

## **Urbanisation in Fiji, 1976–1986**

### **A preliminary analysis**

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### **Introduction**

URBANISATION is a fundamental process of change in the Third World. According to the latest United Nations global review of urbanisation, 34.3 per cent of the population of developing countries lived in urban areas in 1990, sharply up from 17 per cent two decades earlier (United Nations 1993:74). Furthermore, developing countries contained 61 per cent of all urban dwellers of the world, and the majority of the Third World population is expected to be urban by 2015 (United Nations 1993:74–75). The increasing levels and the rate of urbanisation, which have posed major development challenges for developing countries, have been the target of public policies (see, for instance, United Nations 1985:1).

The Fiji Government has long been concerned with urbanisation, albeit negatively, Development Plan Eight having a strong focus on urbanisation in the context of regional development (see Fiji Central Planning Office 1975, 1980, 1985; Chandra 1980; Chandra and Gunasekera 1984; UNDP 1977). Although the Fiji Government has drawn up no development plans since the coups of 1987, it has been concerned with urbanisation both from the point of view of urban management and from the viewpoint of spatially equitable development.

With a per capita GDP in 1993 of F\$2,879, and having achieved high standards in health and education, Fiji is not a typical developing country (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1994:6). It is not surprising, therefore, that it is relatively high urbanised, by Third World standards, with

38.7 per cent of its total population residing in urban centres at the time of the last (1986) population census.

Unlike many other Third World countries, certainly unlike many other countries and territories in the South Pacific, Fiji's rate of urbanisation has been modest, as pointed out in the author's analysis of the 1966–1976 intercensal period (Chandra 1980:145). This process of modest urbanisation slowed down in the last intercensal period (1976–1986), probably in response to the international recession (which was acutely felt in Fiji with its small and open economy) and to economic and infrastructural changes in rural Fiji.

This paper will examine urbanisation in Fiji in terms of the level of urbanisation; urban change in terms of provinces and urban centres; and the primacy of the capital city, Suva, in Fiji's urban hierarchy. It will also examine the issues of gender and ethnicity in Fijian urbanisation. It will not extend its scope by analysing internal population mobility, which, although crucial to understanding the dynamics of urbanisation, has been examined by the author in another paper (see Chandra 1989).

## **Level of urbanisation**

IN 1986, 38.7 per cent of Fiji's population resided in urban centres, compared with 37.2 per cent in 1976, an increase of 1.5 per cent in the level of urbanisation in the last intercensal period (Table 1; also see Figure 1 for the distribution of urban centres and their populations in 1986). This contrasts with an increase in the level of urbanisation of 3.8 per cent between 1966 and 1976. Another way of looking at the changes in the level of urbanisation is to look at the rate of urbanisation, defined as the difference between the rate of increase in the total population and that of the urban population (United Nations 1993:7). The rate of urbanisation in Fiji decreased sharply to 0.4 per cent per annum in the 1976–1986 intercensal period from 1.1 per cent in the 1966–1976 period (Table 1).

In terms of international urbanisation, it is interesting to note that during 1975–1985, a comparable period to Fiji's intercensal 1976–1986 period, the level of urbanisation in developing countries increased from 26.3 per cent to 31.5 per cent, a much greater change than in Fiji (United Nations 1993:74).

**Table 1 Urbanisation and urban growth in Fiji 1966–1986**

Year	Total Population			Urban Population			Level of Urbanisation (4/1)	Rate of urbanisation (6-3)
	Number (1)	Intercensal growth (2)	Annual growth rate (3)	Number (4)	Intercensal growth (5)	Annual growth rate (6)		
1966	476,727	37.9	3.2	159,259	na <sup>a</sup>	na <sup>a</sup>	33.4	na <sup>a</sup>
1976	588,068	23.4	2.1	218,475	37.2	3.2	37.2	1.1
1986	715,375	21.6	2.0	277,025	26.8	2.4	38.7	0.4

**Source:** Chandra and Chandra 1990:19; Walsh 1977 for 1966 data; Chandra 1980 for 1976 data and Navunisaravi 1988:40 for 1986 data. Percentages calculated by the author.

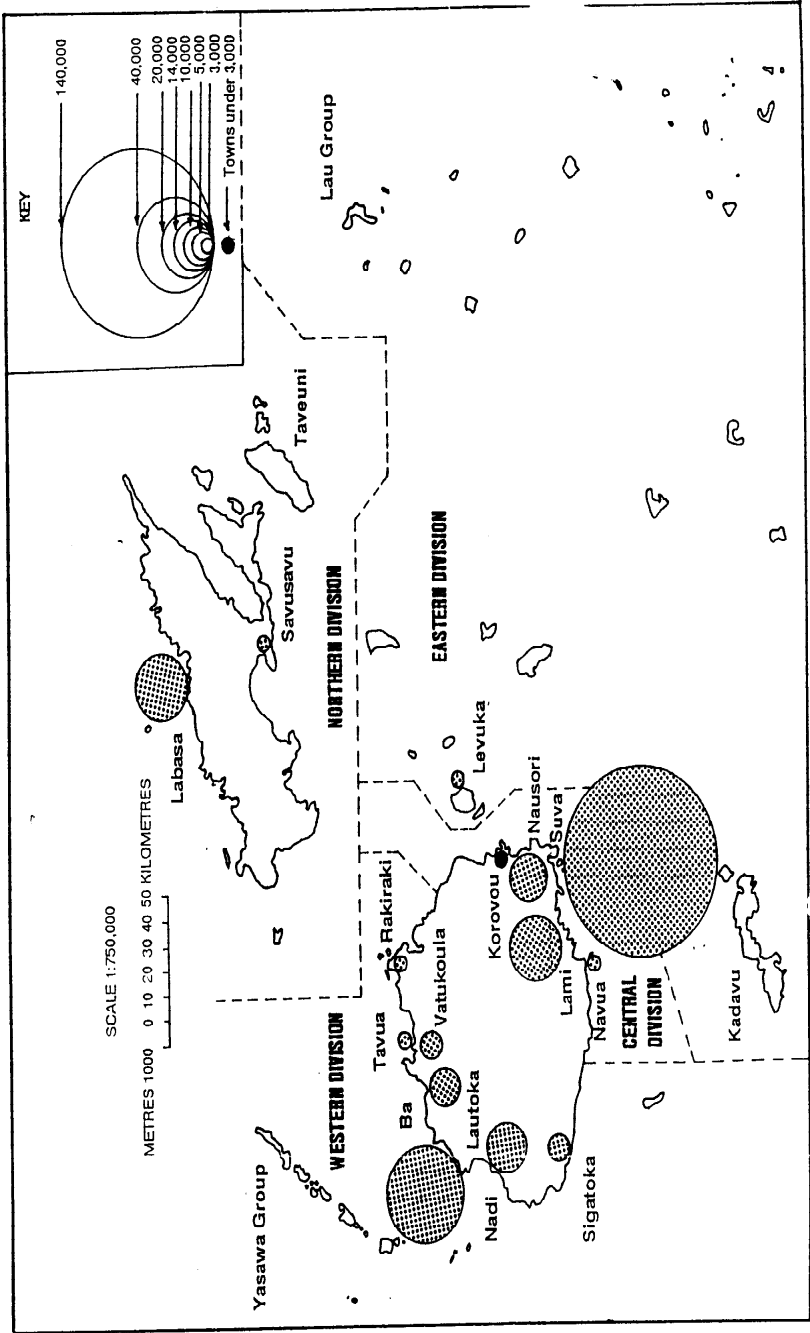
<sup>a</sup> Because of extensive boundary changes in 1966, it would be extremely misleading to compare the 1956 and 1966 urban populations.

Fiji's urban population increased in the last intercensal period by 26.8 per cent or 2.4 per cent per annum (Table 1), considerably lower than the 37.2 intercensal increase or 3.2 per cent annual increase over the previous intercensal period.

Fiji's rate of population increase is considerably lower than rates for developing countries as a whole. For instance, the urban populations of developing countries increased by an average rate of 3.9 per cent between 1975 and 1985 (United Nations 1993:106).

It will be useful to compare Fiji's rate of urban population growth with those of other Pacific Island developing countries and territories. This is done in Table 2. While being higher than the rates for many countries and territories, Fiji's rate of urban population growth is considerably lower than those of the rapidly urbanising Melanesian countries of Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, and Papua New Guinea (for recent discussions of urbanisation in the South Pacific, see Connell 1984; Connell and Curtain 1982; Connell and Lea 1993; Walsh 1982).

Figure 1 The distribution of urban population in Fiji, 1986



**Table 2 Fiji's urbanisation rates compared with those of Pacific Island Countries and Territories, 1980s**

Countries	Annual population growth (%)	Annual urban population growth (%)	Proportion of total Population urban (%)	Annual rate of urbanisation (%)
American Samoa	3.7	8.2	48	4.5
Cook Islands	1.2	2.4	59	1.2
Federated States of Micronesia	3.6	na	na	na
Fiji	2.0	2.6	39	0.6
Guam	2.3	1.9	38	-0.4
Wallis and Futuna	1.3	-	0	0
Kiribati	2.2	3.0	35	0.8
Marshall Is	4.2	8.2	65	4.0
Nauru	2.2	2.2	100	0
Niue	-2.4	-2.0	30	-4.4
Northern Mariana Is	9.5	9.4	53	-0.1
New Caledonia	2.0	2.1	70	0.1
Palau	2.2	2.7	69	0.5
Papua New Guinea	2.3	5.3	15	3.0
Pitcairn Id	-0.6	-	0	0
French Polynesia	2.5	2.2	57	0.3
Solomon Is	3.4	6.2	13	2.8
Tokelau	-1.3	-	0	0
Tonga	0.5	2.5	31	2.0
Tuvalu	1.7	4.8	42	3.1
Vanuatu	2.8	7.3	18	4.5
Western Samoa	0.3	0.4	21	0.1

**Source:** Haberkorn 1993: 15-16. The rate of urbanisation has been calculated by the author.

The decreased rate of urbanisation in Fiji can be attributed to three main factors. First, the international recession of the 1980s affected Fiji's small and open economy severely, increasing its unemployment significantly, as can be seen from Table 3. Rural to urban migration occurs largely because of favourable urban employment prospects. When this is not the case, as happened in Fiji in the 1980s, rural to urban migration slows down.

**Table 3 Unemployment in Fiji 1966–1986**

Year	Total Labour Force	Males		Unemployment Females		Total	
		Number	Rate (%) <sup>a</sup>	Number	Rate (%)	Number	Rate (%)
1966	125,809	5,210	4.5	25	0.3	5,235	4.2
1973	144,060	7,792	6.4	1,564	7.2	9,356	6.5
1976	175,785	7,381	5.0	3,594	12.2	10,975	6.2
1986	241,160	10,334	5.4	7,855	15.3	18,189	7.5

**Source:** Chandra 1980: 156 for 1966–1976 data; and Navunisaravi 1988: 140 for 1986 data.

<sup>a</sup> The rate indicated here is that of the relevant labour force; it is not a proportion of the total labour force.

Second, in addition to the urban conditions becoming unattractive because of lack of employment opportunities, lack of housing, and escalating social problems, an important reason for the slowdown in the growth of Fiji's urban population is to be found in the significant improvement in rural standards of living.

There was a significant improvement in the price of sugar in the 1970s, and this helped contain rural to urban migration (see, for instance, Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1988:72). In addition, the development of the tourist industry, located along the western coast of Viti Levu and in outlying islands, in close proximity to indigenous Fijian villages, meant that people could have access to paid employment while still residing in rural areas. This was helped by the completion of the major Suva–Nadi highway, which has considerably reduced both the monetary and time costs of commuting. Given this, and the success of rural electrification, it has become economical to reside in rural areas and work in non-agricultural occupations.

The importance of this factor in examining urbanisation in Fiji needs to be emphasised, because the small spatial scale of Fiji does enable the population to become 'urbanised' without residing in urban centres.

Third, Bedford (1987) has argued that emigration from Fiji has been a significant contributor to the slowdown in the rate of urban population growth in Fiji:

Evidence from an analysis of net migration gains and losses to Fiji's rural and urban populations between 1976 and 1986 suggests that the slow urban growth of the Indian population in particular was as much a result of international migration as any reduction in the volume of movement to towns from rural areas (Bedford 1987:15).

Bienefeld (1983:12) has also identified the role of high levels of urban Indo-Fijian emigration in slowing down urbanisation in Fiji.

### **Provincial urban change**

THIS DISCUSSION so far has concentrated on national urban growth, but this growth has been spatially unequal. The largest spatial scale at which urban growth in Fiji can be examined is at the level of the province, a large administrative unit that was originally developed primarily for land administration, but has been adopted in Fiji as the *de facto* regional unit.

Urban change in the provinces of Fiji is presented in Table 4. Of the fifteen provinces, five or 33 per cent do not have any urban centres; of the remaining ten provinces with urban centres, only one, Lomaiviti, is an outlying province: the rest are in the two main islands of Viti Levu and Vanua Levu. Of these remaining nine provinces with urban centres, only two are in Vanua Levu; the remaining urban provinces are all in the main island of Viti Levu. Thus there is an overwhelming concentration of the total urban population in one island of the country: 92 per cent of the total urban population in 1986 (Table 4).

It is also very clear from Table 4 that only three provinces—Rewa, Naitasiri and Ba—account for an overwhelming proportion (84.9 per cent) of the total urban population of Fiji. The provinces of Rewa and Naitasiri contain the city of Suva and its periurban area respectively, pointing to the overwhelming dominance of one urban concentration in Fiji, the Suva urban centre. More on this will be said later; here we should note the highly concentrated nature of Fiji's urban development.

Table 4 Change in urban provinces in Fiji, 1976-1986

Province	1976		1986		Change		
	Number	Per cent of Total Urban Population	Number	Per cent of Total Population	Number	Percentage Change	Annual Rate of Increase (%)
Ba	59,584	27.3	71,553	25.8	11,969	20.1	1.8
Bua	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Cakaudrove	2,295	1.1	2,872	1.0	577	25.1	2.2
Kadavu	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lau	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Lomaiviti	2,764	1.3	2,895	1.0	131	4.7	0.5
Macuata	12,956	5.9	16,537	6.0	3,581	27.6	2.4
Nadroga/Navosa	3,635	1.7	4,730	1.7	1,095	30.1	2.6
Naitasiri	44,101	20.2	75,098	27.1	30,997	70.3	5.3
Namosi	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Ra	3,755	1.7	3,361	1.2	-394	-10.5	-1.1
Rewa	78,395	35.9	87,940	32.0	9,545	12.2	1.1
Serua	2,568	1.2	2,775	1.0	207	8.1	0.8
Tailevu	8,442	3.9	9,264	3.3	822	9.7	0.9
Rotuma	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	218,495	100.1	277,025	100.1	58,530	21.1	2.4

**Source:** Chandra 1980:145 for 1976 data and Navunisaravi 1988:40 for 1986 data. Percentages has been calculated by the author.



The pattern of distribution of urban population in Fiji changed little in the last intercensal period, although there was one marked change: the province of Naitasiri, containing periurban Suva, increased its share of the national urban population significantly, thus further concentrating urban development in the Suva urban area. It is also interesting to observe that Rewa, containing the city of Suva, decreased its proportion of the national urban population slightly, indicating little in-migration, and perhaps some movement out of the city into its suburbs, and substantial emigration (to Australia, United States, Canada, and New Zealand) (see Chetty and Prasad 1993). A few other provinces including Ba, the outlying province of Lomaiviti and the Vanua Levu province of Cakaudrove decreased their share of the national urban population while one province in Vanua Levu (Macuata) increased its share. The remainder of the provinces either retained their shares of the national urban populations or decreased them only marginally.

## **Towns and cities**

IT WILL be useful for us now to examine the current distribution of the Fijian urban population in terms of urban centres (Table 5).

The dominance of the capital city in Fiji's urban hierarchy is immediately apparent from Table 5. Suva contained 51 per cent of the total urban population of Fiji in 1986. The second-ranking urban centre, and Fiji's only other city, Lautoka, accounted for only 14 per cent of the national urban population, indicating a serious degree of urban primacy in Fiji. The question of urban primacy will be examined in more detail later in the paper; here we should proceed to identify other salient features of the pattern of distribution of Fiji's urban population.

We have already pointed out the dominance of Suva in the Fijian urban system. The two cities of Suva and Lautoka account for nearly two-thirds of the national urban population.

Below these two major urban centres, there is a bunching of five urban centres with between 10,000 and 17,000 people: Lami, Labasa, Nadi, Nausori and Ba. It is, though, necessary to point out here that two of these five centres, Lami and Nausori, are satellite centres of Suva. These five are the middle-level urban centres that can provide an avenue for further urban growth, specially if the government pursues effective decentralisation policies.

**Table 5 Urban population changes in Fiji, 1976–1986**

Urban Centre	Town/City			Peri-urban			Total Urban								
	Number	Change	r(%)	Number	Change	r(%)	Number	Change	r(%)						
	1976	1986	No	%	r(%)	1976	1986	No	%	r(%)					
<b>Cities</b>															
Suva	63,628	69,665	6,037	9.5	0.9	54,199	71,608	17,409	32.1	2.8	117,827	141,273	23,446	19.9	1.8
Lautoka	22,672	28,728	6,056	26.7	2.4	6,175	10,329	4,154	67.1	5.1	28,847	39,057	10,210	35.4	3.0
<b>Towns (incorporated)</b>															
Nadi	6,938	7,709	771	11.1	1.0	6,057	7,511	1,454	24.0	2.1	12,995	15,220	2,225	17.1	1.6
Labasa	4,328	4,917	589	13.6	1.3	8,628	11,620	2,992	34.7	3.0	12,956	16,537	3,581	27.7	2.4
Nausori	5,262	5,242	-20	-0.4	-0.0	7,559	8,740	1,181	15.6	1.5	12,821	13,982	1,161	9.1	0.9
Ba	5,917	6,515	598	10.1	1.0	3,256	3,745	489	15.0	1.4	9,173	10,260	1,087	11.8	1.1
Sigatoka	1,816	2,097	281	15.5	1.4	1,819	2,633	814	44.7	3.7	3,635	4,730	1,095	30.1	2.6
Levuka	1,397	1,106	-291	-20.8	-2.3	1,367	1,789	422	30.9	2.7	2,764	2,895	131	4.7	0.5
Savusavu	1,754	2,179	425	24.2	2.2	541	693	152	28.1	2.5	2,295	2,872	577	25.1	2.2
Lami <sup>a</sup>			8,597					8,110					16,707		
<b>Unincorporated towns</b>															
Vatukoula	6,425	4,789	-1,636	-25.5	-2.9	-	-	-	-	-	6,425	4,789	-1,636	-25.5	-2.9
Rakiraki	3,755	3,361	-394	-10.5	-1.1	-	-	-	-	-	3,755	3,361	-394	-10.5	-1.1
Navua	2,568	2,775	207	8.1	0.8	-	-	-	-	-	2,568	2,775	207	8.1	0.8
Tavua	2,144	2,227	83	3.9	0.4	-	-	-	-	-	2,144	2,227	83	3.9	0.4
Korovou	290	340	50	17.2	1.6	-	-	-	-	-	290	340	50	17.2	1.6
<b>Total</b>	128,894	150,247	21,353	16.6	1.5	89,601	126,778	37,177	41.5	3.5	218,495	277,025	58,530	26.8	2.4

**Sources:** Calculated from data in Navunisaravi 1988:66 for 1986 data and Chandra 1980:146 for 1976 data.

<sup>a</sup>Lami was part of the city of Suva at the time of the 1976 population census.

The rest of the urban system consists of small, largely inconsequential urban centres, many of them unincorporated.

In terms of changes in the urban populations of urban centres, we should note that the nation's population grew at an average annual rate of 2.4 per cent during the last intercensal period, considerably lower than the 3.2 per cent during the previous intercensal period (Chandra 1980:144). Suva grew at a rate lower than the national average, so in the long run there may be some changes in the Fijian urban hierarchy. However, part of Suva's slow growth is to be explained by the declaration of Lami, which was part of Suva at the time of the 1976 census, as a separate town soon after it: if Lami had not been declared a separate town, Suva's population would have increased by 2.9 per cent per annum, more than the national rate. Lautoka had the most rapid rate of urban growth (3.0 per cent), indicating a possible marginal shift of urban growth to the second largest city.

The rapid growth of Lautoka's urban population has to be seen in the context of the general prosperity of its sugar cane and tourist supported hinterland, and the rapid expansion of manufacturing. Also, with the growing importance of the pine industry, there is growing realisation that the centre of gravity of Fijian economic life is shifting to the Western Division, of which Lautoka is the undisputed capital.

The middle ranking urban centres identified above did not grow at the national rate, but there were exceptions: Labasa, Sigatoka, and Savusavu all grew at about the same rate as the national urban population. The smaller urban centres either hardly grew or suffered population loss.

It is important to point out that the growth of the urban centres appears to be closely linked to the economic performance of their hinterlands. For instance, Lautoka, Labasa, and Sigatoka have all gained from the improved position of the sugar and tourist industries, while Tavua and Vatukoula, which depend on gold mining, lost their populations as the gold mining company reduced its operations in the face of unsatisfactory international conditions.

All in all, the last intercensal period has further skewed Fiji's urban hierarchy; the middle ranking centres have not grown very satisfactorily; and the lower end of the urban hierarchy has either remained marginal, or has lost its position slightly.

## The primacy of Suva in Fiji's urbanisation

PRIMACY is a distinguishing feature of many Third World urban systems (Gugler and Flanagan 1977; McGee 1967), and Fiji is no exception. The examination of the distribution of urban population in Fiji has already established the existence of urban primacy, which has been noted previously by Chandra (1980) and Walsh (1977, 1978). This section discusses the issue in more detail.

We have already noted that Suva contained 51 per cent of the national urban population in 1986. This, however, does not indicate the full extent of its dominance of the Fijian urban system because the city itself has satellite centres in close proximity. If we combine the population of Suva with those of Lami and Nausori, we find that the Suva–Lami–Nausori urban corridor contained just under two-thirds of the national urban population in 1986. Suva's 1986 population was almost four times larger than that of Lautoka and almost nine times larger than the population of the third-ranking urban centre, neighbouring Lami (Table 6).

**Table 6 Fiji's urban hierarchy, 1986**

Urban Centre	Population in 1986	Rank	Expected Population	Deviation (% of ideal population)
Suva	141,273	1	-	-
Lautoka	39,057	2	70,637	55.3
Lami	16,707	3	47,091	35.5
Labasa	16,537	4	35,318	46.8
Nadi	15,220	5	28,255	53.9
Nausori	13,982	6	23,546	59.4
Ba	10,260	7	20,182	50.8
Vatukoula	4,789	8	17,659	27.1
Sigatoka	4,730	9	15,697	30.1
Rakiraki	3,361	10	14,127	23.8
Levuka	2,895	11	12,843	22.5
Savusavu	2,872	12	11,773	24.4
Navua	2,775	13	10,867	25.5
Tavua	2,227	14	10,091	22.1
Korovou	340	15	9,418	3.6

**Source:** Calculated from data in Navunisaravi 1988:66.

Suva's overwhelming domination of the Fijian urban economy is also shown by the fact that in 1976 it accounted for 55 per cent of all workers aged fifteen years and over (calculated from Lodhia 1977:317). Furthermore, Suva and its environs consumed 56 per cent of the total electricity sales in Fiji in 1987 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1988:23). Finally, Suva (including neighbouring Nausori) accounts for 37 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), 69 per cent of GDP derived from banking and other financial intermediary functions, 52 per cent of the total paid employment (Fiji Central Planning Office 1980:335) and an even higher proportion of the total turnover of all service establishments in the country (calculated from Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1980).

### **The basis of Suva's primacy**

SUVA's primacy rests on colonial and post-colonial resource allocations. It became the capital of Fiji in 1882, when the government moved the capital from Levuka (Whitelaw 1966:43). It quickly became the administrative, political, economic, and cultural centre of Fiji. The market economy increasingly magnified Suva's attractiveness for new investment once the first economic activities had been located there. It is a well recognised economic principle that economic activities, once established in a location, increasingly magnify their attraction for further location because of external economies of scale.

Suva's growth was bolstered by the pattern of resource allocations by the government, which provided the first and best infrastructure in Suva. For instance, the first industrial estates were established in Suva (in Walu Bay and Vatuwaqa), the best hospital was constructed in Suva and nearly all the main educational institutions were established in the capital city.

The early concentration of economic activity and government allocation in Suva may be also explained by the fact that Europeans have traditionally been concentrated there, the proportion of them living in Suva ranging from 44 per cent in 1901 to 77 per cent in 1976 (calculated from various censuses). As Europeans made most of the major political and economic decisions in Fiji until Fiji's independence in 1970, it is not very unexpected that Suva received most attention from these administrators.

Suva's growth in the colonial period was unchecked by public policies. Indeed, the colonial government believed its role was to facilitate economic activity, not to interfere with or regulate it. This meant that the forces of agglomeration operated freely.

Moreover, even if the colonial government had wished to intervene in the urbanisation process to divert investment and settlement from Suva to other centres, development funds would have been needed and the colonial government was constrained by the policy of the British government to run Fiji as a self-financing colony. Furthermore, the low prices of Fiji's agricultural exports meant that surpluses that could have been used for equalisation programmes were not being generated.

After independence, Suva's position as the premier urban centre was enhanced, as it became the chief beneficiary of Fiji's increased bureaucracy. It was increasingly seen as Fiji's show-case to the world, and it boasted of having hosted such meetings as the Commonwealth Heads of Governments and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Council of Ministers of the Lome Convention. Furthermore, as the government expanded its policies and the economic sector became more politicised, more and more firms, both locally- and foreign-owned, preferred locating either in or close to Suva.

One can speculate that the continued emphasis on Suva for public investment, or for the lack of an effective decentralisation policy, reflected two other factors. First, Lautoka, the urban centre that might have benefited from diversion of investment from Suva, was in the Western Division, which has traditionally posed a threat to the chiefly establishment in Fiji (see, for instance, Norton 1977). Second, Lautoka, like other major Viti Levu urban centres, was a largely Indo-Fijian urban centre and thus much less likely to be favourably considered.

This is not to imply that the government did not have a strategy of regional development, for clearly it did, from 1981 onwards. The strategy, however, was not effective in reducing Suva's primacy in Fiji's urban system (see Chandra and Gunasekera 1984).

## Gender and ethnicity in Fijian urbanisation

THE URBAN sex ratio in Fiji in 1986 was 99.7, indicating a balance of sexes. It is interesting, nonetheless, to note the very slight numerical superiority of females in the Fijian urban system. There was no major difference among the ethnic groups in sex ratios (Table 7).

**Table 7 Ethnic dimension of differentials in the rate of urbanisation in Fiji, 1976-1986, by gender**

Ethnic Group	Males			Females		
	1976	1986	Annual Rate of Change (%) <sup>a</sup>	1976	1986	Annual Rate of Change (%) <sup>a</sup>
Indigenous Fijian	39,215	53,388	3.1	40,099	54,392	3.0
Indo-Fijian	57,824	72,165	2.2	57,808	72,368	2.2
All Others	12,069	12,724	0.5	11,480	11,988	0.4
Total	109,108	138,277	2.4	109,387	138,748	2.4

**Source:** Chandra 1980:144 and Navunisaravi 1988:52-65.

<sup>a</sup>The rate of Annual population increase is calculated using the formula  $P2=P1.em$

There are, however, significant ethnic differences in the present ethnic composition of the urban population, and their rates of urbanisation. Of the total urban population of 277,025 in 1986, indigenous Fijians made up 38.9 per cent; Indo-Fijians 52.2 per cent; and the remaining 8.9 per cent was made up of Europeans, Part-Europeans, Chinese, and other Pacific Islanders.

The rate of urbanisation of the different ethnic groups in the last intercensal period is given in Table 8, from which it is clear that indigenous Fijians have continued the trend, identified in an earlier analysis, to a higher rate of urbanisation. In the 1966–1976 period, the indigenous Fijian rate of urban population growth was considerably higher than that of Indo-Fijians; this pattern has continued in the 1976–1986 intercensal period, during which the indigenous Fijian urban

Table 8 Urban population change between 1976 and 1986, for indigenous Fijians, Indo-Fijians, and others

Ethnic Group	Total Population		%age annual Changes	Urban Population		Percentage intercensal Change	Annual Rate of Change	Percentage Urban in 1976	Percentage Urban in 1986	Rate of Urbanisation per annum
	1976	1986		1976	1986					
Indigenous Fijians	259,932	329,305	2.4	79,314	107,780	35.9	3.1	30.5	32.7	0.7
Indo-Fijians	292,896	348,704	1.7	115,632	144,533	25.0	2.2	39.5	41.4	0.5
Other	35,240	37,366	0.6	23,549	24,712	4.9	0.5	66.8	66.1	-0.7
Total	588,068	715,375	2.0	218,495	277,025	26.8	2.4	37.2	38.7	0.4

**Source:** Navunisaravi 1988:52-65 and Chandra 1980:144.



population increased by 3.1 per cent per annum compared with a rate of 2.2 per cent for Indo-Fijians (Table 8). However, it is important to note that indigenous Fijians were less urbanised in 1976 than Indo-Fijians, and that in absolute terms, the increases in urban populations of indigenous Fijians (28,466) and Indo-Fijians (28,901) were almost identical.

The low level of urbanisation of indigenous Fijians has to be seen in the context of the policy of the Fijian Administration to keep indigenous Fijians in rural areas through the force of Fijian regulations (see, for instance, Burns et al. 1960; Nayacakalou 1975; Roth 1973; Spate 1959). The impact of these restrictions can be seen from this assessment by Mamak (1974:90):

... it is easy to understand how the attempt to create artificial barriers to migration limited to a certain extent the socio-economic advance of the Fijian people as a whole.

The relaxation of these regulations in 1966 considerably facilitated the movement of indigenous Fijians to towns.

The increasing rate at which indigenous Fijians have moved into towns has been a powerful mechanism for ethnic equality in Fiji, for if indigenous Fijians were still cocooned from the dynamic urban centres, ethnic inequality would have been greater today than it is now. Walsh (1977:3) argues, for instance, that rural to urban migration:

... brings Fijians into the modern sector of the economy, enables them to acquire skills needed to play a fuller part in the development of Fiji, and increases rural–urban links thus enabling a diffusion of urban technology and values which could lead to the modernization of rural areas.

However, the increasing presence of indigenous Fijians in urban centres has raised concern among the traditional chiefly leadership of Fiji about the 'Fijian way of life'. Underlying this concern appears to be the fear of the loss of power of the chiefly elite, whose authority derives from the preservation of a 'rural Fiji' and its elaborate system of patronage.

## **Developments since 1986**

THIS PAPER has been concerned with the analysis of the 1986 census. Since the next population census in Fiji will be held in August 1996, it is useful to provide a brief update on the urban scene since 1986.

The military coups of 1987 caused a massive dislocation in Fiji society. Apart from the damage to the political and institutional structure of the country, the coups brought Fiji to the brink of economic collapse. There was a massive out-migration and significant volumes of capital were also moved out. For a while, there were predictions that if the economic difficulties were not overcome quickly, there would be deurbanisation in Fiji (see, for instance, Bedford 1987).

However, the economy recovered as the country regained political normalcy, albeit with a Constitution that has been widely criticised for its racist elements and backward-looking nature. Under the re-oriented policies of export-led growth, with its accompanying policies of deregulation, privatisation and corporatisation, and emphasis on human resource development, the economy has experienced modest growth, the real GDP increasing by 4.5 per cent per annum in 1994 and 2.2 per cent per annum in 1995 (Fiji Ministry of Finance and Economic Development 1995:5).

The manufacturing sector has grown significantly in the last six years, largely driven by garment manufacturing within the tax free sector. Manufacturing employment, which had reached a plateau in the 1980s, has grown impressively to reach 25,695 in 1994 (Fiji Bureau of Statistics 1996:2).

Although a firm picture of post-1986 urbanisation will have to await the next (1996) population census, it appears that urban growth has accelerated in response to the opportunities and changes identified above. Field visits to urban centres in the Western Division, and in Suva, indicate that urban growth is occurring, most markedly in Nadi, where the relocation of Fiji's international airline, Air Pacific, and the large tourist development in Denarau have fuelled economic expansion.

## **Anticipated changes to boundaries and creation of new towns**

THE CURRENT urban boundaries in Fiji are substantially those created by Bloomfield for the 1966 census (Bloomfield 1967). The 1976 census kept these boundaries intact, and because of time and other constraints, the same boundaries were retained for the 1986 census.

It is obvious, however, that an extensive revision of the boundaries is necessary for the next census. The Fiji Bureau of Statistics began such a review as early as 1994, and presented its preliminary views at a workshop at the University of the South Pacific. Although it is still too early to be definite about all the boundary changes, it can be said with reasonable certainty that nearly all urban boundaries will be expanded and some new urban areas will be declared.

The Government has already given notice of its intention to establish Nasinu, which is presently part of Suva's periurban area, as a separate urban centre. A committee is presently reviewing submissions, particularly from the Nausori Town Council, regarding the proposed boundary for Nasinu. In addition, Pacific Harbour might be declared an urban centre. Seaqaqa is another possibility. All these mean that the level of Fiji's urbanisation in 1996 is expected to jump significantly, even if urban growth within existing urban boundaries remains modest.

## **Conclusion**

THIS PAPER has presented an analysis of the pattern of urbanisation in Fiji in the last intercensal period. The intention has been, in part, to provide a baseline for comparative analyses of the 1996 data. It has shown that the overall rate of urbanisation and the rate of urban population growth have both declined from their peak rates in the 1966–1976 period.

It has been suggested that urbanisation is both a mirror of broad socio-economic changes in society, as argued by dependency and Marxist writers, and an instrument of socio-economic change. Thus when Fiji became independent in 1970, and bureaucracy increased its size, and the economy performed well, partly as a response to commodity price increases in the wake of the 1973–1974 oil crisis, the rate of urbanisation increased. This is manifested in the very high rate of urbanisation in the

1966–1976 intercensal period. In the 1980s, however, as the euphoria of independence waned and the Fijian economy stagnated as a result of the international recession and inappropriate public policies, the rate of urbanisation declined. In part, the decline was also due to a modest success in the government's regional planning initiative, which slowed down rural to urban population drift by opening up new economic opportunities in rural areas, or making it possible for rural populations to have access to non-agricultural economic opportunities while still residing in rural areas. Moreover, Fiji's small scale has meant that as infrastructure has improved, it has become advantageous to reside in rural areas and partake of urban economic opportunities. This last factor is important, and should be given more consideration in the international literature on urbanisation in small island states.

I wish to end this paper with a plea to take a broader view of urbanisation in Fiji in the future. Most studies of urbanisation, including this one, have adopted a narrow view, looking on urbanisation as the proportion of the total population residing in urban centres, and changes in that level. Other issues usually looked at include rural to urban movement, and 'urban problems'. However, such an approach has major shortcomings that should be addressed if we are to gain greater insights into the process of urbanisation.

First, urbanisation is a fundamental socio-economic process of change. Essentially, this means the rise of non-agricultural activities and the concentration of people in certain locations. We need to pay more attention to the processes involved rather than concentrating just on the end product.

Second, we read too much into boundaries. Urban boundaries are often inadequately drawn and they are not, in any case, always strictly adhered to during censuses. Moreover, by relying solely on people and activities within urban boundaries, we neglect a large and increasing number of people who partake of urban activities and services without residing in urban centres. We also neglect the diffusion of 'urban' life to rural areas, such as the spread of services and non-agricultural employment.

Third, most studies of urbanisation concentrate on its demographic aspects. The first part of this paper illustrates the typical analysis of urbanisation. However, population is a proxy for the size and importance of urban centres. We should use other characteristics, such as employment, value added in manufacturing, and investment—all things that sustain

urban centres and encourage the rural to urban movement that is the foundation of urbanisation. An important reason for not focusing on these variables in Fiji has been the lack of information on them. However, we face the danger of accepting population as a surrogate measure too easily, and not putting enough pressure on statistics providers to make data on other variables relating to urban places available.

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## Note

This is a revised version of a seminar paper originally presented to the Department of Geography, Royal Holloway and Bedford New College, University of London, Egham, London, 5 February 1988.

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