

Development Prospects for Medium-Size Cities of Southeast Asian Countries

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Abstract



Medium-size cities are vital for the development of any nation. These cities act as economic and social hub for their local inhabitants and surrounding rural areas. Actually these cities promote the concept of regional development. There are various countries in this globe, who had taken initiatives for their medium-size cities planning and development. This study had critically analyzed and compared the planning initiatives taken at national level in the Southeast Asian countries for the development of their medium-size cities. The study had taken South Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam as case study areas. The study had adopted secondary data collection resources for gathering the required data. The results revealed that the national planning strategies taken in Indonesia and South Korea countries had successful results. However, due to centralized system of planning, the Vietnam government heavily focused on Industrial development. It is therefore suggested that the planning strategies for medium-size cities development should be developed by considering the economic functions these cities and their rural hinterlands are performing in order to promote regional development.

Keywords: Medium-size Cities, Indonesia, South Korea, Vietnam, Planning Strategies.

Introduction

The promotion of medium-size cities and market towns is very important for developing countries. The medium-size cities provide attractive alternative immigration options to the city bound rural migrants. They offer market intermediaries and opportunities for employment. Through this urban poverty can be alleviated and congestion from metropolitan cities can be reduced (McCatty, 2004; Kalwar et al; 2018; 2019).

Medium-size cities are mostly determined through their size, population, function and economic status. As Roberts and Hohmann (2014) pointed out, “*within a nation's system of cities, medium-size cities are geographical urban jurisdictions or centres that carry out crucial administrative, logistical, and production tasks at a sub-national or sub-metropolitan region level.*” (p.2). The medium-size cities population can be between 10% and 50% population of primary city of a country. Although in some cases, it can be smaller (Roberts and Hohmann, 2014, Kalwar et al, 2016). The medium-size cities are also termed as secondary cities and intermediate cities.

The major factors in the growth of medium-size cities of the developing world were their capacity to act as the centers of trade, commerce and services. The development of those cities was initiated due to their spatial placement as an agricultural region center /selection as an administrative center (as being conveniently linked with other cities by railway lines, water ways and roads). He further added that central government should built a network of medium-size cities and establish agricultural processing facilities, small and large scale industries and tourism opportunities in order to create strong beneficial linkages to their rural hinterland (Rondinelli, 1983; Kalwar et al, 2019; 2020).

Medium-size cities promote regional economic development by offering various sites for industrial, business and other productive activities, which consume surrounding small towns and rural areas produce. Thus, these cities increase wealth and income distribution, reduce migration to metropolitan cities, thereby relieves urban congestion and resource strains (Song, 2013; Soomro et al, 2021). As a resultant, medium-size cities helps in promoting local, regional and national levels of sustainable development.

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Many of the medium-size cities of developing and developed world had become thriving hubs of commerce and industrial markets. Those medium-size cities had boosted themselves by improving their highways and faster train system, which had made them accessible for trade and other service to the country as a whole. The research revealed that those medium-size cities offered vast job opportunities than the metropolises as growing urbanization and manufacturing trends demanded more workers (Mullich, 2011; Kalwar et al, 2018; Kalwar et al, 2021).

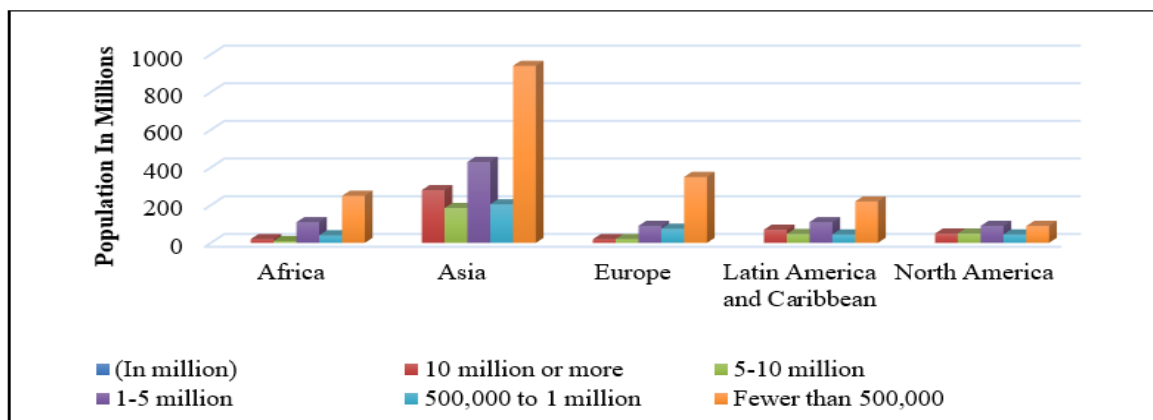
System of Medium-Size Cities

According to United Nation (2012), 53% population of the world was living in cities in 2010. It is predicted that this urban population increase to 70% in 2025. It is also estimated that out of that 70% urban population, 40% will be living in medium-size cities in 2025 (UN-Habitat, 2012; Kalwar et al, 2020).

Presently, there are more than 2400 cities in the globe, which have population ranging between 150,000 to 5 million can be classified as medium-size cities. Two-third of these 2400 cities are in Asia and Africa (Roberts, 2014). The figure 1 shows that the growth of 'medium-size cities' is highest in Asia than in other continents. It is also evident from the figure 1 that the urban growth is rapidly occurring in 500,000 population ranges. The 1-5 million population range is on the second number. Both of these two types fall in the medium-size city's population range.

Figure 1

The Unrecognized Primacy of Medium-Size Cities Worldwide



Source: UN-Habitat, 2012

The medium-size cities generally fall into one of following three types:

Sub-National Medium-Size Cities

The sub-national cities are one of the oldest type of medium-size cities. Most of these cities were developed in industrial era under a nationally devolved system of government. They functioned as industrial, education, administrative and tourism hubs. The other sub-national medium-size cities were developed due to historical and cultural advantages. (Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018). These medium-size cities have more than 200,000 population. The examples are Mecca (Saudi Arabia), Kumasi (Ghana) and Varanasi (India) (Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Cluster Medium-Size Cities

The cluster medium-size cities are linked with new towns movement and metropolitan regions development. To lessen the overcrowding from metropolitan cities or to initiate de-centralizational and de-industrializational strategies, those medium-size cities were established on the outskirts of nuclear or primary cities. Mostly the cities with more than 5 million population are evidence of clustering of metropolitan medium-size city (Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Corridor Medium-Size Cities

With an increase of trade and travel among cities, a new category of medium-size cities has emerged. These medium-size cities develop along the economic growth or trade corridors. The biggest expel is in China, where by improving the national rail and road networks between cities, many of them were stabled as new growth poles. Those cities started functioning as market towns or sub-national government headquarters. By offering transport and other infrastructure facilities, these cities were successful in attracting international firms to establish their manufacturing and processing industries (Song, 2013; Kalwar, 2018).

Methodology

The planners and policymakers develop and review planning initiatives and intervention for cities and regions development (Kalwar et al, 2019; 2020). It is also their prime responsibility to present the ultimate impacts of the integrated plans to all stakeholders (Wang and Hofe, 2007). Bearing in mind these facts, this study elaborates and discusses the national and provincial levels planning strategies adopted in South-East Asian countries for the develop their medium-size cities. The study had taken South Korea, Indonesia and Vietnam countries as its case study areas.

The study had adopted the document review technique for data collection. The required information was gathered through online and manual books, reports and research papers. For data analysis, the population projection models and MS Excel were used to produce graphs and tables.

Results and Discussion

South Korea

East Asia is home to South Korea, which is often referred to as the Republic of Korea. It shares a physical border with North Korea and makes up the southern portion of the Korean Peninsula. It has Yellow Sea on western border and Sea of Japan on eastern border. It has a population of 48,391 in 2011 (see table 1). South Korea is an urbanized country with 83% population is living in urban areas. Around half of this population live in Seoul City, which is the 5th largest metropolitan city of the world. Other major cities include Incheon, Busan, and Daegu. According to UN Urbanization Prospects, 2011, 83% population of the South Korea lives in urban areas. The country has 70 number of cities. Fifty-eight percent urban population is living in cities have less than 500,000 population (see figure 1). The cities having population of 500,000-1 million and 1-5 million share 12% urban population each (Robert, 2014). The details about the population distribution of cities are presented in table 1 and figure 2.

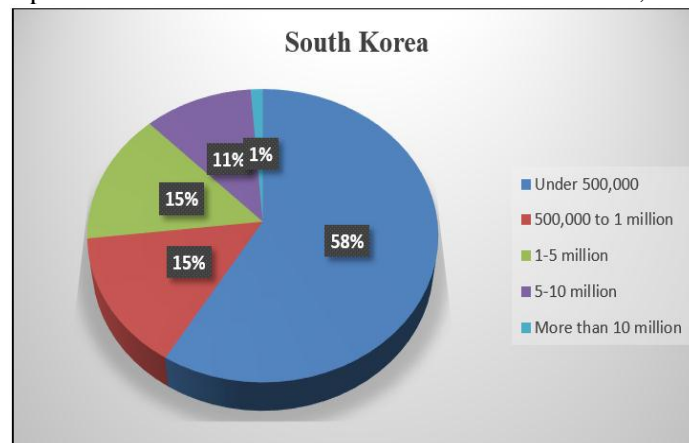
Table 1 Population Prospects of South Korea, 2011

South Korea	
Country Population	48,391
Urban Population	40,165
Urban Population (% of total)	83%
Urban Annual Growth Rate %	0.7
Population 10 Largest Cities	25,621
Largest City	9,772
Total Number Cities	70
Under 500,000	48
500,000 to 1 Million	12
1-5 Million	12
5-10 Million	9
More than 10 Million	1

Source: UN Urbanization Prospects (2011)

Figure 2

Population Share of Urban settlements of South Korea, 2011



Planning Strategies for Medium-Size Cities Development

After realizing the importance in achieving balanced economic growth at national and state levels, the Republic of Korea had encouraged the development of secondary cities. Therefore, the federal government of Korea had initiated social, economic and physical development plans and strategies to slow down the growth of Seoul city and foster the development of medium-size cities. By developing a series of satellite cities in the periphery of Seoul, the Korean government had enabled the agglomeration and specialization of industrial development in those satellite cities. That resulted into in enabling the city on focusing different revitalization and redevelopment programs for inner-city areas, development of new eco-technology parks and in attracting new industries in order to cater the capital city's economy and meet structural changes. Consequently, the Korean government had developed medium-size cities in other districts of the country by implementing a range of diversified strategies, (Mogaha, 2009; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

The main focus of those planning strategies was to initiate flexible and diversified industrial development for the planning and development of all urban settlements. This strategy was different from many other Asian nations, which permitted practically all major industry development to take place in the metropolis. This had resulted into a complementing and balanced urban system of South Korea, which had not only maintained the lowest unemployment rates in the country, but has also created one of the best example for other Asian countries (Mogaha, 2009; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Indonesia

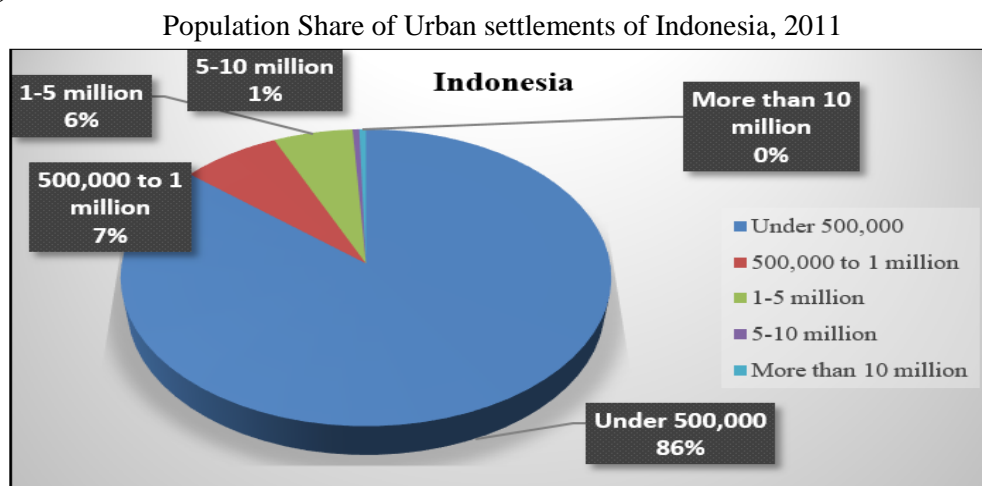
Indonesia is a country in Southeast Asia. Indonesia has an area of 1,904,569 square kilometres, making it the 14th largest country in the world. Sumatra, Java, Sulawesi, and portions of Borneo and New Guinea are among the more than 17,000 islands that make up this archipelago. The country is world's 4th most populous country with more than 242 million population in 2011 census (see table 2). According to UN Urbanization Prospects (2011) 51% population of Indonesian citizens are living in urban areas, with more than half are settled in Java city. There are 208 no of cities in this countries, out of which 180 cities have less than 500,000 population (Robert, 2014). Fifteen cities have population between 500,000-1 million. The details about the population distribution of cities are presented in table 2 and figure 3.

Table 2

Population Prospects of Indonesia, 2011

Indonesia	
Country Population	242,326
Urban Population	123,586
Urban Population (% of total)	51%
Urban Annual Growth Rate %	2.5
Population 10 Largest Cities	28,055
Largest City	9,751
Total Number Cities	208
Under 500,000	180
500,000 to 1 Million	15
1-5 Million	12
5-10 Million	1
More than 10 Million	1

Source: UN Urbanization Prospects (2011)

Figure 3

Planning Strategies for Medium-Size Cities Development

Indonesia had implemented advanced decentralization reforms at national level for medium-size cities development. The development of those medium-size cities established good examples, which contributed a lot in creating competition between cities of the world. A series of national development plans were created in Indonesia with the help of central government intervention and managed economic development programmes, which mostly focused medium-size cities development during 1970s and 1980s. Those development plans had changed the economic geography of the medium-size cities of the country (Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Those development plans were focused towards industrial sector development to stimulate self-sufficiency and regional development. The strategies and policies of the plans were mostly focused heavy industrial development in specific cities. However, the policies of the plans favored the development of medium-size cities in Java. This raised many disparities in the regional development patterns of the country during 1990. That agitated social-unrest in poorer provinces especially in mineral rich provinces. Therefore, those provinces started to cry for political autonomy and establishment of natural resources industries (Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Taking into account these elements, the Indonesian central government established decentralization legislation in 1999, granting authority to regional and local administrations. 33 province governments and 100 local governments in the nation now have autonomy thanks to the decentralization policy of 2000. In order to further promote devolution and the growth of medium-size cities around the nation, the central government established an urbanization policy in 2010. Municipalities therefore manage the majority of local governance issues using their own budgets and supplementary funding from the federal government. Due to reduced rivalry among Indonesian cities as a result of decentralization, the country's recent economic performance during the Global Financial Crisis was affected (Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

However, to fulfil the needs of medium-size cities, Indonesia should improve its urban and regional planning system, especially for economic sector. To make medium-size cities more competitive and vibrant, the Indonesian government still needs devolution in their administrative and financial setup. This will provide them more freedom to take initiative and diversify their sources of income, allowing them to raise money for the construction of vital infrastructure necessary for investment and fosters development.

Vietnam

Southeast Asia's easternmost country, Vietnam, covers an area of 311,699 square kilometers. It ranks as the fifteenth most populated nation in the world, according to the UN, with a population of 96 million. By way of the Gulf of Thailand, the South China Sea, the Philippines, Indonesia, and Malaysia, Laos and Cambodia to the west, China to the north, Laos and Cambodia to the west, and China to the south, Vietnam shares maritime borders with all of these countries. Ho Chi Minh City is the major city and Hanoi is its capital. According to UN Urbanization Prospects (2011) the country had more than 88 million population in 2011 (see table 3). Vietnam had 31 cities in 2011 and 31%

urban population. Twenty-eight cities of the country have population is under 500,000. The details about the population distribution of cities are presented in table 2 and figure 3.

Table 3

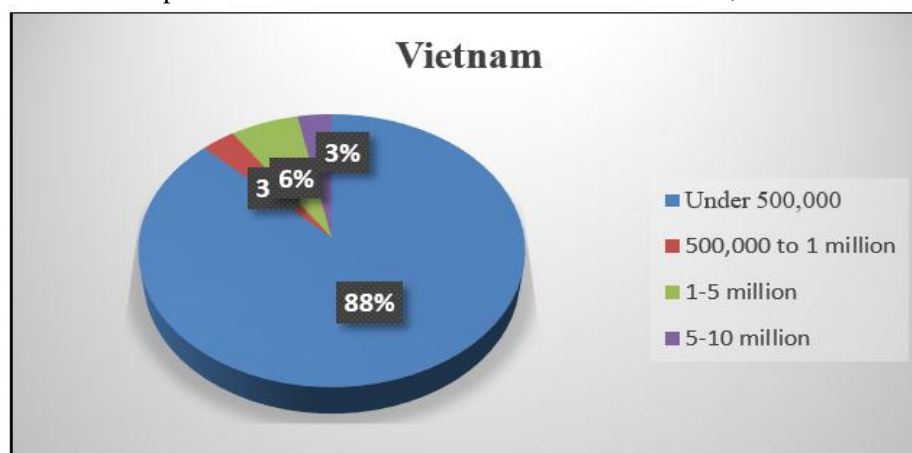
Population Prospects of Vietnam, 2011

Vietnam	
Country Population	88,792
Urban Population	27,526
Urban Population (% of total)	31%
Urban Annual Growth Rate %	3
Population 10 Largest Cities	8,540
Largest City	6,167
Total Number Cities	31
Under 500,000	28
500,000 to 1 Million	1
1-5 Million	2
5-10 Million	1
More than 10 Million	0

Source: UN Urbanization Prospects (2011)

Figure 4

Population Share of Urban Settlements of Vietnam, 2011



Planning Strategies for Medium-Size Cities Development

The central government of Vietnam in collaboration with 'Asian Development Bank (ADB)', 'World Bank' and 'Cities Alliance', had initiated different projects and development strategies for the support of 'medium-size cities' development during 1990s and 2000, for example 'Haiphong and Can Tho'. The Vietnam government also developed 'Socio-Economic Development Plan (SEDP)', 2006-2010 in the year 2005. The main focus of SEDP was to improve urban infrastructure and living conditions to attract investors, development of urban areas as growth centers, reduction in rural-urban disparities and elevate sustainable development (Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

At the first level, the 'Ha Tinh (Ha Tinh Province)', 'Tam Ky (Quang Nam Province)' and 'Buon Ma Thuot (DakLak Province)' were planned to develop as hubs for economic activities of their respective regions, in order to foster 'balanced regional development'. The main aim of the plan was to reduce congestion from metropolitan cities and strengthen connections between targeted medium-size cities and their rural hinterlands. Unfortunately, very few initiatives were taken to strengthen medium-size cities (Kumar, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Due to 'centralized planning system' and political crisis in Vietnam, very few cities are capable of initiating and implementing development plans. The economic development strategies for medium-size cities, however, tended to be more focused on industrial expansion without taking into account the requisite financial resources and tactical infrastructure. Consequently, their tactics did not succeed in luring investors and developers. Along with being politically motivated and extremely delayed, economic governance improvements go against what the market wants. Due to this, governments are now far less able to collaborate with businesses to create favorable conditions, which

has a negative impact on the competitiveness of cities, especially medium-size cities (Kumar, 2012; Roberts, 2014; Kalwar, 2018).

Conclusion and Recommendation

The governments of Vietnam, South Korea, and Indonesia all established and put into practice planning techniques in their national development plans for the local economic growth of their medium-size cities. The provincial and municipal administrations of Indonesia now have autonomy due to its 1999 decentralization reforms (Pepinsky and Wihardja, 2011). The planning policies of the 1970s and 1980s, which were geared on industrial development in major cities, were also diversified as a result of those reforms. The local authorities developed their plans after the 1999 decentralization law went into effect, and numerous industrial units were built. Decentralization measures enabled the Indonesian government to achieve 'local economic development' at the level of 'medium-size cities' and 'balanced regional development'.

The Vietnam government in 2005, had also developed planning strategies in their development plans to achieve 'local economic development' for medium-size cities. Although, the emphasis of the plan was to develop medium-size cities as growth centers, reduce rural-urban disparities, improve living standards and strategic infrastructure to attract investors, and stimulate sustainable development as described by Kumar (2012). However, the central government of Vietnam had promoted only industrial economic development and ignored the development of strategic infrastructure, which is necessary to support industrial development. Therefore, these planning strategies failed to motivate the developers and investors for the establishment of industries in medium-size cities of Vietnam.

Whereas, South Korea's government took the wise decision to create a number of satellite cities around Seoul to allow for the specialization and agglomeration of industry in those towns and alleviate congestion from Seoul (2009). The establishment of a number of subsidiary cities in a cluster around Seoul, however, it is a planning approach that works well for urban areas. For a nation like Korea, where more than 80% of the population lives in cities, this may be appropriate. However, this approach is ineffective in nations like Indonesia and Vietnam, where 49% and 69% of the population, respectively, live in rural areas. Consequently, it is recommended that the Vietnamese government use planning measures to develop its sub-national medium-size cities, which will ultimately promote regional development.

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