# Population, Politics & Development in the Urban Age

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November 29, 2016

# The Global Goals



### We are entering the 'urban age'



Source: Fox, S. & T. Goodfellow (2016) Cities and Development. Abingdon: Routledge.

### The 'classical' theory of urbanization

![](_page_3_Figure_1.jpeg)

### 'Urbanisation without growth'?

![](_page_4_Figure_1.jpeg)

Figure 2 | Time-path plot of income and urbanization, 1970-2010

*Source*: Fox (2017) Mortality, migration and rural transformation in sub-Saharan Africa's urban transition. *Journal of Demographic Economics*. Vol. 83, No 1.

### Migration isn't just about jobs...

![](_page_5_Figure_1.jpeg)

\* There will always be more people seeking to leave rural areas than urban areas due to the myriad real and perceived benefits of living in a large community vs. a small one. Push factors: Population pressure in rural areas; escape serfdom; escape age/gender discrimination; conflict; climate change

Other pull factors: Access to education; 'thick marriage market' in cities; 'bright lights, big city'

Figure 1 Total population & urban population of the world, 1000 AD – 2000 AD

![](_page_6_Figure_1.jpeg)

*Source:* Fox, S. (2012). Urbanization as a global historical process: Theory and evidence from sub-Saharan Africa. *Population and Development Review*, *38*(2), 285-310.

Q: What prevented urbanization?

A: Cities were 'demographic sinks'

- Deaths exceeded births due to infectious and parasitic diseases
- Insecure food supplies due to poor productivity and high transport costs made famine a periodic threat
- Cities depended upon migration to sustain their populations

Q: How were these constraints alleviated?

A: Knowledge, technology & governance

- Medical knowledge (e.g. germ theory) and medical technology (e.g. vaccines, antibiotics)
- Fertilizer & new transport technologies (e.g. railroads, steamships and automobiles)
- Public health programmes, urban planning, infrastructure

### How mortality decline drives urbanisation

- In urban areas, mortality decline allows cities to grow from within, which means every new net migrant increases the urban share of the population.
- In rural areas, mortality decline:
  - Increases the pool of potential migrants;
  - Increases pressure on local natural resources;
  - Can drive 'rural transformation'

A growing body of evidence suggests that mortality decline rather than industrialisation is the *underlying cause* of world urbanisation, and that migration is not the primary driver of urban population expansion.

#### Mortality decline ≠ Economic development

### Life expectancy & urbanization rise together!

![](_page_9_Figure_1.jpeg)

Figure 3 | Time-path plot of life expectancy and urbanization, 1970-2010

*Source*: Fox (2017) Mortality, migration and rural transformation in sub-Saharan Africa's urban transition. *Journal of Demographic Economics*. Vol. 83, No 1.

### We are entering the 'urban age'

![](_page_10_Figure_1.jpeg)

Source: Fox, S. & T. Goodfellow (2016) Cities and Development. Abingdon: Routledge.

# Where is this growth?

![](_page_11_Figure_1.jpeg)

![](_page_11_Figure_2.jpeg)

# The challenge of modern 'slums'

![](_page_12_Picture_1.jpeg)

![](_page_12_Picture_2.jpeg)

#### **UN-Habitat definitions**

#### General

"a heavily populated urban area characterised by substandard housing and squalor"

For measurement purposes, a household lacking one or more of the following:

- Durable structure
- Sufficient living space (<4 p/p/r)
- Access to safe water
- Access to adequate sanitation

services

physical unit

#### Other terms

Shantytowns, favelas, informal settlements, squatter settlements, unplanned settlements, autonomous urban settlements and irregular settlements

# Global slum population trends

![](_page_13_Figure_1.jpeg)

Source: Fox, S. & T. Goodfellow (2016) Cities and Development. Abingdon: Routledge.

### Cities and sustainability

*"Cities consume as much as 80% of energy production worldwide and account for a roughly equal share of global greenhouse gas emissions"* 

(Source: World Bank. 2010. Cities and Climate Change: An Urgent Agenda. Page 15)

![](_page_14_Picture_3.jpeg)

# The politics of urban development

 Slum settlements can be highly profitable for some, leading to a 'status quo' bias *against* improving living conditions.

> The interests of **powerful actors** can impede development

- Political geography shapes our ability to coordinate effectively at various spatial scales and can create political conflicts that impede action.
  - Governance structures affect our ability to tackle complex challenges effectively

# Poor infrastructure is profitable....

![](_page_16_Figure_1.jpeg)

## ...and insecurity creates opportunities.

 'Land racketeering' = promise of protection from eviction, or provision of a protected informal unit, in return for rents (e.g. Kibera in Kenya).

 'Vote banking' = protection from demolition/eviction in return for political support (e.g. India & Pakistan).

![](_page_17_Picture_3.jpeg)

# Urban form shapes sustainability...

#### Atlanta and Barcelona have similar populations but very different carbon productivity

![](_page_18_Figure_2.jpeg)

SOURCE: Transit and Density: Atlanta, the United States and Western Europe , Bertaud and Richardson, 2004

### ...and is shaped by governance structures.

![](_page_19_Figure_1.jpeg)

Source: Ahrend, R., Gamper, C., & Schumann, A. (2014). *The OECD Metropolitan Governance Survey: A quantitative description of governance structures in large urban agglomerations* (No. 2014/4). OECD Publishing.

Large urban areas *with metropolitan governance* bodies saw *a reduction in sprawl* between 2000 and 2006; those *without* saw *a significant increase in sprawl*.

![](_page_20_Figure_0.jpeg)

# Summary

- We are entering an global urban age driven by technological and institutional changes that have dramatically reduced mortality rates / increased life expectancy – even in the least economically advanced countries of the world.
- Looking ahead, the overwhelming majority of urban population growth will take place in Africa and Asia. Cities in these regions will be critical sites for advancing global goals such as poverty reduction and sustainable economic development.
- While we have technologies and planning tools to tackle these challenges, the successful application of both hinges on overcoming political obstacles such as status quo interests and governance structures that impede effective coordination to solve complex urban challenges.

# Questions?