Urbanization and Internal Migration Patterns in Latin America

Marcela Cerrutti

Rodolfo Bertoncello

Centro de Estudios de Población

Argentina

Paper prepared for Conference on African Migration in Comparative Perspective, Johannesburg, South Africa, 4-7 June, 2003.

Introduction

During the last fifty years the process of urbanization in Latin America has been remarkable. Whereas in 1950 less than 41% of its population lived in urban areas presently, that proportion reach about three quarters (United Nations, 2000). The pace of urbanization has been more rapid in Latin America than in Northern America and Europe. As Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa (2002) have pointed out, "it would have taken 75 years (from 1925 to 2000) for the level of urbanization in Northern America to rise from 53.8 to 77.2 percent while Latin America covered the same ground in only half of the time".

In the first decades of the XX century there were already large cities in the region and a few countries had high levels of urbanization. However, rapid urbanization in Latin America and the growth of a group of cities concentrating significant proportions of urban population took place between 1930 and 1970, and was related to the industrialization process and the introduction of capitalist modes of production in rural areas (Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002).

From late 1970's most Latin American economies started to experience serious economic difficulties, and the institutions and policies that were dominant during the Import Substitution Industrialization (ISI) model of growth started being either transformed or dismantled. Most countries were seriously hit with the so call "debt crisis". As stated by the Economic Commission for Latin America (ECLAC, 1990), the 1980's was a "lost decade", evidenced in an overall decrease of 9.8% in the regional GDP. During the 1990's, a new set of economic policies was put in practice. Although there is some variation in the way countries implemented these policies, most of them were oriented to incorporate the region in the new global economy. Structural adjustment policies were adopted and the relationship between the State and society was redefined.

During the first half of the decade several Latin American countries experienced a significant increase in the per capita GDP. However, the regional economic performance worsened during the second half (ECLAC, 2002). This loss of dynamism was even more pronounced at the beginning of the 21st century. Labor market indicator worsen, particularly unemployment and underemployment rates.

For the region as a whole during the 1990's income inequality and poverty increased. Thus, the economic measures that were aimed to solve structural problems failed to do so. The socioeconomic transformations experienced by most Latin American countries had territorial

effects, expressed to a large extent in changes of traditional urbanization patterns and the emergence of new patterns of population distribution and mobility.

This paper examines recent trends regarding urbanization, internal migration and urban systems in Latin America. It pays particular attention to the role of internal migration in the urbanization process and its changes overtime. New internal migration trends are examined taking into consideration their contributions to the urbanization and urban primacy processes, and the transformation of its metropolises.

1. The Urbanization Process

Latin America stands out by its significantly high urbanization level. Currently this level is slightly higher than in Europe and very similar than that observed in North America (UNPD, 2001). Despite the rapid growth in urbanization in Asian and African countries, their current percentage of people living in urban areas is still half of that for Latin American (See Table 1).

The urbanization process in the region started very early in history. Native cultures were organized in large cities before the Spanish colonization, and this type of settlement partly defined the localization of Spanish colonies (Rodriguez and Villa, 1998). Spanish colonization also founded new cities from which they controlled and organized the territory. Many of them were located either close to the cost (for commercial exchange) or where there was an abundant indigenous labor force. Most of the major cities of the region were founded during this period (XVI century).

During the 19th and the early 20th centuries, the consolidation of cities and the reorganization of the settlement system were dominated first by processes of independence and national organization, and later by the articulation of Latin American economies as primary producers in the world market. The growth of cities was connected to their political-administrative as well as commercial functions (mainly port functions) (Cardozo y Pérez Brignoli, 1979; Ferrer, 1999). Later, large scale international migration played also a prominent role in shaping the settlement system and the urbanization process of the eight most urbanized countries of the region (Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002).

From 1930 to 1970 the most important determinant of urbanization and the significant concentration of population in a small group of cities was the adoption of the Import Substitution

Industrialization (ISI) as a model of growth throughout the region.[1] Inward looking industrialization, adopted for most countries as the result of the 1930's economic crisis, generated significant labor opportunities in the cities. Together with a rupture of traditional modes of production and the introduction of agricultural improvements in the countryside, where very high population growth rates were predominant, fueled massive rural-urban migration. This migration flow contributed to rapid urban growth, population concentration, and territorial expansion of these large cities.

This process took place in relatively large cities with a significant consumer market together with a relatively good infrastructure and equipment. These conditions explain the locally concentrated character of the substitutive industrialization in the region.

Urbanization in Latin America increased in fifty years (1925-1975) from 25.0 to 61.2%. The pace of urbanization, however, declined between 1975 and 2000 and currently the proportion of people living in urban areas reached 75.3%. Whereas for the region as a whole during the period 1925-1950 the urban growth rate almost doubled the total growth rate and the urbanization rate was 2.0%, more recently, between 1975-2000 the urban growth rate was just almost 50% higher than the total growth rate and the urbanization rate fell to 0.8% (Lattes, Rodríguez and Villa, 2002, table 2[2]).

To characterize the urbanization process within Latin America is not an easy task, since there is a great deal of heterogeneity among countries in terms of their population, territory and sociodemographic characteristics. In the year 2000 there are countries with population around 100 million inhabitants (Brazil and México) and other with less than five millions (Uruguay, Jamaica and Panamá) (see Table 2).

[1] The instruments employed during the ISI period were tariff protection, public subsidies to industrial activities, and a widespread state intervention in the economy (Thorp 1994).
[2] These authors have projected this trend to the period 2000-25 with a urbanization rate of only 0.4%.

TABLE 1. URBANIZATION LEVELS FOR
SELECTED MAJOR WORLD REGIONS, 1925-2025 (percentage)

Region*	Year				
	1925	1950	1975	2000	2025
World	20.5	29.7	37.9	47.0	58.0
More developed regions	40.1	54.9	70.0	76.0	82.3
Less developed regions	9.3	17.8	26.8	39.9	53.3
North America	53.8	63.9	73.8	77.2	83.3
Latin America	25.0	41.4	61.2	75.3	82.2
Europe	37.9	52.4	67.3	74.8	81.3
Oceania	48.5	61.6	71.8	70.2	73.3
Africa	8.0	14.7	25.2	37.9	51.8
Asia	9.5	17.4	24.7	36.7	50.6

* Regions are ordered by level urbanization in 2000.

Sources: Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002.

Note: Data for Latin America include boht the 22 countries selected and smaller countries whose inclusion does not significantly change the level of urbanization of the whole region.

As Table 2 shows, there is significant country variation in urbanization levels. Whereas in Uruguay 91.2% of the population live in urban areas, in Haiti the percentage of urban population is 35.7%. In the four largest countries, Brazil, México, Colombia and Argentina, the percentage of urban population is very high (81.3%, 74.4%, 73.9% and 89.9%, respectively). With the exception of Uruguay, small countries have relatively low levels of urbanization, as it is the case of Paraguay (56.0%), Panamá (56.2%), Jamaica (56.1%), Nicaragua (56.1%), El Salvador (46.6%) and Honduras (52.7%).

TABLE 2. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. SELECTED DEMOGRPHIC INDICATORS

	Population 2000 (in thousands)	Demographic Density 2000	Percentage urban 2000	Percentage over LA population[1]		Growth rate 1950-2000
				1950	2000	
South America						
Argentina	37 032	13.31	89.92	10.42	7.26	1.54
Bolivia	8 329	7.67	62.47	1.98	1.63	2.24
Brazil	170 115	19.35	81.28	33.76	33.37	2.29
Chile	15 211	20.75	85.67	3.89	2.98	1.83
Colombia	42 321	37.23	73.90	7.82	8.30	2.43
Ecuador	12 646	49.09	65.33	2.10	2.48	2.63
Paraguay	5 496	13.66	55.99	0.87	1.08	2.61
Perú	25 662	19.87	72.77	4.08	5.03	2.42
Uruguay	3 337	18.25	91.25	1.70	0.65	0.80
Venezuela	24 170	26.22	86.93	3.30	4.74	3.11
Mesoamerica						
Costa Rica	4 023	80.52	47.85	0.53	0.79	3.08
Cuba	11 201	101.55	75.31	3.13	2.20	1.30
El Salvador	6 276	315.50	46.64	1.22	1.23	2.34
Guatemala	11 385	104.39	39.66	1.83	2.23	2.69
Haiti	8 222	303.67	35.70	2.03	1.61	1.85
Honduras	6 485	57.75	52.74	0.90	1.27	3.09
Jamaica	2 583	235.01	56.10	0.92	0.51	1.22
México	98 881	50.89	74.39	16.90	19.40	2.54
Nicaragua	5 074	40.12	56.13	0.69	1.00	2.99
Panamá	2 856	39.55	56.23	0.53	0.56	2.40
Rep.Dominicana	8 495	175.89	65.05	1.40	1.67	2.57

Source: Cunha, 2002 [1]Sobre el total del grupo de países en el cuadro.

Several typologies have been developed to account for the heterogeneous urbanization process in Latin America providing similar results (CEPAL/HABITAT 2001, Lattes, 1995, Cunha, 2002). For example, using as a classification criterion the stage in their urban transition, ECLAC/HABITAT (2000) presents four groups of countries (see Table 3). Those that started urbanizing very early constitute one first group. Whereas these three countries (Argentina, Uruguay and Chile) were predominantly urban in 1930, most of the others did not register that condition until after 1950 (Rodriguez, 2002). They have received important European migration flows and currently have the highest urbanization level.

Brasil, México, Colombia, Perú and Venezuela started their urbanization process later (after 1930) and have urbanized very rapidly. Currently they are in the advanced stages of the urbanization transition (with levels over 70%).

Countries in the moderate or incipient stages of the urbanization transition (with urbanization levels under 70% in 2000), are the ones registering urban population growth rates

higher than the regional average, and virtually doubling the rates of countries in the advanced stage. In contrast to countries in the advanced stage, this group presents high rates of rural population growth. This growth generates a significant demographic pressure in both rural and urban areas.

Rodriguez (2002) points out that urban transition and demographic transition are interrelated, although in complex ways. The most urbanized countries are the ones that experienced an early demographic transition, and those with the lowest levels of urbanization are at the initial stages of the transition.

However, there are a few exceptions to this pattern. One is Venezuela, that being today at the latest stages of the urbanization process was predominately rural in 1940. A second exception is Bolivia, which has a high level of urbanization compared to more prosperous countries. The third one is Cuba, that experienced a profound demographic transformation and is not in the advanced stages of urbanization transition. Finally, the last exception is Costa Rica, which has a relatively low proportion of urban population in the context of its high socioeconomic development.

From these typologies, emerges that one of the most significant trait of the urbanization process is the relationship between level of socioeconomic development and urbanization. Those countries with the highest Human Development Index are the most urbanized countries, and those with the lowest have still a majority of population living in rural areas (Rodriguez, 2002).

The intensity of the urbanization process has decreased in the last decades. This process is not only the result of the already high levels of urbanization, but also to changes in the demographic dynamic. On the one hand, migration rates from rural to urban areas have decreased; on the other, urban natural growth rate continued being significantly lower than rural (CELADE, 1997). Nonetheless, this situation is not the same for all countries. As da Cunha (2002) points out, urban population continues growing at a fast rate (around 2% a year) because several countries in the region still have low levels of urbanization, and have to undergo accelerated processes of urbanization.

TABLE 3. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN. PERCENTAGE OFURBAN POPULATION BY COUNTRY. 1970-2020

Stage of Urban Transition	Años										
	1970	**1975**	**1980**	**1985**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**
Advanced urban transition											
Argentina	78.4	80.7	83.0	84.9	86.9	88.3	89.6	90.6	91.4	92.0	92.5
Bahamas	71.8	73.4	75.1	79.7	83.6	86.5	88.5	90.0	90.9	91.5	92.0
Barbados	37.1	38.6	40.2	42.5	44.8	47.3	50.0	52.8	55.6	58.4	61.1
Chile	73.0	76.0	79.0	81.1	82.8	84.4	85.7	86.9	87.9	88.8	89.6
Jamaica	41.5	44.1	46.8	49.2	51.5	53.7	56.1	58.5	61.0	63.5	65.9
Uruguay	82.0	82.9	86.1	89.2	90.5	91.7	92.6	93.1	93.7	93.9	94.0
Venezuela	71.8	75.4	78.9	81.6	83.9	85.8	87.4	88.8	89.9	90.8	91.5
Right Urban Transition	**1970**	**1975**	**1980**	**1985**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**
Brasil	55.6	61.4	67.3	71.0	74.7	77.5	79.9	81.7	83.1	84.2	85.0
Colombia	57.7	61.8	64.4	67.0	69.4	71.7	74.5	76.6	78.4	80.0	81.4
Cuba	60.1	64.1	68.0	71.6	74.8	77.6	79.9	81.9	83.4	84.7	85.7
México	58.9	62.3	65.5	68.6	71.4	73.4	75.4	77.2	78.8	80.2	81.3
Perú	58.1	61.9	64.2	66.3	68.7	71.2	72.3	73.5	74.6	75.5	76.3
Trinidad y Tobago	63.0	63.0	63.1	66.2	69.1	71.7	74.1	76.1	77.8	79.3	80.7
Moderate Urban Transition	**1970**	**1975**	**1980**	**1985**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**
Bolivia	36.2	40.5	45.4	50.5	55.6	60.4	64.6	68.2	71.0	73.1	74.8
Ecuador	39.5	41.8	47.1	51.3	55.4	59.2	62.7	65.8	68.5	70.7	72.5
El Salvador	39.0	41.5	44.1	47.0	49.8	52.5	55.2	57.8	60.3	62.6	64.7
Nicaragua	46.8	48.8	50.1	51.4	52.5	53.9	55.3	56.7	58.1	59.4	60.6
Panamá	47.6	48.7	49.7	51.7	53.8	55.7	57.6	59.5	61.2	62.9	64.5
Paraguay	37.1	39.0	41.6	44.9	48.6	52.4	56.1	59.6	62.9	65.7	68.2
Rep. Dominicana	39.7	44.7	49.9	52.3	53.7	57.1	60.2	62.9	65.3	67.4	69.1
Behind Urban Transition	**1970**	**1975**	**1980**	**1985**	**1990**	**1995**	**2000**	**2005**	**2010**	**2015**	**2020**
Costa Rica	38.8	41.3	43.1	44.8	46.7	48.5	50.4	52.3	54.2	56.1	57.9
Guatemala	36.2	36.7	37.2	37.5	38.0	38.6	39.4	39.9	40.5	41.2	41.8
Hahití	19.7	22.2	24.5	27.2	30.5	34.3	38.1	41.8	45.3	48.4	51.3
Honduras	29.0	32.0	35.0	37.7	40.8	44.4	48.2	52.1	55.9	59.5	62.7

Fuente: Comision Economica para America y El Caribe y Centro de las Naciones Unidas para los Asentamientos Humanos. 2000.

Note: Data for the year 2000 may not coincide with Table 2. Differences are due to the fact that for this table data for 2000 is based on population projections.

2. Internal Migration and Urbanization

For decades spatial population movements in Latin America were dominated by rural-urban migration, however, more recently spatial movements have changed and currently predominates urban-urban migration flows. As part of internal migration flows, other type of spatial movement, the intra-metropolitan migration, has gained significance and is increasingly attracting scholars' attention (ECLAC/HABITAT, 2000). In addition to the demographic relevance of internal spatial movements in the region, it should also be mentioned the growing

relevance of international migration. Between 1960 and 1990 the proportion of Latin Americans migrating internationally increased from 0.7 to 2.5 percent (CELADE, 2000).[3]

With differences due to the urbanization stage, level of natural growth and the relevance of international migration, internal migration has played diverse and changing roles as a demographic component of the urban growth, the growth of cities and the urbanization (Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002). These authors estimated that, for the region as a whole, rural-urban transference has been decreasing its contribution to urban growth. If during the 1950's 46.4% of urban growth was explained by rural-urban transferences, between 1990 and 2000 it accounts for 38.4% (Table 4). However, this process was not homogeneous throughout the region. This decrease took place in countries such as Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Mexico or Peru, but not in countries that still have a high proportion of rural population such as Bolivia and Paraguay. Furthermore, countries with different levels of urbanization have undergone erratic trends in this respect (Cuba, El Salvador, Guatemala Panamá or Venezuela).

Despite rural-urban migration has lost significance in its contribution to urban growth, the attraction of urban areas as well as the economic difficulties experienced by people of rural areas kept fomenting this type of flow. In rural areas where rural population keeps decreasing overtime most migrants are young. This type of migrant selectivity affects the age structure of rural populations (ECLAC/HABITAT, 2000). For the region as a whole, during the last fifteen years 15.5 million rural young people (aged 15 and 29) have became part of the urban population. This transference implied a reduction of one third of rural population at those ages (Table 5).

Rural-urban migration is still triggered by economic factors. Access to social services and labor opportunities in rural areas are still considerable worse than in urban areas. For instance, in 1990, for Latin America as a whole, whereas 34% of people living in urban areas were poor and 13% extremely poor, in rural areas those percentages were significantly higher (53% and 30%, respectively) (Gilbert, 1998).

[3] International migration constitutes a significant component of the demographic dynamics of many Latin American countries and its relevance has been increasing overtime. We will not refer to this issue in this paper, although for some countries there is evidence of the links between internal and international migration. For the case of México see Lozano, Roberts and Bean (1997).

TABLE 4. RURAL-URBAN NET TRANSFERENCE AS COMPONENT OF URBAN GROWTH. LATIN AMERICA, 1950-2000

Country*	Urban increase due to rural-urban net transference (percentage)				
	1950-1960	1960-1970	1970-1980	1980-1990	1990-2000
Uruguay	27.8	9.0	-42.2	25.9	24.2
Argentina	51.0	37.9	31.1	30.2	27.6
Venezuela	56.9	39.4	43.2	22.1	13.7
Chile	41.3	33.6	30.2	11.8	16.3
Brazil	49.7	51.6	49.9	42.8	34.5
Cuba	39.2	16.7	43.9	45.7	-5.4
Puerto Rico	-85.1	52.2	47.6	21.2	36.3
Mexico	40.9	36.1	32.1	21.6	-7.9
Colombia	50.5	37.6	36.6	33.0	30.8
Peru	56.8	50.9	37.6	26.2	14.8
Ecuador	48.2	39.0	46.7	48.3	50.5
Dominican R.	50.2	53.3	51.5	41.9	35.3
Bolivia	8.2	11.1	34.7	48.3	36.2
Panama	36.6	36.6	23.0	25.3	20.4
Nicaragua	31.5	39.8	17.7	1.0	10.3
Jamaica	35.4	19.1	15.8	15.1	12.0
Paraguay	-62.2	-14.4	37.0	45.7	42.2
Honduras	53.3	48.3	44.1	45.5	51.7
Costa Rica	23.3	26.1	35.1	35.8	42.9
El Salvador	10.2	13.0	1.2	-52.2	16.0
Guatemala	28.5	26.1	5.9	-10.9	8.8
Haiti	62.6	58.5	52.6	61.1	50.1
Total	46.4	45.8	42.3	41.6	38.4

* Countries are ordered by level of urbanization in 2000.

Source: Extracted from Lattes, Rodriguez y Villa, 2002, based in United Nations (2001[a]).

Disadvantaged economic and social conditions of rural areas have been responsible for the rapid process of urbanization in Latin America. However, more recently, civil violence has also promoted this type of flow, as it happened in Colombia and Guatemala.

TABLE 5 LATIN AMERICA. YOUTH AND RURAL-URBAN MIGRATION

Rural population

Age groups	1985		2000		2015
0 a 14	53 991 606		47 444 897		40 576 184
15 a 29	32 367 343	-39.7%	32 574 098	-36.1%	30 317 944

Urban population

Age groups	1985		2000		2015
0 a 14	94 498 537		113 051 382		122 264 802
15 a 29	78 484 724	+16.5	110 067 008	+11.1	125 625 565

Total population

Grupo etario	1985		2000		2015
0 a 14 años	148 490 143	-3.9%	160 496 279	-2.8%	162 840 986
15 a 29 años	110 852 067		142 641 106		155 943 509

Fuente: ECLAC/HABITAT 2000. Based on CEPAL, División de Población - Centro Latinoamericano y Caribeño de Demografía (CELADE), *América Latina: Proyecciones de población urbana y rural: 1970-2025* , Boletín demográfico, año 23, Nº 63 (LC/G.2052; LC/DEM/G.183), Santiago de Chile, enero de 1999.

At the beginning of the 1990's economic restructuring in Latin America generated certain optimism regarding the future of rural populations. The abandonment of the import substitution model of growth and the adoption of a more de-regulated and export-oriented model created some expectations regarding future of agriculture, and therefore for the inhabitants living in rural areas. The 1990's experience contradicted those expectations. In fact, even though many of the countries had improved their primary production for export, this improvement was not reflected in a reversal of the previous trend, that is the expulsion of population living in rural areas (Rodriguez, 2002). The only two exceptions were Bolivia and Ecuador, where rural growth rate actually increased in the 1990's. [4]

Some of the reasons to explain the week effect of the economic transformations in the demographic dynamics of rural areas are related to the consequences of the economic restructuring in agriculture. The specialization of production, the use of capital intensive technologies, and the expansion of agro-industrial centers have deepen the segmentation among producers, pushing population to urban areas. An example of this phenomenon can be found in Argentina's Pampa, where technological modernization of agriculture and cattle production has

[4] Agricultural production and "rurality" have traditionally been homologated, however their relationships should be re-examined taking into consideration new developments. The boundaries between agriculture and rural, and manufacturing and urban, are now more diffuse. A great deal of agricultural production is now being organized from

not been accompanied by an increase in population living in rural areas or even by an improvement in the capacity of these areas to retain population (Barsky, 1997). Workers in the agricultural labor market are predominately urban. They prefer to live in urban areas since they have better access to services as well as to security (robberies in rural areas are increasing). The expansion of subcontracting and mechanization has favored this trend.

Even in the case of government promoted expansion of agricultural frontiers or colonization areas, the incipient improvements that initially produced an increase in rural population, where rapidly lost due to the lack of official support in providing services (Rodriguez, 2002). The case of Rondonia in Brazil, is paradigmatic. In areas experimenting processes of agrarian colonization, such as the Amazonia, their urban population have also significantly increased (Becker, 1990; Machado, 1992).

It should be emphasized that, despite the fact that rural population is growing at a slower pace than urban population, the number of people living in rural areas kept relatively stagnant since 1970 in around 125 million people (Rodriguez, 2002).

Urban-urban migration is today the predominant form of spatial movement (Rodriguez, 2002; ECLAC/HABITAT, 2000; Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002; Lattes 1995; da Cunha, 2002). This trend that was incipient in the 1970, gained force during the 1980's and the 1990's. In México, for example, between 1987 and 1992, 50% of interstate movements (excluding intra-metropolitan movements) had urban areas as origin and destination (CONAPO, 1997); and between 1995 and 2000, 70% of all municipal movements took place between urban areas and only 14% were rural-city movements. In Brazil, 61% of all the inter-municipal movements occurred between 1981 and 1991 were between cities (da Cunha, 2002). Internal migration flows have diversified throughout the region in terms of places of origin and destination, as well as in the sociodemographic characteristics of internal migrants.

The increasing predominance of urban-urban migration has lead scholars to inquire about the different nature and perhaps consequences of this type of flow against the traditional one (rural-urban) (Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002). They have pointed out that not only it is more difficult to quantify this type of flow, but also that migrants and non-migrants do not radically differ in their socio-demographic characteristics, as it is the case of rural-urban migration.

---

urban areas and a significant proportion of its labor force is also residing in urban areas. On the other hand, industrial re-localization processes may also imply the movement of factories to less populated areas.

Actually, it appears to be a positive selectivity among urban-urban migrants in terms of their educational attainment. In Santiago, for example, immigrants have higher levels of education than non-migrants. Something similar occurs in the case of México (CONAPO, 1999).

Another significant special movement that is calling the attention of many scholars is the intra-metropolitan migration. Due to the size of metropolitan agglomerations in Latin America, a large fraction of migration takes place between small administrative divisions (SAD) within the same metropolises. Indications of this trend have been empirically showed for Mexico City metropolitan area, Santiago and Lima (Tuirán, 2000, Sabatini, 1999, ECALC/HABITAT, 2000), and indirectly for Buenos Aires.[5] This type of migration flow usually takes place from the center to the periphery. Furthermore, the growth of the periphery has been accompanied by an expansion of the territory.

The issue of intra-metropolitan migration has been strongly linked to the debate of trends regarding urban primacy, more concretely to the discussion about processes of concentration/deconcentration of metropolis and the formation of megalopolises, as well as the social impacts of that type of movements, particularly on the issue of spatial segregation.

3. Urban Systems: Primacy, Concentration and De-concentration

Urban systems in Latin America are characterized for their gigantic cities. For the year 2000, the region concentrates three of the largest cities in the world (São Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires) even though it concentrates only 13.7% of worldwide urban population. This high concentration of population in large cities is not new. In 1950 there were seven cities with more than one million inhabitants, and currently about 50 cities have a population greater than a million, seven with more than 5 million and four with more than 10 million (Rodriguez, 2002).

When compared to other regions in the world, Latin America stands also out by its high primacy. Table 5 shows that despite its heterogeneity, the region concentrates countries with the highest primacy indexes in the world. Whereas indexes of 2 or more are very exceptional in the rest of the world, in Latin America there are 11 countries with that level.

Of the seven cities with more than 5 million inhabitants (São Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro, Bogotá, Lima and Santiago) most of them are or have been the capital city

[5] In the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, the Capital City has been loosing significance. In 1970, it concentrated 35.2% of the metropolitan population and in 2001 it decreased to 23.0%.

of the countries. Buenos Aires and São Paulo have received large migration flows from Europe during the late 1800's and the beginning of the 1900's. All of them for a period have received massive immigration from rural areas. Three are clearly primary cities (Buenos Aires, Lima and Santiago), three are not (São Paulo, Río de Janeiro and Bogotá) and one –Mexico City– is in an intermediate position. All of them attracted large numbers of people due their concentration of investment, knowledge, technical advances and opportunities.

Large cities experienced a prominent growth during the initial stages of the ISI model of growth. The rate of growth of large cities (with more than one million inhabitants), however, slowed down, mainly due to the collapse of ISI model, the decrease in public employment and investment and the virtual abandonment of urban planning (Rodriguez and Villa, 1998). This declined was generalized throughout the region during the 1980's, when for the first time the rate of growth of several large cities was lower than the average national level. Thus, they lost relative weight in the total urban population (Table 6). Furthermore, two of the largest cities (São Paulo and Mexico City) have experienced net emigration.

TABLE 5. PRIMACY INDEX: LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBENA AND THE WORLD
(CIRCA 1995) Selected countries

Region and Country	Primacy Index
Latin America and the Caribbean	
Argentina	3.5
Bolivia	0.9
Brasil	0.9
Colombia	1.0
Chile	3.0
Ecuador	1.1
Guatemala	9.6
Honduras	1.6
México	2.0
Nicaragua	2.8
Panamá	3.9
Paraguay	5.0
Perú	4.1
Dominican Republic	2.5
Venezuela	0.9
Jamaica	2.3
Trinidad and Tobago	3.4
North America	
United States	0.7
Canada	0.7
Oceania	
Australia	0.6
Europe	
England	1.3
France	2.7
Germany	0.7
Russia	1.1
Poland	0.8
Italy	0.6
África	
South Africa	0.5
Asia	
China	0.5
Japan	1.6
India	0.5
Pakistan	1.1
Indonesia	1.3
Iran	1.3
South Korea	1.3

Source: Rodriguez, 2002. Based on DEPUALC - CELADE and United Nations, 1997.

As it can be seen in Table 6, the loss of weight of the largest city took place in some countries and not in others, and not at the same time or with the same intensity for all them. In Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay and Venezuela it occurred since at least 1950; in Puerto Rico, Bolivia, Nicaragua, Paraguay and Costa Rica, since 1970; and in Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador and Mexico around the 1980's. In the rest of the countries, the relative importance of the largest city is still growing, although at different paces (Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa, 2002).

Buenos Aires can clearly exemplify this trend that started very early compared to other countries. Whereas in the period 1915-35 the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires had a similar growth rate to the total urban population (2.7%) and higher than the national average, between 1935-45 the metropolitan population grew much faster than the total urban (with annual growth rates of 3.2% y 2.5% , respectively). From the 1950's this relationship reversed. Between 1980-1991, the rate of growth of the Buenos Aires metropolitan area was almost 50% lower than that of the urban population and even lower than for the total population (1.0, 1.8 y 1.4% respectively) (Lattes y Recchini de Lattes, Table 1).

Part of the decrease in the relative importance of the largest cities was related to fertility decline in those cities, still there are other factors that should be also taken into account, such as changes in the economic model that revitalized primary activities against secondary and services, the greater impact of structural adjustment programs in cities (restriction to public investment and services), and the intensification of urban "problems" (Rodriguez, 2002). Lattes, Rodriguez and Villa (2002) also pointed the importance of improvements in communication and transportation in reducing distance costs. Smaller localities, sometimes close to the metropolitan areas, started being attractive for residence and businesses avoiding the typical dis-economies of very large agglomerations.

During the 1990's there is some evidence of a reversal of this trend. As a matter of fact, during these years some of the largest cities also experienced a recuperation of their attractiveness. Despite the continued decrease in their fertility, data for 2000 show a slight increase in their growth rates.

TABLE 6. LATIN AMERICA AND THE CARIBBEAN: MAJOR CITY POPULATION OVER TOTAL URBAN POPULATION 1970-2000

Stage of urban transition	Country	1970	1975	1980	1985	1990	1995	2000
Advanced a	Argentina	45	43	43	41	40	39	38
	Chile	40	40	41	42	42	42	43
	Uruguay	51	50	49	48	45	43	41
	Venezuela	27	24	22	20	18	16	15
Extensive b	Brazil	15	15	15	14	14	13	13
	Colombia	18	20	20	21	20	20	20
	Cuba	34	31	29	28	27	27	27
	México	30	30	31	28	25	25	25
	Perú	39	39	39	39	39	40	40
Moderate c	Bolivia	31	31	30	29	29	29	29
	Ecuador	30	29	29	28	26	27	28
	Honduras	30	31	33	35	35	30	28
	Nicaragua	38	37	36	35	35	34	34
	Panamá	64	63	62	64	66	69	73
	Paraguay	52	53	52	49	45	43	41
	Dominican Republic	47	48	50	53	59	65	65
Incipient d	Costa Rica	65	65	61	58	54	51	49
	Guatemala	35	32	30	37	50	67	72
	El Salvador	37	39	40	43	46	48	48
	Haití	52	54	54	55	56	58	60

Source: Rodriguez, 2002. Based on United Nations, 2001a, Tabla A.15.

a urban population of 80% or more in 2000. b More than 70% and less than 80% in 2000. c From 50% to 70% in 2000. d Less than 50% in 2000.

From a more structural perspective this latest trend can be related to economic restructuring in the region and the new roles of metropolises. These large cities are articulated to global markets and have consolidated economic and political command and control functions. They now produce specialized services and at the same time privileged sectors of these metropolises have significantly expanded their consumption (ECLAC/HABITAT, 2000).

There are other explanations that had been proposed for the "revitalization" of the metropolises. These explanations emphasize local aspects, in particular intra-metropolitan restructuring. They focus on the internal dynamics of differentiation and restructuring within metropolitan areas. This topic will be analyzed more thoroughly in the next section.

Despite recent trends, high primacy has been a salient trait of the urban system in Latin America. The existence of such large cities (primary or not) has traditionally been interpreted as indicator of an unstructured and unbalanced urban system that prevents the development of

smaller cities.[6] This interpretation, however, may not be accurate since many of the countries with the largest metropolises also have a structured system of smaller cities that have been growing systematically (Rodríguez, 2002).

There is an increasing interest and debate around the role and significance of **middle size cities** in Latin America. [7] Regarding recent trends in this respect, and using a definition of middle size cities as those urban nucleuses with more than 50 thousands and less than one million inhabitants Rodriguez (2002) concludes: a) the relative weight of middle size cities within the urban system is smaller than in other regions, particularly in the developed world; b) this segment of cities is however the most dynamic of the urban system in demographic terms, and its participation has been growing over time in Latin America; c) the nucleuses included in this classification are so heterogeneous in terms of their trajectories that it is very difficult to make other types of generalizations.

Between 1980-1990, the pace of growth of middle size cities was higher than that of the major city and also higher than that of the urban population as a whole. Among middle size cities, those with greater dynamisms have been the smaller ones (more than 50 thousand and less than 500 thousand inhabitants) (Rodriguez and Villa, 1998).

The case of Argentina is very indicative of this trend, since it is a country that has been historically characterized by its high primacy. Examining population growth trends between 1950 and 1991, Vapñarsky (1995), found that cities with more than 50 thousand inhabitants, excluding the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, were the most dynamic. These middle size cities gained population from rural migration and urban migration from very small cities. Whereas in 1950 15.6% of the nation population was living in middle size cities, in 1991 that percentage increased to 33.0%. During the same period the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires also grew (from 29.9% in 1950 to 34.7% in 1991). Thus the only two segments that lost population were rural areas and very small cities. (from 54.5% in 1950 to 31.7% in 1991). This evidence is interesting since it opposes the perception that only one metropolis grew and it was at

[6] The perspective that considers primacy as an "anomalous" trait of urban systems is based on a viewpoint that emphasizes normal distributions of rank and size. Frequently this viewpoint has assumed a positive relationship between normal systems and high levels of development. However empirical evidence does not support this relationship.

[7] As with many aspects in the study of urbanization there are several methodological problems involved in the study of the evolution of middle size cities. For a description of these problems see Rodriguez (2002).

the expense of the rest. In 1991 Argentina's population was evenly distributed in these three categories. The middle size city range was the one experiencing the highest growth.

The greater dynamism of middle size cities in the region has been explained by the loss of attraction of large metropolises. From this perspective middle size cities have been benefiting from the relocation of economic activities previously located in the largest cities. It was this flow of resources that generated the relocation of population. Bertoncello (1994) showed some evidence of this trend when he found migrants from the Buenos Aires metropolitan area living in the most dynamic middle size cities in Argentina. Something similar was observed in the case of Mexico, where almost 31.5% of all migrants from 1985 to 1990 originated in Mexico City metropolitan area (Lozano, Roberts and Bean, 1997).[8]

Other explanations paid more attention to the effects of economic restructuring on regional development. Processes of trade liberalization and economic restructuring -including the conformation of export-oriented zones- have affected regions within countries very unevenly. In those that have economically benefited from this process, middle size cities have shown a great dynamism, because they now concentrate several economic, social and recreational functions.

A clear example of the relationship between regional development and the growth of intermediate cities can be found in Northern Mexico were the majority of maquiladora industries were located. Tijuana and Ciudad Juarez were two of the most dynamic cities in Mexico during the 1990's.

In the case of Argentina, Varpñasky showed that behind the great dynamism of middle size cities, a great heterogeneity prevailed. From cities with a remarkable growth, connected to industrial promotion, mine industry or tourism, to cities that were affected by a crisis in agriculture. Taking into account this diversity and the factors affecting these different performances, it should be indispensable to incorporate these contextual factors when we examine and explain rates of growth of cities by its size (Bertoncello y Minvielle, 1997).

5. Intra-Metropolitan Dynamics

Large metropolises are central components of the urbanization process in Latin America. As we have shown, historically their great dynamisms had been determined by large migration

[8] As we will see in the next section a significant part of this flow was settled in cities that were very close to the metropolitan area of Mexico City.

flows, although these flows have slow down more recently. Despite recent developments, the population in these large metropolises continued growing. For example, between 1988 and 1992 Lima's (Peru) and Bogota's (Colombia) populations have grown in 350.000 and in 430.000 inhabitants, respectively, due to immigration (Rodríguez y Villa, 1998).

Natural growth is today the main responsible of population growth in large metropolises, even in the case of those showing a negative migration balance, and it is not insignificant. For example, Mexico City grew 155.000 inhabitants a year between 1980 and 1995. Something similar happened in Sao Paulo, where its population grew 240.000 people a year between 1980 and 1996 (Rodríguez y Villa, 1998).

It is in this context of large population, large urbanized territories and a multiplicity of social and economic functions that we should examine and interpret recent intra-metropolitan population trends. There is an increasing relevance of intra-metropolitan population movements, mainly from the center to the contiguous periphery and to close territories (the so-called rur-urban spaces and megalopolis- articulations)

Traditionally metropolitan growth was accompanied not only by densification but also by peripheral expansion. In most cases immigrants to the city were settled in the periphery. This type of settlement contributed to consolidate a pattern of expansion of the urbanized space that was continuous and adjacent to the central nucleolus. Economically disadvantaged peripheries were a common trait of large metropolises in Latin America, being the only exceptions few segregated and disperse areas for high income population.[9] Over time, population growth feed this expansion. Old peripheries gained centrality and external peripheries became denser and better prepared (improved infrastructure). The consolidation of secondary centers accompanied this process.

Several studies point out that during the last decades this pattern of metropolitan growth has changed in Latin America, particularly during the 1990's. Two main dominant processes have taken place, with local specificities and variations among metropolises in the region. One is the "peripherialization", in selected gated communities of high income groups, disperse in

[9] Historically there were significant socioeconomic differences between the center and the periphery in the largest metropolises in Latin America. For example, infant mortality rate in the Federal District of Mexico City was in 1950 40% lower than in the poorest suburbs (Tutlitlán and Nezahualcoyotl). In 1970, in Sao Paulo residents of the richest neighborhoods had 12.3 more years of life expectancy than those living in *favelas* (shanty towns). In 1978 in Bogota, mean head of households' income in the richest neighborhood was 10 times higher than in the poorest

fragmented spaces. These wealthy groups moved from the center to the periphery seeking for open, safe and isolated spaces. This peripherial movement greatly differs from the one that prevailed for decades. In general this process is associated to an intense daily mobility (Torres, 2001).

The other dominant process has been the concentration of economically disadvantaged population in deteriorated areas of the urban center or the first peripherial ring, that have been loosing population. At the same time, other central areas regained value by a process of *gentrification* (Ciccollela, 1999)

New forms of urban spatial segregation are thus generated by these patterns of intra-metropolitan movements. Some new rich suburbs are gated communities surrounded by poor neighborhoods that provide services while others are implanted in semi-rural areas. These developments were facilitated by improvements in communication, particularly new investments in highways and roads. In the old areas, segregation is scattered and created by significant differences in public infrastructure and services available in different neighborhoods.

Throughout the region labor markets have became tighter, poverty has increased, income distribution have worsen, and urban crime is on the rise. The new economic model excludes a large proportion of population, and this exclusion is thus expressed in new forms of spatial segregation.

Finally another new trend of spatial mobility in the region is the one that derives from the articulation between metropolises and adjacent areas. The so called "connectivity explosion" developed in the last two decades is the main responsible of the interconnection between large metropolises and other nodes of the urban system. The case of the metropolitan area of Mexico City and Puebla is one example; another one is the case of Sao Paulo and Campinas. The so-called megalopolises, or extended metropolitan areas are the result of this process. Flows of people, goods and services are interchanged in various ways within these areas.

Summary

This paper depicted recent trends regarding urbanization, internal migration and the urban system in Latin America. It showed that the region is characterized by its high urbanization level

---

neighborhoods (Rodriguez and Villa, 1998). In 1991 in Buenos Aires, whereas only 5 out of ten inhabitants in the Capital City lived in poor households, in the metropolitan ring that percentage was 28.1 (Ainstein, 1996).

compared to Africa or Asia. The rapid urbanization in Latin America and the growth of a group of cities concentrating significant proportions of urban population took mainly place between 1930 and 1970, and was related to the industrialization process and the introduction of capitalist modes of production in rural areas. Rural-urban migration was the main determinant of urban growth.

More recently Latin America has undergone a process of economic and social change that have affected settlement patterns. The abandonment of the Import Substitution model of growth and the adoption of neoliberal policies had an effect on production processes, labor markets and income distribution. These changes have territorial effects, particularly the role of cities, the spatial distribution of socioeconomic groups and their patterns of spatial mobility.

Urban systems in the region are characterized by their large cities. Many of the countries combined having high levels of urbanization and gigantic primary cities. When compared to other regions in the world Latin America stands out by its high primacy. However in most Latin American countries with primary cities, the rate of growth of the largest cities have declined compared to middle size cities and national averages. Middle size cities are the ones showing the greatest dynamism in the region.

The pace of urbanization has slowed down, particularly in those countries with already a high proportion of urban population. Rural-urban migration flows have decreased in most of the countries urban-urban migration is today the dominant form of spatial mobility.

There is an increasing relevance of intra-metropolitan population movements, mainly from the center to the contiguous periphery and to close territories (the so-called rur-urban spaces and megalopolis- articulations). These types of movement are at the core of the debate on processes of urban de-concentration and on their impacts on new types of social segregation.

Internal migration has become more complex and difficult to quantify. It now involves a multiplicity of places of origin and destination and also a change in the sociodemographic characteristics of migrants. Data limitations partly explain the difficulties in the estimation of new spatial movements between small administrative units and within localities. Furthermore, the challenge is how we will incorporate in our studies a much more multifaceted migration scenario that may include these types of movements (including flows and counter flows).

References

Ainstein, Luis. 1996 "Buenos Aires: a case of deepening social polarization", in Gilbert, Alan (Ed.). *The Mega-City in Latin America.* Tokyo: United Nations University Press.

CELADE, 1997. "Migración hacia las ciudades en América Latina: tendencias y su contexto" Paper presented in the seminar "Municipios y superación de la pobreza en América Latina y el Caribe", Quito 22-24 october.

CELADE. 2000. *Boletíin Demográfic: 65: Migración Internacional en América Latina.*

CEPAL 1997. *Panorama Social para América Latina, Edición 1997*. Comision Económica para America Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL), Santiago de Chile.

CEPAL/HABITAT 2001, *De la Urbanización Acelerada a la Consolidación de los Asentamientos Humanos en América latina y el Caribe: El Espacio Regional*. Santiago: LC/G.2116(CONF.88/3)

CEPAL. 2002. *Balance Preliminar de las Economías de América Latina y el Caribe*. Santiago: Comisión Económica para América Latona y el Caribe.

Cicolella, Pablo. 1999. "Globalización y dualización en la region metropolitana de Buenos Aires. Grandes invesrsiones y reestructuración socioterritorial en los años noventa" en *EURE Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios UrbanoRegionales*, Vol 25(76):5-27 .

CONAPO, 1997. *La situación demográfica en México, 1997*. México City: Consejo Nacional de Población, CONAPO.

CONAPO, 1999. *Veinticinco años de cambio de la migración interna en México*. México City: Consejo Nacional de Población, CONAPO

Cunha Pinto, José Marcos 2002. "Urbanización, Redistribución Espacial de la Pobalción y Transformaciones Socioeconómicas en América Latina". Santiago: CEPAL, *Serie Población y Desarrollo* Num. 30.

ECLAC, 1990, *Sustainable Development: Changing Production Patterns, Social Equity and Environment*. Santiago: Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean.

Gilbert, Alan 1998. *The Latin American City*. Nottingham: Russell Press

Lattes, Alfredo 1995. "Urbanización, Crecimiento Urbano y Migraciones en América Latina" in *Notas de Población*, 62. pp. 211-260.

Lattes, Alfredo; Rodríguez, Jorge and Villa, Miguel 2002. "Population dynamics and urbanization in Latin America. Concepts and data limitations" paper presented in the IUSSP Expert Meeting. Bellagio, March 2002.

Lozano, Fernando; Roberts, Bryan and Bean, Frank. 1997 "The interconnectedness of internal and international migration: The case of the United States and Mexico", Texas Population Research Center Papers, Num. 96-97-02.

Martine, G 1999 "Urban fertility transitions in Latin America implications for the social and environmental agenda.", in Hill, K. J. Morelos and R. Wong (coord.) *Las consecuencias de las transiciones demográficas y epidemiológica en America Latina*. México City: El Colegio de México.

Rodriguez Vignoli, Jorge. 2002, Distribución Territorial de la Población de América Latina y el Caribe: Tendencias, Interpretaciones y Desafíos para las Políticas Públicas. Santiago: CEPAL/CELADE, Serei Población y Desarrollo Num. 32.

Rodriguez Jorge and Miguel Villa, 1998. "Distribución especial de la población, urbanización y ciuddes intermedias: Hechos en su contexto" in Ricardo Jordan y Daniela Simioni (comp.) *Ciudades Intermedias de América Latina y el Caribe: Propuestas para la Gestión Urbana*. Santiago: CEPAL/Ministero degli Affari Esteri Cooperazione Italiana.

Thorp, Rosemary. 1994. "The Latin American Economies, 1939-1950" in Bethell, Leslie (Ed.) *The Cambridge History of Latin America,* Vol. 6, Part 1. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Torres, Horacio A. 2001. "Cambios Socioterritoriales en Buenos Aires durante la década de 1990" en *EURE Revista Latinoamericana de Estudios UrbanoRegionales*, Vol 27(80):33-57 .

Torres, Horacio A. 1995 ?. *El Mapa Social de Buenos Aires (1940-1990)*. Buenos Aires: Dirección de Investigaciones, Secretaría de Investigación y posgrado. Facultad de Arquitectura, Diseño y Urbanismo, Universidad de Buenos Aires.

Tuirán, Rodolfo, 2000. Tendencias recientes de la movilidad territorial en algunas zonas metropolitanas de México. Mercado de Valores, México DF, Año LX, Num. 3, pp 47-61.

UNPD, 2001. World Urbanization Prospects: The 2001 Revision. New York: United Nation Population Division.

Lattes, Alfredo y Zulma Recchini de Lattes, 1992. Auge y declinación de las migraciones en Buenos Aires. In: Jorge Jorrat y Ruth Sautu (comp.), *Después de Germani. Exploraciones sobre estructura social de la Argentina*. Buenos Aires: Paidos, pp.176-196.

Cardoso, Ciro y Pérez Brignoli, Héctor Pérez, 1979. *Historia económica de América Latina*. Barcelona: Crítica, 1979.

Ferrer, Aldo, 1999. *Historia de la globalización II. La revolución industrial y el segundo orden mundial*. Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica.

Barsky, Osvaldo y A. Pucciarelli (eds), 1997. *El agro pampeano. El fin de un período*. Buenos Aires: FLACSO y CBC-UBA.

Becker, Bertha K., 1990. *Amazonia*. São Paulo: Atica (Serie principios, 192).

Machado, Lía Osorio, 1992. "A fronteira agricola na Amazonia Brasileira", *Revista Brasileira de Geografia*, 54(2): 27-55. Rio de Janeiro: IBGE.

Vapñarsky, Cesar A., 1995. "Primacía y macrocefalia en la Argentina: la transformación del sistema de asentamiento humano desde 1950", *Desarrollo Económico*, 35(138): 227-254, Buenos Aires: IDES.

Bertoncello, Rodolfo, 1994. *Nuevas tendencias de la redistribución espacial de la población en Argentina*. Ponencia presentada al Seminario "Distribución y Movilidad Territorial de la Población y Desarrollo Humano", Bariloche, 4-7 de mayo.

Bertoncello, Rodolfo y Sandra Minvielle, 1997. *Redistribución de la población de Argentina, 1970-1991. Un análisis a nivel de las aglomeraciones*. Ponencia presentada en VI Encuentro de Geógrafos de América Latina. Buenos Aires