, urbanisation and urban population growth are likely to continue to decline, with only Africa still experiencing higher absolute increases in urban population every year, at least for a few more decades.*

*This raises the question of whether policies that specifically target migrants in urban centres are desirable and possible. The first and major obstacle is the lack of data on poor migrants but this reflects the lack of data on the residents of low-income settlements, regardless of their migrant status. Initiatives and programmes that are inclusive of all low-income groups and that recognise the different needs of diverse households and individuals, including migrants, are more likely to be successful in reducing urban poverty. Collaboration between civil society and local governments is key to such success, as is the recognition of citizenship rights that is often the main reason for the marginalisation of the urban poor, migrants and non-migrants alike.*

## **The contribution of migration to urbanisation and urban population growth**

### **Some conceptual clarifications**

*Urbanisation is defined by demographers as the increasing share of population living in urban areas (Poston and Bouvier 2010: 307–311). Urban areas are defined differently in different countries, but are generally taken to be settled areas that are more populous and dense than rural settlements, and more suitable for locating administrative facilities and functions. Significantly more than half the countries providing data on urban population use administrative criteria in their definition, slightly more than half use population-related criteria, and very few use neither (Buettner, 2014; United Nations Population Division 2012). The administrative and population-based criteria are interrelated since urban administrative status is generally conferred on larger settlements. Most of the population-based cut-offs fall between 1,000 and 5,000 inhabitants, with a few significant outliers.*

*However, there is sufficient variation and this variation is systematic and can affect perceptions of regional over-or under-urbanisation. Thus, in a recent attempt to make adjustments to provide more consistent population-based estimates of urban populations, Africa's relatively high level of*

*urbanisation declines, given its level of economic output per capita, whereas South Asia's relatively low-level rises (Uchida and Nelson, 2010).*

*The added urban population that results from urbanisation is sometimes estimated as the sum of net rural–urban migration and the increase in urban population resulting from the expansion of urban boundaries. However, it is not only difficult to obtain the data for such calculations but presenting them suggests wrongly that the urbanisation is being driven by the extension of urban boundaries, when the reverse is closer to the truth. In practice, the people accumulating in near-urban or nearly urban settlements have mostly come to be there as part of the net migration of people towards larger settlements or from the centre of urban settlements towards their peripheries. With urban densities declining around the world (Angel et al. 2011), the expansion of urban boundaries should not be taken to reflect urbanisation in the demographic sense.*

*Where the natural population growth in urban areas is greater than in rural areas, this can also contribute to urbanisation. However, with both age-specific mortality and fertility rates tending to be lower in urban areas, rural–urban differentials in natural population growth are not a significant driver of urbanisation. Similarly, international migration can influence urbanisation, if this affects primarily either rural or urban populations, but is rarely a significant factor during periods of rapid urbanisation and urban growth.*

#### **Overlapping demographic and urban transitions**

*One of the simplest ways of interpreting changing rural and urban populations is, as suggested above, in terms of two overlapping transitions. The first – the demographic transition – involves a period of rapidly increasing overall population. The second – the urban transition – involves a period of a rapidly increasing share of the population living in urban settlements. Historically, both of these transitions have been associated with economic development, although they are clearly also influenced by other factors, and their relations to economic development are contingent. The increasing population growth at the start of the demographic transition is the result of declining mortality rates as population health improves. The later decline in population growth is the result of declining fertility rates. There is a large literature on this demographic transition, what drives the declining mortality rates, the declining fertility rates and the lag between them (Dyson 2010). It has been argued that urbanisation is part of the demographic transition, with mortality decline as its structural driver (Dyson, 2010: 125–126). While this greatly overstates the centrality of the demographic transition, it is clearly no coincidence that the demographic and urban transitions tend to overlap. Both are intimately tied up with a range of interrelated and largely self-reinforcing processes (including and sometimes conflated with economic growth), which came to be somewhat misleadingly called 'development' in the 20th century.*

*The rising urban share during the urban transition is, as suggested above, primarily the result of more people migrating into or towards urban centres rather than migrating away. The net rural–urban migration is clearly linked to the economic success of cities and related livelihood opportunities, although there are also many other reasons for deciding to move to or stay in urban locations, including to be with family, for education or out of a preference for one or more other aspects of urban living. For most of its history, urbanisation has been associated with a combined shift in economy, culture and society, as well as a shift from low- to high-density living. Some of these associations are becoming decoupled. What would once have been considered urban culture, society and production systems are increasingly found in rural locations, while urban areas are declining in density to the point where urban 'suburbs' are often far less densely settled than*

traditional rural villages. Nevertheless, demographic urbanisation involving a shift from rural to urban dwelling is expected to continue, at least in Asia and Africa.

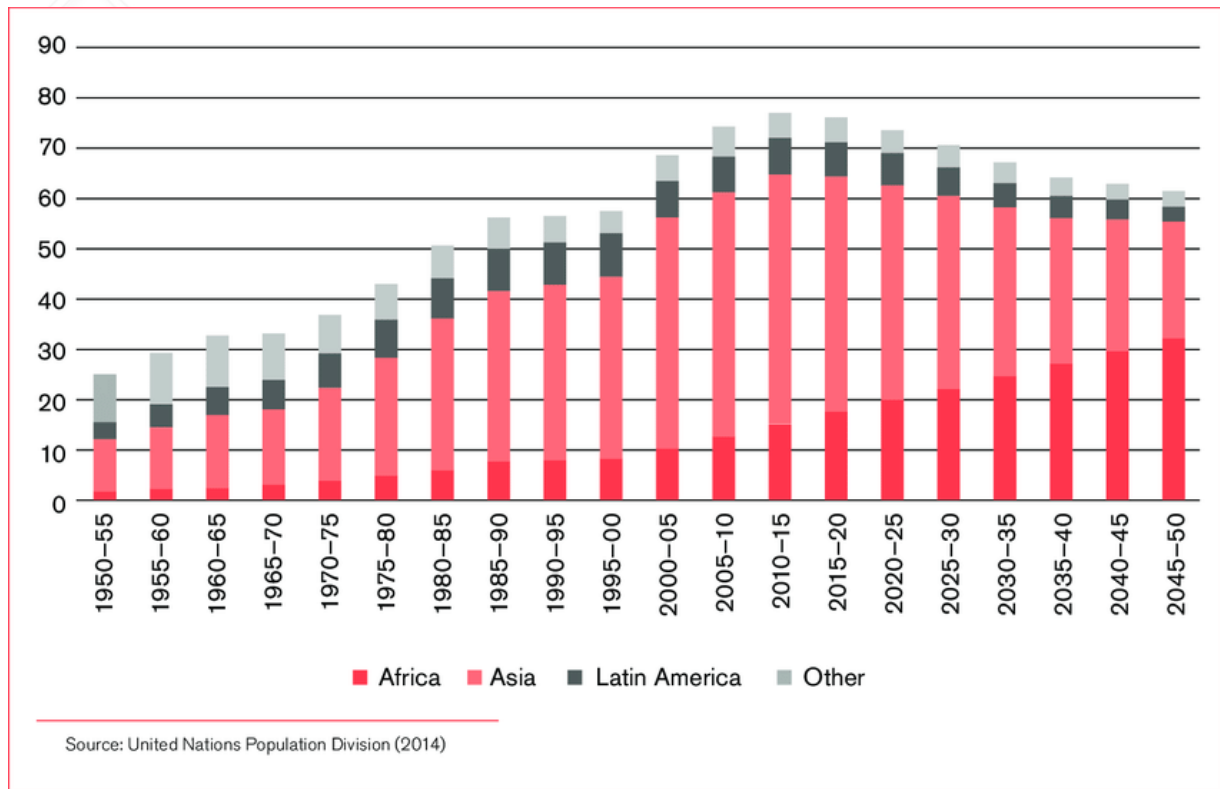
### ***Migration, urban capacities and the risks of exclusion***

#### ***The contribution of migration to urban population growth***

*The rates of urban population growth are, to a first approximation, equal to the sum of the overall population growth rates and the urbanisation rates. The contribution of migration to urban population growth is roughly equal to the share of the urbanisation rate in the urban population growth rate. Thus, from 2000 to 2010 slightly less than half of the world's urban population growth can be ascribed to migration. Moreover, migration only accounts for about one third of urban population growth in sub-Saharan Africa, the world region with by far the highest urban population growth rate (four per cent a year). The contribution of migration is considerably higher in Asia, where urbanisation is almost 60 per cent and is expected to continue growing, although at a declining rate. These patterns are likely to change if Asia's extremely rapid economic growth declines or if Africa manages to retain higher economic growth rates. While urbanisation and urban population growth rates have been falling for some time in all the major world regions, the absolute number of people added to the world's population each year is expected to peak this decade at slightly less than 80 million a year, mostly in Asia and Africa. As illustrated in Figure 1, about 50 million people a year are being added to Asia's urban settlements, while only about 15 million are being added in Africa. However, Asia's share is declining and Africa's is growing, and if current trends continue, by 2050 about half of the 60 million people added to the urban population each year will be in Africa. From some perspectives, it is these large absolute numbers of people that pose a challenge to the urban settlements they are added to.*

**Table (1) Estimates of population growth rates, urbanisation rates and urban population growth rates (all in compound % growth per annum) by region, for the decades between 1950 and 2050**

POPULATION GROWTH RATES										
	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2050
World	1.8	2.0	1.9	1.8	1.4	1.2	1.1	0.9	0.7	0.6
Sub-Saharan Africa	2.1	2.5	2.8	2.8	2.7	2.7	2.6	2.4	2.2	2.0
Northern Africa	2.7	2.7	2.5	2.6	1.9	1.7	1.6	1.3	1.0	0.8
Asia	2.0	2.3	2.2	2.0	1.5	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.2
Europe	1.0	0.8	0.6	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.0	-0.1	-0.2	-0.2
Latin America and the Caribbean	2.8	2.7	2.4	2.0	1.7	1.3	1.0	0.8	0.5	0.3
Northern America	1.8	1.3	1.0	1.0	1.1	0.9	0.8	0.7	0.6	0.5
Oceania	2.2	2.2	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.0	0.9
URBANISATION RATES										
	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2050
World	1.3	0.8	0.7	0.9	0.8	1.0	0.9	0.7	0.5	0.5
Sub-Saharan Africa	3.3	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.3	1.4	1.3	1.2	1.0	0.9
Northern Africa	2.0	1.6	1.1	1.0	0.6	0.4	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.6
Asia	1.9	1.2	1.4	1.7	1.5	1.8	1.4	1.0	0.7	0.6
Europe	1.0	1.0	0.7	0.4	0.1	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Latin America and the Caribbean	1.8	1.5	1.2	0.9	0.7	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.2
Northern America	0.9	0.5	0.0	0.2	0.5	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2	0.2
Oceania	0.7	0.6	0.0	-0.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.1	0.1	0.2
URBAN POPULATION GROWTH RATES										
	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000	2000-2010	2010-2020	2020-2030	2030-2040	2040-2050
World	3.2	2.8	2.6	2.7	2.3	2.3	2.0	1.5	1.2	1.0
Sub-Saharan Africa	5.5	4.6	4.9	4.8	4.0	4.1	4.0	3.6	3.2	2.9
Northern Africa	4.7	4.4	3.6	3.6	2.5	2.1	2.1	1.8	1.6	1.4
Asia	3.9	3.5	3.5	3.8	3.0	3.0	2.3	1.6	1.1	0.8
Europe	2.0	1.8	1.2	0.8	0.2	0.4	0.3	0.2	0.2	0.1
Latin America and the Caribbean	4.6	4.2	3.6	3.0	2.4	1.7	1.4	1.1	0.7	0.5
Northern America	2.7	1.8	1.0	1.2	1.6	1.2	1.0	0.9	0.8	0.6
Oceania	3.0	2.9	1.6	1.5	1.5	1.6	1.4	1.2	1.1	1.0



**Figure (1) Millions more urban people each year by world region**

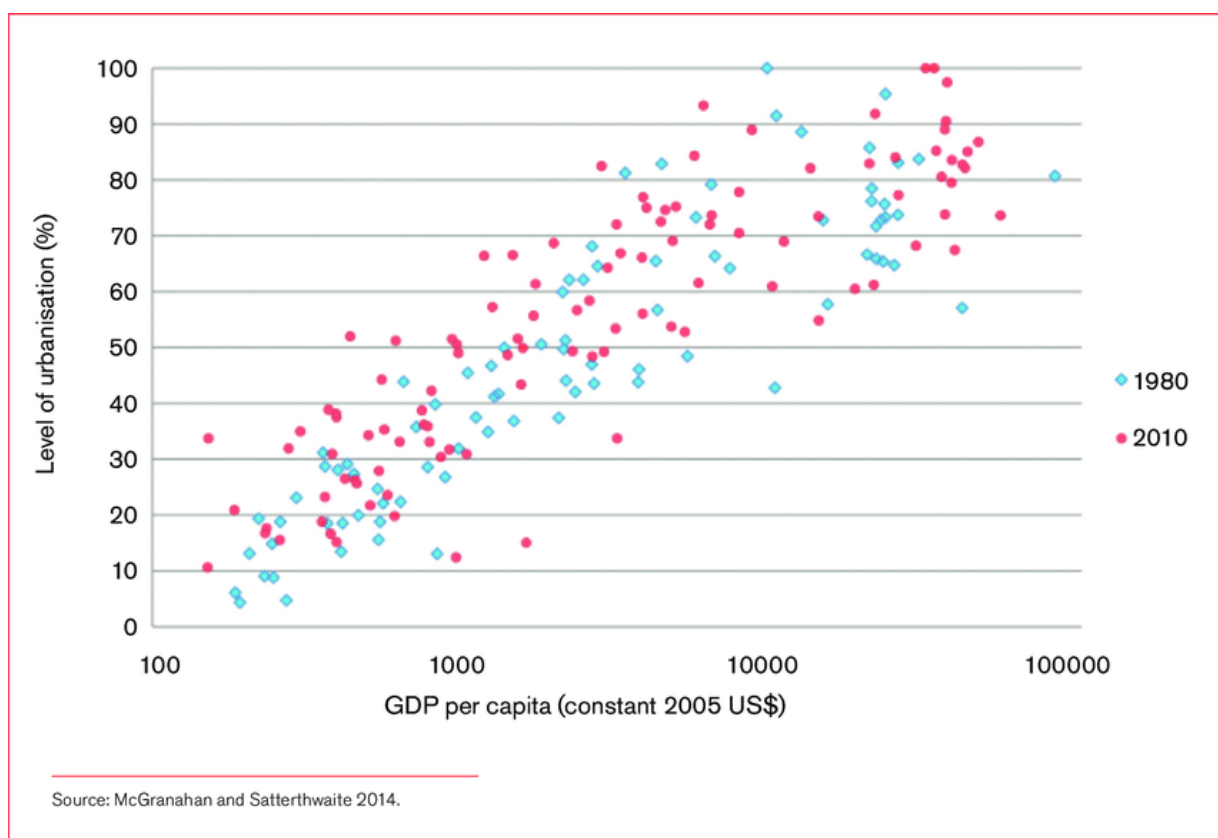
*The tendency to conflate urbanisation and urban population growth, and to overestimate the share of urban population growth that is the result of migration, may be reinforced by the fact that the average number of migrants moving into urban settlements is higher than the net migration, since migrants are also moving out. In short, increasing mobility and migration back and forth between rural and urban areas can give the illusion that migrants are contributing more to urban population growth than they actually are.*

#### **Migration, urban capacities and the risks of exclusion**

*In low-income settings in particular, rapid rural–urban (net) migration can in principle contribute to infrastructure, housing and service shortages, and create financial and delivery problems for the urban residents. But it is important not to exaggerate these problems or the role of migration in creating them. Urban capacities are increased by the economic growth that typically accompanies well-managed urbanisation, and if this capacity can be tapped the net effect of migration, particularly when assessed nationally, is likely to be positive. Alternatively, the negative pressures that result from rapid population growth are much more severe when urban expansion is poorly planned and urban governance is inequitable or ineffectual. Moreover, when urban responsible local governments and national agencies. It can also add to crowding and congestion, creating problems for other governments respond to migration fears by trying to be less accommodating to low-income migrants, the results tend to be counterproductive and ironically force low-income residents, and not just migrants, into the very sort of overcrowded and underserved informal settlements taken to reflect overly rapid urbanisation.*

#### **Urbanisation and economic growth**

Net rural–urban migration typically accompanies economic growth until a country is predominantly urban. One of the obvious explanations for the net movement of people from rural to urban locations during the course of a country’s development is that there are net economic advantages from doing so. As illustrated in Figure 2, which overlays the relationship between urbanisation and per capita income in 1980 and 2010, there is a strong and persistent relationship between urbanisation and economic status. The urban economics that explain why urbanisation would be expected to have economic benefits has progressed considerably in recent decades, and these benefits are more widely recognised (Glaeser 2011; Krugman 2011). Urbanisation clearly brings challenges as well as benefits, but it is hard to find sustained economic growth without urbanisation (World Bank, 2009). In high-income countries, there is also evidence that larger urban settlements are more productive than smaller ones, and the same is likely to apply in lower-income countries, although the evidence is less clear (Turok and McGranahan 2013).



**Figure (2) National levels of urbanisation and per capita income, 1980 and 2010**

Many of the reasons economists give for why modern trade and production offer an economic advantage to people and enterprises who agglomerate in urban centres revolve around specialisation, the lower per unit costs of large-scale production, and clustering to reduce transport and transaction costs. In a simple account of industrial urbanisation, the shift from agriculture reduces the need for production to be dispersed across the arable landscape, returns to scale create the incentive for individual manufacturers to concentrate their production, and lower transport costs create the incentive for producers and workers to locate near large markets (Krugman, 2011; Krugman 1991).

*For post-industrial economies, the less tangible benefits of agglomeration become more prominent, such as the better opportunities for informal knowledge sharing and networking that larger settlements provide (Storper and Venables, 2004). Such benefits are also likely to be present at lower levels of income, but may be hidden by the importance of industry-related incentives to urbanise. More comprehensive lists of the economic advantages of agglomeration have been formulated and classified (Turok and McGranahan, 2013).*

*In addition to the agglomeration economies already noted, others commonly mentioned include the ability of cities to support large-scale infrastructure such as hospitals, airports and universities, the benefits for specialisation that the concentration of production and demand can provide, the benefits of matching supply and demand requirements that bigger markets can offer, along with various other benefits associated with large-scale processes and large markets. Alternatively, some researchers have argued that economic growth and urbanisation require support. Thus, a recent statistical review of spatial variations in India's economic growth noted the statistical significance of urbanisation in explaining rapid economic growth also the economic importance of facilitating migration, for example by providing more adequate transportation infrastructure and laws and welfare policies that do not discriminate against migrants (Das et al. 2015).*

*It should be kept in mind that few of the advantages and disadvantages of agglomeration are the inevitable outcome of economic and demographic concentration; they depend on how, where and which enterprises and people come together. Some of the advantages are more likely to arise through people coming together in the manner they choose and are difficult to achieve through centralised planning. Other advantages, such as large-scale infrastructure, can only be created through collective action and planning and are lost if people and enterprises are left to operate independently. Many rely on the combined contributions of private, state and civil society actors. In effect, the benefits of size need to be seized, and much depends on cities being able to solve a range of governance and planning problems, while at the same time enabling markets to function efficiently and equitably. The challenge is not to create more and bigger cities but to create better cities, some of which can benefit by becoming larger.*

### ***Urban poverty and exposure to risk***

*Our understanding of urban poverty has advanced much in the last 25 years. From being considered and measured primarily as inadequate income in relation to food costs, it is now understood to have many dimensions and many external causes (see Figure 3).*

*However, there has been less progress in measuring and monitoring urban poverty. This is both in relation to income-based poverty definitions (where national or international poverty lines are still applied without attention to the actual costs of food and non-food needs in each urban centre) and in relation to the other dimensions of poverty listed in Figure 3. For instance, there are no statistics that measure who (within the rural and urban populations) has access to safe and sustainable water supplies (as discussed in more detail later). There are also no data for urban populations for many of the other deprivations listed in Figure 3.*



### ***The many dimensions of urban poverty***

*Although references are often made to those who ‘live in poverty’, it is rare for housing conditions to be considered within definitions of poverty. If monetary poverty lines are applied to urban populations or the population of a city, if these are based primarily on the cost of food they can suggest that there is little urban poverty – when, in fact, around a billion urban dwellers*

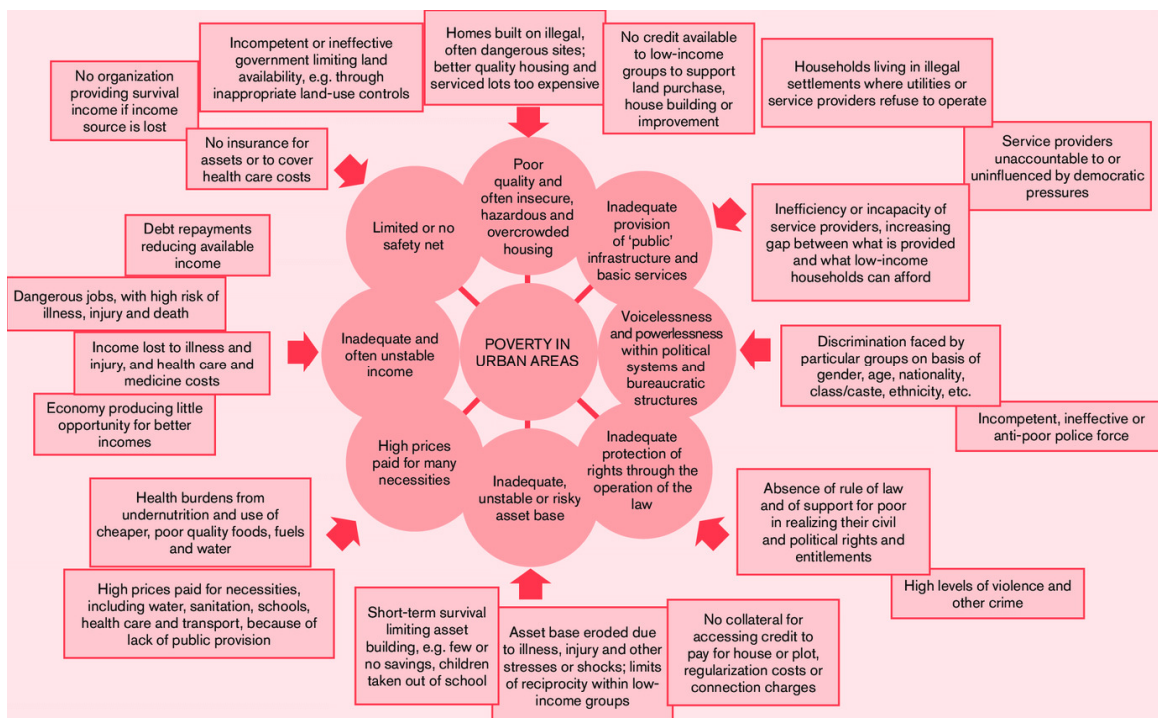
*‘live in poverty’ in overcrowded tenements or cheap boarding houses, informal settlements or temporary camps (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013). Since most such housing is considered ‘illegal’, usually their inhabitants do not have access to public infrastructure (all-weather roads, water piped to homes, sewer connections and drains) or services (including health care, emergency services, safety nets and pre-schools and schools).*

*What is important here is the recognition that the basis for people’s exclusion from infrastructure and service provision is on the basis of the settlements they live in, not whether or not they are migrants. However, migrants may be disproportionately represented within some of the worst-quality informal settlements (for instance, temporary camps for construction workers or small temporary structures on public land or settlements set up by recent migrants often on the urban periphery). Migration flows to urban areas will generally include a range of income groups (including individuals and households that are not low income) but they will also often include rural migrants pushed to urban areas by drought, livelihood loss or debt and (in many countries) conflict. These groups may have particular difficulties finding accommodation they can afford. They may be concentrated in among the most insecure and worst-served settlements, often in peripheral locations (Khrishna et al. 2014).*

*However, it is important to stress that the rapid growth of those living in informal settlements is fuelled far more by the growing number of people (city-born, have been in the city for many years, recent migrants) who cannot afford to buy, rent or build formal housing. In addition, the growth in informal settlements is not so much related to the rate of a city’s population growth (and the contribution of net in-migration to this) as to the competence, capacity and accountability of its government. Many cities that have grown rapidly have a low proportion of their population in informal settlements, and are close to universal coverage for basic infrastructure and services (United Cities and Local Governments 2014).*

*Figure 3 also points to other deprivations associated with urban poverty. Many are in part a consequence of living in informal settlements where local governments and utilities are not allowed to provide services or choose not to do so. These deprivations include a lack of policing (often in areas with high levels of violence and other crimes), a lack of financial services (as these often require legal addresses*

and official land tenure documents) and no safety net. The lack of provision for public services also means higher prices (and often poor quality provision) for private services for instance water vendors or kiosks, latrine-emptying services, schools and health care. Those who lack a legal address (and few informal settlements have legal addresses) may not be able to access state entitlements or get on the voter's register. So perhaps the most recent discovery in our learning about the multiple deprivations that low-income urban dwellers suffer is the lack of any influence on how poverty is defined, measured and acted on. But this is now one of the key discussions (ACHR 2014).



**Figure (3) Deprivations associated with urban poverty and their immediate external causes**

### **Urbanisation and rural–urban migration as a policy challenge**

Although urbanisation generally contributes to economic development and hence to urban capacities, growing towns and cities in low-income countries often face severe urban housing, infrastructure and service deficiencies as well as various forms of urban congestion. During periods of rapid urbanisation it is easy to blame these shortfalls on migration. When net migration is adding a couple of per cent to the growth in the number of people and households living in an urban centre, this can double the demand for new housing and infrastructure (depending on natural growth rates and the need for replacement). Helping to ensure these demands are met is a serious policy challenge, but taking measures to inhibit migration is unlikely to be a good solution and can easily cause severe hardship, not just for current and aspiring migrants but for low-income urban populations generally. There are several reasons to be wary of attempts to improve urban conditions by inhibiting rural–urban migration, even ignoring the economic

*benefits of urbanisation. First, slowing rural to urban migration efficiently and equitably is very difficult. Second, in conditions of poverty and inequality it cannot be assumed that providers are simply falling behind: in part, the deficiencies are likely to reflect the lack of individual capacities among low-income residents to pay for adequate housing and services combined with a lack of public willingness and capacity to make up this deficit. Third, there are many other factors that may be preventing the more deprived residents from securing access to land, services and other urban amenities, some of which are made worse by policies that make it more difficult for migrants to settle. Finally, if people have to stay in rural areas, where conditions are even worse, inhibiting migration may maintain urban average conditions, but national averages are likely to suffer.*

*For publically provided infrastructure and services in particular, it is important to plan for future demands and needs, which depend on migration but also on other demographic and economic factors (Heller, 2010).*

*For most public services, per capita capital costs are higher in smaller than in larger settlements, and some are especially high in isolated rural locations (Foster and Briceño-Garmendia, 2010, Table 5: 131). When demands and needs shift from rural to urban, costs go down, even if in some cases the need for provision increases and the costs reduce less (for example, the costs of on-site sanitation do not decline significantly but the consequences of not having sanitation facilities is particularly severe in urban locations). There is an important role for the public sector, including both local and national governments, in helping to take advantage of the urban benefits.*

*Governments in low-income countries generally receive a much lower share of their country's income than do governments in high-income countries, and almost none provide free or heavily subsidised housing and services to a significant share of their population. A recent review of changes in governance and service delivery in Africa describes the difficulties urban governments and service providers have encountered in different parts of Africa, trying to cope with housing and service deficiencies alongside rapid population growth and the structural adjustments being promoted internationally (Stren, 2014). Despite important institutional differences in the early post-colonial period, particularly between Francophone and Anglophone countries, there is a general tendency for urban governments in Africa to have relatively small revenues, even as a share of national income. Moreover, most international financial institutions, including the development banks, have argued strongly against trying to provide subsidised housing and services at scale.*

*Where governments are unable or unwilling to provide services to those most in need, it is particularly important that they help people to provide for themselves. A historical review of water and sanitation infrastructure development in Kisumu (Kenya) during the second half of the 20th century (Drangert et al. 2002) found that as the population started to grow rapidly after independence in 1963, the expansion of the formal water and sanitation infrastructure and related public service provision lagged behind. People turned to their own smaller-scale solutions, such as private wells and latrines. Unfortunately, the local council was more likely to harass those pursuing these small-scale alternatives than to accommodate and seek to improve them. This did not reduce population growth, and actually undermined service provision, although at least ostensibly the actions were taken in an effort to maintain standards.*

*As urban settlements grow, low-income groups (including low-income migrants) also benefit when the processes of settlement expansion and densification are suited to their needs. Well-located land tends to become more expensive. However, there are ways of providing more affordable yet liveable housing by increasing density incrementally or in a participatory fashion. In Karachi, for*

*example, small plot-based approaches have achieved high levels of density (Hasan et al. 2010). In Bangkok, housing designed and built with the participation of future residents has achieved levels of density comparable to public housing blocks, but has provided significantly more satisfaction to their residents (Usavagovitwong et al. 2013). At the same time, it is also important to open up land for development in response to expected growth (Angel, 2008), and attempts at urban containment that ignore the need for low-income housing can be regressive (Angel, 2012). In addition to creating housing problems for some of the most vulnerable residents, a lack of affordable housing can exacerbate tensions, where they exist, between existing low-income residents and new migrants.*

*Unfortunately, both the dominant planning paradigms and some powerful urban interests have a tendency to restrict the supply of affordable urban housing. In periods of rapid population growth and urbanisation, restrictive zoning and by-laws can limit the supply of affordable housing just when it needs to expand. Developer-led housing is often less restricted, but is rarely affordable to low-income groups without extreme overcrowding. In many urban areas of Latin America, Asia and Africa, formal restrictions have been accompanied by informal developments, where many low-income residents live. Such settlements are often a testament to human ingenuity, but services are often extremely limited, particularly when security of tenure is low and governments are restricting services on the grounds that the residents should not be living there. When later attempts are made to upgrade informal settlements, part of the urban cost advantage is lost as retrofitting infrastructure into informal settlements not designed to accommodate it tends to be expensive (Heller 2010: 9). Upgrading through retrofitting is generally greatly preferable to relocating informal settlements and lower-cost options are sometimes available (Hasan, 2010), but all other things being equal, proactive planning of low-cost settlements is socially as well as economically preferable, at least from a national perspective.*

*The lack of proactive planning to accommodate rapid urban growth can come from policies intended to exclude migrants. As a well-known urban economist put it in a recent review of cities and development: "While it is tempting to view slum development as an inevitable part of the urbanisation process, due to the strain on evolving local fiscal and land market institutions in the face of rapid development, it may be in part intentional, driven by local policies which intend to restrain in-migration through offering very poor living conditions for migrants." (Henderson, 2010) Such an approach may benefit a powerful segment of the urban population, but it does not benefit the poorest urban dwellers whose populations are growing, the low-income migrants looking to find a foothold in the town or city, or the rural dwellers who remain behind. Moreover, it is an approach that is in danger of pitting different cities against each other, trying to attract capital and repel potentially burdensome or disruptive people. National regulation may be needed in order to overcome such nationally destructive urban competition.*

*More generally, contestation over urban land can limit the land available for low-income residents and migrants. While the ideal is often presented as one of planners selectively intervening in urban land markets in the interests of the public, reality is always more complex and usually far more problematic. A recent study of land contestation in Karachi revealed a wide range of power brokers, strategic land investments and dysfunctional markets, often involving migrant politics, but with no efficient or equitable provision of land for urban growth (Hasan et al. 2013). The struggles over the control of urban land were also central in China's recent period of urbanisation, although these conflicts have so far been resolved in ways that favour economic growth, if not social equity (Hsing 2010; McGranahan et al. 2014). Such*

*politics not only influence the life chances of migrants but also the consequences of rural–urban migration for urban and national development. Especially in circumstances where ethnic conflict is already rife, one would expect migration to be a potential source of conflict. More generally, one can expect political consequences with migration. Care must be taken not to exaggerate the disruptive consequences of rapid urban population growth, however. A study of urban social disturbances in 55 major cities in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa found that urban social disorder was associated with a lack of consistent political institutions, economic shocks and ongoing civil conflict, but could not corroborate the claim that urban population pressure is a factor (Buhaug and Urdal, 2013).*

*A recent study of urban growth in the emerging economies concluded that “cities and nations must anticipate urbanisation and accommodate urban growth proactively, so as not to be left with an enduring legacy of inequalities and lost opportunities” (McGranahan and Martine 2014). Efforts to curb rural–urban migration have generally not been successful at controlling the process, but have nevertheless created serious hardship and inequalities that often persist long after concerns about controlling urbanisation have past. The often difficult experiences of the BRICS provide ample lessons for other urbanising countries, and are especially relevant as they are located in quite different parts of the world.*

*Rural–urban migration has been contentious in South Africa for more than a century, with the apartheid system the epitome of an oppressive, racially discriminatory system of controls on movement whose negative impacts are still felt today (Turok, 2014). When the apartheid system was disbanded, urbanisation speeded up but South Africa’s cities are still economically fractured and socially segregated. The durability of the urban form and the power of vested interests have reinforced persistent inequalities between the races and imposed economic costs, well into the democratic era.*

*Rural–urban migration has also been contentious in Brazil, although resistance was more passive (Martine and McGranahan, 2013). In a complex political compromise, many migrants and other low-income urban residents were left to occupy legally ambiguous informal settlements known as favelas, with very limited tenure security, access to services and other urban rights. More recently, as Brazil’s urban transition has run its course, the country has experimented with various measures to reduce urban inequalities and has tried to enshrine urban rights in its Statute of the City (Rolnik 2013; Santos Carvalho and Rossbach, 2010). Inequalities have indeed started to decline, but Brazil remains one of most unequal countries in the world and its favelas still reflect the inequalities built into its past urbanisation and the treatment of low-income migrants, which spilled over to affect almost all low-income urban dwellers.*

*Rural–urban migration of a sort has been actively encouraged in China since liberalization started in earnest, and China is still one of few countries that actively encourage net migration to urban areas (United Nations, 2013a). An experimental and incremental approach to urbanisation – built in part around its approach to rural–urban migration – has been central to its immensely successful economic growth strategy (McGranahan et al. 2014). However, the hukou registration system that still persists in China once played a major role in controlling rural–urban migration and can still greatly limit the rights of those who cannot secure a local hukou registration. The hukou system was maintained in part to prevent rural–urban migrants from gaining the rights conferred on registered urban dwellers and becoming a financial burden on local authorities or the central government. However, as even the Chinese central government recognises, phasing out the hukou system remains a major challenge, in part because of the social divisions it has helped to entrench.*

*Net rural–urban migration has been somewhat slower in India than one might have expected given its economic status and performance (Kundu, 2014). This is creating problems in rural India, but is also reflected in increasingly harsh treatment of urban informal settlements and 'encroachment', particularly in cities aspiring to 'world city' status. India has been the home to some inspiring organizations of the urban poor (Appadurai, 2001). Nevertheless, in Delhi the exclusion of relatively disadvantaged urban dwellers, including but not limited to low-income migrants, has been driven by 'public interest legislation' and participatory processes that might superficially be thought to support inclusive urbanisation (Bhan, 2014). This may benefit the urban elites, or perhaps even a majority of existing urban dwellers, but tends to exclude the poorest groups.*

*Russia urbanised under a Soviet central planning model that favoured a pro-industrial and essentially pro-urban model of development. This places it outside of the conventional debates about urbanisation and excessive rural–urban migration. During the Soviet Union's period of rapid urbanisation between the world wars, the economy did industrialise successfully and growth was sufficient to raise fears in Western countries. However, throughout the Soviet era population movements were relatively tightly controlled, and costs arose from people and enterprises not being able to seek out more economically desirable locations (Becker et al. 2014). Cities are clearly not places where people and production facilities should simply be allowed to locate wherever they want, with only property rights and the free market to guide them. In economically successful cities, however, markets do play an important role in guiding location.*

*Overall, the experiences of the BRICS clearly point to the dangers of attempting to restrict the urban transition. Many of the most serious social problems in South Africa and Brazil stem from their attempts to inhibit rural–urban migration, of which Brazil's was far. Despite the increasingly pro-urban perspective among influential segments of the research community, policymakers in rapidly urbanising countries remain unconvinced, as indicated by the United Nations surveys cited above, which show an increasing aversion to urban concentration, particularly in low-income countries (United Nations, 2013a). Indeed, in the policy arena there has been a relatively constant refrain of concern when there is rapid urbanisation in relatively low-income settings. Part of what makes it difficult to resolve policy debates about whether urbanisation is taking place too fast is that the symptoms urban detractors cite to demonstrate that urbanisation is proceeding too rapidly are the same as those cited by urban supporters as evidence of insufficient investment in public services and of exclusionary policies that make it difficult for low-income groups to access the benefits of urbanisation. Thus, while urban detractors see in 'slums' a surfeit of people who should not have come to the city without a decent place to live, urban proponents see in the same 'slums' legitimate residents struggling in the face of planning failures and outright discrimination. While urban detractors see informal enterprises as places where the urban poor eke out an unproductive living in unacceptable working conditions, proponents see them as innovative endeavours contributing to the urban economy and receiving too little formal support in return.*

### **Conclusions:**

*In this paper, we have argued that in many cases when urban governments try to reduce or control rural–urban migration, this also affects low-income residents and not just migrants. Blaming urban poverty on migrants is not realistic, as not all migrants are poor. In many cities, however, migrants form a large proportion of the urban poor with whom they share income and non-income disadvantages, including difficulties in finding adequate housing and in accessing services. At the*

*same time, like the majority of the urban poor, they work long hours in low-paid, insecure and unsafe jobs and are exposed to a wide range of environmental hazards because of the lack of basic infrastructure in most low-income and informal settlements.*

*Cities and municipal governments have a huge importance in addressing the needs of their residents. But in many cases, they lack resources and capacity and, perhaps most importantly, political will, as described in Section 3. There is also an underestimated lack of information on who lives in informal low-income settlements; more accurate data, including migrant status, is clearly a priority, since in many cases migrants make up a considerable share of those groups. One key disadvantage for migrants is the lack of registration in the destination area. But lack of full civic rights is in many instances linked to the place where people live rather than to their migrant status. In India, approximately half of all 'slums' are not recognised by the government, with huge implications for their residents, ranging from lack of access to basic services and infrastructure to difficulty in accessing official documents because informal residential arrangements make it impossible to prove residency. This, in turn, has wide-ranging impacts on low-income groups, including poor migrants, who cannot access social protection programmes and compensation after disasters and calamities (Subbaraman et al. 2012). It is also difficult to understand migrant-specific policies in isolation from the wider context of economic growth models and their social and political corollaries. In China, the public rental housing scheme, implemented throughout the major cities, is the only programme that, since 2010, explicitly addresses the housing needs of migrants who are not entitled to the local household registration (hukou). However, few migrants have benefited from it. In Shanghai, there is a considerable gap between the policy and its implementation, and low-skilled migrants are deliberately ignored despite their contribution to the city's economy. This is consistent with the city's development strategy, which seeks to reduce labour-intensive manufacturing in favour of high-level services and is therefore making an effort to attract highly skilled migrants while at the same time discouraging low-skilled ones from extending their stay in Shanghai (Shen, 2015). Widespread evictions of low-income households are increasingly commonplace in cities of the global South that aspire to a status of 'world city', with prestige projects funded by international investors and inhabited by predominantly middle-income residents. In this framing, the status of migrants – even after several decades – contributes to the marginalisation of low-income residents of informal settlements (Bhan, 2014).*

*Inclusive urbanisation that addresses the needs of diverse low-income groups, be they migrants or long-term residents, remains elusive in many fast-growing cities of the global South. There are, however, several examples of initiatives and programmes to reduce urban poverty that build on the capacities of the residents of low-income settlements to work with local governments in providing the necessary but generally missing information. One example is that of enumerations conducted by local grassroots*

*organisations (Karanja 2010; Farouk and Owusu 2012). These enumerations include temporary residents, people sharing accommodation and all those who are typically 'invisible' in official censuses and surveys – that is, a large proportion of migrants. Collaboration between organisations of residents of low-income urban settlements and local governments is also essential in the long term with regard to the provision of adequate and affordable housing and basic services to reduce deprivation (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014). Overall, however, perhaps the most important element in successfully managing fast-growing cities is ensuring full citizenship rights to all groups. The lack of this is often a key disadvantage for migrants; but it is also a root cause of the marginalisation of many low-income groups.*

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