

Urbanization

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I. INTRODUCTION

The population of the Arab region is around 320 million people, living in 22 countries stretching from Morocco and Algeria in the west to Yemen and Oman in the east. The region is characterized by a wide diversity, not just in political, ethnic, social, cultural, and economic terms, but also in terms of the progress that individual states have made in terms of development. In terms of sub-regional divisions, we consider four main groupings, bearing in mind that some LDC group members tend to also belong to another group: Arab Least Developed Countries (LDCs), the Mashreq and the Maghreb regions, and the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC).¹ Taken together, the Arab countries offer examples of conflict and post-conflict situations; range from very open economies to economic isolation; and display highly urbanized to predominantly rural populations.

Urbanization in the Arab region has been fuelled by high fertility rates, substantial rural-urban migration, international labour migration and the concentration of economic activity in urban areas. Housing policies have also contributed to urban growth. Infrastructure development has not kept pace with this growth (UNFPA, 1996). Rural development activities often intended to counter urbanization trends, have received low priority policy attention. The states in the GCC have some of the world's highest rates of labour immigration. Migrants are concentrated in the Gulf cities, contributing to this sub-region's high urbanization levels.

Over the last few decades, infrastructure improvements in the Arab region brought drinking water to 82 percent of the population, and sanitation to most of those living in urban areas. However, progress slowed in the 1990s and in some countries has reversed. Since 1990 the percentage of people living below \$1 per day has not improved, and the percentage living below \$2 per day has increased from 21 to 23 percent of the population. According to World Bank estimates, adopting the income poverty line \$1/day per person does not reflect reality in the Arab region: some countries, namely in the GCC, are classified as high income, while many of those in the Mashreq and Maghreb are considered middle income (ESCWA, 2005).

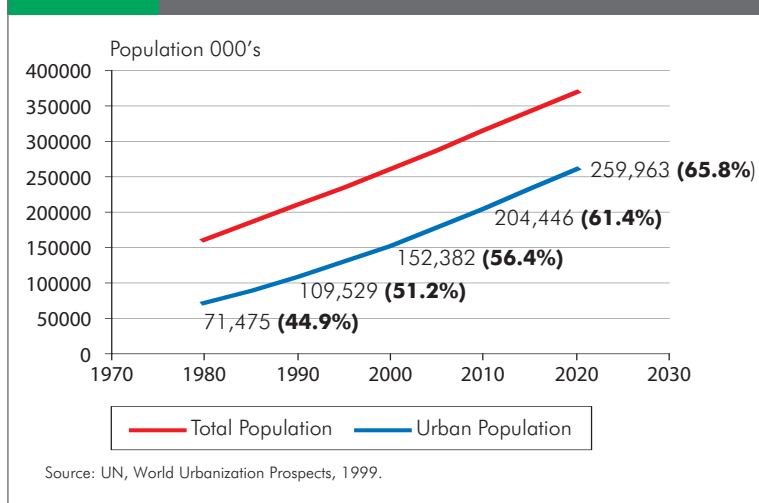
The region once had the highest population growth rates in the world. Fertility declined significantly in the 1990s, but the growth rate is still high – about 2 percent compared to 1.4 percent for the less-developed world as a whole. In addition, the region's relatively high proportion of youths means that the population is expected to grow strongly in the future. UN-Habitat projects that the region will be home to some 395 million people by 2020 (compared to about 303.9 million in 2003, and 144.6 million in 1975). It will be a challenge for the countries of the region to ensure that population growth is matched by corresponding social and economic development. (Figure 1 shows the total population of the Arab region between 1980-2015).

II. URBANISATION TRENDS IN THE ARAB STATES

The Arab region is marked by the widespread and very swift expansion of cities, with this high level of urbanization bringing about a range of social, economic, and demographic changes. Today, urban areas account for 56 percent of the total population of 320 million; this figure is projected to increase to 66% by 2020. The “urban explosion” witnessed in the Arab world has not just been evident in the massive growth of the region's major cities, but small- and medium-sized towns have also shown high and speedy levels of urbanization and development.

Rapid population growth remains a major challenge. Some countries have annual population

FIGURE 1 ARAB STATES REGION- POPULATION 1980- 2015





growth rates between 3 and 5.5 percent, while some urban growth rates are even higher: 6.4 percent (Iraq), 5.9 percent (United Arab Emirates), and 4.1 percent (Oman and Bahrain). Urban growth rates will remain higher than total population growth rates for the foreseeable future. Although these changes show a sustained increase in the Arab states, they give rise to a process of urbanisation that is far from uniform. The diversity of national situations and the existence of distinct urban traditions in each country explain the heterogeneity of the urban contexts (Kharoufi, 1996).

In the region's more diversified economies, urban growth has been the result of rural-to-urban migration as well as high fertility and declining rates of mortality. In some countries, however, high rates of urbanization have been stimulated by transnational migration as well as natural increase (UN-Habitat, 2001).

Urban population is greatest in the smaller states (Kuwait 97 percent, the Gaza Strip 95 percent, and Bahrain and Qatar 92 percent). Saudi Arabia, one of the largest Arab states, is 86 percent urban and this figure is projected to rise to 89 percent by 2010. Egypt is 45 percent urban and Sudan 36 percent. Both countries will

remain among the region's least-urbanized in the years to come. Table 1 shows Size and Growth of Urban and Rural Populations, Urbanization Trends.

At present, there are 19 mega-cities in the world (i.e. with populations exceeding 10 million), with a total population of over 275 million and 8.8% of the world's urban population, four of which are from developed parts of the world. The other 15 mega-cities are from the developing world. Cairo is the only mega-city in the Arab region with 11.1 million inhabitants.

In the Arab states, the urban framework often appears to be in a state of disequilibrium due to geographical constraints. This common feature does not apply a similar pattern of development. Apart from the "City States" of the Gulf Cooperation Council, where the presence of one metropolis dominates the whole urban system, varying degrees of unbalance can be noted in the other countries (Kharoufi, 1996).

In the case of the Maghreb, (Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Tunisia), despite initial restoration of the balance of regional disparities with regard to the concentration of city dwellers, the coastal regions still display the highest degree

TABLE 1 SIZE AND GROWTH OF URBAN AND RURAL POPULATIONS, URBANIZATION TRENDS

	Level of Urbanization (%)			Urban Population Estimates & Projections (thousands)		
	2000	2015	2030	2000	2015	2030
WORLD	47.0	53.4	60.3	2,845,049	3,817,292	4,889,393
More developed regions	76.0	79.7	83.5	902,993	968,223	1,009,808
Less developed regions	39.9	48.0	56.2	1,942,056	2,849,069	3,879,585
AFRICA	37.9	46.5	54.5	297,139	501,015	765,709
Algeria	60.3	68.5	74.4	18,969	28,214	36,721
Comoros	33.2	42.6	52.2	231	425	656
Djibouti	83.3	86.3	88.8	531	747	975
Egypt	45.2	51.2	59.9	30,954	43,641	60,115
Libya	87.6	90.3	92.0	4,911	6,841	8,465
Mauritania	57.7	68.6	74.4	1,541	2,665	3,856
Morocco	56.1	65.6	72.0	15,902	22,829	29,139
Somalia	27.5	35.9	45.8	2,776	5,869	10,846
Sudan	36.1	48.7	57.7	10,652	19,381	28,237
Tunisia	65.5	73.5	78.4	6,281	8,528	10,491
ASIA	36.7	44.7	53.4	1,351,806	1,943,245	2,604,757
Bahrain	92.2	95.0	95.8	569	724	858
Palestine (Gaza Strip)**	94.6	95.5	96.2	1,060	1,897	3,095
Iraq	76.8	81.6	85.0	17,756	27,804	37,326
Jordan	74.2	79.8	83.5	4,948	7,906	10,869
Kuwait	97.6	98.2	98.5	1,924	2,574	3,067
Lebanon	89.7	92.6	93.9	2,945	3,651	4,324
Oman	84.0	92.8	94.0	2,135	3,805	5,636
Qatar	92.5	94.2	95.2	554	690	755
Saudi Arabia	85.7	89.7	91.5	18,526	29,259	39,331
Syria	54.5	62.1	69.1	8,783	14,063	19,409
UAE	85.9	88.8	90.8	2,097	2,688	3,065
Yemen	24.7	31.2	41.0	4,476	9,221	17,943
EUROPE	74.8	78.6	82.6	544,848	565,599	570,612
LATIN AMERICA	75.3	79.9	83.2	390,868	504,184	604,002
NORTHERN AMERICA	77.2	80.9	84.4	239,049	277,563	313,663
OCEANIA	70.2	71.2	74.4	21,338	25,688	30,650

Source: - United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), The State of the World's Cities 2006/7: The Millennium Development Goals and Urban Sustainability - Thirty years of Shaping the Habitat Agenda., UN Habitat -Earth scan, 2006.
 ** the available data only cover Gaza strip, and there is no available date about the rest of Palestine.

of urbanization. As for the “urban explosion” prevalent on the outskirts of big centres (Casablanca, Algiers, Tunis), a significant observation has been the intensification of relations between these centres and their outskirts (Kharoufi, 1996).

The region’s considerable internal disparities are reflected in the conditions in its cities and have resulted in widely varying domestic needs and priorities: rehabilitation and reconstruction (Iraq, Lebanon, Palestine and Somalia); poverty alleviation (Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Morocco and

Yemen); urban management and housing needs (Egypt, Jordan and Algeria); and capacity building (Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya) (UN-Habitat, 2001).

Water and sanitation

Access to acceptable drinking water sources remains a problem in the Arab region. Between 1990 and 2004, the proportion of the population using such water sources was constant at around 82%. Regional disparities exist: there were

Annual Growth Rate (%)		Rural Population Estimates & Projections (thousands)			Annual Growth Rate (%)	
2000-2015	2015-2030	2000	2015	2030	2000-2015	2015-2030
2.0	1.7	3,210,000	3,337,074	3,222,587	0.3	-0.2
0.5	0.3	284,987	246,171	199,699	-1.0	-1.4
2.6	2.1	2,925,013	3,090,903	3,022,888	0.4	-0.2
3.5	2.8	487,306	576,781	640,216	1.1	0.7
2.7	1.8	12,502	12,985	12,661	0.3	-0.2
4.1	2.9	464	573	601	1.4	0.3
2.3	1.8	106	118	124	0.7	0.3
2.3	2.1	37,515	41,583	40,256	0.7	-0.2
2.2	1.4	693	732	735	0.4	0.0
3.7	2.5	1,128	1,221	1,324	0.5	0.5
2.4	1.6	12,448	11,955	11,312	-0.3	-0.4
5.0	4.1	7,321	10,481	12,838	2.4	1.4
4.0	2.5	18,838	20,430	20,723	0.5	0.1
2.0	1.4	3,305	3,079	2,890	-0.5	-0.4
2.4	2.0	2,330,744	2,403,649	2,271,823	0.2	-0.4
1.6	1.1	48	38	38	-1.6	-
3.9	3.3	61	90	121	2.6	2.0
3.0	2.0	5,359	6,259	6,603	1.0	0.4
3.1	2.1	1,721	2,003	2,150	1.0	0.5
1.9	1.2	47	48	48	0.1	-
1.4	1.1	337	291	282	-1.0	-0.2
3.9	2.6	407	297	360	-2.1	1.3
1.5	0.6	45	42	38	-0.5	-0.7
3.1	2.0	3,081	3,364	3,660	0.6	0.6
3.1	2.2	7,342	8,583	8,669	1.0	0.1
1.7	0.9	344	339	311	-0.1	-0.6
4.8	4.4	13,636	20,374	25,791	2.7	1.6
0.3	0.1	184,039	153,709	120,364	-1.2	-1.6
1.7	1.2	128,275	126,931	121,534	-0.1	-0.3
1.0	0.8	70,582	65,602	58,112	-0.5	-0.8
1.2	1.2	9,055	10,401	10,538	0.9	0.1

improvements in the GCC, Mashreq, and Maghreb, raising the percentages there to 100%, 94%, and 86%, respectively, but the percentage for the Arab LDCs fell from 68% to 63%. It is clear, therefore, that more efforts still need to be made in order to improve the situation for the people still without adequate access to drinking water (ESCWA/LAS, 2007).

There still exist wide discrepancies between rural and urban populations when it comes to access to improved water sources; in 2004, the proportion of the population with such access

in rural areas was 13% less than that in urban areas. This big difference can primarily be explained by the considerable divide between urban and rural populations in the Maghreb; 56% of the Maghreb population live in Morocco, where the percentages for urban and rural are 99% and 56%, respectively. For Arab LDCs, the situation is equally grim: almost half the rural population has no access to improved water sources. It is clear that national development strategies in the region need to take this problem into account and close the rural-urban gap (El-Habr, 2007).

TABLE 2 URBAN AGGLOMERATIONS POPULATION SIZE AND GROWTH RATE

		Estimates and Projections (thousands)						
		1985	1990	1995	2000	2005	2010	2015
AFRICA								
Algeria	Algiers	1,480	1,561	1,687	1,885	2,142	2,407	2,622
Algeria	Oran	604	679	774	895	1,034	1,171	1,282
Egypt	Alexandria	2,835	3,212	3,648	4,113	4,586	5,051	5,525
Egypt	Cairo	7,691	8,572	9,533	10,552	11,605	12,664	13,751
Egypt	Shubra El-Khemia	661	789	906	1,033	1,163	1,294	1,430
Libya	Benghazi	508	634	752	871	987	1,087	1,171
Libya	Tripoli	1,040	1,318	1,573	1,822	2,056	2,253	2,413
Mali	Bamako	599	738	912	1,131	1,404	1,738	2,130
Morocco	Casablanca	2,387	2,721	3,101	3,541	4,019	4,477	4,862
Morocco	Rabat	967	1,118	1,293	1,496	1,716	1,926	2,105
Somalia	Mogadishu	548	779	965	1,219	1,552	1,955	2,443
Sudan	Khartoum	1,485	1,828	2,249	2,731	3,299	3,950	4,615
Tunisia	Tunis	1,428	1,568	1,722	1,897	2,087	2,279	2,454
ASIA								
Gaza Strip	Gaza Strip (Urban)	486	601	853	1,060	1,299	1,575	1,897
Iraq	Arbil	691	1,157	1,743	2,369	2,925	3,380	3,768
Iraq	Baghdad	3,681	4,039	4,336	4,797	5,438	6,155	6,833
Iraq	Mosul	603	744	879	1,034	1,210	1,390	1,560
Jordan	Amman	782	955	1,179	1,430	1,700	1,965	2,212
Kuwait	Kuwait City	942	1,090	1,090	1,190	1,313	1,418	1,513
Lebanon	Beirut	1,385	1,582	1,826	2,055	2,238	2,366	2,468
Saudi Arabia	Jeddah	952	1,216	1,492	1,810	2,139	2,460	2,753
Saudi Arabia	Mecca	550	663	777	919	1,079	1,244	1,399
Saudi Arabia	Riyadh	1,401	1,975	2,619	3,324	3,990	4,587	5,111
Syria	Aleppo	1,288	1,543	1,840	2,173	2,536	2,923	3,305
Syria	Damascus	1,585	1,790	2,036	2,335	2,694	3,096	3,500
UAE	Abu Dhabi	415	624	799	927	1,022	1,093	1,153
Yemen	Sana'a	402	678	965	1,303	1,697	2,157	2,709

Source : - United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), The State of the World's Cities, 2006/7: The Millennium Development Goals and Urban Sustainability - Thirty years of Shaping the Habitat Agenda., UN Habitat -Earth scan, 2006.

Figure 2 indicates the proportion of the population using improved drinking water sources, 2004 (%).

As for access to sanitation facilities, we can observe slow improvement in the Arab sub-regions during the last 15 years. In 2004, the proportion of the population in Arab LDCs with access to improved sanitation facilities was only 42% compared to 99% in the GCC, 87% in the Maghreb, and 84% in the Mashreq. Nonetheless, at this pace, an estimated 124 million people in the Arab region will remain without access to sanitation facilities by 2015, and 50% of these people will be living in the Arab LDCs (ESCWA/LAS, 2007).

Figure 3 indicates the proportion of population using improved sanitation facilities, 2004 (%).

As with access to clean water, access to sanitation facilities varies widely between urban and rural areas; the difference is particularly striking in the Arab LDCs, where the figure stands at 26% and 60% for rural and urban areas, respectively. Nonetheless, the aforementioned improvements of the last 15 years have mostly been due to improved access in rural areas in the region. In fact, it is interesting to note that the proportion of rural populations with access to clean sanitation facilities improved by 13%, 14%, and 8% in the GCC, Mashreq, and Maghreb regions, respectively, rising

	Annual Growth Rate (%)			Share in Country's Urban Population %		
	1985-1995	1995-2005	2005-2015	1985	2000	2015
AFRICA						
	1.3	2.4	2.0	14.1	9.9	9.3
	2.5	2.9	2.2	5.8	4.7	4.5
	2.5	2.3	1.9	13.0	13.3	12.7
	2.2	2.0	1.7	35.2	34.1	31.5
	3.2	2.5	2.1	3.0	3.3	3.3
	3.9	2.7	1.7	17.5	17.7	17.1
	4.1	2.7	1.6	35.9	37.1	35.3
	4.2	4.3	4.2	36.0	33.5	31.9
	2.6	2.6	1.9	24.7	22.3	21.3
	2.9	2.8	2.0	10.0	9.4	9.2
	5.7	4.8	4.5	36.1	43.9	41.6
	4.2	3.8	3.4	30.9	25.6	23.8
	1.9	1.9	1.6	36.2	30.2	28.8
ASIA						
	5.6	4.2	3.8
	9.3	5.2	2.5	6.6	13.3	13.6
	1.6	2.3	2.3	35.0	27.0	24.6
	3.8	3.2	2.5	5.7	5.8	5.6
	4.1	3.7	2.6	29.6	28.9	28.0
	1.5	1.9	1.4	58.4	61.8	58.8
	2.8	2.0	1.0	65.4	69.8	67.6
	4.5	3.6	2.5	10.4	9.8	9.4
	3.5	3.3	2.6	6.0	5.0	4.8
	6.3	4.2	2.5	15.2	17.9	17.5
	3.6	3.2	2.7	25.6	24.7	23.5
	2.5	2.8	2.6	31.5	26.6	24.9
	6.6	2.5	1.2	34.8	44.2	42.9
	8.8	6.5	4.7	18.8	29.1	29.4

from 54% to 59% in rural areas in the Arab region as a whole. At the same time, the percentage fell in urban areas from 87% to 85%, though this fall can partly be attributed to the increased pressures on urban infrastructures through rural-urban migration (ESCWA/LAS, 2007).

III. IMPACTS OF NEW MIGRATION PATTERNS

Changes in migration patterns and types of population mobility can be observed in the past four decades; while in the 1960s the big cities of the Arab region could still accommodate high

inflows of migrants, this rural exodus has slowed today as the absorptive capacity of these cities has lessened considerably. In fact, as indicated above, urban conditions may actually have worsened in some cases due to increased strains on existing infrastructure, such as sanitation.

In the specific case of the oil-producing Arab countries, and particularly in the GCC region, urban expansion has been strongly fuelled by international migration. In the UAE and Saudi Arabia, for example, the high urban growth rate can be attributed to the immigration of foreign workers from both Arab countries (such as Palestine, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria) and Asian

countries (such as Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, the Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Sri Lanka, and Thailand (Kharoufi, 1996).

Turning to the examples of Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia, and Egypt we find another pattern, namely that of large, medium, and even small-sized towns increasingly becoming urbanized. In Egypt, we even observe villages around towns urbanizing in this manner. Nonetheless, more research needs to be done to explore more clearly the role of small and medium-sized towns in the changing urbanization patterns in the Arab region, and the ensuing redistributive spatial dispositions. It will be interesting to study the impacts of better transportation links between rural and urban areas, on the migratory patterns between them (Kharoufi, 1996).

With their increasing urbanization, small towns in the Arab region are increasing in functional importance and capacity, for example developing service activities which include administration, education and health. Through decentralization and the downward migration of civil servants and managerial personnel, they have acquired the position of administrative, commercial and even manufacturing centres (Kharoufi, 1996).

Although the predominant pattern in the region is one of a decline of rural populations, an already-observed pattern in the 1990-2000 period, and also for the current decade, six countries in the region face both urban growth rates and



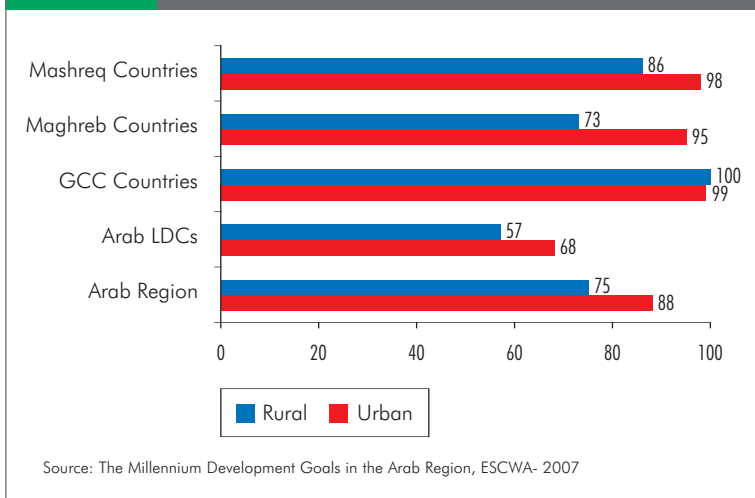
rapidly expanding rural populations. These are Yemen, the Gaza Strip, Syria, Iraq, Jordan, and Egypt (UN-Habitat, 2001).

For many countries, urban growth is still much higher than rural, and urban centres continue to hold large portions of the population. In Tunisia, for example, the Tunis district holds around one-fifth of the country's population and is exhibiting a strong population growth rate. In Algeria, 95% of the population lives in a 1200 by 100 km territory by the sea. And in Egypt, the region around Cairo and by the Nile holds a considerable proportion of the country's population.

For many of the region's major cities, existing infrastructure, such as educational facilities, work as a force attracting rural to urban migration, and cities such as Damascus, Cairo, Alexandria, and Amman can expect – and need to prepare for – strong rural to urban migration. This truly places great strains on the resources of these states and cities, dealing as they have to with dwindling resources, high demand on existing facilities, increasing poverty, and the serious environmental consequences of such highly concentrated urban populations.

Historically, there have also been instances in the Arab world of forced migrations to urban centres. Demographic changes such as these have been observed in Sudan, in 1983-1984, when about 5 million people forcibly changed their place of resident; in Mauritania, in 1989, during the conflict with Senegal; and in Iraq in 2003. "Following the invasion of Kuwait by Iraq in 1991, the Near

FIGURE 2 PROPORTION OF POPULATION USING IMPROVED DRINKING WATER SOURCES, 2004 (%)



East saw the biggest forced migration of populations of these last decades: 4 or 5 million people had to leave the Gulf region. The vastness of this migration has shattered the migratory patterns in the Near East putting the countries which furnish labour in a difficult economic and social situation” (Kharoufi, 1996). Naturally, such overwhelming population movements cause considerable difficulties for the authorities when it comes to the management of urban centres as well as the controlled expansion thereof.

Although chapter 12 deals with this issue in greater detail, it must be mentioned that political upheavals, instability, and armed conflicts have become added complications in the Arab region’s attempts at development and poverty reduction. The examples of Iraq, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the civil strife in Sudan and Somalia, and the summer 2006 conflict in Lebanon and Israel are notable examples of such highly problematic conflicts. The destruction of housing and urban infrastructure, such as in Lebanon, for example, caused migratory movements, mainly to urban centres, placing greater pressures on the already-limited infrastructure facilities thereof. In addition, terrorist acts in countries such as Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia contributed to economic insecurity and population displacement. Many conflicts such as those mentioned above have partially eroded earlier progress in development.

IV. SLUMS IN THE ARAB STATES

In the Arab region, Egypt and Tunisia are considered among the “on track” countries when it comes to reducing the numbers of slum dwellers and slum expansion.

Tunisia has succeeded in more than halving the number of slum dwellers to approximately 190,000. Egypt succeeded in reducing the number of slum dwellers by 3 million from 1990 to 2005.

On the other hand, in Sudan, one of the off-track group, the numbers of slum dwellers grew considerably during the same period. Although Morocco is doing slightly better than the off-track group when it comes to managing slum growth rates, it still has a relatively proportion of

people living in slum conditions (30%). Swift action is needed in order to reverse the process of slum formation and improve living conditions for slum dwellers.

For the Arab region as a whole, we can note that most of the Arab states still need to review and improve existing housing policies and improve performance. Table 3 shows the Population of Slum Areas at Mid- Year by Region and Country; 1990, 2001 and Slum Annual Growth Rate.

V. THE CHANGING CHARACTER OF THE ARAB CITY

A study published by ESCWA in 2005, entitled “Urbanization and the Changing Character of the Arab City” examines the role of development in shaping the character of Arab cities. The study focuses on three cities: Amman, Jordan; Dubai, UAE; and Beirut, Lebanon, considering their characteristics generalizable to other cities in the region as a whole. In particular, the study examined the effects on these cities of dynamics and processes such as rural-urban migration, population growth, and socio-economic developments, while taking into consideration the particular historical and social background of the cities (ESCWA, 2006).

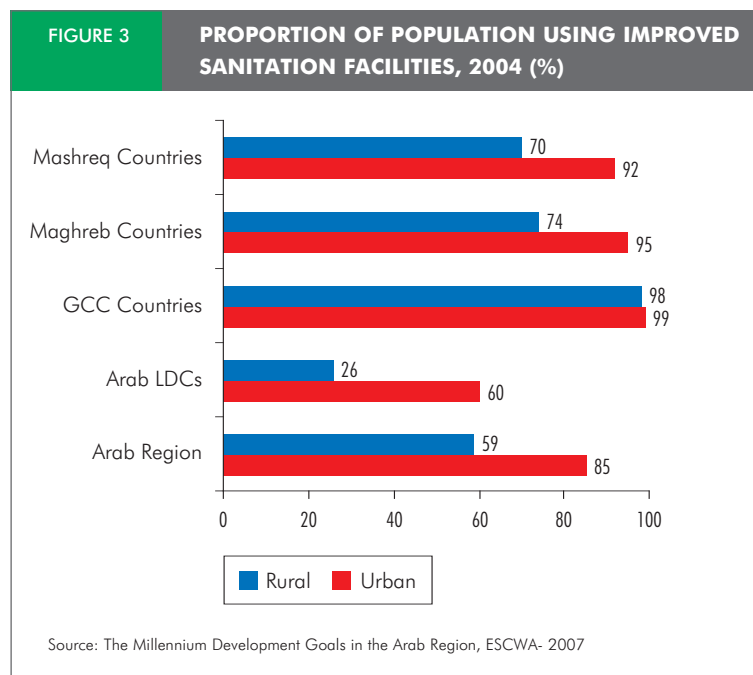


TABLE 3 POPULATION OF SLUM AREAS AT MID- YEAR BY REGION AND COUNTRY; 1990, 2001

	Total Population (thousands)	Urban Population (thousands)	1990		Slum Population (thousands)
			Percentage Urban	Percentage Slum	
WORLD	5,254,807	2,285,693	43.5	31.3	714,972
Developed regions	933,494	694,260	74.4	6.0	41,750
Developing regions	4,039,703	1,407,172	34.8	46.5	654,294
AFRICA					
Algeria	24,855	12,776	51.4	11.8	1,508
Comoros	527	147	27.9	61.7	91
Djibouti	504	408	81.0		
Egypt	56,223	24,499	43.6	57.5	14,087
Libya	4,311	3,528	81.8	35.2	1,242
Mauritania	1,992	877	44.0	94.3	
Morocco	24,624	11,917	48.4	37.4	4,457
Somalia	7,163	1,734	24.2	96.3	1,670
Sudan	24,818	6,606	26.6	86.4	5,708
Tunisia	8,156	4,726	57.9	9.0	425
ASIA					
Bahrain	490	429	87.9	0.0	
Palestine (Gaza Strip) **	2,154	1,379	64.0		
Iraq	17,271	12,027	69.6	56.7	6,825
Jordan	3,254	2,350	72.2	16.5	388
Kuwait	2,143	2,034	94.9	3.0	60
Lebanon	2,713	2,284	84.2	50.0	1,142
Oman	1,785	1,109	62.1	60.5	671
Qatar	453	407	89.8	2.0	8
Saudi Arabia	15,400	12,046	78.2	19.8	2,385
Syria	12,386	6,061	48.9	10.4	629
UAE	2,014	1,615	80.2	2.0	32
Yemen	11,590	2,648	22.8	67.5	1,787
EUROPE	214,807	152,222	70.9	6.0	9,208
LATIN AMERICA	440,419	312,995	71.1	35.4	110,837
NORTHERN AMERICA					
OCEANIA	6,066	1,430	23.6	24.5	350

Source: United Nations, World Urbanization Prospects: The 1999 Revision. Source : - United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (Habitat), The State of the World's Cities 2006/7: The Millennium Development Goals and Urban Sustainability - Thirty years of Shaping the Habitat Agenda., UN Habitat -Earth scan, 2006.

** the available data only cover Gaza strip, and there is no available date about the rest of Palestine.

While it is undeniable that the three cities differ in terms of urban history, archeological identity, bureaucracy, economic and tourism activities, they do share common characteristics, such as comparable populations, a growing mall culture, and the role of foreign capital in their development. Also, like many cities in the region, they were in some way influenced by regional conflicts. Beirut, suffering major destruction and devastation during the 15-year civil war, and again during the 2006 summer war, has been the site of much reconstruction during the past years. Amman struggled to deal with signification population inflows, while Dubai,

geographically further from conflict zones, has exhibited incredible urban and economic development as a result of its high economic growth and ambitious policies aimed at making it a globally significant economic and financial centre.

“The resultant diversity and difference provided a cosmopolitan life of various intensities in the three cities. Among the three cities, Amman is the city that has undergone the most qualitative changes; Beirut is the oldest continuously inhabited; and Dubai is the most economically vibrant” (ESCWA, 2005).

AND SLUM ANNUAL GROWTH RATE

2001					
Total Population (thousands)	Urban Population (thousands)	Percentage Urban	Percentage Slum	Slum Population (thousands)	Slum Annual Growth Rate (%)
6,134,124	2,923,184	47.7	31.2	912,918	2.22
985,592	753,909	76.5	6.0	45,191	0.72
4,865,893	1,988,093	40.9	42.7	849,013	2.37
30,841	17,801	57.7	11.8	2,101	3.02
727	246	33.8	61.2	151	4.61
644	542	84.2			
69,080	29,475	42.7	39.9	11,762	-1.64
5,408	4,757	88.0	35.2	1,674	2.72
2,747	1,624	59.1	94.3	1,531	5.60
30,430	17,082	56.1	32.7	5,579	2.04
9,157	2,557	27.9	97.1	2,482	3.60
31,809	11,790	37.1	85.7	10,107	5.19
9,562	6,329	66.2	3.7	234	-5.43
652	603	92.5	2.0	12	
3,311	2,222	67.1	60.0	1,333	
23,584	15,907	67.4	56.7	9,026	2.54
5,051	3,979	78.7	15.7	623	4.32
1,971	1,894	96.1	3.0	56	-0.65
3,556	3,203	90.1	50.0	1,602	3.07
2,622	2,006	76.5	60.5	1,214	5.39
575	534	92.9	2.0	11	2.47
21,028	18,229	86.7	19.8	3,609	3.77
16,610	8,596	51.8	10.4	892	3.18
2,654	2,314	87.2	2.0	46	3.27
19,114	4,778	25.0	65.1	3,110	5.03
208,208	147,673	70.9	6.0	8,878	-0.33
526,594	399,322	75.8	31.9	127,566	1.28
7,755	2,072	26.7	24.1	499	3.24

One feature shared by all three cities is that of some kind of demographic stratification; that is, different neighborhoods accommodating different sections of the population. In Beirut, these are the poor southern suburbs; in Amman, the affluent western suburbs; and in Dubai, the evident residential stratification by which nationals and foreign expatriates are accommodated. This feature can be seen in many other Arab cities, for example Cairo and Baghdad.

The study also revealed that the development of cities is driven by various factors, including the following: (a) strengthening and sustaining insti-

tutions, in the case of Amman; (b) political will, which, in the case of Beirut, was promoted by the Lebanese Company for the Development and Reconstruction of Beirut Central District (SOLIDERE); and (c) economic growth as in Dubai. However, in general terms the visible development of cities is one of the most tangible manifestations of positive national development, whereby advancement in the quality of life can be observed and gauged.

Architecturally, the three cities face similar challenges, balanced as they are between traditional



urban designs and modern, distinctive development. The two have not synthesized, but rather cause what the study deems a kind of “identify crisis in architectural forms” (ESCWA, 2005).

Then there is the big change in commercial spaces vis-à-vis the traditional *souks* that has been brought about by the mall culture. In particular, malls tend to be isolated from the neighbourhoods in which they are situated by large parking lots, and constituting mini-cities in and of themselves. Unlike the *souks*, such malls do not perform a social function within their areas (ESCWA, 2005).

Dubai is a fascinating case, in that it represents at once a city trying to escape from the stereotypical representations of the Arab city, but at the same time sometimes lavishly displaying waste and opulence. It is yet to be seen if, through planned and sustainable development, it can avoid the latter; plans such as the “Green Building Codes” are promising initiatives, though most buildings in Dubai still follow the glass screen design with few energy-saving features. Still, Dubai is developing economically less reliant on oil, and may therefore well move towards durable economic success as a regional economic powerhouse.

In terms of the environment, however, it remains to be seen whether the extraordinarily rapid urban developments in Dubai, Bahrain, and Qatar, and elsewhere in the Arab region, aimed at economi-

cally diversifying away from oil revenues, and attracting investors and business, can come to terms with the long-term environmental impacts of their ventures. Some argue, for example, that projects such as those of the artificial islands for luxury developments have not been preceded by satisfactory amounts of research into the environmental impacts of such coastal structures.

Further research is needed into the role of rapidly-growing urban centres, fuelled by massive foreign immigration and high natural growth rates, especially as this pattern of development is projected to continue in the future.

VI. CONCLUDING REMARKS

The main growth in the Arab region has been in urban centres, and on the whole, it can be observed that the population growth and inflow into these centres has generally outpaced their ability to adequately develop. Huge strains have ensued on water, sanitation, public transport, sewage networks, waste management, education, and other services. In turn, this has caused strains on the environment.

The Arab states need to revise their urbanization policies to deal seriously with their problems of imbalances in infrastructure, slums and the changing face of their cities.

GREEN BUILDINGS IN DUBAI

From an article in Gulf News, Dubai, By Emmanuelle Landais, published on 24 October 2007.

All buildings in Dubai will have to be constructed as per environment-friendly "green building", Sheikh Mohammad Bin Rashid Al Maktoum, Vice-President and Prime Minister of the UAE, has instructed in his capacity as the Ruler of Dubai.

Owners of residential, commercial and other buildings will have to implement the decision according to the highest international standards that are suitable for Dubai, to maintain a healthy city that follows the global benchmarks in sustainable development and clean environment.

Mohammad Al Gergawi, Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs, said the decision enhances Dubai's keen efforts towards contribution in international efforts to combat environmental challenges, such as the global initiative to control climate change and heat retention. The decision makes Dubai the first city in the Middle East to implement this method.

Environmentalists lauded the decision as a major boost to environmentally-conscious construction. Dr Sadek Owainati, co-founder of the Emirates Green Building Council, said the decision will favourably impact the construction industry to go sustainable and will enforce

the "expectation we have of construction in this part of the world." He said the principle for older buildings has not been laid out yet, but the council is encouraging the reviewing of energy consumption in older buildings. "You cannot change the orientation of a building but you can remove hazardous materials."

A green building is environment-friendly by abiding international standards to reduce its impact on the environment. It achieves this by increasing its efficiency and use of energy, water, and materials, and reducing impacts on human health and the environment, through better design, construction, operation and maintenance. According to the US Green Buildings Council, a green building on average saves 70 per cent of electricity, 50 to 60 per cent of water and 36 per cent of energy than standard buildings.

Based on a point system for every level of efficiency there are about 16,000 green buildings in the United States. There are 16 Platinum green buildings in the world, which is the highest level of eco-friendliness for a structure. By using solar panels and wind turbines to water efficient faucets, buildings can make a difference to how they impact the environment.

READERS' COMMENTS

On 25 October, the following comments from readers appeared on Gulf News website:

Shame it has taken so long. By the time this comes into effect think of all the hundreds of towers and thousands of villas that have missed out. The energy usage from those buildings that have already gone up is huge - how can that be rectified?

Jayne, Dubai,UAE

I hope the construction phase where many toxic materials are generated is also considered. What about the community's carbon footprints after the building is built? There is a long way to go one step at a time!

Sherry, Dubai,UAE

FROM ARCHITECTURAL RECORD

5 December 2007

"The U.A.E. is picking up on messages from around the world, and one of those is sustainability, and they have the ability to implement it," says Chris Johnson, a Gensler managing principal.

But to do so, the country should pay heed to its own vernacular forms—large tents, for example, cooled by breezes and not air conditioning—and not rush to re-create a Manhattan-style skyline, contends Robert Fox, a partner in Cook + Fox. In 1995, he helped design Four Times Square, in New York City, which is often cited as one of the earliest green skyscrapers in the U.S. Fox worries that a U.A.E.-specific LEED ratings system could allow developers to score extra points for, say, photovoltaic panels while neglecting fundamental design issues. "What are the lessons they could learn from their forefathers?" he wonders. "I don't think that any of the forefathers thought that skiing in the middle of the desert would have been a good idea."

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NOTE

- 1 Note that these three groupings comprise the following countries: Mashreq: Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, Syrian Arab Republic; Maghreb: Algeria, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Morocco, Tunisia; and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC): Bahrain, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates; Least Developed Countries (LDCs): Comoros, Djibouti, Mauritania, Somalia, Sudan, Yemen.