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The Role of Cities and Urbanisation in Achieving Development Goals

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May 2016

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THE ROLE OF CITIES AND URBANISATION IN ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT GOALS

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The Minister says that for India's sake, people should leave their villages and move to the cities. He's a Harvard man. He wants speed. And numbers. Five hundred million migrants he thinks, will make a good business model.

Not everybody likes the idea of their cities filling up with the poor. A judge in Bombay called slum dwellers pickpockets of urban land. Another said, while ordering the bulldozing of unauthorized colonies, that people who couldn't afford to live in cities shouldn't live in them.

Arundhati Roy (2014: 1)

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Summary

The world is in the midst of a long and uneven urban transition, with the great majority of urbanisation and urban population growth now occurring in parts of Asia and Africa. Urbanisation has profound effects on local rural and urban economies, life chances and environments, though much depends on how it is handled. The stereotypical view is that cities and urbanisation are economically advantageous but socially and environmentally deleterious. This Evidence Report follows other recent research in contradicting this oversimplified view. It explores how urbanisation and cities can contribute to the three global goals identified by the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) as priorities for the post-2015 period: (1) reducing economic inequalities; (2) creating more secure and inclusive societies; and (3) accelerating the transition to sustainability.

Each of the goals is shown to pose different challenges for cities and urbanisation, though in each case the relationship is somewhat paradoxical. Rapid urbanisation is often blamed for rising inequalities, but these inequalities are accentuated by efforts to inhibit the urbanisation of some of the more disadvantaged population groups, even as the 'urbanisation' of private investment is being encouraged. Cities and rapid urbanisation are also often blamed for urban insecurity and violence, but here too the rhetoric is stronger than the evidence, and there are more obvious culprits, including urban exclusion. Cities and urbanisation are also usually treated as undermining global sustainability. This is partly because the economic and technical efficiencies of cities and urban towns have historically been used to support much higher levels of production and consumption, when in principle they could instead have contributed to achieving the same or even somewhat higher consumption levels with lower levels of resource use and wastage. Generally, cities and rapid urbanisation have been part of the process that has helped bring the challenges of inequality, insecurity and unsustainability to the fore; now, they must also play a key part in addressing these challenges.

Without more inclusive urbanisation and cities, the goals are likely to become intractable. More inclusive urbanisation requires, among other things, planning for – and perhaps more importantly planning by and with – the growing low-income urban populations in urbanising countries. This requires a major shift in approach and one that cities will be hesitant to follow without more support from national governments and others. There are a number of other areas where conventional approaches must change if cities and urbanisation are to contribute effectively to the three global goals, but where the alternatives remain poorly developed or understood. Decentralisation policies have not always succeeded in making local governments more accountable to urban citizens, let alone aspiring migrants; a more strategic decentralisation is needed if cities are to achieve social as well as environmental goals. It is also important that local governments engage more constructively with informality; current approaches are problematic and can accentuate the conflicts between social and sustainability goals. Finally, the report argues that improving human wellbeing needs to become a more central and measured goal if cities are to facilitate the pursuit of economic, social and environmental goals in a unified way.

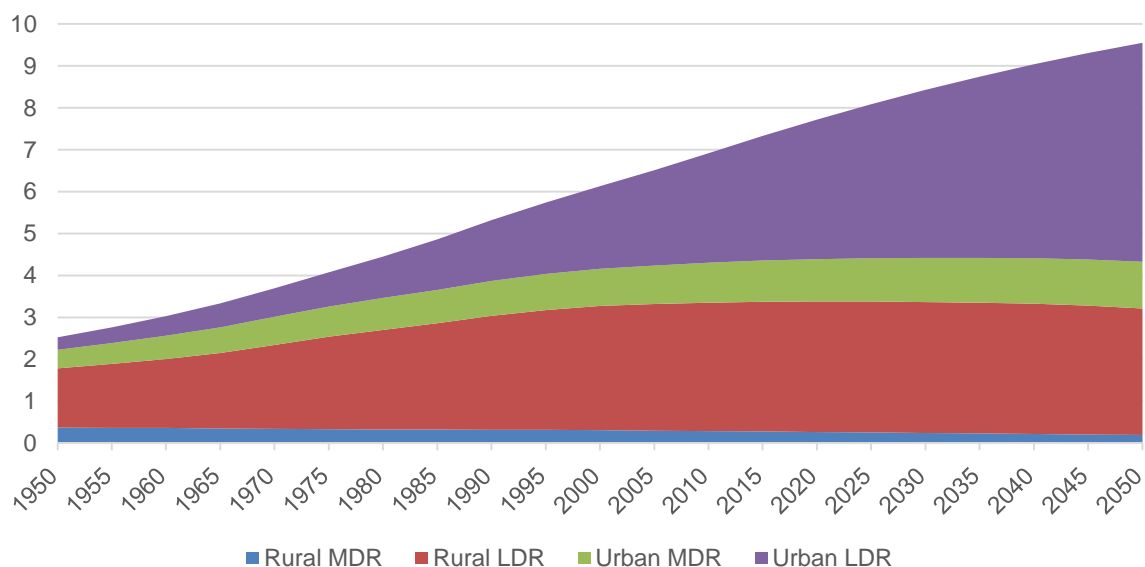
1 Introduction

1.1 Urbanisation and its discontents

Much praise has been lavished on cities in recent years, countered by growing fears that ongoing urbanisation (see definition in Box 1.1) in Asia and especially Africa is too rapid to handle (McGranahan, Schensul and Singh 2016). References to exponential urbanisation and exploding cities abound. There is some uncertainty in the underlying estimates; those most commonly used are produced by the United Nations Population Division (Buettner 2014; McGranahan 2015; United Nations 2014), but much also depends on how the estimates are presented.

Figure 1.1 presents the urbanisation challenge of the first half of the twenty-first century as a daunting one. Almost all of the world's projected population growth is in the urban areas of developing regions, where the urban population is projected to increase from less than 2 billion in 2000 to more than 5 billion in 2050; by then, the urban population of these regions will account for well over half of the world population (rural and urban). Most of the increase is in developing Asia and Africa, with urban populations in Asia (excluding Japan) projected to increase from 1.3 billion to 3.2 billion, and urban populations in Africa from 0.3 billion to 1.3 billion. How this population increase is accommodated is clearly going to make an enormous difference to whether and how development goals are achieved. More generally, this segment of the world population – demographically as well as economically insignificant in 1950 – is going to comprise well over half of the world population by 2050. Economically, politically, socially and environmentally, this will involve an enormous shift.

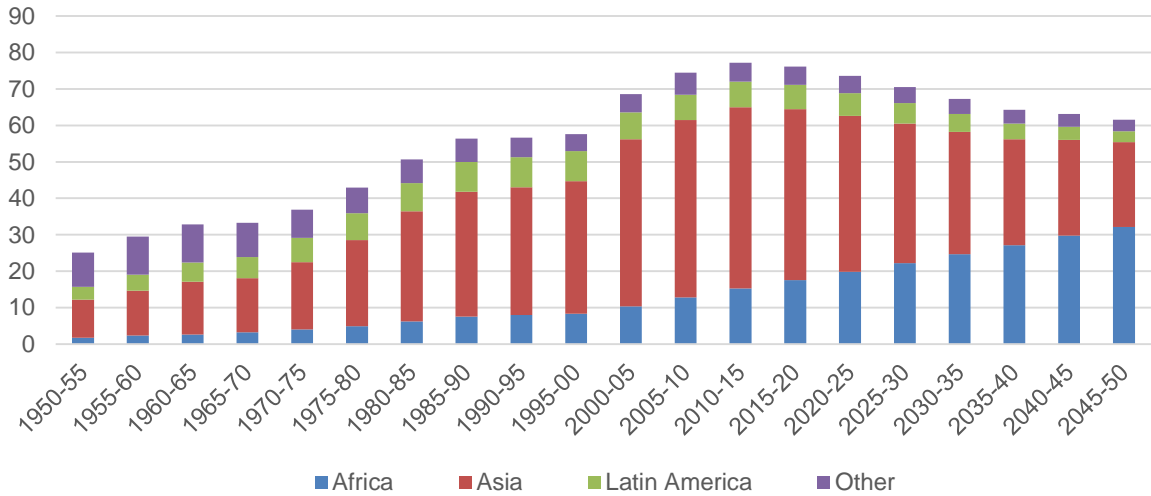
Figure 1.1 World population by rural/urban and more developed regions (MDR)/less developed regions (LDR) (billions)



Source: Based on data from United Nations (2014).

Figure 1.2 is based on the same set of statistics, but presents them in somewhat less daunting terms. According to these estimates, the number of additional people added annually to the world's population has recently peaked at about 77 million, and is projected to decline to about 62 million by 2050. Only in Africa are the annual increments increasing: from about 10 million at the start of the twenty-first century to more than 30 million by 2050.

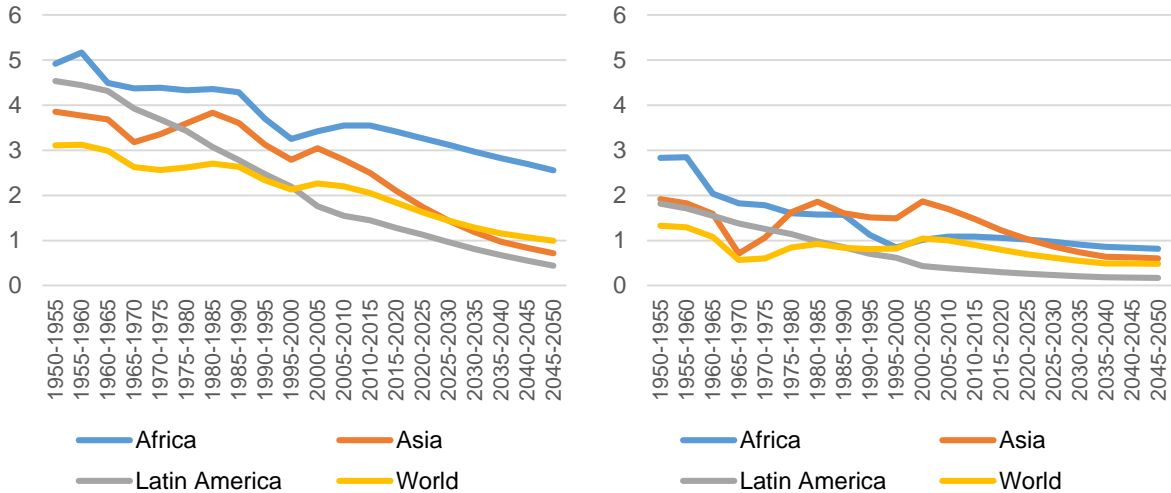
Figure 1.2 Estimated annual increment in world urban population by region (millions)



Source: Based on data from United Nations (2014).

Figure 1.3 presents the annual percentage rates of urban population growth (left) and urbanisation (right) for the major world regions. It shows a general decline over the whole period from the middle of the twentieth century to the middle of the twenty-first century. The rates of urban growth are consistently higher than the rates of urbanisation – the difference being (to a first approximation) the region’s rate of overall population growth.

Figure 1.3 Urban population growth rates (left) and urbanisation rates (right) by region (% per year for five-year periods)



Source: Based on data from United Nations (2014).

Overall, these rates suggest that while the world is still in the midst of the global urban transition, it is beginning to wind down, and words like ‘exploding’ and ‘unprecedented’ are misplaced. Nevertheless, there are indications of growing concerns about excessive urban population shares in urbanising countries. In 2013, 84 per cent of governments in Asia and 85 per cent in Africa had policies to lower rural–urban migration, up from 75 per cent in Asia and 46 per cent in Africa in 1976 (United Nations 2013: 122; United Nations 2014).

Box 1.1 Defining urbanisation

Demographers define ‘urbanisation’ as the increasing share of a population that is urban; this report uses the same definition. Thus, the level of urbanisation is the share of a population that lives in urban areas and the rate of urbanisation is the annual percentage growth in this share. Statistics on urbanisation are complicated by three factors: (1) different countries defining urban differently; (2) most urban and rural population estimates being based on past (and sometimes long past) census data; and (3) the sharp distinction implied between rural and urban becoming increasingly blurred – with, for example, suburbanisation and the emergence of urban regions.

‘Urbanisation’ is often used more broadly, and taken to include the economic, social and environmental shifts associated with the transition from rural to urban. This can be a problem as the associates of demographic urbanisation change over time and between countries. Also, it should not be assumed that urbanisation is driving associated economic, social and environmental shifts.

Urbanisation is also sometimes used to refer to the increasing share of the land or economy (for example) that is urban. It is important to distinguish these definitions from demographic urbanisation. For example, demographic urbanisation is associated with a shift from lower to higher density settlements, while the urbanisation of land can be associated with a shift from higher to lower density settlements.

Source: McGranahan (2015).

Urbanisation is rarely the straightforward result of rural dwellers (cultivators) leaving the land and going to the city to find jobs in industry or other urban occupations. It is, by and large, the net result of many comings and goings between and within rural and urban areas. In many countries with large rural populations there is seasonal, circular, otherwise temporary migration into or through urban areas. Migration alters the gender and age composition of urban populations, and while these changes vary over time, during periods of rapid net migration urban populations tend to receive a higher share of people of child-bearing and working age. Well-managed, this ought to provide a demographic dividend to the city, particularly as urban populations tend to have fewer children.

There is also an economic logic to urbanisation, though it is not just economic prospects that can attract people to cities. Urbanisation often accompanies a country’s shift out of agriculture, and results in part because most non-agricultural enterprises are more productive in urban locations where they can take advantage of returns to agglomeration. However, rural economies are also often shifting out of agriculture and diversifying, including into industrial production, while many low-income urban dwellers have informal service jobs. In the course of urbanisation, many families strategically try to spread their risks and opportunities, spanning the rural–urban divide, and creating what have been called ‘multi-local’ or ‘stretched’ households. Adverse rural conditions, including natural disasters and collective violence, can drive urbanisation (though the poorest rural dwellers may not have the economic capacity to migrate). This can be more difficult – for the migrants and for the cities they go to – than when economic opportunities are attracting them.

The rapid increase in urban population can be difficult for urban authorities to cope with. Coupled with the widespread tendency for people to blame outsiders and ‘others’, it is perhaps not surprising that when there is rapid urbanisation and urban growth and conditions in cities are problematic, rural migrants often attract a disproportionate share of the blame. Already stretched public resources become scarcer, public facilities become more congested, and migrants can be scapegoated for multiple urban deficiencies. When mobility is high, it can be difficult to identify migrants, because with people migrating out as well as in, the number of migrants will be more than statistics related to net migration might seem to imply. But low-income residents living in insecure and informal housing are typically seen as having more rural characteristics, less urban, and a source of problems.

On the other hand, urbanisation is often viewed as inherently beneficial to a country's economy. As neatly captured in the quote from Arundhati Roy which introduced this report, although rural–urban migration is often blamed for urban woes, it is also often part of a country's 'business model'. One of the recurring themes of this report is that if the goals of reducing inequality, achieving more secure and just societies, and accelerating the transition to sustainability are to be achieved, a more inclusive approach to urbanisation is sorely needed.

1.2 Structure of the report

Section 2 examines the relationships between cities, urbanisation and economic growth and their interpretation. It starts with a quick look at the industrial cities of the nineteenth century, which became symbols of urbanisation, modernisation and economic growth – as well as poverty and pollution. It then looks at more contemporary interpretations of cities and urbanisation as drivers of modernisation and economic transformation. The new urban economics – with its focus on the economic logic of city formation, and on how and to what extent urban agglomeration yields economic benefits – has contributed to a more positive attitude to urbanisation as a motor of economic growth (Spence, Annez and Buckley 2009; World Bank 2009). This contrasts with the sociology of cities as growth machines, with its longstanding focus on the negative politics of urban growth coalitions (Harding and Blokland 2014: 93–107; Logan and Molotch 2007). The agenda of these coalitions, claiming to be in the best position to secure the economic growth of their cities, is not necessarily supportive of the agenda for urban growth suggested by the new urban economics, let alone the key development goals around which the rest of the report is structured. This section argues that while it is important to seize the economic advantages that the new urban economics identifies, it is equally important not to reify economic growth, and instead to assess both formal and informal urban economies in the broader context of human wellbeing.

Box 1.2 Defining inclusion

Unless otherwise specified, we use 'inclusion' to refer to an improvement in the terms on which people take part in society, through:

1. Removing discriminatory exclusions, such as denying migrants the right to settle in the city (space), buy property (markets), send their children to school or access health care (services);
2. Ensuring that prevailing institutions (regulating markets, the provisioning of services and the use of space) incorporate the voices and reflect the needs of disadvantaged groups, thereby addressing structural exclusions;
3. Ensuring that the human rights of otherwise disadvantaged groups are fully met through, among other means, markets, public services/provisioning and access to spaces.

This definition builds on that used by the World Bank (2013) in emphasising inclusion in spaces, markets and services, but follows McGranahan *et al.* (2016) in identifying three levels of inclusion. All three levels represent improvements for those being included. In cities as elsewhere, there are important situations where measures presenting themselves as inclusive have adverse effects on those purportedly being included. This is sometimes referred to as 'adverse inclusion', but under this definition would be more consistently termed 'false inclusion'.

Spatial exclusion and inclusion are particularly critical in urban areas. There are important processes excluding some people from the city; others are excluded to the periphery of cities and still others are effectively excluded within the city. In urban settings, the third level of inclusion has parallels with the notion of the 'right to the city', which has been debated heavily in recent years (Bhan 2009; Brown 2013; Harvey 2008, 2012; Parnell and Pieterse 2010).

Section 3 turns to issues of cities, urbanisation and inequality. In recent decades, economic inequality in many parts of the world, most notably the wealthiest parts, has been increasing (Justino and Moore 2015; Piketty 2014). Urbanisation and cities are often viewed as contributing to inequality, and though the links are disputed, it is in the political economy of urbanisation that many of the policies affecting inequality play out. Urban bias – the idea that most people living in poverty are in rural areas while people in cities have disproportionate power, secure a disproportionate share of public resources, and devote them to cities – was first articulated in the 1970s (Lipton 1977) and remains influential (Jones and Corbridge 2010). Unfortunately, a concern with urban bias is often used to justify targeting policies and investments to reduce poverty and inequality in rural rather than urban areas. This is unfortunate because exclusive urbanisation can also be a source of considerable inequality. Cities often compete to attract investment, but would prefer to prevent rural–urban migration exceeding levels that can be accommodated with formal jobs and formal housing.

As described in this section, the politics of exclusive cities can be active and overt in their attempts to control in-migration and urbanisation (as in the racist apartheid system of South Africa or the bureaucratic *hukou* system of China); or they can be passive and informal (as with policies that helped create the *favelas* (slums) of Brazil and informal settlements more generally). In all of these cases, however, exclusionary urbanisation has left a legacy of spatially configured inequality that is extremely difficult to overcome. Inclusive urbanisation is key to addressing inequality, but needs to be made consistent with the economic and political ambitions of cities.

Section 4 focuses on cities, urbanisation, violence and security. As a recent IDS Evidence Report by Luckham (2015) argues, there is a contradiction at the heart of the security–development nexus, and nowhere is this more evident than in cities:

On the one hand, security is a process of political ordering. Even more than development, it intermeshes with established power structures, property relations and inequalities. On the other hand, it is founded upon the claim that states and other forms of public order make citizens safe from violence and insecurity. In principle, it is equally shared and socially inclusive, even if in practice it is anything but. (Luckham 2015: 5).

Cities are increasingly the sites of violence, and urban violence is often blamed on rapid urban growth and related disorder. However, it was recognised as far back as the 1970s that ‘The linking of crime, violence, and disorder to urban growth must fall into the category of things people simply want to believe, for the belief rests on no substantial foundation of verified fact or systematic analysis’ (Lodhi and Tilly 1973: 296). Indeed, not only is the statistical relationship between urban population growth and violence weak, but where such a relationship exists, it quite possibly reflects attempts to stem this rapid urban growth through exclusionary practices, rather than being a direct outcome of growth. The quick review undertaken for this section suggests that while there are numerous forms of urban violence and numerous approaches to achieving urban order, inclusive urbanisation provides at least part of the basis on which to address urban violence equitably.

Section 5 considers the role of cities and urbanisation in achieving the transformation to sustainability. This has become a global priority largely due to the city-led development initially epitomised by the industrial urbanisation characteristic of both Europe in the nineteenth century and China at the turn of the twentieth century. While urbanisation and cities may have been central to creating the global sustainability challenge, they will also need to be central to the transformation of human activities and institutions so that they are no longer testing the boundaries of what the planet can take without risking catastrophic environmental change. As a recent IDS Evidence Report, *Accelerating Sustainability: Why Political Economy Matters*, states: ‘We know what the problems are and where we need to get to. But we know much less about how to get there’ (Schmitz and Scoones 2015: 7).

Section 5 starts with a quick review of the urban environmental transitions that helped to create the sustainability challenge, and the underlying political economy of that challenge. It then goes on to consider the role of cities and urbanisation in forging a route to global sustainability. It recognises that an inherent part of the environmental sustainability challenge is that for local coalitions such as those that can form at the city scale, there is a serious free-rider problem: however much any individual city contributes to the global sustainability transition, it makes no significant difference to its global environmental outlook, or at least not directly. This has not stopped cities from acting on issues like climate change; but for such city-based action to be sustained there will need to be alliances of coordinated actions, from neighbourhoods up through cities and nations to regional and global scales, and back down again. It is not clear whether new technologies and information technology (IT) in particular will support or undermine such alliances; the literature supporting smart cities makes it clear that there will be greater capacity to achieve such coordination, but is less clear on how the increased capacity will be deployed.

The report ends with a brief look at how the pursuit of these different goals can be brought together. If the goals are pursued separately, conflicts and large trade-offs are likely to arise, especially regarding economic aims. It is argued that the combined pursuit of these goals will be facilitated by more inclusive urbanisation, strategic decentralisation, engaging constructively with urban informality, and treating the economy as a means to improving human wellbeing rather than an end in itself.

2 A critical look at cities, urbanisation and economic growth

Cities and urbanisation have long been associated with economic advantage but also with a sacrifice in equality, security and environmental quality. Britain's nineteenth century manufacturing cities were at the centre of the industrial revolution – places where urban capitalists with larger and more production facilities could hire the increasing supply of urban labourers for subsistence wages, tap nearby natural resources, trade with local firms, reach distant markets, and drive the market economy forward. These cities were also centres of extremes of poverty, pollution and unruly behaviour, and many had death rates higher than their birth rates (Garenne 2010). Contemporary affluent cities are more staid and healthy. A well-known urban economist recently described cities (with more hubris than irony) as 'our greatest invention, making us 'richer, smarter, greener, healthier and happier' (Glaeser 2011). Urbanisation remains a contested process, however, and just as in the industrialising and urbanising countries of the nineteenth century (Williamson 1990), many governments in rapidly urbanising countries today are concerned that their cities' populations are growing too fast (United Nations 2013). Moreover, even the world's most successful cities have a dark side (Sassen 2014).

2.1 Is urbanisation good for the economy?

The role of markets, regulations and collective action in translating urbanisation into economic growth is still not well understood. Until the 1990s, when the new urban economics adapted the tools of conventional economics to the study of urbanisation, mainstream economics was largely a-spatial (Krugman 2011). The new urban economics identifies a variety of factors that explain the economic advantages of urban agglomeration (Duranton 2009; and various chapters in Henderson and Thisse 2004) and the higher productivity of larger urban settlements (Behrens, Duranton and Robert-Nicoud 2014). The agglomeration economies can be roughly divided into the following categories: matching (e.g. being better able to find the workers and products that best match the needs of the enterprise); sharing (e.g. being able to benefit from sharing larger-scale and hence lower-cost infrastructure and services, such as piped water systems and hospitals); and learning (e.g. being able to find out from other similar firms what innovations are working and worth adopting) (Duranton and Puga 2004). Such agglomeration economies are not just related to settlement size, but would be expected to contribute to higher productivity in larger settlements. Indeed, it was estimated on the basis of the empirical work available a decade ago that a doubling in settlement population is associated with a 3–8 per cent increase in productivity (Rosenthal and Strange 2004: 2,133).

More recent evidence on this relationship suggests that the mechanisms are far more complex than those initially modelled (as illustrated in several papers in Duranton, Henderson and Strange 2015). The evidence on the relationship between urbanisation and productivity is weakest in Africa and Asia, where issues of urbanisation are most pressing (Turok and McGranahan 2013). Regardless, as economies move out of agriculture, urbanisation clearly offers potential economic benefits they can take advantage of. Whether technological progress will accentuate or reduce this urban advantage is unclear: it was once assumed that the IT revolution would conquer distance and render cities obsolete, but instead it has rejuvenated cities, especially in areas of finance, which are particularly dependent on IT.

The nature of the agglomeration economies is such that the shift from rural to urban, and from small to larger settlements, provides economic opportunities. But these opportunities must be secured. They do not apply to most agricultural tasks, which require labour to be applied over large areas. Nor do they apply to just any concentration of people and activities

in urban areas. The agglomeration economies of matching depend on the cities having the right mixes of workers and enterprises, with different mixes in different cities. The economies of sharing depend on the large-scale urban infrastructures and services being provided. The economies of learning still depend to a surprising degree on face-to-face communication and what has sometimes been called the 'buzz' of the city (Storper and Venables 2004). Neoliberal economists may be inclined to assume that these economies will spontaneously emerge through private property and markets. However, cities are shot through with features that can render urban markets dysfunctional (Duranton 2009). When the enterprises and people come together in close proximity in cities, their activities do not just provide the basis for beneficial matching, but also for public bads such as unsanitary conditions and pollution, which unless actively addressed can render urban concentration far more hazardous to health than dispersed rural living. The shared urban infrastructure and services that benefit from being large in scale are also at risk of monopolisation – which has historically been one of the reasons for their being public. Finally, face-to-face communication and learning in the city depends on a culture of productive communication and shared learning, as well as spaces in which this communication and learning can take place.

The lesson for cities wanting to achieve economic growth would seem to be that it is critical to create the sort of city where enterprises can flourish, with the right workers and intermediate goods easily accessible, appropriate infrastructure available to share, and other enterprises and people to learn from. The most tried solutions seem to lie in a well-governed system of public and private property rights and good urban planning, including the creation of spaces for self-organising as well as more formal face-to-face communications. Transport and communications arteries and infrastructure are critical to the overall functioning of any city, and underpin all of the agglomeration economies. How rural–urban land conversions are handled and how land is allocated among different public and private uses and users will clearly be critical to achieving the economies associated with good matching. How land is serviced, how infrastructure costs are recovered, and how rights of access are distributed will be critical to the sharing economies. These conditions are all easier to describe than achieve; but the better they are achieved, the less likely they are to gain public and media attention.

The World Bank used the new urban economics to make the case for urbanisation as a desirable spatial transformation, and the case was laid out in detail in its *World Development Report 2009* subtitled 'Reshaping Economic Geography' (World Bank 2009). The central message of the report was that governments need to think in '3-D', and recognise that increasing 'density' (i.e. urbanisation), shorter 'distances' and reduced 'divisions' enable more integrated and successful economies (World Bank 2009). The authors argued that a positive approach to urbanisation – far from being less important in sub-Saharan Africa – was particularly important there (World Bank 2009: 285). Their emphasis was exclusively on using urbanisation to assist the economy, ignoring that the approach a country or city takes to urbanisation can also have profound social and environmental effects. Indeed, the report explicitly excluded 'the social and environmental effects of a changing economic geography' from its analysis (Box 0.1 on page 34 was entitled 'What this report is not about').

Given how the new urban economics interprets the economics of urbanisation, it is not surprising that its social and environmental dimensions were ignored. Economic integration, greater returns to scale and economic matching, sharing and learning all pose no obvious social or environmental threats, except those inherent in economic growth itself. But the approach the World Bank describes is largely devoid of politics, while the implementation of policies designed to turn cities into motors of growth is always highly politicised. As David Harvey (2009: 1272) interprets the self-imposed limitation of the report: 'The authors felt no obligation to consider how increasing social inequality and poverty along with environmental degradation might actively be produced through capitalism's market-led uneven geographical development'. In practice, attempts to tap the economic benefits of urbanisation are not neutral efforts to enhance productivity, but political processes, potentially involving

exploitation and environmental destruction. Urban economic growth strategies are highly political, and involve conflicts between investors and ordinary citizens as well as among investors.

2.2 Are urban growth coalitions good for the economy?

There is an important stream of urban sociology, going back to the 1980s, that explores the urban coalitions and the politics of cities as 'growth machines' (Logan and Molotch 2007). In this analysis, the emphasis is not on whether and how urbanisation can benefit the economy; it is on the machinations of city coalitions that form, often presenting themselves as the doyens of economic growth, but more concerned with the sorts of urban development that will serve their own economic interests than those that serve the rest of the city (except in so much as the latter will serve their political interests). Logan and Molotch focused on North American cities at a time of increasing awareness that much urban 'renewal' was actively harming low-income groups, while benefiting those involved in orchestrating local development. They argued that to understand city dynamics and uncover the prevailing regime one had to 'get physical' (Logan and Molotch 2007: vii), and study how land, real estate and development projects were being controlled, who was benefiting and who was losing out. They located a central conflict between those for whom the city was a growth machine, who were interested in land and buildings primarily as a basis for increasing exchange value, and those for whom the city was a place to live, who were more interested in its use values.

Though research and debate about the politics of cities as growth machines has waned, in many ways such politics are at least as relevant to rapidly urbanising countries today as they were to North American cities of the 1980s, even if the form that the politics take is often somewhat different (Shatkin 2007, 2014). In a context of globalisation, less regulated markets, and a weakening in the economic role of national governments, the economics and politics of cities have become increasingly prominent. Structural adjustment directly challenged the economic role of national governments in many low- and middle-income countries (Stiglitz 2002). In more than 75 countries, decentralisation programmes have shifted some state responsibilities to lower tiers of government (Ahmad *et al.* 2005). Combined with the shift towards more democratic governance, decentralisation has helped to enhance the role of urban authorities in many Latin American countries (Campbell 2003; Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014: 97). Some have argued that the success of cities demonstrates that they deserve more power (Barber 2013). Alternatively, more critical researchers have focused attention on the dark underside of the rising cities (e.g. Sassen 2014), including the megacities of the global South (e.g. Koonings and Kruijt 2009). It has been pointed out that many decentralisation efforts have been partial, leaving government 'closer' to the citizens but no more accountable to them (Devarajan, Khemani and Shah 2009), and that decentralisation can leave urban governance more prone to elite capture (Bardhan 2002; Bardhan and Mookherjee 2005).

In the 2000s, the conventional wisdom in high-income countries grew more favourable of cities and saw city competitiveness as a 'fundamental source of prosperity in an increasingly market-driven economy' (Turok 2005: 25). In modern service economies, and especially their high-tech segments, it has been argued that it is jobs that follow people, and that the key to an economically successful city is to attract the 'creative class' (Florida 2003, 2005). Against this, Storper (2013: 225), for example, derides such efforts on the grounds that they 'crowd out discussions of the most basic challenge for city-regions, which is how to generate income', and argues that for cities, 'winning in the development process depends on successful specialization and respecialization'. Both of these approaches are in danger of encouraging destructive growth machine politics and environmentally destructive competition. Efforts to privilege the 'creative class' are in danger of subsidising gentrification (Krätke 2012), and the exclusion of the lower-income fractions of the implied 'non-creative class'. Efforts to attract the right investments are in danger of becoming a means of

subsidising investors favoured by a growth coalition more interested in their own wealth than the wellbeing of the city region (which is unlikely to have a politically powerful constituency).

The view that economic competition between cities is a good basis for pursuing economic growth, let alone human wellbeing, is debatable. As Paul Krugman has pointed out, the productivity-enhancing mechanisms inherent in market competition among firms do not apply directly to economic competition among cities or countries (Krugman 1994, 1996). When a special issue of *Urban Studies* in 1999 tried to address the issue of whether inter-city competition was a good thing, the authors were generally favourable, but they used an expanded definition of city competitiveness that departed considerably from narrow economic competition:

... the degree to which cities can produce goods and services which meet the test of wider regional, national and international markets, while simultaneously increasing real incomes, improving the quality of life for citizens and promoting development in a manner which is sustainable.
(Lever and Turok 1999: 792)

In effect, they defined away the problem. They accepted that economic competition is necessary, but then added the proviso, rather than the prediction, that the competition also yield social and environmental benefits (see also Buck *et al.* 2005).

The pressure to prioritise economic growth is greater in the cities of low- and middle-income countries, where there is also less capacity to prevent growth coalitions from manipulating the outcomes to their own benefit (McGranahan *et al.* 2016). City-based public–private partnerships and large developer-led projects have displaced city planning in many locations (Shatkin 2007) and provide a vehicle for temporary urban growth coalitions to organise around. Studies of Manila, Mumbai and Delhi have shown in some detail how the strategies of such growth coalitions diverge from those typically described in the literature on growth machines in the United States, although they too engage in steering the benefits of economic growth their own way as well as rent-seeking and corrupting local government (Heller 2014; Shatkin 2008). Foreign private and state interests can also intrude, particularly where cities are linked to special economic zones designed to attract foreign direct investment (FDI).

Box 2.1 Defining informal

'Informal' is often used loosely to refer to settlements or segments of the economy that are not formally accepted by government, either because they are not recognised (e.g. registered) or because they do not conform to official regulations (e.g. labour laws or building standards). For this report, the central concern is settlements and economic activities that do not conform to official regulations, at least in part because those living in the informal settlements or working in the informal economy are living in poverty and cannot afford to meet the regulations at their own cost without facing even greater deprivation.

More statistically tractable definitions focus on the shelter deprivation of the households in informal settlements (as with UN-Habitat statistics on slum households) or the lack of legal or social protection of the employment arrangements of those working in the informal economy (as with statistics from the International Labour Organization (ILO) on employment in the informal economy (International Labour Office 2013)). This statistical facility is, unfortunately, bought at the cost of making the complex political challenges of informality misleadingly straightforward, with formalisation as the obvious solution.

It must be recognised, however, that by limiting the discussion of informality to the informal settlements and economies of the poor, this report evades any discussion of the large and growing informality of affluence, with its very different dynamics and consequences. More generally, the very terms 'formal' and 'informal' can seem to imply a dichotomy, where in practice there are clearly different levels and types of formality and informality.

In Asia, the relationship between national gross domestic product (GDP) per capita and levels of urbanisation has been tighter than in other world regions (McGranahan *et al.* 2014). As the case of China indicates particularly clearly, the existence of corruption-prone alliances spanning public and private sectors does not prevent cities from becoming effective motors of economic growth. On the other hand, China's experience also illustrates how this prioritisation of economic growth can lead to unnecessarily sharp increases in inequality and environmental distress (McGranahan *et al.* 2014). Indeed, the tendency to prioritise economic growth first, and worry about social (and environmental) issues once the capacity of the economy is stronger, has created a heavy legacy in other emerging economies (McGranahan, Turok and Martine 2014). This is not just because of the politics of cities as growth machines, but also because of a more general tendency not to recognise or support activities and enterprises that are making a substantial contribution to human wellbeing despite relatively low economic productivity. Many such activities are found in the informal economy or in informal settlements, both of which are often viewed as obstacles to rather than vehicles for economic success.

2.3 The informal economy, urbanisation and human wellbeing

While cities and urbanisation have been receiving considerable support from the new urban economics, government officials in rapidly urbanising countries tend to be concerned that their cities' populations are growing too rapidly, harming rather than contributing to the urban economy. Although urban growth rates and urbanisation rates in Asia and Africa have reportedly been steady or falling in recent decades (McGranahan 2015), concerns about excessive concentrations of populations in urban areas have been increasing (McGranahan *et al.* 2016; United Nations 2013).

Alongside these concerns, there is the persistent claim that, in sub-Saharan Africa in particular, countries are experiencing urbanisation without industrialisation or economic growth (Fay and Opal 2000; Jedwab and Vollrath 2015). This claim has been challenged on economic grounds (Spence *et al.* 2009) and for relying on misleading urbanisation statistics (Potts 2009, 2012). However, it is clearly true that a large share of the population growth in urbanising countries is being housed in informal settlements (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013), and the working age population is heavily dependent on the informal sector (International Labour Office 2013). This expanding informality goes against conventional visions of modernisation, and can reinforce officials' fears that cities are growing too rapidly. However, for many urban dwellers, informality is preferable to the prevailing rural situation where they might also be dependent on an informal economy, but a less productive one.

An emphasis on economic growth, defined as increasing income per capita, is in danger of belittling the contribution of the informal economy and reinforcing an urban growth politics that seeks to urbanise the formal economy without urbanising the population, which is unable to secure formal employment or afford formal housing. The formal economy is generally more productive than the informal economy (Porta and Shleifer 2014). Formal housing is generally of higher value than informal housing. But this does not imply that wellbeing would be improved if the urban informal economy and settlements were suppressed. Some parts of the informal economy and the informal settlement system create more harm than good, but large parts make critical contributions to the wellbeing of some of the most disadvantaged urban dwellers, including migrants.

It has long been recognised that income poverty is only one dimension of urban poverty, and the contribution of the informal sector is more than the market value of its production might seem to imply (Wratten 1995). The rapidly growing research on subjective wellbeing demonstrates that while individual and household income do influence wellbeing, other factors, including social relations, are also important (Diener, Tay and Oishi 2013; Easterlin, Angelescu and Zweig 2011; White and Blackmore 2016), and the informal economy often helps people to build social networks and capital. At least as important, the informal sector

often provides critical goods, services and employment opportunities that are not formally available. Moreover, while for many urban officials informality provides a basis for harassment and the extraction of informal payments, there are some that use the lack of formality as an opportunity for more constructive relations.

From an economic perspective, while the non-agricultural informal economy is also growing in rural areas, one would expect that, like formal activities, informal activities would also benefit from the economies of agglomeration – through matching, sharing and learning. Better matching is provided by urban locations, particularly as many informal activities provide services that cannot be provided at a distance (such as paid and unpaid care work in the home). Better sharing is also provided by urban locations, at least to the extent that informal workers and residents have access to and can afford the large-scale urban infrastructure. And while the benefits of urban learning in informal enterprises and settlements are not well quantified, one of the best-known recent attempts to theorise the economics of rural–urban migration emphasises learning (Lucas 2004).¹

Despite the well-documented importance of the informal sector (Vanek *et al.* 2014), the role of the informal economy in improving human wellbeing remains relatively under-researched. A recent study of the wellbeing of workers living in informal settlements in Bangladesh and India applied a mix of techniques to explore determinants of wellbeing and their institutional basis (Gupte and te Lintelo 2015).² Despite considerable variation in wellbeing in the sample, there was little difference in wellbeing associated with having work in the informal sector versus casualised work in the formal sector. Those involved only in unpaid care work had particularly low wellbeing scores in several domains, and while gender had little influence on wellbeing priorities, scores were lower among women. The results confirm the expectation that the wellbeing conferred by both the informal economy and informal settlements depends heavily on the specific conditions of the work or settlement, and that the lack of support given to many informal activities and settlements places a particularly heavy burden on women.

¹ Lucas (2004) emphasises learning the skills required by modern production technologies, but one would also expect informal learning to be important to success in the informal economy.

² Purposively selected focus groups were used to identify community views on the most important components of and contributors to local wellbeing. These were organised under a globally recognised classification of ten domains of wellbeing. A survey instrument, including questions on local conditions as well as the respondents' levels of satisfaction, was designed to obtain indicators for the key components of wellbeing that had been identified. The survey instrument was administered to male and female workers living in informal settlements at a selection of sites in Bangladesh and India.

3 Cities, urbanisation and inequality

The relationship between cities, urbanisation and inequality is complex and contingent. On the one hand, urbanisation is part of the economic transformation that is generally associated with increasing national inequalities, as some benefit more from economic growth while others get left behind. On the other hand, efforts to suppress urbanisation by making it more difficult for people to move from rural to urban areas are likely to amplify these inequalities. Moreover, as alluded to in Section 2, the fact that there are inevitable inequalities associated with market-led economic growth, and that this growth relies on rewarding the pursuit of wealth, can become an excuse for approaches to urban development that create more inequality than is good for economic growth, let alone for human wellbeing. The complexity of urban politics and economics makes it difficult to distinguish clearly between attempts to improve the economy and attempts to divert income to those driving the growth agenda.

A stylised fact commonly accepted among economists in the second half of the twentieth century was that in a market economy, inequality first increased with a country's economic growth and then declined. Urbanisation was very much part of the original explanation for this 'Kuznets curve'. According to Kuznets' classic analysis, with higher urban incomes, urbanisation would initially lead to more overall inequality, but this inequality would fall as the urban sector became predominant (Kuznets 1955: 13). Combined with equally systematic shifts that would reduce intra-urban income inequalities, Kuznets suggested that the declining inequality being observed in the United States, England and Germany in the first half of the twentieth century was a pattern that other developing market economies would follow. An assessment of inter-country relationships seemed to verify this (Kuznets 1963). However, inequality did not continue to decline in affluent countries. Indeed, looking only at the shifts in the income shares of the highest decile in the United States since the 1920s, one could reach the opposite conclusion: that inequality first decreases with economic growth and then increases (Atkinson, Piketty and Saez 2011: 6). Clearly, such curves should be interpreted with caution.

Importantly, the effect of urbanisation on inequality cannot be reduced to one of rural people becoming like urban people, as the analysis of Kuznets and his followers could be mistaken to imply. Urbanisation sets off profound political and economic dynamics, and does not leave intra-urban, intra-rural and rural-urban inequalities unchanged. When Kanbur and Zhuang (2013) follow a Kuznets-like approach and decompose the source of changing inequalities in a set of Asian countries into these components, plus a share explained by urbanisation, they find that in most cases urbanisation is contributing to inequality. This is an interesting exercise, based on mathematical identities, but should not be taken to imply that if measures were taken to curb urbanisation the result would be less inequality (or that support for urbanisation has led to increasing inequality in Asia).

Robinson and Acemoglu (2002) provide a different and more overtly political and context-specific account of how and why the inequalities created by early industrialisation and urbanisation were reversed in some countries:

The process of industrialization increased economic inequality and may also have mobilized the poor segments of the society by concentrating them in urban centers and factories. These developments led to increased political unrest, or even to the threat of revolution. We argue that in response to the political unrest and the threat of revolution, the political elites were forced to undertake radical reform.
(Robinson and Acemoglu 2002: 184)

They also argue that these same political dynamics have not been uniformly reproduced with industrialisation and urbanisation in other parts of the world. Accompanying the rise of democracy and increased decentralisation in Latin America – which for most countries

occurred after the urban transition was largely complete – there have been some notable urban successes. These have in turn helped to address the extremes of national inequality experienced in many Latin American countries. More broadly, urban informal workers have become better organised, and there has been international organising – for example, through Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO) (<http://wiego.org/>). Overall, however, the trend of income inequality in low- and middle-income countries has not exhibited any strong direction in recent decades (Justino and Moore 2015).

In any case, the political struggles that urbanisation can set off do not all focus on production politics. In Castells' 1977 book, *The Urban Question*, he argued that the locus of urban politics was shifting from struggles over working conditions in factories to struggles over the conditions of collective consumption in the city. He followed this up with a review of grass-roots urban movements, and their attempts to gain more control over the city-building process (Castells 1983). The struggle to improve access to land and living conditions in cities remains an important one. There have been important developments, with federations of the urban poor, often rooted in women's savings groups, becoming influential in many cities. Through Slum Dwellers International (SDI), many have also networked nationally and internationally and brought the concerns of urban poor groups more directly into international policy processes (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014). Such initiatives have not, however, been able to compensate when heavily political or economic pressures have been brought to bear, fostering exclusion and exacerbating shelter poverty.

3.1 The legacies of exclusive urbanisation in the BRICS

While it is not possible to directly assess the impacts of urbanisation on overall inequality, it is possible to identify forms and examples of urban exclusion that are linked to urbanisation in mixed economies and are exacerbating inequalities. A recent review of urbanisation in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) (McGranahan *et al.* 2016; McGranahan *et al.* 2014b) noted that urban exclusion tends to be particularly severe when amplified by fears that too many people who are not contributing to the urban economy are moving in from rural areas. In South Africa, the apartheid system was an explicitly racist attempt to resist urbanisation, and left a legacy of segregation and fragmentation. China's *hukou* system is a more bureaucratic system employed to control urbanisation, and though neither racist nor as exclusionary as apartheid, it is also set to leave a damaging legacy. Brazil's attempt to resist urbanisation was more passive, but led to the emergence of *favelas*, creating one of the country's major social fault lines. Issues of urban exclusion are increasingly central in India, which is urbanising at a slower rate. (Russia, like South Africa and China, had a pass system, but exclusion from cities was never very critical during its planned urbanisation.)

As a recent review noted 'Twenty years after apartheid was formally abolished it continues to shape South African society' (Mariotti and Fourie 2014: 113). Even before apartheid, successive white governments had long struggled with the tension between the economic demand for urban labour and the political demand to prevent large numbers of black Africans from becoming urban citizens. The apartheid system was an authoritarian response, which deployed the state machinery to enforce a legally based spatial exclusion, with mostly work-related exceptions. South Africa's inequalities, and its fractured and segregated cities, still bear the imprint of this apartheid exclusion (Turok 2014).

China's *hukou* system has been so central to the country's embracing of urbanisation, as a core plank in their economic strategy, that it is somewhat misleading to present it as a means of resisting urbanisation. However, the *hukou* system was based on a system that at the start of the liberalisation period tightly controlled people's spatial mobility, especially across the rural–urban divide, which was also a divide in social provisioning systems. The system was adapted incrementally and experimentally so that people were given much greater spatial mobility but less social mobility. The cities were protected from having to take responsibility

for rural–urban migrants working in the factories or service industries. The migrants gained few of the social benefits accorded to official residents. Some cities have experimented with various adjustments to the system, and there is no longer such a strict rural–urban divide built into the system. The *hukou* system and the social divisions it created remains a major challenge for China (McGranahan *et al.* 2014b).

The *favelas* of Brazil have become emblematic of the informal settlements that represent one of the most pervasive and variegated outcomes of exclusionary urbanisation. Brazil was more passive in its resistance to urbanisation, and to the migration of poor rural dwellers into the major cities in particular (Martine and McGranahan 2013, 2014). In effect, its urban elites and authorities were unable to slow the net migration to the cities appreciably, but they were more successful at excluding disadvantaged migrants and other urban poor groups from the formal city; these groups settled in poorly controlled spaces where neither private ownership nor public planning held sway. While there are a number of different low-income housing forms in Brazilian cities, the *favelas* of Rio and other major cities are probably the best-known informal settlements in the world. Janice Perlman (1976) wrote a well-known book, *The Myth of Marginality*, which argued that *favela* dwellers, while excluded from many urban benefits, were tightly integrated into the economy and full of capabilities, capacities and hope. Three decades later, she found that social and spatial exclusion (or what could be termed ‘adverse inclusion’) had prevailed even where evictions had been avoided (Perlman 2010). Despite the shift to democracy and better living conditions in the *favelas*, the residents were in many ways less hopeful and more oppressed, not only by the authorities but by gangs involved with guns and drugs, enforcing their own brand of security (McCann 2014).

The tight control of urbanisation through registration and regulation – as with apartheid South Africa and the Chinese *hukou* system – is extremely costly, onerous and relatively rare. Even the direct costs of running such systems are very high; Wang (2004) estimates that at one point, the *hukou* system employed hundreds of thousands of field officers and tens of thousands of computers. Despite their unique histories and particular challenges, it is the *favelas* of Brazil, the Chinese ‘urban villages’ (Wu, Zhang and Webster 2013), the ‘slums’ of India and the post-apartheid informal settlements of South Africa that are more typical of the land-based exclusion found in so many low- and middle-income countries.

3.2 Informality and urban exclusion

Many countries and cities adopt building standards and land-use and other regulations that if fully enforced would raise the quality of urban built-up areas, reduce the density, improve working conditions and decrease inequalities within the city – largely by forcing those who could not afford to live in the higher-quality city to leave. In practice, people who are unable to secure a formal job or to afford a formal home in a city seek work in the informal economy and a home in an informal settlement. Strict regulations can be very difficult and costly to enforce, particularly during periods of economic, agricultural or conflict-related crisis, or once informal settlements and enterprises have become the norm.

People who are struggling to secure a place in the city seek out places where rents and property prices are low or vacant land that can be occupied at a cost they can afford – and which nevertheless allows them to secure some sort of livelihood. In some cases residents of informal settlements may have been involved in squatter-led processes or even land invasions, but this is the exception. More powerful actors such as land developers, employers or politicians are often involved in the development of informal settlements, and profit from them financially or politically. Many inhabitants of informal settlements are renters. There may be structure owners with valid, disputed, or no land titles. The buildings may or may not conform to land-use and building standards. But almost by definition there is something about informal settlements that puts the residents at a legal disadvantage, and excludes them from some of the benefits of being an urban citizen. They may be refused

environmental services, not be provided with transport infrastructure, or be excluded from schooling or health care.

People who are struggling to gain a livelihood face similar problems when they cannot find formal employment. They either do informal work for formal enterprises, or work in the informal economy, typically in a small enterprise or self-employment, earning low incomes. Like the residents of informal settlements, they face numerous disadvantages because of their informal employment status. Women who work for pay are especially likely to work in the informal economy, and tend to be concentrated in those segments of the informal economy that are less remunerative and often involve working in or around the home. This partly reflects women's unpaid care work responsibilities, which make it harder for them to secure formal employment or employment in the higher-paid segments of the informal economy. It can, however, reflect other forms of gender-based discrimination.

Whether informal work and informal settlements are seen to increase or decrease inequality depends on what is envisaged as the alternative. If the alternative is the strict enforcement of existing regulations and policies that a large segment of the population cannot afford to abide by, and do not have a collective interest in, then informality can be seen as increasing inequality. If the alternative is the development and implementation of regulations and policies that do serve those currently living and working in informality, then informality can be seen as an obstacle to increasing inequality. It also depends on whether the existing informality provides space and support for self-organisation and collective action, or whether it merely opens the door for official harassment and discrimination.

In effect, informality can be an awkward compromise that involves what is defined as exclusion in this report, but which could also be described as adverse inclusion. From a spatial and economic perspective, those living or working in informality are included in the city, but the terms of that inclusion are adverse in part because they are not fully included politically.

3.3 Cities and urbanisation that contribute to reducing inequality

It is probably too optimistic to expect rapid urbanisation to contribute to reducing inequalities, at least in the short term. Such urbanisation typically takes place during periods of dislocation, when changes in the economy, patterns of conflict or the environment are giving a greater advantage to urban locations. Inequality is quite likely to be rising during such periods. As evident from the previous discussion, however, taking measures to make it more difficult for people to move to and settle in urban locations is exclusionary and likely to increase inequalities. This is especially likely when policies explicitly or implicitly target those who are unable to afford formal housing and to secure formal employment in urban areas. It is likely whether the rapid urbanisation is being driven by rural push (such as rural conflicts or environmental degradation), urban pull, or some combination of the two.

A more inclusive urbanisation, reducing inequality, would open up more urban land in plots suitable for affordable housing, in a manner that allows self-build options to compete with private and public options. It would involve planning more actively and progressively for urban expansion (Angel 2015), and also for densification (Hasan, Sadiq and Ahmed 2010). It would involve removing exclusion from urban spaces, markets and services based on identities, but also based on structural barriers, such as those linked to informality.

Urban social security could also be designed to reduce inequalities, and to allow for rural-urban mobility and urban inclusion. As documented by Gentilini (2015), the social security programmes extended to rural populations have not been adequately developed for urban areas. There is a danger that requiring cities and towns to finance measures to improve the

social security of their low-income populations would increase their incentive to exclude these same populations. Mobile national social security programmes could both reduce inequalities directly, and reduce urban incentives to exclude migrants and expel their low-income populations.

More inclusive urbanisation is sometimes taken to be a threat to the economy, but there are a wide range of actions that can be taken to support more inclusive urbanisation without undermining economic performance. Indeed, some measures of inclusion are likely to be economically beneficial, for the economy as a whole if not for the urban economy alone. These include proactive planning for urban expansion and densification, both of which increase urban efficiency.

4 Cities, urbanisation and security

4.1 The relationship between urbanisation and violence

In 'Rapid Urbanization and the Growing Threat of Violence and Conflict: A 21st Century Crisis', Patel and Burkle (2012: 194) present a longstanding but misleading narrative on urbanisation and violence in their Special Report in a health and medical journal:

As the global population is concentrated into complex environments, rapid urbanization increases the threat of conflict and insecurity. Many fast-growing cities create conditions of significant disparities in standards of living, which set up a natural environment for conflict over resources. As urban slums become a haven for criminal elements, youth gangs, and the arms trade, they also create insecurity for much of the population. Specific populations, such as women, migrants, and refugees, bear the brunt of this lack of security, with significant impacts on their livelihoods, health, and access to basic services. This lack of security and violence also has great costs to the general population, both economic and social.

This narrative was constructed to attract attention to the heavy toll that urban violence incurs in a great many urbanising countries, and to spur the international humanitarian community to act on the inequalities and planning failures, which they claim are caused by rapid urbanisation and contribute to the violence. In presenting excessively rapid urbanisation as the underlying driver, however, they not only base the narrative on a dubious claim but on one that subverts their own proposed solutions. Indeed, they are in danger of implicitly providing support for the sort of exclusionary urbanisation criticised in the previous section. If rapid urbanisation is the problem, then why encourage it through proactively planning for urban population growth?

Violence is urbanising along with people, but this should not be taken to imply that urbanisation is associated with increasing violence, and still less that it causes violence. The international homicide statistics presented in a World Bank report display some weak patterns consistent with the claim that urbanisation contributes to violence (Marc and Willman 2011). In 32 out of 50 countries, the homicide rate in a principal city was higher than the national average (*ibid.*: 16). Faster-growing cities were also found to have higher homicide rates than slower-growing cities, though the relationship was not very significant statistically ($p=0.06$).

More detailed analyses have not borne out the claim that rapid urban city growth or urbanisation is an important driver of violence. Buhaug and Urdal (2013) employ a database on events involving social disorder in 55 major cities in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa to explore whether city population growth contributes to social disorder. None of the models they tested supported this association. Instead, they found that 'urban disorder is primarily associated with a lack of consistent political institutions, economic shocks, and ongoing civil conflict' (Buhaug and Urdal 2013: 1). Using a subset of 34 of these cities for which the relevant data were available, Østby (2015: 1) tried to explore whether rural–urban migration contributes to social disorder, and concluded that:

It is not the actual movement of rural people into the cities that creates social upheaval. Rather, overall poor and unequal educational opportunities as well as socioeconomic marginalization of rural–urban migrants are found to spur increased levels of urban violence.

In any case, even if city population growth or the presence of rural–urban migrants was statistically associated with social disorder or homicides, measures to keep migrants from settling in the city could make matters worse. Indeed, a statistical relationship between

urbanisation and violence could reflect conflict resulting from attempts to stop the migration. In yet another complication, the conflict resulting from urbanisation could, in some circumstances, help to drive reforms that enhance long-term security, as implied by Robinson and Acemoglu's (2002) account of how the struggles of urban workers drove political change in urbanising Europe. Alternatively, it could stimulate a response more in line with the new military urbanism (Graham 2010), which if successful would confirm Dennis Rodgers' provocation that 'a safe and secure city is arguably a dying city' (Rodgers 2015).

In a different vein, some cities do not so much breed violence as have violence thrust upon them. The drug trade has contributed to the rise or transmutation of urban violence, including in recent decades in many countries of Latin America (Bourgois 2015). Larger-scale armed conflicts often involve fighting for control of strategically located cities, placing their populations at risk. Arms and armed conflict can also infiltrate cities in countries bordering those involved in armed conflicts. Thus it is perhaps not surprising that Karachi – the port in Pakistan through which arms flow to Afghanistan and drugs flow back – is one of the most violent cities in the world despite not directly being involved in a war. But even in Karachi, the levels and types of violence are complex and contingent on many other factors, including how the city has been urbanising and how local and external factors combine (Gayer 2014).

Irregular warfare is itself becoming increasingly urban, and this has fostered the militarisation of selected cities and an increasing focus of international as well as local counter-insurgency on urban conflicts and control (Graham 2010; Kilcullen 2013). Kilcullen, an Australian counter-insurgency expert, adopts much of the misleading narrative about rapid urban population growth being a leading driver of urban conflict and insecurity. He nevertheless provides powerful insights into the dynamics of irregular warfare and conflict in extreme situations, and the role of both local exclusion and foreign connections and interventions. In a section on 'Future Cities, Future Threats', he examines the terrorist attacks on Mumbai in 2008, the shifting conflicts in Kingston's 'garrison' communities leading up to a violent US-backed destruction of a settlement heavily involved in the international drug trade, and the rise of violence leading up to and beyond the 1993 battle of Mogadishu that led to the US pull-out. In each case, informality and the problematic relations between certain deprived settlements and local authorities helped to foster the violence; international connections were also critical, with international terrorist networks or drug smugglers as well as foreign states involved, at least indirectly. Despite his clear association with Western counter-insurgency, Kilcullen sees approaches that seek to impose order from the outside as counterproductive. He argues for approaches that build capacities and co-design responses not just with local authorities but with local communities (Kilcullen 2013).

Violence is heavily gendered and age-related. Young men are especially likely to be involved in gang violence, homicides and violent social disruptions, and are also the most common victims. Women also suffer from urban gang violence (Baird 2015; Hume and Wilding 2015), urban political violence (Khan 2010: 104–16) and warfare (though see Wood 2009 for an examination of the relative absence of sexual violence among some armed groups). Especially for women and children, less visible and less deadly forms of violence can also be a major concern, and may play out differently in urban areas. This includes a large share of sexual and gender-based violence. For example, while it is difficult to discern whether violence against women is greater or less in urban areas, the statistics in Table 4.1 indicate that, at least in the countries selected, violence against women by their intimate partner is considerably higher in rural areas, while violence against women by non-partners is considerably higher in urban areas.

There is also a spatial patterning of violence in cities. Stereotypically, domestic violence centres on homes, gang violence on (poorer) streets, ethnic conflict on neighbourhoods, theft-related violence on transport hubs, social disorder on squares, terrorism on crowded or strategic locations, and irregular warfare on whole cities. While the spatial patterns of

violence are far more complex than such stereotypes imply, different sorts of violence do display different patterns. Between and within cities, there is also what could be termed a 'place' dependence of violence, as it tends to occur in the same homes, streets, neighbourhoods, hubs, squares and strategic locations. The spatial pattern in any particular city depends on its particular conditions and histories. Thus Karachi's homicides have been concentrated for some years in a set of peripheral neighbourhoods sometimes referred to as its ring of fire (Gayer 2014). On the other hand, ethnic differences and conflicts are discussed and negotiated in a wide range of spaces. Indeed, as Ring (2006) demonstrates, important efforts to produce peace are being undertaken in the *zenana* or women's space of middle-class apartment buildings, which might superficially seem to be isolated from the arenas of conflict.

Table 4.1 Proportion of adult women experiencing physical and/or sexual violence by intimate partner or non-partner by rural/urban residence for Brazil, Peru, Tanzania and Thailand

	Adult women having experienced physical or sexual violence...			
	By intimate partner (%)		By someone other than intimate partner (%)	
	Rural	Urban	Rural	Urban
Brazil	37	29	23	40
Peru	69	51	18	31
Tanzania	56	41	19	34
Thailand	47	41	14	20

Source: Mcllwaine (2013: Table 1).

More generally, behind the patterning of urban violence lie complex issues of territoriality, barriers, segregation, and a host of other locational factors (Pullan and Baillie 2013). To continue with the example of Karachi, attempts to steer violence and divide or protect populations range from erecting barriers around middle-income communities and strategic locations to the simpler barriers put up in low-income communities – these last being prone to being dismantled by public security forces (Ahmed *et al.* 2015: 33).

Urban exclusion and informality can create places of violence, though the majority of informal settlements are reasonably peaceful places. In some ways the lack of policing in informal settlements is analogous to the lack of other services such as health, water and waste, with similar consequences; in the absence of safe policing, local inhabitants are put at risk, and in some circumstances the risks can spill over into better-off neighbourhoods. Violence is more likely to occur when there are bad relations between local authorities and the residents of deprived and excluded communities. Even in the United States, where more than 10 per cent of young African American men are already in prison, police patrolling low-income African American neighbourhoods reinforce exclusion by harassing, chasing and trying to book still more in order to meet targets, creating a sub-population 'on the run' (Goffman 2014).

In effect, the authorities and the police often protect some groups more than others, and for excluded populations in particular, state forces can become sources of violence and insecurity. In many informal urban settlements around the world, the police are less present than in formal areas. This is not always perceived to be a disadvantage. However, it can leave openings for criminal or violent political organisations to infiltrate or even emerge from the informal settlements. In the short term, illicit organisations may gain local support by providing valuable services and functions that the absent state does not, even as they earn their money or gain their political power from illegal activities. In the longer term, as informal settlements grow increasingly difficult to police (rather than just being unpoliced), they can become a safe haven for groups trying to avoid the authorities – groups that might once have

sought refuge in rural forests or uplands, as with James Scott's (2009) upland anarchists of Southeast Asia. Whether from the authorities or those battling them, this often brings more insecurity and conflict to local residents. Some of this insecurity and conflict can come from state reprisals against illegal or illicit organisations operating in informal settlements, though in some cases there are alliances between certain state forces and these organisations.

More generally, research in Latin America illustrates that lethal urban violence is related to a range of political processes, linked to but not reducible to inequality and exclusion. Thus party politics and how they play out within cities and between national and urban governments have an influence on urban violence (Hoelscher 2015), as do relations between urban authorities and business interests (Moncada 2013, 2016).

4.2 Cities and urbanisation that contribute to a more secure and inclusive society

Urban exclusion can lead to violence, and for some scholars extreme forms of social exclusion are themselves forms of violence. As Scheper-Hughes and Bourgois (2004: 1) note in the introduction to their edited volume on *Violence in War and Peace*: 'Violence is a slippery concept – nonlinear, productive, destructive, and reproductive', while 'Structural violence – the violence of poverty, hunger, social exclusion and humiliation – inevitably translates into intimate and domestic violence'. From this perspective, if the state imposes security without addressing these forms of structural violence, one would have to ask 'Security for whom?' More directly relevant to the goal being examined in this section, it is doubtful that being secure in one's poverty, hunger, social exclusion and humiliation is being secure at all, but it is certainly not the basis for a secure and inclusive society.

Even at its simplest, the relationship between urbanisation and building a secure and inclusive society is somewhat paradoxical. Urbanisation poses serious challenges for security and inclusion, but resisting urbanisation poses a bigger challenge. To a first approximation, it is through more inclusive urbanisation that a more secure and inclusive society needs to be built. As with the goal of reducing inequality, this means ensuring that cities are more welcoming of rural migrants and do not let the challenge of urban economic growth become an excuse for excluding segments of the urban population, thereby creating conditions of exclusion, insecurity and violence. More generally, as Gupte (2016) argues, approaches to peace-building and political settlements in cities need to understand how the physical forms of the city (grid) and the institutions through which people are included or excluded (governance) are contributing to violence, but also to recognise that the shifting dynamics and identities of violence (ephemerality) cannot be reduced to the effects of material and institutional conditions.

Given the complex, contradictory and ephemeral qualities of urban insecurity and violence, human wellbeing is not likely to be well served by a narrow understanding of security that equates it with something imposed by security forces, or that sees violence through the eyes of the state. It is, in other words, important to address the challenge of 'rethinking violence in the vernacular' (Luckham 2015: 20–26). Even in a very simple sense, one person's security can be another's exclusion, oppression or even victimisation. But the very terms in which violence and security are understood and debated vary enormously, with very practical implications for who will benefit in what way from which actions and policies.

A recent review found positive but quite mixed results from a range of innovative approaches to community-based urban violence prevention (Math y and Matuk 2015). Given the scale of the challenge and of the innovative solutions being promoted, this is not surprising. The very nature of violence makes it difficult to address effectively through small-scale interventions alone, even if such measures must be part of the solution. In the right circumstances, small innovations involving more inclusive or community-based measures can be expected to

contribute to enhanced security and inclusion, but not in the face of widespread violence and social upheaval, and not on their own. Medellín's celebrated efforts to combat violence and insecurity involved measures to enhance the inclusion of informal settlements, partly by providing better transport links. Even at the micro level, neighbourhoods with these links experienced greater reductions in violence than those without (Cerdá *et al.* 2012). But as Moncada (2016) argues, Medellín's success with an inclusive and participatory programme to reduce violence was preceded by a participatory programme that failed. According to Moncada, the difference was that in the second case, 'collaborative relations between an inclusionary mayor and the cohesive business community coupled with the emergence of an armed territorial monopoly sustained the participatory project' (Moncada 2016: 56).

5 Cities, urbanisation and sustainability

5.1 The relationship between urbanisation, economic growth and sustainability

The sustainability of cities and their societies has long been a concern. It was a concern of Ibn Khaldūn (1967) when he wrote his introduction to world history in fourteenth century Tunis. He is best known for his theory of how city-based societies lose their '*asabiyyah*' (collective vigour) under the corrupting influence of luxury, sedentary lifestyles and unwarranted inequalities, eventually leading to their downfall at the hands of rural tribes with a stronger *asabiyyah*. The cycle may be repeated, though not necessarily in the same location. In a section on the 'requirements for the planning of towns' (*ibid.*: 267–9), he also has cities falling 'into ruins' for environmental reasons. For this he blames founders of cities who saw only what was directly important to the pursuit of their short-term interests (such as trade and warfare, which rely on camels and the pastures, trees and brackish water that support them) and ignored the longer-term requirements for the sustenance of the city populations (sweet water sources for drinking, trees for firewood, fields for crops, pastures for domestic animals). In effect, as in modern cities, authorities prioritising a narrow set of short-term elite interests were apparently undermining the sustainability of their cities.

The industrialising cities of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries had more profound impacts on their regional hinterlands. Cronon (1991) charts part of this spatial extension in his environmental history of Chicago, illustrating the central role of its economy in the radical changes in the flora, fauna and by implication the ecosystems of the Greater Midwest in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For example, he shows how and why Chicago's economy and its technologies reduced genetic diversity in the grasses, emptied forests of white pine, and led to an enormous growth in pig populations and their concentration and slaughter in the city.

In today's more affluent cities, long-term sustainability no longer depends just or even primarily on the relationship between the city and its regional environmental hinterland. As nodes in the global economic system, cities can now import resources, intermediate goods and consumables from far greater distances. They can also displace their wastes, pollution, and ecologically damaging activities, including through trade. The concept of an ecological footprint originated in the early 1990s as an attempt to demonstrate (using numbers) how much more influence cities have on the global environment than suggested by the 2–3 per cent of the world's land area they occupy (Rees 1992; Wackernagel *et al.* 2006): a city's ecological footprint is an estimate of the net land area needed to sustain the activities undertaken there. However, this sort of accounting is no substitute for understanding the underlying economic, political and ecological dynamics, although it can be useful heuristically.

Looking back on our less environmentally disruptive rural past, environmentalists have tended to idealise a more environmentally benign rural future, where we are again living in close proximity and harmony with nature. This is changing. Where ecologists once treated cities as the other of nature, there is now a longstanding tradition of studying ecosystems in cities, and a somewhat more recent tradition of studying cities as ecosystems or parts thereof (Douglas 2011; Pickett *et al.* 2011). One of the insights that comes with seeing cities as an integral part of larger socio-ecological systems is that understanding cities requires understanding their connections with the rest of the world. On the other hand, it can be misleading to ascribe environmental burdens to cities and urbanisation simply because the damaging activities are concentrated in cities. As observed in the 'Urban Systems' chapter of the Millennium Ecosystems Assessment, 'Urban demographic and economic growth has

been increasing pressures on ecosystems globally, but affluent rural and suburban living often places even more pressure on ecosystems' (McGranahan *et al.* 2005: 795).

Partly because the world is so economically unequal, there is enormous variation in the sort of environmental burdens incurred by different cities and neighbourhoods. To a first approximation, there would seem to be what amounts to an urban environmental transition related to economic status (*ibid.*). The environmental burdens created by activities in the poorest cities (and especially their poorest settlements) tend to stay close to home and threaten people's health directly: unsanitary toilets or no toilets at all, smoky kitchens, polluted wells, pest infestation, and so on. The burdens created by the most affluent cities and neighbourhoods are increasingly global, undermining the world's life-support systems; ecological footprints and greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions required to support per capita consumption tends to be higher in more affluent cities and neighbourhoods. The heavily researched environmental Kuznets curve – which posits that environmental conditions first deteriorate and then improve as a country or city's per capita income increases – has not been found to be generalisable (Stern 2004), though it does apply to a subset of intermediately scaled urban environmental burdens such as poor urban ambient air quality due to urban emissions.

In practice, all cities are involved in creating and facing a complex mix of environmental burdens, with the influence of economic status complicated by local geography, governance, economic specialisation, technology development, demographic change and much more besides. Especially in the peri-urban areas of expanding cities, the overlapping burdens often come together in particularly acute ways. The general trend is for more affluent urban populations to use more resources and create more waste, but to use some of their wealth to protect themselves from the consequences of environmental degradation, drawing resources from and dispersing their wastes over longer distances. With the increasingly global environmental consequences of development, resilience to environmental shocks has become an important concern not only in more affluent cities but also in low-income settlements, which are often more vulnerable.

Looking at the countries that were urbanising and industrialising in the nineteenth century, a stylised account of their environmental transition is as follows: their most pressing urban environmental problems in the nineteenth century were connected to unsafe household sanitation and work environments; their most pressing problems in the twentieth century were linked to ambient pollution problems brought on by industrialisation and motorisation; and their contribution to the twenty-first century's environmental problems is linked to consumption-driven environmental burdens undermining global sustainability, with global climate change as the archetypal example.

An optimistic interpretation of the environmental trajectories of these more affluent cities is that their past approaches to urban sanitation and pollution challenges need to be spread more widely and extended to the global sustainability challenges. The urban-based public health movement and sanitary revolution, and the increased capacities brought on by technological development and economic growth, helped these cities to address the sanitation-related challenge of the nineteenth century. The environmental movement of the twentieth century and the accompanying policy shifts (again supported by technological and economic developments) have enabled them to address most of the ambient pollution problems that were prevalent. From this optimistic perspective, we just need to launch a sustainability revolution – like the sanitation and pollution revolutions of the past, but bigger and better.

A pessimistic interpretation of these same trajectories is that even in the most affluent cities, the environmental challenges have not been addressed so much as displaced, and that there is no viable way of displacing global environmental challenges. Moreover, the inequalities which ensure that other, less affluent cities are still suffering from severe sanitation or

pollution problems are part of a complex global challenge against which city-scale successes with sanitation or national-scale successes with pollution are largely irrelevant.

The truth almost certainly combines elements of both of these interpretations. Attempts to achieve a twentieth century sustainability transition do need to learn from the urban-based sanitation and pollution revolutions, but simply mounting a larger version of these will not meet the global sustainability challenge. Part of the difference lies in the role of cities, and the rising importance of global governance to the sustainability challenge.

5.2 Cities and urbanisation that accelerate the transition to sustainability

In a very simple sense, it is a combination of economic globalisation and the spatial shifts in environmental burdens to the global scale that have made global governance the critical sustainability issue for the coming decades. While recent decades have seen significant international measures freeing up trade in commodities and capital (not labour), there has been no comparable progress in addressing inequalities or environmental burdens, or in strengthening the kinds of institutions that enable such goals to be pursued. As such, there is little reason to expect global income inequalities to decline appreciably (Galbraith 2012; Milanovic 2012), or for global environmental burdens to stop growing (De Vogli 2013). This last applies especially to environmental burdens that involve global collective action problems, such as climate change, where the costs borne by GHG-emitting individuals, enterprises or even most nations bear virtually no relation to the level of emissions they generate. Expectations were raised in advance of the Copenhagen Climate Summit in 2009, and its failure to make significant progress created widespread disillusion with international summitry. There were lower expectations of subsequent Conference of Parties (COPs), and of the Rio+20 United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development; until the recent Paris COP, these expectations were not exceeded (Goldin 2013).

Considering the history of attempts to create the institutions of global governance, these difficulties are not surprising (Mazower 2012). Most efforts to strengthen global governance are resisted – for good reasons and bad – even when there is widespread agreement that the stated goals are laudable. In relation to inequalities and environmental burdens, there are widely divergent views on what should be considered egregious or excessive, and whether and how they should be controlled. There are vested interests wanting to maintain privileged positions. There are also legitimate concerns that regulatory or governmental powers will be misappropriated and corrupted in the international arena, particularly if the organisations of governance have been hastily constructed, and are not rooted in healthy or supportive national and local institutions. Alternatively, in a variety of Catch 22 – given the limited powers likely to be granted to any global agency attempting to address global inequalities or environmental burdens – there is also legitimate scepticism about the potential influence of such agencies and related agreements. Even the limited governance structures of the United Nations have been heavily contested and face serious difficulties, not least because of national politics (Goldin 2013; Goldin and Reinert 2012).

Cities and urbanisation might seem to be irrelevant or even undermining of global attempts to address sustainability issues. Technologically and economically, cities and urbanisation are usually associated with increasing efficiencies that create the capacity to produce more with less, but are more often used to produce much more with more – in a variant of the Jevons paradox (Freire-González and Puig-Ventosa 2014; Madlener and Alcott 2009; Polimeni *et al.* 2008). Greater efficiencies are accompanied by technological and economic developments that bring new uses and new demands to the market, increasing aggregate resource consumption and waste. Politically, the growing importance of cities, often at the expense of the nation state, would seem to be shifting power away from the global scale where there is the most critical need for stronger governance mechanisms.

However, the shift of powers to cities, and the declining hegemony of the nation state, could also provide more scope for global governance. As expressed by Elinor Ostrom in relation to climate change: 'Building a global regime is a necessity, but encouraging the emergence of a polycentric system starts the process of reducing greenhouse gas emissions and acts as a spur to international regimes to do their part' (Ostrom 2012: 353). More generally, a global regime is more likely to be successful if it is rooted in, and made more accountable by, active localities pursuing complementary goals.

Cities are natural hubs in such a polycentric system, as they are important sub-national sites of state power; they are also key locations where state power, market-driven systems and alternative forms of self-organisation come together. Even in primarily agrarian societies, cities are where most new alliances are forged, civil society typically makes its presence felt and many social movements make their stands. Cities help to shape the lives of their residents, and many cities create their own distinctive ethos (Bell and De-Shalit 2011). Cities are where most market transactions are negotiated, but also where non-market interactions and shifting solidarities are particularly intense, and where planners are always necessary, if not necessarily liked. Individuals, enterprises and other organisations are attracted to or repelled from cities based on what they can buy and sell, but also on what they can secure outside of the market, from the state and directly from each other. Cities are where most private returns to agglomeration are to be found, where most public infrastructure investments are made, and where most large social events are organised. They exhibit the best and worst forms of social and political collaboration and, often, conflict (Davis and Libertun de Duren 2011).

Whether urbanisation and cities enhance or undermine the sustainability transition that is needed, they clearly have an important role to play – particularly in countries where urbanisation and population growth are combining to create towns and cities that are growing extremely rapidly. But from a sustainability perspective, all of the world's urban settlements have an important contribution to make; the difficulty is how to make it worth their while, from below and from above.

6 Can urbanisation and cities facilitate the combined pursuit of greater equality, security and sustainability?

Urbanisation and cities have a reputation for sacrificing equality, security and sustainability for economic ends. Economy-minded defenders may point out that the pursuit of non-economic goals benefits from a flourishing economy. However, their pursuit can easily come into conflict with economic goals and politics, and also with each other. As outlined above, cities are often viewed as engines of economic growth, and the politics of city growth coalitions can make it difficult to address inequalities, problems of exclusion and insecurity, and unsustainable practices. These difficulties are compounded when a city's population is growing more rapidly than the authorities and local elites would like, and especially when they respond with exclusionary measures.

In rapidly growing low-income cities, migrants and those living in informal settlements and working in the informal economy are often blamed for the city's visible poverty and environmental degradation, and also for rising violence. Urban authorities can seem to face what have been termed 'wicked' policy problems – characterised by being complex, unpredictable, open-ended and essentially intractable (for a recent treatment of 'wicked' problems and public policy see Head and Alford (2015)). Efforts to improve conditions in overcrowded informal settlements and workplaces are seen to risk attracting more low-income migrants to the city, exacerbating underlying problems and creating even more overcrowding and congestion. On the other hand, not providing informal settlements with services, or actively trying to limit informal settlement by threatening eviction, exacerbates the symptoms being ascribed to overcrowding. The result is often an awkward compromise, whereby people who cannot secure formal employment and afford to live in formal settlements are formally excluded (in the sense that if all regulations were enforced fully they would not be able to afford to live in the city), but informally accepted on disadvantageous terms. This is no solution, particularly for the disadvantaged, but also for the wealthier segments of the population.

Somewhat similarly, the challenge of reconciling economic and environmental goals is also often presented as if it were a 'wicked' problem. Ecologists are best known for emphasising the importance of tipping points and the dangers of going past them, in local socio-ecological systems and at the planetary scale (Rockström *et al.* 2009; Steffen *et al.* 2015; Walker and Salt 2006, 2012). Policymakers are often more fearful of undermining national or city economic growth trajectories, and pushing the economy over a tipping point and into a recession. The notion that cities need to compete economically to succeed reinforces such fears, and the city economic growth coalitions described in Section 2.2 have every incentive to exaggerate the risks of redistribution or environmental measures.

The separate pursuit of these goals can amplify the trade-offs. As described earlier, the politics of cities as growth machines leaves little room for efforts to retain a flourishing economy while negotiating efficient measures to prevent unsustainable practices or to reduce inequalities and insecurities. Narrowly environmental and social agendas also leave little room for seeking out ways of reducing trade-offs, even if both are inclined to claim that they support the other. The goal of achieving a secure and inclusive society is at least superficially more complementary to the other goals, but security and inclusion can themselves be at odds with one another, with government efforts to impose security only rarely inclusive. One of the problems with the 2030 agenda, with its multiplicity of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and targets, is that the indivisibility of its different goals is strongly asserted but weakly supported (McGranahan *et al.* 2016). Somewhat the same

applies to literature on economic growth in cities that is green (see, for example, OECD 2013) or equitable (see Rodríguez-Pose and Wilkie 2015). In these cases the tendency is to focus on certain aspects of economic growth (such as employment in the case of equitable growth) rather than on the broader political conflicts between the growth agenda and the green and equity agendas.

The remainder of this final section focuses on four cross-cutting means through which the different goals can be pursued together more easily, without undermining economic productivity. The first is inclusive urbanisation, which, as already described, is relevant to each of the goals and can also be economically advantageous. The second is strategic decentralisation, involving the sort of localisation that can bring government 'closer to [and more accountable to] the people', while recognising the importance of multi-scale governance to ensure, for example, that cities are not expected to address individually issues that pose collective action problems at higher scales, such as rural–urban migration or mitigating global environmental change. In the absence of appropriate scaling of governance, cities will be tempted to be more exclusionary and contribute less to global sustainability than they ought to. The third means is engaging constructively with informality: accepting informality uncritically and crude efforts at formalisation both tend to undermine these goals, partly by increasing the trade-offs among them. Finally, there is treating wellbeing as an end and economic output as a means; a flourishing economy is central to all of the goals, but treating economic growth as an end in itself reinforces the more environmentally and socially damaging forms of urban growth politics.

6.1 Inclusive urbanisation and cities

A common theme running through much of this report is that especially when countries' populations are growing rapidly, and urban populations are growing even more rapidly, cities are inclined to respond by excluding (sometimes more actively, sometimes less) the 'excess' population. It is not clear that such exclusion has much impact on urbanisation rates, but it does have an impact on wellbeing, not only of migrants but of disadvantaged urban groups generally. In effect, it can mean that the worst-off groups in a city are not so much being planned for as planned against. For example, zoning and other regulations prohibit them from living or working where they can afford to, and where they can earn a livelihood, so they end up living and working informally. Little effort is made to open up transport systems to new areas, or to provide low-income dwellers with ways of moving incrementally to liveable density. There are many forms and degrees of informality, but informality often opens people up to harassment and discrimination – though the strict enforcements of regulations can be even more oppressive. The result of 'informality gone wrong' is more problems that are then misleadingly blamed on overly rapid migration and population growth – expanding informal settlements, service deprivation in these settlements, conflict and insecurity.

More inclusive urbanisation means planning for low-income urban populations and their growth, but also planning with them. Better-organised informal communities and informal workers sometimes appear as an obstacle to addressing the problems of informality, but they can become (and already are in some cities) an important part of the solution (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014).

More inclusive urbanisation is likely to reduce national and, in some cases, urban inequalities, though urban inequalities may also rise if, as many cities fear, many more low-income migrants are attracted in to urban settlements. There will be some trade-offs between opening up more land for low-income settlement and protecting environmentally sensitive land from inappropriate settlement. On the other hand, part of what drives people to environmentally sensitive land is the lack of better alternatives. More inclusive and engaged urbanisation should in principle be able to protect key sites while opening up land that is more suitable to settlements in more accessible and affordable sites. It should also reduce the trade-offs between more vigorous efforts to accelerate the transition to sustainability and

local wellbeing. Well-executed, inclusive urbanisation should also improve security in the poorest neighbourhoods.

More inclusive urbanisation is not consistent with the images promoted of eco-cities, world cities or more generally the images of the future city projected by most city boosters and planners. It is certainly not consistent with the sort of planning criticised by Vanessa Watson as creating ‘fantasy cities’ and ‘smart city’ rhetoric (Watson 2013, 2015). Those who design or advocate such (imagined) cities eliminate poverty from the images, but have no plans for those who cannot afford to live in such cities, except implicit exclusion.

There is, however, no reason to think that inclusive urbanisation requires sacrificing economic growth or, more importantly, the increased productivity that enables economic growth. As noted at the start of this report, urban economics generally treats demographic urbanisation as economically beneficial, and better connections within the city as conducive to this (Spence *et al.* 2009; World Bank 2009). Some of the better-known economists have expressed concerns about urban exclusion. In his assessment of the role of cities in economic growth, Duranton (2009) argues that cities can be expected to want to reduce rural–urban migration to the point that it harms the national economy, and that city authorities should not be given the opportunity to put this desire into practice. In his review of cities and development, Henderson (2010: 517) notes disapprovingly that ‘slums’ ‘may be in part intentional, driven by local policies which intend to restrain in-migration through offering very poor living conditions for migrants’.

6.2 Strategic decentralisation

For some time, decentralisation has been advocated by neoliberals disillusioned with the role of central governments, by neo-communitarians hoping that decentralisation will encourage grass-roots democracy, and by more narrowly pragmatic supporters of local governments claiming they are in the best position to meet the large number of local public needs (see Bardhan 2002). As already indicated in Section 2.2, outcomes have been mixed.

Decentralisation has often devolved responsibilities but not given local authorities the basis for meeting them or made them accountable to their public. In any case, it is difficult to make a clear distinction between which responsibilities should be local, which regional, which national and which multinational; the concept of decentralisation implicitly devalues the importance of developing good relations between different levels of government so that they can combine to support both local initiative and larger-scale collective action challenges.

As described in Section 5 on sustainability, climate change poses a global collective action problem, but cities can play an important role, both in implementing climate-related action (including efforts to reduce GHG emissions) and in joining with other cities to ensure that national policies and international agreements support appropriate local actions.

Decentralisation needs to be developed strategically to bring the collective environmental interests at different scales into better alignment. Strategic decentralisation can also support the goals around inequality, insecurity and inclusion, but in order to do so, local governments need to have the incentive to engage constructively with all of their residents, and to welcome migrants. It undermines these goals when mechanistic decentralisation leads to cities competing to attract formal investments, making life even more difficult for those forced to work in the informal economy and to live in informal settlements.

A reasonably high degree of urban autonomy is important not only because quasi-autonomous local governments can respond better to the needs of their citizens, but also because it allows cities to become sites of innovation and experimentation that if successful can be spread to other cities or to the national level. City-level innovation and experimentation often focuses on economic growth, particularly when that is also the national government’s priority. For example, when post-Maoist China shifted towards a more market-driven economy, most of the experimentation was undertaken in emerging or pre-existing

cities (designated as special economic zones) where capital and labour came together under the auspices of bureaucratic entrepreneurs to become enormously successful motors of economic growth (McGee *et al.* 2007; Naughton 2007).

There are also cases where experimentation and innovation has been more focused on the other goals. For example, after the fall of the rightist dictatorship in Brazil, when the Workers' Party first gained power democratically in cities, it experimented with new approaches to participation and social redistribution (Baiocchi 2003). City-level successes became the basis for national initiatives a decade or so later, and its urban roots were evident when the national government passed exceptionally inclusive urban legislation in the form of a 'City Statute' (Fernandes 2007; Santos Carvalho and Rossbach 2010). There are numerous examples where cities have become internationally known for their innovations, such as Curitiba for its environmental initiatives (Rabinovitch 1992) and Medellín for its efforts to reduce violence through inclusion (Cerdá *et al.* 2012; Moncada 2016, especially chapter 3). Such innovation requires decentralisation, but decentralisation alone does not ensure that the right innovations succeed.

6.3 Engaging constructively with urban informality

Since urban informality first attracted serious attention in the early 1970s (Hart 1973), many have treated it as a temporary phenomenon soon to be driven out by the formal economy and formal settlements. Instead, both the informal economy and informal settlements have grown, and now account for the majority of urban employment and housing in large parts of the world (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014; Vanek *et al.* 2014). Such informality is still often treated as temporary, however, in part because in some circles it cannot be formally accepted.

Urban informality is relevant to all of the goals of concern in this report, and to economic productivity and growth, but in each case the relationship is ambiguous. The informal economy is, on average, less productive than the formal economy (Porta and Shleifer 2014), but repressing the informal economy is likely to reduce productivity still further. The urban informal economy and informal settlements are symptoms of inequality, and their informality reflects a form of exclusion, but enforcing the regulations that created this informality is likely to exacerbate the underlying inequalities. Violence often arises in informal settlements, but the failure of governments to be more accepting of informal settlements and economies is often part of the problem. Ignoring the informal economy while trying to accelerate the transition to sustainability not only risks increasing inequalities but also risks driving environmentally degrading activities into the informal sector, while failing to support the informal activities that are or can become environmentally beneficial. Alternatively, adopting a conventional regulatory approach to 'greening' the informal sector could easily increase inequalities and insecurity, without much environmental benefit (for a discussion of the greening of the informal sector, see Brown and McGranahan 2016).

From the perspective of pursuing all of these goals, better relations between local authorities and those living and working in informality are central. Informal workers and residents may be able to use rights-based approaches to defend their interests and, in some cases, to challenge the regulatory systems that undermine their human rights. However, this is complicated by the legally awkward position that informal workers and residents are often in – one that in many cases discourages them from relying on legal approaches. Much can be learned from the experiences of what could be described as the more formal international organisations of informal residents and informal workers, such as Slum/Shack Dwellers International (SDI) and Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO), which are reasonably well-documented. There is also a lot to learn from the multitude of smaller and less well-connected organisations of informal residents and workers, only a few of which are well-documented. What seems likely, however, is that the goals would all be served by local governments being more supportive of those who depend on

informal settlements and economies, and more willing to engage with their organisations. Better relations may lead to an implicit or explicit formalisation of most informal settlements and enterprises, but that should not be the goal.

6.4 Treating wellbeing as an end and economic output as a means

Whatever is done in terms of urban inclusion, decentralisation and informality, there will always be trade-offs as well as synergies between achieving economic growth, reducing inequality, achieving secure and inclusive societies, and accelerating the transition to sustainability. The most powerful groups in many existing cities prioritise economic growth, and to the extent that they value the other goals, they would want to assess the trade-offs in economic terms, using actual or surrogate market values. Many would argue, however, that wellbeing is the more obvious goal, and increasing wellbeing is much less at odds with the other goals than is economic growth, though the defence of economic growth as a goal is typically that it contributes to human wellbeing.

In terms of inequalities, societies have historically tried to resist the tendency for economies dominated by markets to create large income differentials, as these have been deemed unacceptable by large parts of the population (Polanyi 2001). Much criticism has focused on the income differences being unfair. Recent research on subjective wellbeing raises a different doubt regarding the large income differentials that markets often generate: after a point, the wealthy themselves are not actually better off. As summarised by Kahneman (2011: 396), 'being poor makes one miserable' while after a point 'being rich may enhance one's life satisfaction, but does not (on average) improve experienced well-being'. Moreover, at least some of the increased life satisfaction that comes with wealth derives from relative rather than absolute wealth.

Wellbeing is also very consistent with the pursuit of a secure and inclusive society. After all, as with inequality, insecurity and exclusion undermine wellbeing (Wilkinson and Pickett 2009). Similarly, understanding the sources and dynamics of insecurity and exclusion, and especially what Luckham (2015) refers to as security 'in the vernacular', can inform understandings of wellbeing – and avoid its collapse into little more than a more intellectually rigorous version of happiness.

There is a potentially significant trade-off between present wellbeing and environmental sustainability; to some degree, it can be seen as a trade-off between present and future wellbeing. Indeed, a society that valued the wellbeing of future generations as highly as the wellbeing of the present generation would provide a strong basis for a rapid transition to sustainability – provided that the political means could be found for translating that value into practice.

Inclusive urbanisation, strategic decentralisation, constructive engagement with informality and the pursuit of wellbeing: these are not inspiring concepts, and they are not part of any city's vernacular. And who does not wish more for either a world city, an eco-city or a rebel city? (see Bassens and van Meeteren 2015; de Jong *et al.* 2015; Harvey 2012 for accounts of world cities, eco-cities and rebel cities respectively). But as the saying goes, people should be careful what they wish for. This report has argued that urbanisation and cities can contribute simultaneously to the development goals of reducing inequality, building more secure and inclusive societies, and accelerating the transition to sustainability. This is an enormous challenge, and can be expressed in inspiring terms, but not in this report.

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