

Session 1

Facts on Asian Megacities



Chairpersons : Prof. Tatsuo Ito, Prof. Yuji Murayama

Keynote Speaker : Prof. Peter James Rimmer

Speakers : Prof. Kam Wing Chan, Prof. Masato Ikuta, Prof. Satoshi Nakagawa

In this session, we discussed the structural changes in the megacities in Asia, focusing on the urbanization trend, urban environmental changes, urban problems, etc.

Prof. Rimmer examined the changes in the international urban system in Asia as a keynote speech. Cities in Northeast Asia were put into their international context by invoking the global hub-and-spoke logistics system, which recognizes the importance of Main Street linking Europe, Asia and North America and identifies connections to cul-de-sacs in Africa, Australasia and South America. Global flows of goods, passengers and information through the system are used to identify key hubs in container shipping, air transport and telecommunications. The findings from this analysis are brought together to identify Asia's multi-level hubs (city-regions or urban platforms) and their attraction as headquarter sites for global network firms. Six pivotal urban platforms are recognized that are centered on Tokyo, Hong Kong, Singapore, Shanghai, Beijing and Taipei. Other urban centers are regarded as proto-platforms or ranked as other nodes.

Then the present urban trends of megacities in China, Singapore and Bangkok were reported by three urban geographers. Prof. Kam Wing Chan provided a background of China's past urbanization strategy and then looked at the latest urban growth trends both at the national and individual city levels based upon a comprehensive sample of 414 cities for which census population data of 1990 and 2000 are available. It was shown that there has been significant mis-representation of the list of the largest cities in China in the literature and misinterpretations of China's policy. Based on China's 2000 Census population data, the largest cities are identified and compared with the "regular" data presented before. The largest cities witnessed significant population growth in the 1990s, along with export-processing centers and some smaller, county-level cities. The second part of this presentation analyzed the critical issues in promoting sustainable urbanization and development in China. These involve examining the reforms of the household registration system, migration, urban labor market, social welfare and environment.

Prof. Ikuta discussed the urban development of Singapore which is a city state with no rural areas. This is a result of the severe population and immigration control policies. Singapore was able to realize quick industrial reorganization without a remarkable increase in the population. Due to this, Singapore was able to continue introducing new types of FDI and sustain the economic

growth with quick industrial restructuring in accordance with the rapid reorganization of the world economy toward increasing service activities. He concludes that the cross-border urban development could be effectively realized only if we could have a strong growth pole as Singapore. The surrounding region can enjoy the spreading effects of such a growth pole. In order to realize such an urban development, it is important to politically create the strong growth pole. Singapore and its surrounding region can be perceived not only as a preceding example for other Southeast Asian EMRs(Extended Metropolitan Regions), but also as a crucial model for considering the relationship between a large city and a nation for future Asian urban developments.

Prof. Nakagawa discussed the impact of the recent globalization process on the gender-specific migration and changes in population distribution in Thailand, focusing on Bangkok. Bangkok and the surrounding region are important to explore the impact of globalization because both command and production functions have been settling down in this city in recent years. The command function for Thailand and neighboring countries concentrated mainly on the city center of Bangkok, stimulating an increasing number of the new middle class population. He especially emphasized the change of the spatial structure of employment was not only concerned with the absolute number of employment by region, but the employment by gender was also subject to change. Through their gender preference for employment the peculiar redistribution of industrial sectors had implicitly formed the female-dominant population structure in the Bangkok Metropolis and the vicinity.