Quadrant II – Notes

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Case Studies and Additional Examples/Illustrations:

Population Distribution around the world- Spatial variations

People are not distributed evenly across the world or within a country. One-third of the world's population lives in China and India. Yet, each country has large expanses of land (the Himalayas in India and a vast interior desert in China) where people are absent or sparsely distributed.

In addition to studying population densities, geographers study population distributions —descriptions of locations on the Earth's surface where individuals or groups (depending on the scale) live. Geographers often represent population distributions on dot maps, in which one dot represents a certain number of a population. At the local scale, a dot map of population can show each individual farm in a sparsely populated rural area. At the global scale, the data are much more generalized. In the following section of this chapter, we study a dot map of the global population.

World Population Distribution and Density

From the beginning of humanity, people have been unevenly distributed over the land. Today, contrasts between crowded countryside's and bustling cities on the one hand and empty reaches on the other hand have only intensified. Historically, people tended to congregate in places where they could grow

food—making for a high correlation between arable land and population density.

Cities began in agricultural areas, and for most of history, people lived closest to the most agriculturally productive areas. In recent history, advances in agricultural technology and in transportation of agricultural goods have begun to change this pattern.

At the global scale, where one dot on a map represents 100,000 people, three major clusters of population jump out. Each of the three largest population clusters is on the Eurasian (Europe and Asia combined) landmass. The fourth largest is in North America.

East Asia

Korea and Japan almost one-quarter of the world's population is concentrated here—over 1.3 billion people in China alone.

In addition to high population density in China's large cities, ribbons of high population density extend into the interior along the Yangtze and Yellow River valleys. Farmers along China's major river valleys produce crops of wheat and rice to feed not only themselves but also the population of major Chinese cities such as Shanghai and Beijing.

South Asia

The second major population concentration also lies in Asia and is similar in many ways to that of East Asia. At the heart of this cluster of more than 1.5 billion people lies India. The concentration extends into Pakistan and Bangladesh and onto the island of Sri Lanka. Here, people again cluster in major cities, on the coasts, and along rivers, such as the Ganges and Indus.

Two physical geography barriers create the boundaries of the South Asia population cluster: the Himalaya Mountains to the north and the desert west of the Indus River Valley in Pakistan. This is a confined region with a rapidly growing population. As in East Asia, the overwhelming majority of the people here are farmers, but in South Asia the pressure on the land is even greater. In Bangladesh, over 152 million people, almost all of them farmers, are crowded into an area about the size of Iowa.

Over large parts of Bangladesh the rural population density is between 3000 and 5000 people per square mile. By comparison, in 2006 the population of Iowa

was just under 3 million people, and the rural population density was well under 30 people per square mile.

Europe

An axis of dense population extends from Ireland and Great Britain into Russia and includes large parts of Germany, Poland, Ukraine, and Belarus. It also includes the Netherlands and Belgium, parts of France, and northern Italy.

This European cluster contains over 715 million inhabitants, less than half the population of the South Asia cluster. A comparison of the population and physical maps indicates that in Europe terrain and environment are not as closely related to population distribution as they are in East and South Asia. For example, note the lengthy extension, which protrudes far into Russia. Unlike the Asian extensions, which reflect fertile river valleys, the European extension reflects the orientation of Europe's coal fields. If you look closely at the physical map, you will note that comparatively dense population occurs even in mountainous, rugged country, such as the boundary zone between Poland and its neighbours to the south. A much greater correspondence exists between coastal and river lowlands and high population density in Asia than in Europe generally.

Another contrast can be seen in the number of Europeans who live in cities and towns. The European many of which developed as a result of the Industrial Revolution. In Germany, 88 percent of the people live in urban places; in the United Kingdom, 89 percent; and in France, 74 percent. With so many people concentrated in the cities, the rural countryside is more open and sparsely populated than in East and South Asia (where only about 30 percent of the people reside in cities and towns).

The three major population concentrations we have discussed—East Asia, South Asia, and Europe—account for over 4 billion of the total world population of approximately 6.7 billion people. Nowhere else on the globe is there a population cluster even half as great as any of these.

The populations of South America, Africa, and Australia combined barely exceed the population of India alone.

North America

North America has one quite densely populated region, stretching along the urban areas of the East Coast, from Washington, D.C. in the south to Boston,

Massachusetts in the north. On Figure 2.5, the cities in this region agglomerate into one large urban area that includes Washington, D.C., Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and Boston. Urban geographers use the term megalopolis to refer to such huge urban agglomerations. The cities of megalopolis account for more than 20 percent of the U.S. population.

Look at the global scale map in Figure 2.5 and notice the dense population concentration of megalopolis is stretched west into nearby Canadian cities of Toronto, Ottawa, Montreal, and Quebec City. Adding these Canadian cities to the population of megalopolis creates a population cluster that is about one quarter the size of Europe's population cluster. If you have lived or traveled in megalopolis, you can think about traffic and comprehend what dense population means. However, recognize that the total population of megalopolis is 2.8% of the East Asian population cluster, and that the ,309 people per square mile density of New York City does not rival the density in world cities like Mumbai, India, with a population density of 76,820 per square mile or Jakarta, Indonesia, with a population density of 27,137 per square mile.

Reliability of Population Data

When the United States planned and conducted its 2000 population census , various groups protested the practice of trying to count every single person in the country.

Rather, many advocates of homeless, minorities, and others insisted the census practices resulted in a serious undercount of these disadvantaged populations. Much federal government funding depends on population data. If the population of a disadvantaged group is undercounted, it translates into a loss of dollars for city governments that rely on federal government funding to pay for social services to disadvantaged groups. Thus, advocates are concerned that the people already in disadvantaged groups suffer more so under census undercounts. Being undercounted also translates into less government representation, for the number of congressional seats allotted to each state is based on the census counts.

Advocacy groups urged the census to sample the population and derive population statistics from the samples. They argued this would more accurately represent the true number of people in the United States. The United States Census Bureau continued to conduct its census as it always has, trying to count each individual in its borders. Despite all of the technology and people-power

employed, some estimates claim the 2000 census undercounted the U.S. population by over 3.3 million people. If a prosperous country such as the United States has problems conducting an accurate census, imagine the difficulties that must be overcome in less well-off countries.

The cost, organization, and reporting of a census go beyond what many countries can afford or handle. Several agencies collect data on world population. The United Nations records offi cial statistics that national governments assemble and report. The World Bank and the Population Reference Bureau also gather and generate data and report on the population of the world and of individual countries.

If you compare the population data reported by each of these sources, you will find inconsistencies in the data. Data on population, growth rates, food availability, health conditions, and incomes are often informed estimates rather than actual counts.

Monaco is the most densely populated country in the world, according to the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs Population Division.

The principality, located on France's Mediterranean coast, measures just 2.02 square kilometres. But despite its tiny size, around 26,000 people are squeezed in per square kilometre. This figure is predicted to rise to more than 27,000 by 2025.

Macao, meanwhile, which is designated as a special administrative region in China, is in second place, with a population density of around 20,800 per square kilometre.

The former Portuguese colony, which was handed back to China in 1999, has an area of 23.8 square kilometres, and around 612,00 residents.

Monaco has the second-highest nominal GDP per capita in the world. The nation also has a very low unemployment rate, as many Monegasques travel to France and Italy for work. Monaco has the lowest poverty rate in the world and the most billionaires and millionaires per capita. Monaco has a strong economy due to tourism, banking services, and the gambling industry.

Pros and cons of crowding

Having more or less people per square kilometre presents both issues and opportunities.

For example, densely populated areas present problems for governments and policymakers, as they look to provide adequate infrastructure, including sanitation, transportation and housing, for their rapidly expanding populations.

And while in the future densely populated cities may offer improved healthcare, today's urban environments can concentrate health risks and introduce new hazards, the World Health Organization (WHO) warns.

"Health challenges particularly evident in cities relate to water, environment, violence and injury, no communicable diseases, unhealthy diets and physical inactivity, harmful use of alcohol, as well as the risks associated with disease outbreaks, among others," WHO says.

On the other hand, higher density city environments can be more efficient, with greater public transport use and shorter journeys. Modern high-rise buildings also provide breathing space for more affluent urban dwellers.

While the world's most crowded cities present major health challenges, a number of studies suggest that living in a densely populated urban area can make you healthier and happier.

For example, a recent study of 419,562 adults by the University of Oxford and the University of Hong Kong found that people living in built-up, residential areas in 22 British cities had lower body-mass indexes and took more exercise than residents of more widely-spaced homes in suburban areas.

Eradicating poverty from the world is a widely accepted goal, and during the last decades many poverty-abatement programs have been implemented at the local, national and global level. The importance of reducing poverty has been strengthened by the Millennium Development Goals Initiative, which makes of poverty reduction its first goal and which sets specific targets to be reached in the year 2015. The interest in keeping track of progress in attaining the goals has placed an enormous emphasis in measuring poverty, since it is necessary to know how many people are in poverty, how these poverty numbers evolve over time, and what the impact of different programs is.

When dealing with an issue which is associated to millions of people experiencing low well-being there is clearly a sense of urgent action needed. This desire of immediate action, together with the widespread implementation of

focalized social programs, has stimulated an interest in studying measurement methods to designate the potential beneficiaries of the programs and to evaluate their success. In consequence, during the last decades the focus of interest in poverty studies has been on measuring poverty rather than on discussing conceptual issues.

Social Environments for Happiness

In the first half of Chapter 2, six factors are used to explain happiness, and four of these measure different aspects of the social environment:

having someone to count on, having a sense of freedom to make key life decisions, generosity, and trust. The second half of the chapter digs deeper, paying special attention first to the effects that inequality has on average happiness, and then on how a good social environment operates to reduce inequality. Just as life evaluations provide a broader measure of well-being than income does, inequality of well-being turns out to be more important than income inequality in explaining average levels of happiness. Well-being inequality significantly reduces average life evaluations,

suggesting that people are happier to live in societies with less disparity in the quality of life. The next step is to explore what determines well-being inequality, and to see how the effects f misfortune on happiness are moderated by the strength and warmth of the social fabric. Life evaluations are first explained at the individual level based on income, health, and a variety of measures of the quality of the social environment.

Several particular risks are considered: ill-health, discrimination, low income, unemployment, separation, divorce or widowhood, and safety in the streets. The happiness costs of these risks are very large, especially for someone living in a low-trust social environment. For example, Marie, who is in good health, employed, married, with average income, sees herself as free from discrimination, and feels safe in the streets at night is estimated to have life satisfaction 3.5 points higher, on the 0 to 10 scale, than Helmut, who is in fair or worse health, unemployed, in the bottom-fifth of the income distribution, divorced, and afraid in the streets at night. This is the difference if they both live in a relatively low-trust environment. But if they both lived where trust in other people, government, and the police were relatively high, the well-being gap between them would shrink by one-third.

The well-being costs of hardship are thus significantly less where there is a positive social environment within which one is more likely to find a helping hand and a friendly face. Since hardships are more prevalent among those at the bottom of the well-being ladder, a trusting social environment does most to raise the happiness of those in distress, and hence delivers greater equality of well-being.