

# Urbanization Challenges in East Asia

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## Abstract

This paper addresses the issues surrounding urbanization in the East Asian region. The paper begins by considering the reasons for urbanization and, therefore, the nature and shape of that urbanization. It then goes on to consider the various impacts of the phenomenon as they have affected social and workplace relations, as a result of changes in lifestyles and environment. This leads to the consideration of the agglomeration effects of urbanization and the possibilities and prospects for networked cities in the region. It is concluded that numerous structural and systemic changes must be made by nearly every state in the region before the benefits of networked and smart cities can be harvested.

## Introduction

Urbanisation is the process by which people move away from the countryside to cities which, as a result, grow in size and complexity. All across East Asia, many millions of people have undertaken this movement and have contributed to creating some of the largest cities in the world, including Tokyo, Chongqing, Manila, Bangkok and Jakarta (see Table 1 below). While urbanization can be

panned and resourced to some extent, most of the time it is a chaotic and unpredictable process in which government agencies have little capacity either to estimate the number of people involved or to provide them with the services that they need in terms of sanitation, public health and education. This section explains the reasons for urbanization, its effects and the implications it has for business practices.

**Table 1: Urban Indicators for East Asian States.**

State	Urban Population (%age)	Annual Change in Urbanization, 2010-5 (%age)	Leading Cities (population in millions)
Brunei	76	2.2	Bandar Seri Begawan (<0.1)
Cambodia	20	3.2	Phnom Penh (1.5)
China	47	2.3	Shanghai (16.6), Beijing (12.2), Chongqing (9.4), Shenzhen (9.0), Guangzhou (8.9)
Hong Kong	100	0	
Indonesia	44	1.7	Jakarta (9.1), Surabaya (2.5), Bandung (2.4), Medan (2.1), Semarang (1.3)
Japan	67	0.2	Tokyo (36.5), Osaka -Kobe (11.3), Nagoya (3.3), Fukuoka-Kitakyushu (2.8), Sapporo (2.7)
Korea, DPR	60	0.6	
Korea, Rep	83	0.6	Seoul (9.8), Busan (3.4), Incheon (2.6), Daegu (2.5), Daejon (1.5)
Laos	33	4.9	Vientiane (0.8)
Macau	100	0.7	
Malaysia	72	2.4	Kuala Lumpur (1.5), Klang (1.1), Johor Behru (1.0)

<b>Myanmar</b>	34	2.9	Yangon (4.3), Mandalay (1.0), Nay Pyi Taw (1.0)
<b>Philippines</b>	49	2.3	Manila (11.5), Davao (1.5), Cebu (0.8), Zamboanga (0.8)
<b>Singapore</b>	100	0.9	
<b>Thailand</b>	34	1.8	Bangkok (6.9)
<b>Timor-Leste</b>	28	5.0	Dili (0.2)
<b>Vietnam</b>	30	3.0	Ho Chi Minh City (6.0), Hanoi (2.7), Haiphong (1.9), Da Nang (0.8)

Source: CIA Factbook

(available at: [https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region\\_eas.html](https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/wfbExt/region_eas.html)).

### Reasons for Urbanization

The principal reason for urbanization is the uneven development of land, which is intensified by changes brought about by modernisation and capitalism. Since development is uneven, some people will consider moving in order to find better opportunities for themselves and their family members. In general, opportunities will be better in towns and cities because more and higher paying jobs are created there and, even where there are no jobs, entrepreneurial activities are more likely to provide an income because there are more people present and, therefore, better opportunities for buying and selling goods. City life also provides a more attractive lifestyle, particularly for young people, than life in rural areas, where facilities can be very limited and opportunities to meet other people rare. Clearly, therefore, when the opportunity to migrate to a city arises, there will be many people who will take that opportunity.

The economist Arthur Lewis, who wrote influentially about the changes in the labour market that occur when economic development takes place in a country, noted that the opportunities for change were, overall, beneficial for people because they increased the scope for personal choice (Lewis, 1963:470). Although, therefore, this section provides plenty of details of how people's lives and fortunes are limited and damaged by living in overcrowded and sometimes dangerous cities, it should still be remembered that most people have made a conscious choice to move to those cities and will do what they can to remain there. Regional development and agrarian change can be used to make it more attractive for people to remain in, return or move for the first time to a rural area.

### Lewisian Change

According to the Lewisian model of economic development, countries may be divided into two basic

sectors: a large but generally unproductive rural sector and a much smaller but more productive industrial sector. Since the agricultural sector is characterised by subsistence farming with zero or very low growth in productivity, workers will move to the industrial sector since higher productivity means higher wages. The presence of a pool of labour in the agricultural sector acts to restrict increases in wages in the industrial sector through the normal workings of supply and demand: workers in industrial plants who might threaten to strike to obtain higher wages can simply be threatened with replacement by new workers drawn from the agricultural sector who would be happy to work for the existing level of wages. Across the East Asian region, there have been very few occasions in recent years when labour unions have been given the opportunities to negotiate with employers on an equal basis and with effective collective bargaining support is low. As a result, the threat to replace workers has generally been successful and employers have been able to rely upon the state to use its legal monopoly of violence to break strikes and protests using the police or the armed forces.

In the early years of economic development in particular, most jobs in the industrial sector are comparatively low-skilled in nature. Most factories are set up according to Taylorist ideas of scientific management which means that jobs within them are at least semi-skilled in nature. As a result, unskilled workers can be converted to semi-skilled workers in a comparatively short period of time. This has the additional effect that workers employed in a factory cannot bargain with employers that they have job-specific skills which it would be difficult or expensive for employers to replace and, therefore, have less ability to improve either their wages or their workplace terms and conditions. In those factories where skilled work is required on a large-scale, for example in textiles and fashion manufacturing, employers have called on workers who have developed

those skills at their own expense: that is, young women employed in these factories have learned at least the rudimentary aspects of the craft while growing up and contributing to household maintenance. Additionally and, often inaccurately, employers have believed that they would be able to bully and coerce factories of predominantly or exclusively women workers, given the reputation that East Asian women have of being docile, pliant and unwilling to stand up to such pressure.

The reason why these changes lead to urbanisation is because industrial facilities are nearly always located in or near urban areas. There are good reasons for this: infrastructure such as roads, railways, water and electricity are likely to be better near urban areas and so transaction costs for sending goods to markets will be lower in addition to the lower production costs; employers and employees alike require public services such as housing, education, health, retail and leisure facilities which are present by definition only in urban areas; and there are big benefits from clustering or agglomeration which are discussed below.

According to the Lewisian model, therefore, people will move from the agricultural sector to the industrial sector and, so long as economic development continues, there is no reason for this to stop. Eventually, then, the demand for new workers will start to outweigh the supply of new workers. At this point, wages will inevitably increase and the competitiveness of many factories relying on low labour costs will erode or disappear completely. At this point, systematic and structural change within the economy will be required to create new forms of competitive industrial activities; these, too, are more likely to occur in urban areas and this promotes a new form of urbanisation.

### **Network and Agglomeration Effects and Urbanisation**

The benefits of locating industrial activities close together has been known throughout history, even if the theoretical vocabulary has only been developed over the last century or so. In all parts of the Mekong region, for example, villages have been devoted to specific forms of artisanship and have been encouraged and supported in doing so by ruling kings and princes. In the Chiang Mai Chronicle, it is the desire for ownership of particular communities of such skilled workers that prompted numerous monarchs to start wars aimed at overrunning the territory on which those villagers were located and moving them en masse back to the core lands of the victorious army. European travellers exploring the Mekong River and its environs before and during the period of colonization also came across and recorded details of economic specialisation within neighbouring villages and trading systems were put in place to enable different communities to benefit from that specialisation.

Communities such as this benefit from the fact that there is expertise resident within many senior members who are able and willing to pass it on to the younger generation and have a strong incentive to do so because it means their own family members will be able to enjoy a better income. Young people will also be more willing to join this traditional activity when they can see it offers higher income than would be available from alternatives such as farming and, therefore, provide better opportunities when it comes to such things as social status and choosing potential marriage partners.

Within villages, there is not much scope for maintaining more than one type of specialist economic activity. However, in larger urban settings it is possible for people from different types of occupation to meet each other and interact so as to stimulate new ideas and, therefore, create added value in production activities. Historically, these processes have been managed through some form of state patronage: Korea's King Sejong, famously, gathered together the leading scholars of his reign to encourage them to work together and produce new knowledge. However, there were some successful developments in the private sector: it was the activities of networks of ethnic Chinese merchants, for example, which led to the creation of branded opium products, which are among the very earliest cases of private sector branding on a large-scale. More recently, combinations of public and private sector agencies have worked together to create the various special economic zones that have characterized so much of contemporary East Asian economic development. When working together or, at least, in such proximity that social interactions can occur on a reasonably frequent occurrence, there are opportunities for cross-firm co-operation to take place, for sharing of mutually useful information, for sharing of expertise and for creation of friendly relationships that might help to produce new knowledge or goods at some stage in the future. There is of course no guarantee that these positive results will occur – people do not always get on with each other and neither do they wish to share organization-sensitive knowledge with outsiders, especially in countries such as Japan or Korea where loyalty to a single, large firm is considered to be an important attribute of a loyal employee. However, where success has been achieved in such circumstances it has nearly always been associated with an urban setting: the mercantile cities of northern Italy, the Seattle of Starbucks and Microsoft and the foreign quarters of Hong Kong, Ayutthaya and Penang. It is no surprise, therefore, that firms prefer to place their headquarter facilities in urban settings where they can be close to important representatives of their markets, relevant government agencies and the type of facilities that contribute to a good quality of life. As a result, city space has become an important commodity which is worthy of sale and exchange: when the cities existed as places for factory workers to be congregated, they are

usually filthy places with the very minimum of public services, little political or legal representation and precious little hope for a better future for subsequent generations. Perhaps the earliest and best systematic descriptions of such cities come from Friedrich Engels, in *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (1887) but there are numerous descriptions of the lives of the poor in contemporary East Asian cities.

However, when cities began to be reinvented as places for business and business leaders, the working-classes began to be rounded up and confined to the less desirable areas, while those locations deemed more desirable were recreated as upmarket locations through the process of gentrification. On three occasions, it has been the staging of the Olympic Games that has given the opportunity for city planners to clear out the slums and the no-longer wanted low-cost workers to redesign the city for the admiring eyes of the international media. Visitors to modern cities such as Seoul, Taipei and Singapore will find clear, uncluttered streets, efficient mass transportation links and a wide range of dining, leisure and retail facilities for those who can afford them. Less modern cities such as Bangkok, Jakarta and Manila are currently witnessing different forms of struggle between those who would modernize them and those classes of people who have become unwelcome and lacking in aesthetic appeal but who refuse to leave and who are still needed. In Phnom Penh, this struggle is being conducted with open violence and harassment of people who happen to live in once disregarded places that have now become valuable to developers (the land around Lake BoeungKak, for example (e.g. Chak, 2012)).

An example of how change is brought about by urbanization is provided by the Olympic Games. The Olympic Games has been held three times in East Asia: Tokyo hosted the 1964 games, Seoul hosted the 1988 games and Beijing hosted the 2008 games. Based in a single capital city, these games have offered opportunities for the creation and reproduction of national pride and cultural traits, in addition to the legacy of enhanced infrastructure and the provision of the sporting facilities, which in some cases may be redesigned for alternative uses. The same may also be said of 1998 football World Cup, which was jointly held by cities in Japan and South Korea. However, the distributed nature of that competition, together with the fact that cities involved already had stadiums of some sort has meant that the impact was comparatively limited.

The extent of the ambitions provided by the opportunity to host the games has generally increased over time but has, in the case of the three East Asian events, been particularly spectacular. The Tokyo games represented the opportunity to complete the subway train system in the capital, along with connections to other urban centres and the early

versions of the Shinkansen or bullet train. That these games were the first to be broadcast in real time internationally also necessitated considerable investment in media facilities. Tokyo had previously been scheduled to hold the 1940 games but the intervention of the Second World War, not to mention the invasion of China, prevented this occurring, by the time of 1964, therefore, Japanese authorities were ready to present quite a different impression of their country to the world, one that was safe, industrious and equipped with the latest technology. These changes had been planned and would presumably have been brought about in due course: however, the Olympics represented a symbolic moment and purpose by which activities could and should be completed (Essex & Chalkley, 1998).

By the time of the Seoul Games in 1988, the intention of policy-makers was not just to host a sporting event but to demonstrate Korea's enhanced status in the international community, the enhancement of national pride, the promotion of traditional culture and to provide the springboard for an economic take-off that would see Korea move towards high-income status and entrance into the Knowledge-Based Economy (KBE) (Kim et al., 1989). However, these laudable aims have required the sacrifice of their homes and livelihoods by thousands, perhaps even millions, of poor people whose presence in the capital city was no longer required. The Olympics presented an opportunity for state planners to use force to evict squatters and slum-dwellers whose labour was not necessary for a city taking part in the KBE and whose aesthetically displeasing qualities detracted from the impression of Seoul as a forward-thinking and, above all, modern city (Ha, 2001).

By the time of the Beijing Games of 2008, China's leadership was ready to display the country to the world as modern but able unselfconsciously to celebrate its lengthy history and continuity of cultural traits. Beijing may come to represent the apogee of city rebranding and regeneration (Gold & Gold, 2008), since the ongoing 2008 economic crisis has changed the aspirations of London 2012 and may continue to have an impact in the long term.

Ambitions for the Beijing Games also included implicit promises of better human rights for Chinese citizens, political reforms and all kinds of improvements in quality of life and standards of living. Propaganda surrounding the benefits of the games was used to help distract the population at large from the problems and difficulties of daily life (Brady, 2009). Indeed, the enormous restructuring of Beijing and its environs in the years before 2008 also contributed, as too was the case in both 1964 and 1988, in the spread of a more advanced form of capitalism in the capital city. Since this was accompanied in the case of Beijing with political authoritarianism that prevented personal mobility by people from other regions wishing to take advantage of



new opportunities, these changes heightened the uneven development of the country and heightened income inequalities (Broudehoux, 2007).

Events smaller in scale and scope than the Olympics have offered similar but less-wide ranging opportunities for urban redevelopment and reinvention. In some cases, the capitalist development in and of itself has been sufficient to promote redevelopment in the cities involved and the exclusion of the poor, the vulnerable and the terminally ugly.

### **Networked Cities**

A third generation of cities has occurred with the continued development of ICT and, in particular, wireless networking. This development has meant that, given good network support, people can in many industries do their work anywhere. At the small scale, this means that individuals need not spend all their time in the office but can do useful work in a cafe, while waiting for children to finish school or even on the beach. There is, of course, a negative aspect to this, which is that people are never beyond the call of colleagues and superiors and can find their working activities expanding to fill all of the working hours. People become tempted to check their email or contribute to joint projects while they are officially off-duty or even on holiday. Not only does this mean that employers can increase their hold over employees who find themselves doing ever more work unpaid but it also puts people under increased stress to keep up with events at all times and has negative effects on their social relations, as these are conventionally expected to be.

At a slightly larger level, it means that people need not live even within commuting distance of where they worked but could, instead, live wherever they the quality of life most amenable within the context of their household income. Although some people will prefer to live in a suburban or even rural setting in these conditions (assuming that reliable network coverage extends that far), most young professionals prefer to live in cities. In such cases, cities become home to ever fewer industrial jobs but ever more service sector jobs catering to the needs of HQ facilities and the lifestyles of business executives and professionals. Consequently, service sector jobs in cleaning, catering, waiting and serving abound and these are generally low-skilled and low-paid jobs taken by people who cannot afford to live in the gentrified city. Thus is born the phenomenon of long-distance, early-morning commuting of service sector workers coming to the cities where they will work to serve the residents by whom they are mostly ignored.

### **The Experience of Urbanization**

The city streets are the emblem of modernity in that they offer a public space where it is possible, even hypothetically, to meet people of all walks of life and of every social class.

The shops of the regionalized or globalized city provide goods from international markets which would have been beyond the imagining of people from previous generations. Of course, no sooner did such possibilities open up that those with the means to do so began to sequester themselves from the threat of the crowd by providing themselves with personal transportation that means that they can navigate the streets in personal solitude and hygiene. That form of transportation has become the car which, in East Asian streets, must be air conditioned most of the time it is in operation to reduce the heat and the pollution and, hence, with windows firmly closed represents a barrier between the driver and passengers and the rest of the city and the poorer people, whose transportation is the motor cycle, the jeepney or tuktuk or just their own feet.

Urban development, as cities and states have grown richer, has followed a generally Haussmannesque approach (Jordan, 1995) in that it has seen old neighbourhood replaced by newer ones with different, more modern purposes and connected with each other via high speed road connections. The new roads permit the wealthier people to drive their cars from the outskirts of the city to the central retail and leisure facilities without having to interact with poorer urban residents at all. This also has the effect that of making transportation around the city dangerous and difficult for those who cannot afford personal cars. The largest streets and highways of Bangkok are essential arteries to avoid the notorious traffic jams but they are officially off-limits to motor cycles and non-car road vehicles. It is a common sight to see traffic police setting up blocks to stop some of the numerous motor cyclists riding the streets illegally or without wearing a proper helmet or committing some other offence. The new mass transit systems, meanwhile, are priced in a way that inhibits poorer people from using them, particularly when hoping to do so on a regular basis.

One example of how these changes affect living conditions is provided by Bangkok's Tawangrun market (see Walsh, 2014). Tawangrun market (literally 'early morning') is a small, neighbourhood market that services the local people of Ladprao 62 in Bangkok and the residential areas adjoining it. It is possible to divide markets in city centres into three categories: neighbourhood, as are described here, destination markets, which are places which people specifically go to visit and do some shopping and ambulatory, which are markets that people pass by as they walk (or ride) along the city streets. Each type of market has different issues in terms of product assortment, marketing and consumer behaviour.

The market originally grew up around the Chinese temple tucked away in one of the side streets and the community organization that maintains it and has prepared various

events to promote community spirit. Over the past few decades, the nature of the market has changed as a result of the different ways in which people live in contemporary Bangkok. These changes have included the following:

Greater opportunities for people to obtain personal transportation (cars and motor cycles) which allows them to travel further from home to work and more opportunities to purchase food from supermarkets and other facilities;

Increased numbers of condominiums and apartment blocks catering for single people working in Bangkok, many of whom might be internal migrants;

Improvements in the mass transit systems, both the subway and the Skytrain light rail system, which again changes the ability of people to move around more conveniently and also provides new and desirable areas for street vendors to establish themselves. Market areas emerging around the stations where there can be heavy flows of foot traffic, especially during rush hour periods, are mostly ambulatory markets in nature. To date, mass transit systems have yet to reach Ladprao 62 but plans for this to happen have been discussed;

Significant increase in the amount and type of frozen food now available, including various lines of single person meals in staple Thai dishes. Frozen food is not just available from supermarkets but from neighbourhood convenience stores, including the new chain established by the multinational food and agro-industrial concern CP, which brings small but dedicated frozen food retail outlets right into the heart of local neighbourhoods.

All of the changes have had an impact on the relationship between local people and their market, generally in the direction of reducing reliance on the market for picking up the breakfast or evening meal on the way home or else eating next to the street. To some extent, this has inspired Tawanrung street vendors to improve the range and quality of their offerings so as to compete better with the new options more easily available. It has also been the case that the strength of vendor-customer relationships has in many ways been diminished because there are fewer long-term residents and those that there are will have wider consumption choices and so more opportunities for butterfly behaviour – fluttering, that is, from one place to another.

### **Everyday Politics**

A second element of the urban experience is the space it provides for political activity. Where there are opportunities for people to gather together, there is the opportunity for discussion of events within the political sphere and the possibility for generating dissent. The cities of many East Asian states have been infused with the spirit of Maoism in which authentic and permissible political opinion is to be

found in the countryside, while the cities are full of decadence, politicking and the exploitation of the people. During the Khmer Rouge period in Cambodia, for example, the capital Phnom Penh was deliberately emptied of all but a few thousand essential service personnel at least in part because of the desire to prevent people from developing alternative versions of Marxist-Leninist dogma by discussing issues in unregulated groups (Kiernan, 2006:64).

This ambivalence towards city life builds upon the sometimes sentimental adherence to the rural setting as the true home of the soul of the people. In Japan, this reverence for the rural heartland is known as *furasato*. The prevalence of animist thought in East Asia means that specific geographic locations are permanently fixed to specific meanings and presences. As a result, once a particular association has been made – for example, areas of the countryside have superior moral characteristics than do urban areas – then this is a connection which it is very difficult to break.

Numerous East Asian rulers have, throughout history, moved their capitals in order to avoid problems of loss of legitimacy if disaster should strike at or threaten the previous capital or else to take advantage of new sources of legitimacy or power deriving from a new location. The expenses involved in such moves could be considerable and so were only undertaken at times real need by, for example, Chinese emperors wishing that to demonstrate that a new dynasty had been established. In other states, Burma for example and Cambodia, moving the capital was a less onerous affair and movements could be made on a quite regular basis. Indeed, moving the capital remains a possible government strategy in Burma, where the military junta took the somewhat surprising step of moving the capital from Yangon (previously Rangoon) to the new centre of Naypyidaw, which had very few facilities and little or no appeal to diplomatic officials or business leaders but did offer advantages of better strategic location in the event of a possible invasion by hostile forces (Americans are suspected) and is also symbolically important in terms of being historically potent as a source of Burmese essence and, also, resolutely not a creation of the colonial age (Preecharushh, 2009).

### **Colonial and Post-Colonial Cities**

The extensive colonial past of East Asia has resulted in the creation of a number of colonial cities, which have their own particular characteristics. Colonial cities are planned and developed as a means of extracting the resources of the colony and sending them back to the imperial centre. Such cities are often, therefore, coastal cities which can act as good, deep water ports and have access to international sea lanes. Since colonists tend to be fewer in number than the colonised, they have often made use of a separate class of

people, possibly of different ethnicity to the colonised, to serve as the civil service and the security forces. Within the colonial city, therefore, there was a need for one section for the colonists to live (which would be the most desirable area), another connected section where the co-opted civil service and similar professions would live (the next most attractive locations) and much larger but less desirable areas where the colonised who were part of the city could dwell. These divisions, which have been patched over to some extent by the occupation of better parts of the city by richer occupants irrespective of ethnicity and position within the colonial state, may still be discerned in post-colonial cities such as Manila, Hong Kong and Yangon. Depending on circumstances and the particular cultural characteristics of the colonial power, the colonial city might or might not subsume within itself important indigenous cultural and religious institutions. The creators and maintainers of the British Empire, for example, never showed much interest in the souls of the colonised and generally permitted monks and priests to go about their business as they liked as long as they did not interfere with business. The Spanish, however, had quite a different attitude and erected their churches and cathedrals as central urban functions.

As the colonial period has given way to the post-colonial period, attitudes towards the colonial cities left behind have varied. In some cases, the trading advantages have been embraced and the colonial history integrated into a post-colonial narrative of successful independence (e.g. Singapore and Hong Kong), in other cases the colonial has been incorporated into the tourism experience (e.g. Penang and Ho Chi Minh City), while in others still it has been resented to the extent that authority has been transferred away from it, as occurred when the Burmese junta moved the capital from Yangon to Naypyidaw.

**Business Implication of Urbanization**

Probably the best business opportunity resulting from urbanisation relates to real estate and property development and redevelopment. As population centres, cities have always been the home to retail and related industries. This includes basic retailing such as food and household items which can be sold through a combination of early-morning peri-urban wholesale markets and city centre or neighbourhood retail markets. Traders will send vehicles to the wholesale markets to purchase enough goods to support their retail market stall or stalls on a daily basis. In some cases, the husband will handle the wholesale part of the business and the wife the retail aspect. This basic system offers opportunities at many scales for people to establish their own entrepreneurial ventures. Taking advantage of the utility of place and time for example, a vendor might take small amounts of fruit, sweets or cigarettes to factory premises, university campuses or popular bus stops where people will be willing to accept a slightly marked-up price to purchase goods in small quantities. At a larger scale, the retail system creates restaurants, department stores and specialty stores for people who are urban residents or who may be visiting the city for purposes of business or pleasure. These business ventures are also based on utility but in addition offer both specific expertise not available elsewhere and take advantage of the ambience and experience of city life. People, especially tourists, will be happy to pay a premium for even quite basic goods if they can be consumed as part of the experience of living in the city. There will also be opportunities for culturally-specific items which may be thematically or emotionally-linked to a specific urban location; people want to drink Singapore Slings in Singapore and stand next to the Mer-Lion.

**Table 2: Ease of Doing Business in East Asian States, 2011.**

State	Score 1 (best) – 183 (worst)
Brunei	83
Cambodia	138
China	91
Indonesia	129
Japan	20
Korea, DPR	-
Korea, Rep	8
Laos	165

<b>Malaysia</b>	18
<b>Myanmar</b>	-
<b>Philippines</b>	136
<b>Singapore</b>	1
<b>Thailand</b>	17
<b>Timor-Leste</b>	168
<b>Vietnam</b>	98

Source: Worldbank Figures (available at [databank.worldbank.org](http://databank.worldbank.org)).

## Conclusion

This paper has evaluated the nature of urbanization in the East Asian region. It has considered the reasons for that process and the impacts that it has had on personal experiences and lifestyle, especially when taken in conjunction with parallel developments in terms of urban transportation infrastructure and spread of contemporary retail outlets. Urbanization is contributing further to the effect of uneven development in East Asia and in some cases intensifying income and opportunity inequalities. More research is needed to determine what impacts these changes will have in the medium and long terms.

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