

URBANISATION, GOVERNMENT POLICIES AND GROWING SOCIAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL PROBLEMS IN POKHARA, NEPAL

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Introduction

Even though only 9.2 per cent of the population of Nepal in 1991 lived in designated urban areas, the process of urbanisation is growing rapidly. Urban population constituted 3.57 per cent of the total population in 1961, grew to 3.61 per cent by 1971 and touched 6.39 per cent in 1981 (CBS 1974, 1984 and 1999). The urban population growth rate (annual) was 8.5 per cent during 1971-1981 and 6.0 per cent in the decade following, whereas the figures for the corresponding period at the national level were 2.7 per cent and 2.1 per cent respectively (CBS 1974, 1984 and 1999). Of about 3 million residential houses in Nepal in 1997, 0.3 million (or 10 per cent) are in urban areas¹ (NPC 1998:258).

As agriculture alone is not able to support a growing rural population, internal rural-urban migration is adding to the pressure on already inadequate urban utilities, infrastructure and services. Moreover, migration is also changing the nature of poverty—it now has an urban face. Considering the recently adopted criteria that the poverty line indicates percentage of population spending 70 per cent or more of their income on food, 51 per cent of the urban population live below the poverty line (Nepal South Asia Centre 1998:127).² It is also estimated that 24 per cent of families in urban areas live in rented houses and 7.3 per cent live in small, temporary huts in public space (NPC 1998:258). In recent times, issues related to urbanisation have engaged policy makers and the general problems recognised in government policy papers include sanitation, hygiene, amenities, services, environment and inadequate housing.

Since the fourth plan period (1970-75), the government has been paying attention to urban development (Gurung 1989:14). When the concept of regional planning was taken seriously, urban centres were

1 Average household size of urban areas (5.4 members) is slightly lower than the national average (5.6 members) (CBS 1996).

2 The same figure for rural Nepal is 68 per cent. Overall, it is 66 per cent.

considered as growth poles³ for integration of the hill and Tarai economies. During this period four economic corridors⁴ were identified and these were called 'development regions'. Later, one more development region was created to reduce regional disparities between the eastern and western regions. But since the eighth plan period (1992-1997) urban problems themselves have received government attention. In addition, the basic assumption that urban centres provide facilities for surrounding villages and create employment opportunities in farm and non-farm sectors has been maintained. The government therefore invested a total of Rs 134.4 million as loan and Rs 96 million as grant through the Town Development Fund in the eighth plan period (1992-1997) (NPC 1998:259).

This concept of urban-rural linkages was introduced in Nepal when Rondenelli, a USAID consultant, proposed small town development for facilitating rural development in the early 1980s (Rondenelli 1985, Rondenelli and Evans 1983). The idea of small towns and markets acting as catalysts for rural development and poverty alleviation received greater emphasis in the Ninth Development Plan (1998-2002), and the designation of as many as 58 areas as municipalities of varying order rests on the basic assumption that enhancing urban growth will help in rural development and an increase in living standards. The Ninth Plan also aims to develop infrastructure and public utilities of municipalities and other cities in order to systematise the process of internal migration. This essentially means that government policy is not aimed at containing internal rural-urban migration.

Even though, Nepal is still considered rural because most people still live in its villages, it has an urban history dating back to the 18th century BC, as evidenced from excavations in Lumbini and Tilaurakot in the western Tarai. City life existed there until the 2nd century AD. Historically, the Bagmati Valley too was a seat of civilisation, and urban culture developed here with the growth of Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur cities, and flourished because of their location on the trade route between India and Tibet. Religion was also a factor for the growth of

3 They are generally larger urban centres of industry, commerce and administration that together with their immediate region of influence possess high potential for economic expansion.

4 Economic corridors essentially mean elongated aerial units where economic growth and development are possible because of inter-linkages in economic and social activities, trade and commerce due to the existence of a road network or movement of goods and commodities.

Kathmandu and other towns like Janakpur and Kapilvastu. Outside Kathmandu Valley, other strategic places developed as military centres. From the 10th to 14th centuries, Sinja and Dullu were prosperous capital cities in the Karnali region. During the medieval period (14th–18th C.), the country was divided into *bāise* (22) and *caubise* (24) microstates because of loss of control from the centre. This division led to the growth of small market centres and dense settlements on hilltops having a fort, security being the main reason for the growth of such settlements. Some of these settlements later developed into urban centres. However, Pokhara, which had a locational advantage as a trading centre, developed only after the unification of the country in 1769.

Pokhara is the fourth largest town⁵ (out of 58) in the country in terms of population size but its political and economic influence may be next only to the capital city, Kathmandu. Therefore, by studying the urbanisation of Pokhara one can test the assumption that an urban centre can spur the development of a region. This is the focus of this paper and it concludes that Pokhara's urbanisation has not strengthened its rural base.

Research Questions

Since Pokhara is regarded as an important city and a growth centre for the Western Development Region, it has been receiving increasing attention from government as well as external agencies as a potential centre for market expansion. The government also considers it an important centre for foreign tourism on which the future of the country is seen to rest when Nepal joins the World Trade Union (WTO). Tourism, especially trekking tourism, is one sector in which Nepal is said to have a comparative advantage, and Pokhara, being the main entry point for trekking tourism, earns much needed foreign exchange. During the 1970s and 1980s, Pokhara was also seen to have industrial development potential. To promote industry, the government established an industrial estate and several financial institutions. In the light of these recent developments, this study, which is primarily based on secondary information and participant observation (the author is a resident of the town), focuses on the following questions:

5 After Kathmandu, Biratnagar and Lalitpur. Population in these cities in 1991 was 421,258, 129,388 and 115,865, respectively. Pokhara had a population of 95,286 in 1991 (CBS 1999).

- what is the scale and rapidity of urban growth in Pokhara?
- what are the reasons for the development of Pokhara as an urban centre?
- is Pokhara helping in the development of its hinterland as assumed by urban policy makers? and
- what are the social and environmental consequences of urbanisation on the residents of Pokhara?

This paper analyses the development of Pokhara from a historical perspective in order to understand the reasons for its growth and its impact on the hinterland. It appears that growth took place mainly because of capital accumulation from the hinterland, with savings coming mainly from remittances. The result is a drain of precious capital from the rural areas, increasingly being utilised for the consumption of goods and services now available in the city due to the process of globalisation. Therefore, the commonly assumed principle that surplus generated from farming in rural areas flows to an urban centre for its development cannot be seen to be operational here. As a result, it has no strong urban-rural linkages with respect to providing value addition for products from the rural areas and in creating a market for rural produce. The industries established thus far, although providing some employment opportunities, do not have strong backward linkages as raw materials and a part of labour force are brought from the Tarai or India. Rather, the town has acted as a supply centre for goods and services from distant markets, which again means that it has facilitated the integration of village economies with world markets. This raises questions as to the sustainability of urban growth and the creation of a healthy urban culture. Although some opportunities to market rural produce have helped rural households earn their livelihood, this has again been possible due to an increase in the income of urban people from their access to remittances and income from tourism.

Urbanisation can be understood from different perspectives. In the study of urban phenomena, sociologists are particularly interested in changes in human behaviour and ties in family, kin-groups and community. From this perspective, urbanisation can be understood as the erosion of communitarian values. Early sociologists like Wirth (1938) saw urbanisation as a process of erosion of moral order because of the concomitant decline of community, in the sense that the firm ties of families, kin and community, as seen in rural areas, give way to individualistic behaviour. Therefore, the city was seen in earlier times as a

separate human environment with its own influence on the individual. However, this view has changed in recent times, as it is seen that there are 'rural-like' communities within the city—usually called 'urban villages'.⁶ This is particularly noticeable among recent immigrants into a metropolis, where people hailing from the same region settle down in separate enclaves. This is also the case of cities in Nepal, including Kathmandu and Pokhara. In the latter, this phenomenon is seen among both the wealthier as well as poorer immigrants. These enclaves, with strong community ties and the continued practice of rural activities⁷ by immigrants as well as early settlers, give the impression that Pokhara has not become a truly urban society. On the other hand, it is also not a village society as it has dense population, a large market, and a significant amount of the income comes from trade and business and other non-farm work. In this sense it can be said that Pokhara represents an urban society in the physical sense but most people still have a rural mindset. But the definition of rural/urban societies is complex and often misleading, especially so in recent times. Because of the integration of rural areas with urban societies, a rural way of life is giving way to an urban way of life and many rural folk have, in fact, an urban mindset.

In most developing countries urbanisation is seen as a demographic feature—urban areas are understood as those that exceed a population size and/or density threshold. In Nepal too urban areas have been defined solely on population-density criteria. For example, in all regulations related to municipalities, urban areas are defined as those having a certain minimum threshold of population. In the latest Municipal Act (Municipal Act, 1992), urban centres were defined as settlements with a population exceeding 20,000. Further, this Act makes three categories of urban centres—Metropolitan City (with a minimum population of 300,000, annual revenue of Rs 70 million and with urban facilities), Sub-Metropolitan City (with a minimum population of 100,000, annual revenue of Rs. 20 million and with urban facilities) and Municipalities (with a minimum population of Rs. 20,000, annual revenue of Rs. 1 million and with some basic urban facilities). In the earlier Municipal

6 Clusters or pockets of households performing, as part time activity, rural activities like farming, animal husbandry and other rural enterprises like small scale weaving and knitting, and retaining the social and cultural life of a village.

7 Even though people now do not depend on agriculture as a main source of livelihood they carry out some activities like keeping a buffalo or goat, maintaining a kitchen garden, and the like.

Acts⁸ too population density was the main criterion to designate a town, although rules were relaxed to consider some other areas as urban centres under political and administrative pressure.

Even though the population criterion has been mainly used to define urban areas in developing countries, an urban area or urban way of life is more than just a demographic feature. It is also an economic, social, political and cultural phenomenon. There are various other attributes of the population and its social and economic organisation that are associated with urban living. Urban life in western countries is linked to economic development, and urban growth and industrialisation have moved hand-in-hand. Urban development in these countries was also linked with the rise of capitalism. For example, Durkheim and Marx argued that towns and cities played a distinct role in the transition to, and development of, capitalism, and they then became a part of that universal mode of organisation, with no independent identity (see Johnston et al. 1986:506). This essentially means that the processes of capitalism can be seen to be operational in all spatial organisations—whether rural or urban.

In recent times, the development of urban centres in developing countries has been affected by the globalisation process, manifest in their increased integration with the world economy and the operations of multinational companies. The case of Pokhara also illustrates that urban development may not necessarily be linked with the process of industrialisation. Rather it represents a city/town rapidly developed by its access to capital, goods and services in the global market due to historical reasons and a globalisation process facilitated by increased transport and communication facilities. The origin of Pokhara as an urban centre also supports what David Harvey (1973) says about 'alienation of surplus' and its concentration in 'a few hands and in a few places'. Other 'ecological' (existence of certain ecological facilities like irrigation and navigation system)⁹ and 'cultural' factors (mainly religion), are also not applicable in

8 In 1961, the government set a criterion of declaring a settlement as an urban area if it exceeded the 5,000-population mark. This threshold was later increased to 10,000 by the Town Panchayat Act, 1962.

9 In some of the earliest cities, especially those in West Asia, ecological infrastructures facilitated the existence of towns. For example, the earliest urban centres were established near big rivers, which facilitated navigation and transportation of goods and commodities. Thus trade flourished at such points. Similarly, industrial development occurred at places where transportation was easier. Usually a river provided this facility. Similarly, existence of raw materials and minerals were other

the case of Pokhara—it neither had a transportation network facilitated by a river system or raw materials for the establishment of industry and trade. Similarly, it was also not a centre of any particular religious prominence. However, it had some locational advantage in the sense that it facilitated north-south trading activity.

The main impetus for its urbanisation however came from the 'political-military' interests of early rulers. As is discussed later, the rulers, after unification of the country in 1769, developed Pokhara as an administrative centre of West No 3 District, which comprised three of the present 75 districts (Kaski, Lamjung and Prapat). Similarly, it was also developed as a military centre for the western region, which led to the establishment of military camps and other related offices. The discontinuation of village based government institutions and their establishment in Pokhara in the recent past and its recognition as a centre for the western region has increased the inflow of people from rural areas. Therefore, the impetus for urbanisation has not come from economic necessity, but from administrative and political interests. It is also a reason why Pokhara, and most other towns for that matter, show a 'parasitic'¹⁰ relationship with their hinterland.

In Nepal, the study of cities and towns and policies concerning their development has been greatly influenced by geographical thought. Therefore, changes in discourses in urban geography have also influenced urban development. The approach of regional geography in particular (which replaced the concept of environmental determinism coined in the 1920s, and regards the role of physical features—site and situation—as determinants of urban foundations and growth) has influenced urban development. This approach pays attention to regional relations of towns and cities and to the existence of morphological regions within urban areas. The location theories of Walter Christaller (sometimes called the Central Place Theory) and August Losch (see Johnston et al 1986:506)¹¹

reasons for the establishment of industry, which caused the development of close settlements and trading opportunities.

10 Parasitic towns are those that depend on the hinterland and other places for their survival but do not contribute to the economy of these areas by adding value to their products or by creating demand in these places.

11 For an understanding of development and the spatial nature of economic growth, attempts have been made since the early 20th century to develop models on land use differentiations in space according to population concentration, growth patterns in towns, diffusion of economic growth amongst towns, and from towns to their environs. In the 1930s, Walter Christaller developed the Central Place Theory, according to which human

have been particularly instrumental in influencing our understanding of spatial organisation of human activities and, thus, became the cornerstone of regional planning. To further strengthen the understanding of how this pattern of centres gradually develops, the 'growth poles'¹² theory came into existence. This theory, which has influenced urban development and regional planning processes, explains the diffusion of growth patterns from centres to the periphery or hinterland. The concept of growth corridors¹³ with urban centres as growth propellers, first introduced in Nepal during the fourth plan (1970-75), is used here as 'development regions'. Similarly the focus of town-hinterland relationships in recent policies for urban development has been derived from these concepts of growth poles and diffusion of growth from higher order centres to lower order centres.

However, growing inequalities among residents of urban areas led to the questioning of the location theories' bases of planning. These theories had ignored the nature of capitalism and its impact on individuals and class interest and conflict, areas that have since drawn the attention of sociologists and political scientists. The increase in squatters and low income groups and the influence of the capitalist class in decision making

activities are horizontally as well as vertically organised in a geographical space. Horizontally they are centrally located within hexagonally shaped trading areas, and located in regularly spaced clusters forming triangular lattices. There is also a hierarchy of central places. Higher order central places are more widely spaced and the lower order ones are located at the gravity centres of the triangles formed by places at the next higher order. The higher order centres are larger with respect to economic activities, and also supply all goods which are supplied by lower order centres, but, in addition, over a wider range. It is through this interlocking of central places of various orders that growth diffusion to wider geographical areas from the city centres occurs. Losch developed another theory based on Christaller's model, but elaborated upon it by taking into account variations in economies of scale and transportation costs between different goods. This theory is more applicable to secondary activities like manufacturing.

- 12 Also see footnote 3. In these centres, propulsive firms are located, which exert a strong influence over their surroundings and which are capable of generating sustained growth over a long period of time. It is assumed that most innovative activities take place in the large economic units, which are capable of dominating their environment.
- 13 Growth corridors (development axes) are elongated corridors along principal transport routes linking two or more metropolitan regions. Also see footnote 4.

or in shaping urban planning can be seen in Pokhara, where lower class people lack access to basic urban functions.

The Beginnings of Urbanisation in Pokhara

As in the case of other towns in west-central Nepal, Pokhara's growth as a market centre is traced to the spread of Newars westwards from Kathmandu during the later half of the nineteenth century. It is often argued that market development and the introduction of urban culture began in Pokhara (or Kaski district) when a king of the then Kaski kingdom brought some Newars from Bhaktapur to Pokhara in 1752 to develop trade and build houses similar to those in Kathmandu Valley. It is questionable if these Newars actually built the present houses in Pokhara market, as the capital was then located in Kaski Kot and the winter capital in Batulachaur (although these places did not develop as trading centres). Even though other specialists like Brahmins (now located in villages near Kaski Kot) and Ganes or minstrels (now concentrated in Batulachaur) stayed around the palace, there are no Newars there nowadays. However, later Newar settlers are credited with the development of urban culture in Pokhara. But before their arrival (post unification of Nepal in 1769), Pokhara had become an important military centre in terms of communication and supply of arms through the *hulāk* system of locally organised portage during the early part of the nineteenth century. One of half a dozen offices of that kind was located at Pokhara (Blaikie et al. 1980:124). Unification of the country led to an increased movement of people within the country, and helped the development of towns, including Pokhara.

Oral history has it that Pokhara first began to develop as a market centre when 26 households of Newars migrated here from Bhaktapur more than 200 years ago—soon after the take-over of Kathmandu Valley by Prithvi Narayan Shah. It is said that they migrated fearing torture at the hands of the invading army, for it was common in those days that the vanquished were often tortured and relegated to a lower status. These new settlers were skilled in masonry, wood carving and had rich cultural practices. Among locals these immigrants were known as *chabbis-kuriyā* (twenty-six households). They founded the localities around the neighbourhoods now known as Ganesh Tole, Bhimsen Tole and Bhairav Tole. In fact, these localities were known by the name of temples that the immigrants established for their worship. The most plausible reason for their choosing to stay at this place is that water was available for cultivation and paddy fields and forests were close by. They established *guthīs* (Trusts, in the form of land) to support these temples. They also

produced woollen and cotton clothes, sweets, and established shops to sell goods that were not produced locally.

Pokhara was also a gateway to Tibet, and people going to Thak Khola for fetching salt had their stopover here. Tibetan goods, mostly spices and medicinal herbs, were also brought here for trading. As a result, the number of shops began to increase. Goods were brought from as far away as Kathmandu and Bhairahawa. The main products that the merchants of Pokhara supplied to India through trading in Butwal (then Batauli) were *ghee*, honey, wax, oilseeds and woollen blankets of various types made by hill ethnic groups like Gurungs and Magars whose main occupation was sheep rearing. These products were first collected in Pokhara from the producers in west-central Nepal and then supplied to Butwal through portorage. Sugar, tea, spices, medicines and clothes were brought from Butwal on the return trip. Historical sources reveal that Nepali merchants used to travel to Indian cities like Lucknow and Patna for marketing (Regmi 1971:171 cited in Blaikie et al. 1980:125). The town and hinterland were self-sufficient in food, and so food items were not imported from outside. Later on, the market also facilitated the distribution of goods produced by rural households and required for farming—spades, axes, sickles, bamboo baskets of various types, tobacco and ropes. Rural households themselves produced these goods, but traders acted as middlemen. Mobile trading was also very common. Shop-owners established mobile camps in the important centres to sell clothes, sugar, spices and tobacco to rural households and to purchase rural produce like grains and *ghee*. These mobile trading centres later became second and third order market centres.

To increase the participation of rural people in the markets the Newars also organised various festivals. The Bhairav dance, Bagh dance, Lakhe dance, Krishna Lila and Gai Jatra would attract large crowds from the hinterland and facilitate the exchange or marketing of goods. Temporary markets were set up at religious places on auspicious days. As a result, the cultural richness of Newars was maintained while also serving the important function of market exchange. The early immigrants were not only traders but also small manufacturers who developed metal and weaving industries. Although the weaving industry was well established in Bandipur, another Newar town located in west-central Nepal, production of cotton clothes was also common in Pokhara. Older residents recall that open spaces, which were abundant at that time, used to be fully occupied with weaving activities like bundling of thread, drying of clothes and dyeing. Similarly all the metal utensils were produced locally by Newars.

The occupational caste, chiefly Kami (blacksmiths), used to collect ores from scattered small mines and refine them locally. These metals were brought to Pokhara where Newar craftsmen made various artistic utensils. This is also recorded in the writings of Oldfield in 1880. He notes "the city of Pokhara is large and well-inhabited; it is famous for its copper manufactures, and it has a large annual fair, at which these, as well as supplies of grain and all productions of the district are sold" (Oldfield 1974[1880]:45).

Before the development of commercial activity in Pokhara, surrounding hilltops were considered more suitable for settlement. To cultivate lands in the valley, people would come down in the morning and return to their hill villages in the evening. They did not stay in the valley for the fear of malaria. The lowland villages of the valley thus represent the secondary dispersal of hill people and are associated with agricultural extension. The potential for increased paddy cultivation with irrigation attracted Brahmins and Chettris from the hills. Settlement in Pokhara had grown through two processes. Firstly, the declaration of Batulachaur as the winter capital brought many Chettris and Brahmins and lower castes there from the hilltop town of Sarangkot. Secondly, the establishment of Bindyabasini temple brought Brahmin priests to the valley. This was well before the unification of Nepal in 1769. But later the population increased mainly because of the opportunity to cultivate land. Until the 1960s, hill ethnic groups like Gurungs and Magars were rare in the valley, as it was considered a malarial zone, hot and humid. Even though Kaski was under the control of Ghale Gurung chieftains before its takeover by the Shah king, Bichitra Khan in the 14th century, Gurungs migrated to Pokhara mainly after the 1960s.

Before the establishment of a permanent market in Pokhara, people traded their wares at various periodic religious fairs organised at Dugesangu, Baidam and Satmuhane. This was also the time when petty kingdoms harboured rivalries and religious fairs offered the only opportunity for peaceful exchange of goods. But with the stability of political organisation in the mid-18th century, permanent commercial bazaars replaced the periodic fairs and further accelerated the migration of people from the hills into the valley. This trend quickened after malaria eradication programmes commenced in the late 1950s. The expansion in irrigation facilities, location of governmental offices and initiation of developmental activities were other reasons for migration into the valley. Transport facilities further led to concentration of population and the urbanisation process commenced after Pokhara was linked to the border

town of Bhairahawa in 1969 and with Kathmandu in 1971. These roads facilitated the quick movement of goods and people and in integrating Pokhara and its hinterland with the world economy. Gurung (1980:153) mentions that the transportation system came about in an inverted sequence: the aeroplane in 1952, jeep in 1957 and finally bullock cart in 1961.

Until the early 1950s, the city area was confined to the areas along the length of a footpath that linked the three temples established by the earlier generations of Newar immigrants. The market area was limited to a row of houses from Ram-Krishna Tole to Bagar and to a branch starting from Nalamukh and ending at Ranipauwa. This is revealed by the travelogue of a foreigner who happened to be in Pokhara in 1952, on his journey from Kathmandu to Mustang.

It [Pokhara] is said to be the largest town after Kathmandu, but it is not really a town at all, it is an enormous bazaar winding along one endless street. It supplies the whole of the vast surrounding district and is a very important junction.... Because of its position, it is bound to see a great expansion (Tucci 1977:23).

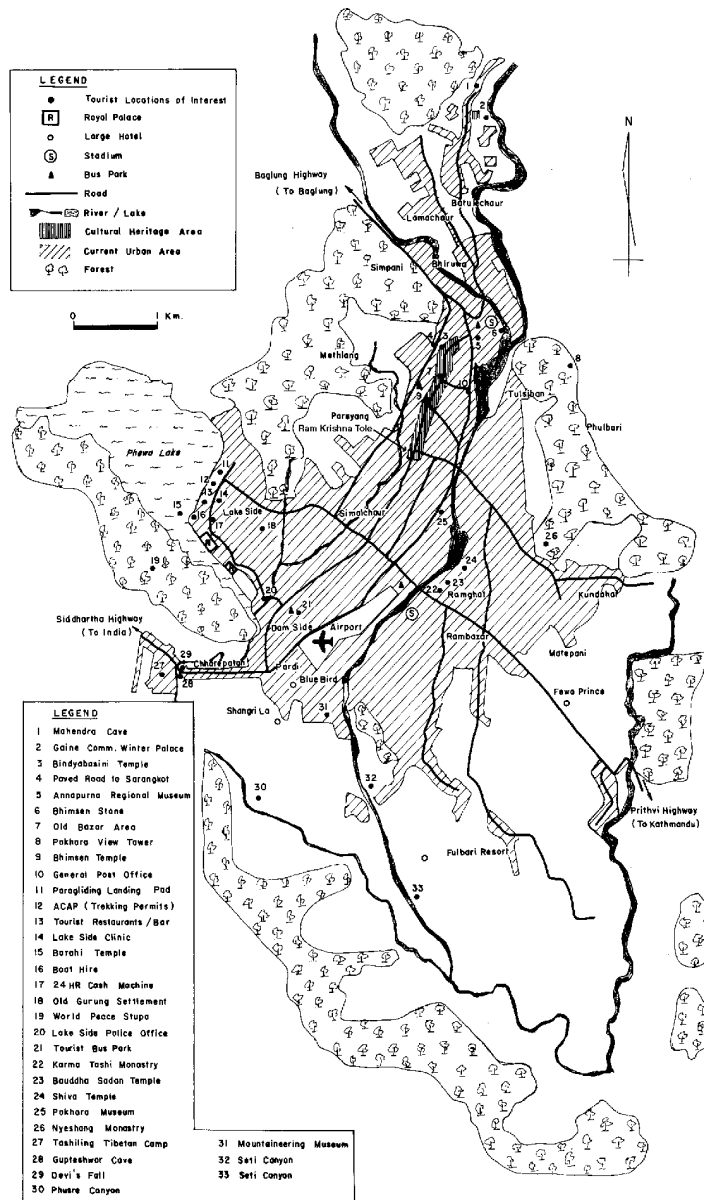
Pokhara, at the time of Tucci's visit, was beginning to develop as a market centre for the central hilly region of the country. Shop-houses,¹⁴ usually two storied and built of bricks with mud mortar and roofed by mud-tiles, lined both sides of the long and narrow street running from Ramakrishna Tole to Bagar (see Map 1). The street was stone paved, and temples were built in the middle as well as on the sides of the street. Wood was extensively used for the construction of houses. Shopkeepers were usually Newar. The architectural style of houses and temples and the spatial organisation of the market centres were, in many ways, similar to that of Bhaktapur. The main function of this market centre was to supply goods and commodities to the hinterland. Except for this bazaar, it was a tradition-bound farming community much like the villages Tucci saw on his way to Pokhara from Kathmandu. The population was only 3,500 and therefore Tucci was hesitant to call it a town.

Like Tucci, other early writers too considered Pokhara a mart or village town with the potential for expansion because of its strategic location on the trans-Himalayan route. As a result, it attracted businessmen from Kathmandu, Palpa and other places. This is revealed in

14 The old houses existing in Ram Krishna Tole, considered a conservation area under the Integrated Action of the Department of Housing and Physical Planning, illustrate the housing style of the past. Houses within a conservation area are protected from demolition and changes.

Hamilton's observations based on his visit to Kathmandu in 1793. He

Map 1: City of Pokhara



writes "[Pokhara is] a considerable town... which is frequented by merchants from Nepal (Kathmandu), Palpa, Malebum & C. and afforded duties that in so poor a country were reckoned considerable" (quoted in Gurung 1980:144-145). Similarly the observation of Japanese Buddhist scholar Ekai Kawaguchi during his visit in 1899 gives some insight into the town of Pokhara. He writes "Pokhara looked like a town of villas at home... it is not a place of wealth or of political importance, but its size, its fertile soil and its position on the central east-west road of Nepal combines with its official character to make it a town that is destined to play no small part in the future industrial development of Nepal" (quoted in Gurung 1980:147).

In earlier times, Pokhara's natural beauty was not confined only to the view of snow-covered mountains. This is revealed from the writings of early visitors who note that banana and orange plantations added colour to the landscape. In fact, Pokhara was known all over the country for its oranges. This was true until the mid-1960s as Gurung (1980:151) found extensive orchards of oranges in the plains villages of Batulechaur and Hyangja. Older residents of the town still recall with nostalgia the visit of Queen Elizabeth II of Britain to Pokhara in 1961. Numerous welcome arches were erected for her arrival made from orange trees with their golden fruits. But orange cultivation was wiped out from the valley due to Citrus Canker, a disease believed to have been introduced from exotic orange plants imported by the government for improving local varieties.

When the Indian government extended railway lines to towns on the Nepal border in the early part of the nineteenth century, it led to the easy availability of cheap mass manufactured goods. While this also led to the development of towns in the Tarai, it seriously undermined Nepali petty industrial production. Metal and weaving enterprises that were thriving in Pokhara were almost wiped out due to imports from India, and it became a market centre for commodities brought from towns in the Tarai and India for consumption within the town and supply to the hinterland. The opening of the country to the outside world in the early 1950s further increased the flow of goods and commodities from India to Pokhara and to rural areas. The town Panchayat census in 1965 revealed that there were only about 450 business establishments in Pokhara, of which 56 per cent were *kirānā* (general stores) shops. From the growth pattern of these *kirānā* shops, Blaikie et al. (1980:128) argue that commercial expansion is a recent phenomenon. This pattern shows that while only 1-5 *kirānā* stores were added each year from 1950/51 to 1957/58, from 1958/59 to 1962/63, 11-19 shops of this kind were added each year. From 1963/64

onward the expansion was rapid. In 1963/64, 34 *kirānā* shops were added, and in 1964/65 and 1965/66, 71 and 53 shops, respectively, were established (Blaikie et al. 1980:128). This period in which rapid expansion took place coincides with the expansion of administrative and educational facilities, eradication of malaria, and the initiation of road construction work to link Pokhara with Bhairahawa and Kathmandu.

Expansion of the Town and its Urban Function

With Pokhara continuing to expand rapidly the government recognised it as a town in 1965, as regional headquarters of the Western Development Region in 1972 and as a sub-metropolis in 1995. Even though supply of goods from distant markets in the Tarai, India or overseas is still the main function of the town, it has grown to provide many other urban services like education, transportation, communication, administration, hospitality and health. Population too has been growing rapidly—by about 7.4 per cent per year in the 1980s and 1990s against a national average of 2.1 per cent (CBS 1999). The population growth rate was even higher in earlier times (see Table 1), and was highest during the 1960s—a period that coincides with the eradication of malaria and the initiation of developmental activities.

This growth was not solely due to inward migration from the hills,¹⁵ but also due to the inclusion of more areas under the municipality. Therefore, population density is another aspect to examine under this urban growth. Gurung, writing about Pokhara in the mid-1960s, indicates that population density within the municipal area was 3,450 persons per square mile (Gurung 1965) or 1,326 persons per sq. km. As the area of the town is about 55.66 sq. km, and the population size in 1998 was 157,000, population density was 2,821 persons per sq. km. Within the municipal area declared in the 1960s, the population density is even higher. Following the growth in the population size, rapid expansion took place during 1961-1971. The construction of Siddhartha Rajmarga (linking Pokhara with Butwal and Bhairahawa to the south, and hence with India), began in 1965 and was completed in 1969 (although the road

15 It is because of migration to Pokhara that population growth rates in the surrounding villages of Pokhara slowed in the 1980s. I have estimated that in the villages that form the watershed of Phewa lake, population growth rate was 1.2 per cent per year from 1981 to 1991, but in the urban part of the watershed the rate was 7.5 per cent per year. From 1970 to 1981, the same figures were 2.6 per cent and 8.5 per cent per year, respectively.

must have been operational for a few years before that). Similarly, work on the Prithvi Rajmarga (which connects Pokhara to Kathmandu) began in 1967 and was finished in 1971. This was also the time when Pokhara was regarded as an important centre from an administrative and planning perspective and regional offices have been established here since then. The increase in population in the surrounding villages also meant that the food produced was now insufficient to feed the population. This required trips to Pokhara market for the purchase of food grains and other commodities imported mainly from India.

Table 1: Population Size and Growth Rate in Pokhara (designated as municipality).

Year	Population size	Population growth rate (annual)
1952/54	3,755	-
1961	5,413	5.0 per cent
1971	20,611	18.0 per cent
1981	46,642	8.5 per cent
1991	95,268	8.5 per cent
1998	157,000	7.4 per cent

Source: (Gurung *et al.* 2048 v.s.:4, CBS 199, PSMC 1999).

A major factor that has brought more people from the hills to permanently settle in Pokhara is education. The wealthier people in particular have been attracted to the town because of education for their children who find it unsatisfying and physically exhausting to return to the villages. Macfarlane (1989:186) has noted from his study area (Thak) that scarcely any of those who went off to Pokhara to school in the 1970s returned to the village. The permanent settlement of retired army personnel in Pokhara has also helped increase the pace of urbanisation. This is a relatively recent phenomenon. For example, Macfarlane found, in his longitudinal study of Thak, that in 1970 only two or three families had retired to towns in India or Nepal. By 1987, there were 46 households from Thak in Pokhara alone, most having retired on pension. This case is certainly not specific to Thak, it is a common phenomenon in the hill villages of west-central Nepal. Table 2 illustrates the number of Gurung households at various periods. It shows that while there were only 33 Gurung households in Pokhara by 1957, this number had increased to 6,165 households by 1998—an increase by 187 times in three decades.

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The migration of Gurungs from various hill-villages has also resulted in separate enclaves of people hailing from the same region. For example,

Table 2: Total Gurung Households in Pokhara from 1957-1998.

Period (Year)	Number of households	Main wards settled
1957	33	1,7,12
1958-1978	632	1,7,10,12,16,13
1978-1998	5,500	1,10,12,13,7,16
Total	6,165	1,10,12,13,7,16

Source: Gurung (1989) for data up to 1978; other data are my estimates based on population data collected by the Office of Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City.

the Matepani area of Pokhara town has a predomination of Gurungs from the east of Kaski district. Similarly, in the Deep area it is Gurungs from the west of Pokhara, and the Pardi area has Gurungs and Magars from Syangjya district. Even the names of new neighbourhoods reflect places of origin. This happens primarily because a person buying land in Pokhara utilises his social network of people who have already migrated here. As these former migrants tend to have a good knowledge of their locality, they convince the prospective buyer to buy land in the neighbourhood. Moreover, for reasons of security, people from the same origin and having a kinship network tend to cluster together. Because of this clustering of village-folk or kin-groups, immigrants do not hesitate to leave their family behind when they go abroad for a prolonged period. Des Chene (1992) reports a similar situation in Bhairahawa, another town in the Tarai where retired army personnel have settled. She comments that 'when relocating within Nepal, Gurungs have created enclaves that reproduce, in an attenuated form, the communities of the hill' (1992:7). In other words, it is the reproduction of the social geography of the hill. This finding also lends support to the theory that community life can continue to exist within an urban space. As a result of this process of clustering, one can find in Pokhara a little Ghandruk, little Sikles, little Syanja, and the like. The Gurungs of Pokhara also organise various cultural activities, derived mainly from their rural roots. They have also established their religious institutions, which have helped them maintain solidarity and assert their cultural symbols in this urban landscape. For example, they have built their monasteries and cremation place in a peculiar way.¹⁶ This solidarity

¹⁶ Gurungs (or Tamus) have built their *kul* (lineage) temple called *Kairibo* in Ramghat, Pokhara. This *Kairibo* or *Failu Kairibo* (ancestral Kairibo) has four pointed towers in four corners and a pillar in the middle. These towers

coupled with the increase in the number of Gurung households (discussed above) has seen an increased participation of Gurungs in the public sphere in recent times. At present (1997-2001), it is estimated that about 30 per cent of the political positions in Pokhara are held by Gurungs. The enhanced awareness of cultural identity is also seen in other minor ethnic groups like Tibetans in Pokhara. About 3000 Tibetan refugees, sheltered in 3 camps, regularly organise various cultural and religious activities.

As Pokhara was a main stopover on the trade route between India and Tibet it received traders from north and south. The Thakalis and Lobas of the Mustang area came here, especially in winter, to trade their goods for food grains. The Thakalis, who acted as middlemen between the hill people and Tibetans, controlled the salt trade. Therefore, until the 1960s, one could see several makeshift teashops and restaurants in Pokhara during winter catering to traders coming mainly from the north. The Thakalis used to maintain warehouses in Pokhara where they stored food grains and commodities to be supplied to the north. Since mule trains were the main means of transportation in the hills, the pack animals were a common sight in the town. After the annexation of Tibet by China in 1959, trade suffered and Thakalis began to spread across the country. Many settled permanently in Pokhara, where they helped develop the hospitality industry. The local populace adopted some of their social mechanisms (like Dhukuti) to raise capital for the establishment of business and industry. The migration of Thakalis into Pokhara continues to this day. As Thakalis have comparatively higher access to formal or informal jobs in Japan, remittances have helped them migrate and establish various business ventures. Like Gurungs and Magars, the Thakalis too have their enclaves and have continued their socio-cultural practices with suitable modifications.

The migration of hill people to the valley has also changed the social structure of Pokhara town. Until the mid-1960s, Brahmins and Chettris and other Hindu castes dominated the population of the town. Gurungs and Magars were almost negligible in number. But the migration of Gurungs and Magars since the 1960s, especially those employed in the British and Indian armies, has changed the ethnic composition of the town. Gurungs now outnumber Brahmins. A study conducted in 1988 in Pokhara revealed that 48.5 per cent of the population was Brahmin and Chettri, 29 per cent Newar, 13.0 per cent Gurung and Magar, 2.0 per cent

and pillar represent the five basic elements of life. Being nature worshippers, these five elements play an important role in their religion.

Thakali, 2.8 per cent Muslim, 3.5 per cent 'untouchables', and 1.2 per cent 'others' (Pandit 1989). But the 1991 census report revealed that about 21.5 per cent of Pokhara's population was Gurung, 21 per cent Brahmin, 17.8 per cent Chettri, 12.6 per cent Newar, 6.7 per cent Magar, about 9 per cent were members of Occupational Castes, and 11 per cent grouped under 'others' (PSMC 1999). In fact it is the income brought in by these new rural migrants (mainly Gurung and Magar), and its investment in housing, industry and business, that has accelerated the pace of urbanisation in Pokhara. The process of urbanisation and the inward migration of hill people further accelerated in the 1990s. Accordingly, the proportion of hill ethnic groups in Pokhara by the end of the century might be significantly greater than the above-mentioned figures.

The process by which capital and people, both wealthy and poor, are flowing into the town is depicted schematically in Figure 1 (see also Adhikari 2000). The main source of savings for people in rural central Nepal is remittances and some ethnic groups like Gurungs, Magars and Tamangs have a relatively better access to this source (Adhikari 1996). In Gurung villages of Kaski District, remittances contribute as much as 60 per cent to household income. In general, outside income (mainly remittances) has contributed as much as 40 per cent to the household income in Kaski District (Adhikari 1996). Agriculture has remained subsistence oriented, but in recent times it is also not able to provide food security for most villagers. In most rural households, their own farms do not meet their food requirements for more than six months in a year (Adhikari and Bohle 1999). Therefore, remittances are the main source of savings.

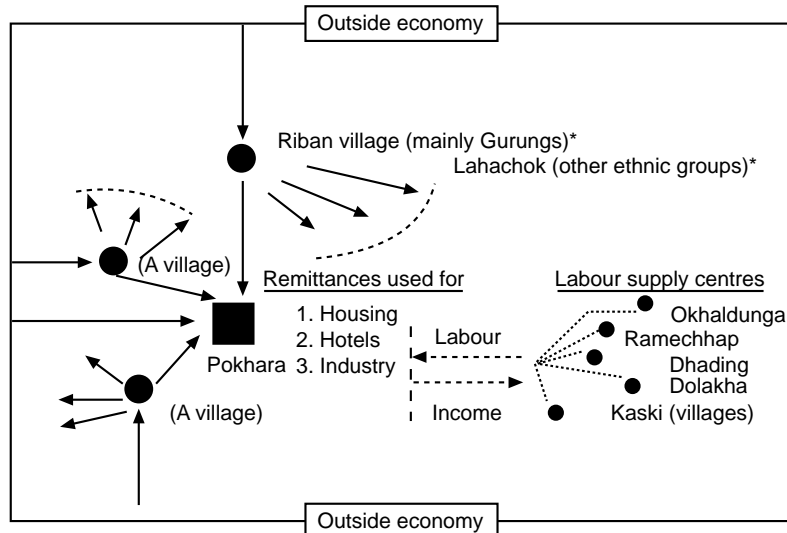
The savings thus generated flow into Pokhara where they are used for developing small business or industrial enterprises, hotels and real estate. These investments have also been attracting labourers from central Nepal as well as from other regions. When outside income flows into the villages, a part of it is retained within the villages and is used mainly for purchasing deficit food and other consumables and services not produced locally. A study of Thak village in west-central Nepal in 1987 revealed that the average annual expenditure per family on food and other goods from Pokhara was Rs 5,000. A part of this expenditure is also retained within Pokhara (Macfarlane 1989:187). Similarly, a part of it is also distributed within neighbouring villages in employing wage labour and leasing land for farming. This process of distribution of outside income in a village in Kaski District, of which Pokhara is headquarters, has been studied in detail by the author (Adhikari 1996). That study revealed that a

large part of the outside income flows into Pokhara mainly because of the migration of people with high incomes from outside sources and their investments in business, industry and real estate. Such income flows into Pokhara have taken place not only from the villages of Kaski district but also from the whole of central Nepal (although amounts differ from village to village depending on their access to outside employment). Since several people from Pokhara are employed outside, remittances (mainly from foreign countries) also flow into Pokhara directly. A recent study conducted by Pokhara Municipality revealed that about 3,500 people held jobs in foreign countries and remittances contributed 23.0 per cent to the income of Pokhara. Similarly, 2,500 people from Pokhara are reported to receive pensions, mainly from their employment in British and Indian armies. Their income contributes 3.3 per cent to the total income of the town. Adding what flows directly into Pokhara to the flow of savings from villages and income from tourism (about 9.6 per cent of the income of the town, see Table 3), Pokhara can be considered a town dependent on outside income.

As depicted in Figure 1, remittances coming directly into Pokhara or indirectly through savings from villages are the major force behind industrialisation, housing and business expansion. As reported in *Himal* (Dahal 1999:30) Pokhara is the main centre where remittances have played a major role in transforming the economy and urban structure. Yet, a large part of the remittance money has not been utilised in productive sectors. Although the exact amount of remittance money coming into Pokhara has still not been accurately calculated, it is substantial. The Indian Pension Camp, Pokhara alone disburses about Rs 3 billion per year to 1,60,000 retired personnel of the Indian army residing in the Western Development Region. A large part of this income also flows into Pokhara. Similarly, there are several thousand retired British army personnel in Pokhara who receive slightly higher pensions. The increase in pensions in recent times has encouraged more retired British army personnel to invest money in land and housing in the town. However, due to the lack of opportunities for productive investment they have lost large amounts of money in money lending and to brokers. About Rs 2 billion is reported to be lost in bad debts (Dahal 1999:30). But it is also these retired army personnel from the British and Indian armies who have started new ventures in Pokhara. The first bus system to Kathmandu and the city bus service were introduced by them, and so are most petrol pumps, tourist hotels, restaurants, instant noodle factories and finance companies. About 80 per cent of the modern houses in Pokhara have been built with the help of

'outside' money (Dahal 1999:33). It is commonly said that when an army man returns home for the first time his savings go towards household improvement in the village, which also facilitates his marriage. On the second return he buys land in Pokhara, and the proceeds from the sale of land help the local person build a house. On his third visit, the person returns with money to build the house. But with the number of army personnel declining, due mainly to cuts in British army jobs, their place has been taken by people taking up civilian jobs, often illegally, in countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia, the USA and several continuous in Europe.

Figure 1: Capital and Labour Flows into Pokhara



*These particular villages were studied in detail. See Adhikari (1996) for a detailed analysis of how villages in west central Nepal make savings from outside economy, and how that is brought to urban centres.

From the above discussion it is clear that in-migration of people from the west-central region and investment of their savings from remittances are reasons for Pokhara's expansion. This raises the question: which are the places from where people migrate and what are the reasons for their migration. A study conducted in 1978 revealed that there were 37,289 people in the town in 1977, and 2,379 immigrants settled permanently in the town that year (PNP and IHSSPN 1978:8). This indicates that the population of the town increased by 6.4 per cent in that year alone. This

corresponds with the general picture of population growth rate for that year in Pokhara, which had increased by about 8.5 per cent and includes the natural growth rate. Similarly, a study conducted in 1986 among a sample of immigrants (192 households) in Pokhara reveals that a majority came from Kaski District, followed by Syanjya, Prabat and Tanahu Districts, and Kathmandu Valley (Sharma 1986:22-26). Other districts from where Pokhara receives a lesser proportion of immigrants include Baglung, Mustang, Lamjung, Gorkha and Dhading. A majority (37 per cent) of the immigrants said they came for employment (service). Others said they came there for business opportunities (29 per cent), education of children (19 per cent), urban facilities (8 per cent) and to establish industry (7 per cent). Apart from those who have settled permanently, this study also identified seasonal migrants who come mainly from Kaski, Tanahu and Mustang districts. Other districts of lesser importance in terms of seasonal migration are, in descending order, Prabat, Syanjya, Gorkha, Baglung, Rupendehi, Dhading, Lamjung and Kathmandu Valley. A large proportion of these seasonal migrants were involved in construction related work and in jobs like portering and woodcutting. The hotel industry too attracts a significant number of these seasonal migrants. Selling farm produce, tailoring, knitting, and the manufacture of utensils, bangles, shoes and jewellery, are other occupations undertaken by them (Sharma 1986:27-28). Sharma (1986) also argues that the flow of immigrants into Pokhara increased after the construction of the two major highways linking it with Bhairahawa and Kathmandu.

The high rate of migration, as discussed above, has led to growth in housing and business centres. As a result, built-up areas have increased rapidly and non-agricultural areas now account for more than 57 per cent (residential 20.54 per cent, mixed residential and commercial 21 per cent, institutional 8.61 per cent, open space and parks 5.89 per cent, industrial 0.45 per cent and others 43.51 per cent) of the total area of Pokhara (PSMC 1999). Bazaar areas or shopping centres have also expanded significantly over the past two to three decades. For example, Mahendrapool, Bagar, Ranipauwa, Chipledunga-New Road, Prithvichowk-Srijanachowk, Pardi-Birauta and Rambazaar (pension camp) have emerged as main trading centres. On the other hand, the importance of the old bazaar—Ramakrishna Tole to Bagar—has declined. Some of the shops there are still of a traditional nature, catering to the needs of rural people. Such a change in the importance of marketing centres has resulted from the development of new infrastructure and communication systems, which has also changed the population density of various places within the

town. The new marketing centres no longer resemble the old bazaar in that the former have not incorporated the religious and cultural symbols in the physical planning of the space or in the construction of shop-houses.

Besides Newars, who are traditionally business oriented, members of other cultural groups have turned to business in increasing numbers. A survey conducted in 1974-75 revealed that of the 127 businesspersons surveyed randomly in Pokhara, 48 per cent were Newar. Other major businesspersons were from the Chettri, Brahmin and Thakali groups. None was from the Gurung or Magar group (Blaikie 1980:154). Although Newars may still be in a dominant position in terms of numbers, partly due also to the inheritance of business enterprises, other groups like Gurungs and Magars are now important businesspersons (industrialists and hotel-owners). It now seems that for a majority of Newars the scale of business is so small that they can be considered 'subsistence endeavours'. Moreover, they are now in a run-down part of the town. Traditional co-operation among Newars is still helping them remain successfully in business. This co-operation is even stronger among Thakalis. Even though the system of *dhukufi* (rotating credit) was common among Thakalis and helped them succeed in business, it has been widely adopted by others involved in business. These changes in the structure of ownership of commercial activities and access to different types of business, and the expression of immigrant identities in an urban context, have not been studied yet.

The urban characteristic of Pokhara is also revealed by the fact that most people in the town now depend on non-agricultural sources of income. This is a major change in the economic structure of the town. Until a decade ago agriculture was the main source of income. A recent study revealed that the total income of the town is estimated at Rs 228 million in 2000 (see Table 3). Of this, 9.6 per cent came from tourism, 14.2 per cent from trade and commerce, 15.5 per cent from industry, 15 per cent from services, 8.3 per cent from transportation, 10.4 per cent from agriculture, 3.3 per cent from pensions (mainly from the Indian and British armies), 23 per cent from jobs in foreign countries, and 0.8 per cent from other sources, mainly the informal sector (RUP Program 2000). Table 3 also shows the future prospects of these income sources and reveals that the contribution of the farming sector will decline steadily as a source of income and employment. The non-farm sector is also expected to grow rapidly in future and by 2020 it is expected that Pokhara will become truly urban with only 1 per cent of its income coming from agriculture.

The importance of the non-agriculture sector in Pokhara's economy is also revealed by shifts in the occupational structure. The dependence on farm and non-farm sectors for employment in Table 4 shows that in 1971

Table 3

nearly 63 per cent of people were dependent on agriculture for their income. By 1991, this figure had declined to 27 per cent. The non-agriculture sector was the main source of income for 37 per cent of the population in 1971, and for 73 per cent of the population in 1991. A study conducted recently in Pokhara also reveals that the occupational shift has taken place mainly in agriculture. About 77 per cent of people interviewed by Parajuli (1999) reported that they shifted from agriculture to business mostly, followed by services. This study also reveals that there has not been a great shift in other occupations. The main reasons cited for changing occupations were low income (51 per cent of the sample), rough and hard work (23 per cent) and low status (16 per cent). Only about 3 per cent aspired to take up farming while about 92 per cent wanted to take up business (business and services) in future (Parajuli 1999:13). These aspirations also reflect future prospects for the non-agricultural sector in the town.

Table 4: Dependence on Agricultural and Non-Agricultural Sources of Income in Pokhara 1971-1991 (percentage of population).

Sources of income	1971	1991
Agricultural sector	62.9	27.3
Non-agricultural sector	37.1	72.7

Source: Parajuli 1999:3)

As with the growth of population and the expansion of marketing facilities, other urban facilities too have expanded in the town. There are now 14 university campuses and 143 schools of various types, about 600 hospital beds and 8500 telephone lines (PSMC 1999). Since it is the administrative centre for the Western Development Region the number of various government/quasi-government offices has also increased significantly. The industrial base of the town has also been strengthened with the establishment of 33 medium- to large-scale industries employing more than 50 people. The number of small and cottage industries, each of the latter is well over 1442 and employed 10988 people in 1999 (DHPP 1999). Traditional industries like brass, bronze and other metal industries still provide employment opportunities for a large number—80 such industries provide employment to 1280 persons. Other industries providing employment include construction services (1163 persons) and

rice and oil mills (991 persons). Carpet industries and hotels, lodges and restaurants employ about 700-900 persons.

Tourism is also flourishing in Pokhara mainly because of its natural beauty. It is estimated that 69,049 tourists arrived in Pokhara in 1992 and their numbers have increased significantly in the last decade. In 1997, the number stood at 92,717 (MTCA 1997) and increased to 103,895 in 1998 (PSMC 1999). The expansion in tourism has boosted the hospitality industry in Pokhara.¹⁷ There are now about 176 hotels and lodges and 574 restaurants in this town, and the number of travel and trekking agencies has also grown. This development of an urban environment also indicates that employment opportunities in the non-farm sector are growing rapidly. Due to the conversion of agricultural lands into residential areas and the decline in farm holdings, farming is no longer a main source of income for the residents of Pokhara. The expansion in the non-farm sector is the cause as well as the effect of a rapid scale of functional change of the town. As shown in Table 5, commercial and industrial establishments have grown rapidly in the last 13 years (1986-1999) as compared to the previous 23 years (1963-1986). These establishments have increased by nearly 7 times in the last 13 years (mid-1980s to 1990s), while they grew threefold in 23 years (1960s to mid-1980s).

The rapidity of urbanisation and in-migration is also reflected in increased land value in Pokhara. A major increase occurred during 1960-1970, when in-migration was high—land per *ropani* in 1960 was estimated at Rs 1,000 but by 1970 the same fetched Rs 18,000, an 18-fold increase in 10 years. But since 1970 land prices have grown consistently—increasing by five times every ten years. Similarly, average land holding per household has also been declining at a faster rate. In 1960, a household had, on average, 57.4 *ropani* land (Pandit 1989:40). This had declined to 4.9 *ropani* after about 40 years, by 1998 (personal communication, officials in land revenue office in 2000).

Pokhara and its Links to the Hinterland

The above discussion clearly leads to the conclusion that Pokhara is being urbanised rapidly even though this may be confined to the built-up areas. What then are the consequences of this urbanisation on the socio-

17 Despite this increase in tourist arrivals, expenditure of tourists in Pokhara is declining. For example, it is estimated that in 1997 a tourist in Pokhara spent US \$18.0 a day, whereas the national figure is US \$31.9 (Khatiwada (1998). In 1995, a tourist in Pokhara spent US \$25.24 a day (Klein 1996). Tourism provides employment opportunities to 6,834 people.

Table 5: Functional Change in Pokhara, 1963-1999.

Functional Group	1963 No.	percent	1986 No.	percent	1999 No.	percent
1. Commercial						
Shops	200	65.6	645	62.8	3892**	57.4
Hospitality#	41	13.6	160	15.6	1083	16.0
Service	27	8.9	84	8.2	240^	3.5
Miscellaneous	18	5.9	40	3.9	95^	1.4
Bank offices	2	0.6	12	1.2	30^	0.5
Total	288	-	941	-	5340	-
2. Industry*	17	5.6	86	8.3	1442	21.3
TOTAL	305	100.0	1027	100.0	6782	100.0

Source: (Gurung 1965:239, Thapa and Weber 1990:184, PSMC 1999).

^ Author's estimate * Includes small and cottage industries. ** Also includes shops providing various services. # Includes hotels, lodges, restaurants and trekking agencies.

economic system of the hinterland? The hinterland, located around a valley and hill topography, has an economy based on subsistence oriented farming operated on small land holdings of about half a hectare by a family of about 6.5 people. This region suffers from food deficit, and, as discussed above, remittances (including pensions and other benefits) sent by people working away from home helps bridge the gap between production and consumption of food (see also Adhikari and Bohle 1999). Pokhara acts as a supply centre for goods and commodities (mainly clothes, rice, tea, sugar, kerosene, medicine, cigarettes, and stationery) that are not produced locally. Even rice is supplied to the hinterland from Pokhara, while the reverse is true in the case of towns in the Tarai. Because of low productivity and high population density in the hinterland, the magnitude of inflow (from hinterland to town) of goods and commodities into Pokhara is very low compared to outflow. Milk, vegetables and fruits are the main products supplied to Pokhara from places in the hinterland, some located at 4 hours walking distance. These commodities supplied from the hinterland are consumed within the town. The high demand for some commodities has also caused changes in the land use patterns of areas located in the immediate periphery of the town. Dairying and vegetable farming have become popular in the immediate periphery, although the scale of operation is still small and is aimed at just meeting the demands of the town. Despite these new developments,

Pokhara continues to receive a large part of its vegetables, rice, fruits and other consumables from India, and to a lesser extent from the Tarai. As the hinterland also lacks mineral resources, the prospects for large-scale industrial development too are limited.

Tables 6-8 illustrate the inflow of fruits, vegetables and food grains from various locations. Table 6 clearly shows that a large quantity of fruits come from India, and only a small fraction from the Tarai, the contribution of neighbouring VDCs is almost negligible. Because of the rising incomes of town-dwellers in recent times, due mainly to remittances and income from tourism, the habit of consuming fruits has increased. The increased demand is met primarily by imports from India. Until a decade ago, it was difficult to find fruits like apples, grapes, oranges and mangoes during the off-season. But now these are available in plenty. The only common fruits supplied from the hinterland are oranges (available only in winter) and a small part of the bananas consumed. As for vegetables (Table 7), neighbouring villages meet only a part of the demand. The bulk of vegetables come from the Tarai and other parts of the country. The dependence on Indian markets for vegetables is considerably lower when compared with care of fruits. Most of the fruits and vegetables are consumed within the town.

The town also does not get its food grains (Table 8) like rice, maize, millet, and pulses from the hinterland, except for a small amount of high quality rice from neighbouring villages that is consumed by the elite class. Villagers who sell this fine rice in turn purchase low quality rice from the Tarai for their consumption. Even though it is clear from the data in Table 8 that the foodgrains come from the Nepali Tarai it is suspected that they might have originated in India. Businesspersons say one can safely assume that 50 per cent of these foodgrains come from India. From the data it is also not clear whether all the foodgrains supplied from the Tarai or India are consumed within the town. However, businesspersons are of the view that about 60 per cent of the rice goes on to other small market centres that service the hinterland. This clearly shows that the hinterland is unable to meet the demands of the urban centre. On the other hand, Pokhara is also not able to add value to products received from the hinterland and distribute them to other parts of the country or abroad. While noodles, biscuits and confectionery industries have flourished they get their raw materials from the Tarai or India. All the food-related industries in Pokhara, which number 57 in all, provide employment only to 473 persons (DHPP 1999). The products are supplied within Pokhara and its hinterland, except for instant-noodles and

some brands of biscuits that are also supplied to other places within the country, and, to a limited extent, to India. This analysis clearly indicates that Pokhara, while not serving the function of value addition, has remained a break-of-the-bulk nodal point to supply products received from the Tarai and distant markets.

Many of the marketing centres (central places of varying order) located in the hinterland are not linked to Pokhara by a transportation network. This has hampered the development of an efficient marketing mechanism in rural areas, a situation said to discourage changes and development in agricultural systems. The lack of transportation linkages has also been discouraging people to commute to the town for employment, study and other purposes, encouraging them to settle in Pokhara and thus aggravating congestion and stretching already limited utilities. It has also been observed that commuting is common from central places, like Gagangauda and Begnas, which are linked to the town by a motorable road. But this facility is available only in a few cases. Moreover, the concentration of urban facilities in Pokhara has hampered development of small marketing and residential centres in the hinterland.

Social and Environment Problems Associated with Urbanisation

The environmental consequences of increased built-up areas, population density, industries and vehicles are well known and need no particular emphasis here. Expansion in the built-up area causes increase in temperature (due to the use materials that quickly absorb and then release heat), flooding, higher surface run-off, trapping of heat, changes in air flow, uneven distribution of moisture and the like. An increase in the population density places great strain on existing water supply and sewerage systems, open spaces and other facilities. Solid waste generation increases with an increase in population. An increase in vehicle numbers creates noise, smell, dust and smoke pollution, and increased risk of traffic hazards. Industrial expansion is likely to cause noise, air, and soil pollution.

How far the above-mentioned environmental problems have affected towns has not yet been scientifically studied or measured. The general problems experienced by residents include air and water pollution, solid waste littering in public spaces, the growing use of chemicals in food items (especially vegetables and fruits), scarcity of water (let alone safe drinking water), and shrinking open spaces. The severity of these

problems however differs from one neighbourhood to another. According

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Table 6

Table 7

Table 8: Flow of Foodgrains to Pokhara in 1999

Fruits	Amount (ton)	Source (percent)				
		Baglung/Myagdi	Bhairahawa	Birgunj	Chitwan	India
Paddy	3600	-	33	33	34	-
Rice	11032	1	99	-	-	-
Maize	1250	2	49	-	49	-
Wheat flour	145	-	50	50	-	-
Millet	480	-	50	-	50	-
Dal and pulses	270	-	12	13	12	50

Source: Rural-Urban Partnership Program, Pokhara SMPC (this office collected the above information from 3 octroi check-posts in Pokhara (Simpani, Chhorepatan and Bijayapur) for the whole year of 1999. NVDC – Neighbouring VDCs (Syanja has also been included).

to a recent study, about three-fourths of a sample of 250 residents of Pokhara felt that the town suffers from pollution of various kinds. Incidentally, 37 per cent considered land pollution as the main problem. Other problems reported were air pollution (35 per cent of the sample) and water pollution (15 per cent). Vehicular emissions were considered the main cause for environmental pollution, followed by development activities and the lack of proper waste disposal methods. People also expressed dissatisfaction with the Municipal Authority's handling of environmental problems. Only 3 per cent (of the sample) considered the efforts of the municipality enough to solve the problems (Parajuli 2000:80-90).

The Department of Housing and Physical Planning (DHPP) also tried to identify the problems of Pokhara in 1999, although its findings do not reflect public perception of the same. Problems identified by the DHPP include, in order of severity, encroachment of road space, lack of a fixed and suitable dumping site, siltation of Phewa Lake, lack of public toilets and drainage of sewerage in Seti river, squatter settlements in open spaces, lack of protection for remaining forest cover, pot-holes, haphazard motor repair centres, no fixed and proper slaughter house, and the lack of a drainage system.

As discussed above, urbanisation has also attracted poor people from near and far who have migrated here in search of employment

opportunities. They are usually uneducated, and displaced from the villages due to shortage of land for cultivation or natural calamities. Their permanent migration has caused the development of squatter settlements, a noticeable feature of public spaces in Pokhara today. As of September 1989, there were 2060 people living in 427 squatter households in the town, making up 3.05 per cent of the population (KC et al. 1992). Although squatter settlements are scattered all over, they are concentrated in Rato-Pahiro, Ghari-Patan, Ghari Kulo, Rambazaar, Ramghat and Bagar areas. By 2000, it was reported, by an officer of the Municipality, that there were as many as 40,000 people living as squatters. Of them, he estimated that about 15,000 were real squatters (*sukumbāsī*, or those having no land at all). The other 25,000 have turned *sukumbāsī* with the aim of getting a piece of land in the town area, which fetches a high price. The latter are locally called *hukumbāsī*. Altogether, the *sukumbāsī* and *hukumbāsī* constitute as much as 25 per cent of the town's population. The *sukumbāsī* alone constituted 9.5 per cent of the population by 2000, a three-fold increase within a decade. In 1992, 75 per cent of the squatter population was reported to be living below the poverty line, as against an average of 6 per cent for the town and 49 per cent for Nepal. The literacy rate among squatters was about 40 per cent whereas it was about 70 per cent among town dwellers in general.

A study conducted for UDLE (Urban Development through Local Enterprises) in 1992 categorised squatter households as having 'better' (1 per cent), 'good' (10 per cent), 'fair' (45 per cent), 'bad' (34 per cent) and 'poor' (10 per cent) housing conditions. These categories were developed considering very basic housing requirements in the context of Pokhara. Average family income per month was estimated at Rs 1061, amounting to an annual income of Rs 12,800 or nearly 6 times lower than the national average. There was at least one household whose earning was as low as Rs 40 per month, and nearly 50 per cent of households had a monthly income of only Rs 1000. The economic activities of women included running small shops (54 per cent of the sample), liquor vending (17 per cent), wool spinning (11 per cent), tailoring (9 per cent) and others (9 per cent). About 20 per cent of the families had taken loans—65 per cent of them from moneylenders, 16 per cent from banks, 11 per cent from friends, and 8 per cent from relatives. Of their total expenditure, 34 per cent was spent on food, 29 per cent on clothing, 26 per cent on general expenses, 5 per cent on health, and 6 per cent on education. All expenditures were made in Pokhara. The major constraints faced included finances (60 per cent of the sample), lack of education (11 per cent), lack

of children or manpower (10 per cent), lack of employment (7 per cent) health problems (7 per cent) and lack of time (5 per cent) (UDLE 1992). Besides these poor permanent migrants, there is yet another category of migrants who come here during the slack farming season (January to April, mainly) seeking employment. They return home after the onset of the farming season.

Apart from the growth in the squatter population, growing inequalities are beginning to show in the economic status of households with access to remittances and those without remittances. Even though no study has been conducted in this aspect, it is now felt that the children of *lāhures* (once used to refer to people working in armed forces abroad but now denoting anyone having access to remittances) attend expensive private schools. Most boarder students too are from *lāhure* families. Children of economically less well-off families often complain of inferior clothes, stationery and snacks that they receive at home in comparison to what their *lāhure* friends enjoy. How far this inequality exists and what its impact will be in the future needs to be studied. Some social problems within *lāhure* families, as are generally reported, are growing family disintegration, and immoderation like gambling, drug abuse and alcoholism. But again no specific study has been conducted to probe the impacts of remittances on the 'social life' of Pokhara.

To meet the needs of a growing population, the housing and transportation sectors have also been expanded. During the 1980s, more than 700 houses were built each year. In the last four years (1996-1999), on average, permission was granted for 1400 houses to be built each year. In the last 12 years (1988-1999), permission was granted for 12,142 houses (personal communication, municipality office of Pokhara), although many more are built (small houses particularly in less dense areas) without permission from the municipality office. Similarly, the number of vehicles has also rapidly increased, and, as of May 1992, there were 4,481 vehicles (836 buses, trucks and tractors, 1,554 jeeps, cars and vans, 309 tractors and power tillers, 1780 motorbikes and scooters and 2 tempos) in Pokhara (CBS 1994). By 1999, the number of vehicles registered at Gandaki Transportation Office numbered 16,500 (Bus/truck 1988, car/jeep/van 3476, motorcycle 9897, power tiller 867) 80 per cent of which run in Pokhara. The length of asphalt roads has also increased, and there is now (as of 1999) 118 km of blacktopped and 105 km of gravelled road within Pokhara town (PSMC 1999).

Pokhara has not yet been seriously affected by the problem of air pollution. But considering the rapid pace of urbanisation and the

geophysical situation of the town it is likely to be a serious problem before long. This is mainly because urban development (as in other towns) is utilitarian and driven by immediate needs. Being a small valley surrounded by high mountains, Pokhara is very sensitive to air pollution as air circulation can be blocked by the process of 'air inversion'.¹⁸ In recent times, it is felt that air pollution has increased rapidly not only because of the growth in vehicular traffic but chiefly due to dust pollution from poorly maintained roads.

The environmental problems should also be viewed from a geological perspective. The valley was formed by the deposition of glacio-fluvial materials from the Annapurna region in the post-glacial period, sediments brought down by the Seti river which later traversed the valley cutting deep gorges at various places. Casual observation indicates that the land is prone to subduction and erosion. The increase in built-up areas has further aggravated this problem. Since Pokhara receives the highest amount of rainfall (approx. 300 cm annually) in all of Nepal, the torrential monsoon rainfall causes erosion and mass wasting or landslides and is also the main cause for the siltation of Phewa Lake. Studies conducted in the 1980s predicted that the lake would be completely silted up in 60 to 100 years. But a recent study, conducted using high-precision technology to estimate siltation rates, forecasts that Phewa Lake¹⁹ will be completely dead (when 80 per cent of storage capacity is lost due to siltation) in about 190 years. This forecast was based on a study of sedimentation rates over 10 years, estimated at 180,000 cu m per annum. But 16 per cent of the lake's area (or 68 ha) is expected to be silted up within the next 24-33 years (Sthapit

18 Usually, in a city, much heat is radiated from settlements. The air above the settlements is light and warmer, which gives way to cold and fresh air from the countryside. But during winter, a dense cold air sinks into the valley from the neighbouring hills creating a stable layer of cold air--instead of warmest--at the bottom. Back radiation of heat from the city structures pushes the base of the inversion upward, leaving a thin layer (commonly about 100m thick) of unstable warm air over the ground. Here, fog, smoke, pollution etc. accumulate. Unable to rise past the stable cold air, pollutants remain near and on the ground until the sun warms up the air enough to destroy the inversion. (Nepal South Asia Centre 1998:11).

19 The capacity of the lake is estimated at 42.18 million cu. m., with a highest water level of +794.15m. The average sedimentation rate from the watershed is about 17 cu. m/ha for the period 1990-1994, about 12 cu. m/ha for the period 1994-1998, and 15 cu. m/ha for the period 1990-1998. The silt trap area, depending upon the Harpan Khola (shifting nature), will likely be completely filled up in 24-33 years time, reducing the area of the lake by 16 per cent (68 ha) (Sthapit and Balla 1998).

and Balla 1998). Water quality and aquatic life too have also been threatened by waste disposal from hotels and restaurants and people washing clothes along the banks.

The environmental problems caused by urbanisation that are directly and immediately affecting daily life are a decline in the quantity and quality of drinking water, poor solid waste management and sewerage systems, shrinking open spaces, traffic problems and the loss of green cover. These problems are reported not only in the town but also in the surrounding areas. The water supplied is not free of pathogens and as a result water-borne diseases are common. In winter, water supply is irregular and insufficient. It is also reported that losses due to leakages amount to 41 per cent of the drinking water supplied. The Nepal Water Supply Corporation currently (1999) supplies drinking water through 260 stand pipes and 14500 private connections with a 1000 cu m capacity. The demand for drinking water in Pokhara is 18 million litres a day and present sources like the Mardi (capacity 13 million litres), Kalomoda (6 million litres), Bhotikhola (3 million litres) and Baldhara (30 thousand litres) have the capacity to meet demand (DHPP 1999). But due to leakages and poor management water shortages are common, especially in winter.

The town also lacks a proper sewerage system and about 65 per cent of houses do not have latrines or septic tanks (personal communication, Tourism Office, Pokhara 1999). In many places, garbage is simply dumped on the street and left to rot. The town produces about 153 m³ of solid waste each day but there is no garbage collection and disposal system in place. The waste is collected and dumped into the Seti, threatening the river ecosystem. Therefore, it is imperative to identify and implement a proper waste disposal mechanism. Even though the Municipality Office has plans for a sanitary landfill site at the southern end of the valley, work has not commenced because of resistance from people living near the proposed site. The plan is to build a landfill site over a 10-15 ha area, but given that the population is growing rapidly it is doubtful whether this site will be enough in the long run. One way to make this landfill site last longer is to reduce solid waste production by making people aware about recycling and reducing waste. At present (as of 1999), solid waste consisted mainly of those materials that could be effectively recycled at home—organic materials, paper, fibre (cloth and jute), leather and inert material like dust account for 60 per cent (by

volume) of the solid waste²⁰ produced. These materials can be easily composted and used productively as fertiliser in kitchen gardens. The only problem seems to be with plastics, which account for 34 per cent (by volume) of the solid waste. Reducing the use of plastic can help cut the production of solid waste.

Open spaces are necessary in an urban area for conversion into green belts, parks, playing grounds and other recreational places. In the case of Pokhara, the number and area of such open spaces has reduced significantly over the past 10-15 years. Expansion of the municipality area, and inclusion of rural-like areas within the jurisdiction of the municipality, has increased the complexity of studying land use changes. Although there is no accurate data about decline in open spaces, casual observation clearly reveals this fact. Similarly, there were several public mango groves and a community used to have free access to at least 3-4 such groves. Of late, these groves have almost ceased to exist. The mango trees were either not replanted or felled by the municipality for timber revenue. Part of the blame for the decline in open spaces must go to the political system, which turned a blind eye as land sharks went about grabbing these lands. Poor migrants also forcibly occupied a part of the public land and settled on them. The lack of public spaces in the city is a serious problem considering that more people now visit the markets regularly. Open and public spaces in the bazaars are almost non-existent, and essential utilities like drinking water and toilets are insufficient. Villagers often complain about these problems when they visit the bazaars.

Pokhara's Phewa lake has borne the brunt of pollution caused by locals as well as tourists. The quality of water in the lake is now very poor for human use, but until about 15 years ago people living by the lake used to depend on it even for drinking water. With the increase in the number of hotels by the lake, pollution along the waterfront has significantly increased. In areas where there are more hotels and

20 Amount of solid waste produced is about 153 cu m by volume and 61.2 tonnes by weight. The composition of solid waste by volume is 29.8 per cent organic matter, 5.9 per cent paper, 34.2 per cent plastic, 1.0 per cent metal, 1.1 per cent glass, 4.9 per cent cloth/jute, 2.7 per cent rubber and hide, 16.5 per cent inert materials like dust, and 1.1 per cent others. The composition by weight is 47.5 per cent organic matter, 5.8 per cent paper, 13.2 per cent plastic, 0.7 per cent metal, 2.0 per cent glass, 4.4 per cent cloth/jute, 2.2 per cent rubber/hide, 23.3 per cent inert materials and 0.9 per cent others (personal communication, Kamal Shrestha, Pokhara Environmental Improvement Project).

restaurants, biological pollution, as revealed by e-coli count,²¹ is rampant. This is mainly because of septic tanks being located close to the lake and the drainage of hotel wastes and sewerage into the lake. Pollution of the lake will adversely affect the length of stay of tourists in Pokhara, and will likely repel tourists instead of attracting them.

Another significant problem is chemical pollution from the uncontrolled use of fertilisers and pesticides. One of the reasons for the deterioration in the quality of water in Phewa Lake is the leaching of these chemicals from fields situated in its watershed. In areas where agricultural fields skirt the lake chemical pollution is far greater than biological pollution. In winter, when the water is not refreshed and remains stagnant for several months, it is common to see dead fish floating in the lake. This happens mainly because of chemical pollution resulting from the use of fertilisers and pesticides (personal communication, Kamal Shrestha). During the monsoon water flows out and drains much of the pollutants. The leaching of fertilizers into the lake has also considerably increased its nutrient content.²² This has led to a profusion of weeds and water hyacinth (*jal kumbī*), now a major problem especially during the rainy season.

Urbanisation and increasing westernisation have also brought about changes in attitudes and behaviour. The attitude of people in the past had been helpful in maintaining the environmental balance and in improving social life. For example, it was considered a religious merit to plant trees

21 A water quality test of Phewa lake indicates that it should not be used for human use at all. The test conducted recently (1996) reveals that e-coli counts ranged from 700/100 ml to 9 million/100 ml, depending upon the location. A sample site near the hotels (Barahi side) had 9 million/100 ml, due to leakage of the contents of septic tanks into the lake. At Firke Khola, the count was 41,750/100 ml. Similarly, at the point where the Seti canal enters the lake, the count was 6,000/100 ml. At locations where washing is done the count was 700/100 ml. The standard for drinking water is less than 10 e-coli/100 ml. In Europe, lakes with more than 2,000 e-coli/100 ml are restricted for human use (personal communication, Kamal Shrestha).

22 The nutrient content differs from one location to another. The average chemical content of the lake water is: chloride 0.01 mg/lit, nitrate 0.06 mg/lit, NH₄ 0.08 mg/lit, PO₄ nil, alkalinity 23.04 mg/lit (due to human excreta and urine) and chlorine 15.19 mg/lit. These indicators reveal that the lake is severely polluted by chemical pesticides (personal communication, Kamal Shrestha).

by the roadside and to build resting-places called *cautārīs*.²³ During summer, a pit was dug in the middle of the *cautārī* where an earthen pitcher would be placed for storing drinking water and replenished every day. This benefited all, including unknown wayfarers. People also dug ponds for collecting rainwater, which could also be used by animals. Most *cautārīs* that remain today were built in the name of *dharma* (religious merit). Later, government agencies improved a few of these places, while many others were destroyed or fell into disuse. It is these remaining *cautārīs* that provide shade on the roadside and a resting-place for people during the summer.

The Pokhara Municipality has been implementing projects to solve some of the problems. These projects are funded internally as well as through external loans and debts.²⁴ The Pokhara Environmental Improvement Project, for instance, focuses on public environment education and staff training, sanitation, drainage, access road improvement and seepage management. Improvement of tourism infrastructure is another objective of the project. The Urban Basic Services Programme aims at providing social and health services to the poor. Other programmes include the Rural Urban Partnership Program, the Municipal Organisation Development and Administration Programme, the Financial Management Programme and the Integrated Action Plan. Many of these programmes were initiated after the problems had already turned complex, and a common saying that 'officials bring in a doctor after the death of a patient' best sums this up.

The haphazard growth of houses and settlements in an unplanned and unorganised spatial pattern has already led to various incurable environmental and urban problems for the town as well as the hinterland. Because of public resistance, plans for acquisition of land and demolition of houses for expanding roads have either been withdrawn or implemented

23 A raised platform around a tree. Usually two trees, Bar (*Ficus bengalensis*) and Pipal (*Ficus religiosa*) are planted together; they are ideal for shade in summer and for greenery. In a few cases three trees are also planted (the third is called *Sami*).

24 In 1998/99, the income of Pokhara Sub-Metropolitan City (PSMC) was Rs. 73.9 million, of which about 59 per cent came from local taxes, 5 per cent from fees and fines, 3 per cent from property rentals, 0.2 per cent from others, 2.7 per cent from miscellaneous sources, 27.9 per cent from grants, and 2.4 per cent from previous balance. Of this income, current expenditure (office expenditure) accounted for 28 per cent, debt repayment 0.2 per cent, social welfare 7.9 per cent and capital investment 63 per cent (PSMC 1999).

not as planned. Political parties do not want to risk alienating their potential voters and therefore do not enforce the law impartially. Some programmes have had to be cancelled because of elected representatives favouring their supporters. For example, the Guided Land Development Plan implemented by the Department of Housing and Physical Planning failed because the political party in power allowed its supporters to build houses on land specified as 'restricted' in the plan.

Until the late 1970s there was no vision to guide urban development in Pokhara. In 1975, the aim was to develop it as a 'tourist city'. But not much was done to achieve that goal and by 1989 that goal had changed and planners put forward another vision of a 'tourism, health and education' city. In recent times, the word 'green' has been added to this slogan. This addition does not signify a commitment by leaders but the current fad of using 'green' to attract public attention. As a matter of fact, green cover has reduced considerably and a valley that was once full of trees is now a concrete jungle.

Residents of the town too have shown their concern for the community and the environment. The growing number of non-governmental organisations²⁵ indicates public concern over deteriorating environmental conditions. The establishment of the Phewa Lake Cleaning Trust on the initiative of public and private agencies is an encouraging sign. The interest earned by the funds collected in the Trust (which is now Rs 550,000) will be utilised for conservation and cleaning of the lake. The Boat Union and several NGOs concerned with Phewa lake have also taken some small steps to protect the lake. Despite these efforts, overall environmental conditions show a declining trend. Moreover, the Municipality is not prepared to work together with these local institutions on a partnership basis. The media has not done enough to inform people about environmental degradation, although the occasional news item does appear in the newspapers. The capacity of local newspapers to conduct investigations into environmental issues is limited and although the mass media that is being developed in Pokhara, especially with the imminent opening of several FM radio stations, can initiate discussions and inform the public on environmental situations, this potential has not yet been tapped.

Conclusion

25 There were about 778 NGOs in Kaski District by July 2000. It is estimated that about 40 per cent of these are located in Pokhara.

Pokhara, as things stand now, is a supplying market, residential town and a tourist centre. Industrial development is at a preliminary stage and there is not much scope here for the establishment of manufacturing industries. Environmental conservation, cultural development and improving the living conditions of poor households are essential not only for attracting tourists but also for the health of the town and its residents. Till now environmental and cultural conservation, cleanliness and greenery were thought to be essential only for attracting tourism. Increased public awareness regarding conservation of the environment and proper waste disposal is also essential.

Even though planners have recognised the need to create small centres in the hinterland with urban facilities like education and health to avoid further migration into and congestion in the city, nothing concrete has been done to achieve this. Moreover, Pokhara has been acting as a 'parasitic' and a 'paralysing' town through a process of 'sucking up' as discussed above. Also, due to the centralisation of urban facilities within the town, and in recent times due to security reasons, Pokhara has paralysed potential centres that could have developed into small towns. It is now felt that the development of a transportation network, linking residential and marketing centres located on its periphery, is essential to facilitate commuting. This will also help in the development of efficient marketing channels which will augment production of various commodities in the rural areas which, in turn, could help in the development of agro-based industries or in reducing the import of agricultural commodities like fruits, vegetables and livestock products. Similarly, private entrepreneurs must be encouraged through incentives to invest their capital (especially for the productive utilisation of remittances) in productive and employment generating enterprises that have a minimal adverse impact on the environment, in Pokhara as well as in the smaller market centres.

Urbanisation has led to various environmental problems that have adversely affected residents of the town as well as of the surrounding villages. The disposal of waste generated by industries, farms and households, and control of air pollution along heavy traffic routes, need immediate attention. Moreover, plans to establish a waste disposal system should be implemented efficiently. With the growth of the town, the capacity of the waste management system should be enhanced and planned with the future in mind. To solve these problems and develop the town's tourism potential and education and health sectors, proper long-term planning and commitment to plans—by both agencies and the public—is

essential. In the past, regulations were not enforced uniformly, mainly due to political favouritism and corruption. Unless these aspects of implementation and commitment are given due consideration, all this will remain wishful thinking.

Pokhara's urban growth also has implications for planners and policy makers. Contrary to the idea that the growth of towns can hasten or aid rural development, this case illustrates that a town can draw away capital and human power that can potentially be utilised in villages—a global pattern of capitalism that helps in the accumulation of capital in metropolitan centres. As a matter of fact, a study conducted as early as in the late 1970s also clearly illustrated that the impact of Pokhara as a growth centre was minimal. The report stated: "... the changes that have appeared in the economy of Pokhara valley do not affect the interior economy of people living in the mountains and hills of the western region. This has been said explicitly on the grounds that the socio-economic condition of the people living there has not changed. Market did not develop whereas the volume of trade might have decreased" (Gurung et al. 1977:17).

The situation as reported by Gurung et al. (1977) has not changed much in the late 1990s. Instead, it appears that Pokhara's link with its hinterland has grown weaker (even though some amount of vegetables and milk come from neighbouring villages) in recent times. This is because locally produced commodities face competition from mass-produced commodities from India and abroad, and the easy availability of farm products from the Tarai and India. One reason for weak urban-rural linkages here is that urban growth did not result from the surplus generated in the rural areas. In a liberalised economy it is generally assumed that agriculture provides the basis for urban development where farm sector surplus is brought to urban centres for processing and value addition and distribution to other regions. As urbanisation here has resulted mainly from the inflow of remittances or indirectly through the flow of funds from villages, it has not been firmly linked with the agrarian economy of the hinterland. On the other hand, this urban centre has helped in the effective distribution of essential as well as luxury goods from within and outside the country, facilitating rapid changes in food systems (production, distribution, processing and consumption) and cultural patterns. Therefore, it is a backwash effect that is strongly evident in the case of urban-hinterland relations in west-central Nepal. One reason for this situation is the lack of organisational abilities and skills (both for trade and industry) required in an urban context. Most people have settled

in Pokhara with a consumerist attitude, although we also see that a small portion of remittances have been used for the establishment of industries, housing facilities and the hospitality industry.

It is now clear that despite various programmes and planning for regional development with Pokhara as a 'growth pole' not much has been achieved in the last 40 years of this effort. Urban growth here has not been helpful in triggering overall economic development in west-central Nepal. The hinterland is still gripped by poverty and a food deficit. On the other hand, whatever growth has been achieved in the urban centre from its links to the outside world is not oriented towards sustainability. The following stanza of a poem (Adhikari 2035 v.s) clearly reveals this situation:

Dear Tourists
Look again carefully with telescope
There is no Anna (food) around Annapurna (mountain of food).

Acknowledgement

Thanks are due to Samuel Thomas for editorial help, and to Pratyoush Onta for constructive comments on the earlier version of this paper.

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