



## NEWS FROM

# Hemispheres

THE INTERNATIONAL OUTREACH CONSORTIUM  
AT THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS AT AUSTIN

### FALL 2009 IN THIS ISSUE: The City

**New York, Rio de Janeiro, Paris, Cairo, Mumbai, Moscow** The names of these cities immediately conjure up images of natural settings, landmarks, and architecture. Whether or not we have visited Paris, we can picture the Eiffel Tower and name half a dozen other important cultural sites there. Our knowledge of other countries is inextricably linked to their major cities: cities are centers of government, financial systems, cultural venues, and, of course, human settlement.

Today, cities are holding larger and larger percentages of the world's population. In 2005, the United Nations published a report on world urbanization that showed dramatic and rapid urbanization in the twentieth century:

Year	Percentage of global population living in cities	Total urban population
1900	13%	220 million
1950	29%	732 million
2005	40%	3.2 billion
2030	60% (projected)	4.9 billion (projected)

Urban populations are distributed among cities large and small. Over half of the urban population in the world lives in small cities with populations less than 500,000. But almost half of the urban population lives in extremely large cities with astounding population figures. The twentieth century witnessed the emergence of the megacity, with a population of 10 million or more. Tokyo, Mexico City, New York, São Paulo, and Mumbai are the biggest of these megacities. Greater Tokyo alone has a population that is more than that of the country of Canada. Mass rural-urban migration also has resulted in the primate city, a disproportionately large city that is commonly at least twice as large as the next largest city in a country (e.g., London, Paris). Today, Al Kuwait (Kuwait City) accounts for 69 percent of all urban residents in Kuwait, and Port-au-Prince contains 64 percent of Haiti's population. Primate cities are on the rise in the developing world.

In summary, whether in the developed or developing world, in large or small urban settlements, nearly half of the world's population currently lives in the city. But numbers alone do not tell the story of the city. In order to understand cities better, we have to examine their place in the world: their geographic setting, planning and construction, and historical development. Inspired by our summer teachers' institute, *Sense of Place: Intersecting Geography, History, and Culture*, this issue of *News from Hemispheres* focuses on the place of the city in the four world regions we represent.

In order to prepare students for the readings, we suggest that you discuss urbanization with your students: Why did cities first form? What function did cities historically serve? Why are cities important today? What do cities offer that people can't get in the countryside? How do cities accommodate growing populations, and is it always possible to plan for new people? If it is helpful, have students answer these questions about a specific city (e.g., New York).

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*Note:* Data from "World Urbanization Prospects: The 2005 Revision," Population Division, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, United Nations.  
<http://www.un.org/esa/population/publications/WUP2005/2005wup.htm>

## THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE *Islamic City*

**THERE ARE MANY DEFINITIONS** of the elements that make a city. In some places (e.g., medieval Europe), there are elements that can be identified as typical. With the cities of the Islamic empires, however, it is difficult to do this because the cities span the distance from Spain to western China, and they resemble each other very little. With Islamic cities, we should consider instead the way that they were planned and grew over time. Four characteristics in each city reflect its planning and development: (1) geographic environment; (2) settlements that preceded it; (3) society that built it; and (4) relationship between the ruler and the governed.

### *Geographic Environment*

The earliest “Islamic city” was Madina in what is now Saudi Arabia. A small oasis in the midst of a desert, it was the destination of the followers of Muhammad when they fled persecution in Mecca in 622 CE. The early Muslims were invited to set up their capital here. Even after Mecca was conquered in 630, Madina remained the capital of the Islamic state. However, after the Muslim armies began expanding the empire outside of the Arabian peninsula, Madina’s geographic limitations became apparent: it had to import water and food to sustain a rapidly growing population. Quickly thereafter, the capital moved to Damascus, which had ample supplies of both.

### *Earlier Settlements*

As Islam expanded beyond the Arabian peninsula, its armies conquered a number of cities. In some cases—Jerusalem and Alexandria, for example—a Muslim governor was appointed, but the city was largely left alone as long as it paid tribute to the state. In other cases—such as the city of Memphis in Egypt—a new city was built near existing settlements to garrison the army, but away from them so as not to disrupt trade (and, therefore, income from taxation).



Fes, Morocco

In others—such as Damascus—new and old merged. Over several hundred years, Damascus evolved from a Roman style city, laid out in a strict grid pattern, to a more “organic” city. As merchant stalls and squatter tents were pitched in open spaces, and were replaced over time with more permanent structures, a city with narrow alleyways and winding streets emerged. Although many European scholars originally considered this to be an example of urban “decay,” it actually demonstrates how cities change based on how they are used by their inhabitants.

### *Societal Values and Norms*

The earliest Islamic cities—Basra and Kufa, both in present day Iraq, and Fustat in Egypt—were military encampments. They were laid out in an orderly grid pattern. Many of these soldiers were Arab Bedouin, accustomed to encampments in the desert where tents were built with lots of space in between, and the new city layout reflected those origins. The early cities also were built next to rivers, but, at the orders of the Caliph ‘Umar, they were built on the side of the river nearest Madina. ‘Umar was concerned that the Arab armies, used to fighting in the desert, would have difficulty crossing a river quickly to give aid in the event of attack by enemy forces.

On the other hand, the mountain-dwelling Berbers, who formed the armies that conquered North Africa and Spain,

were accustomed to building mountaintop villages, packed closely together, with maze-like streets designed to confuse their enemies. The Berbers did not approve of strangers wandering their streets alone: visitors had to have a guide or be invited in by a local. The Islamic cities of this region—Granada, Córdoba, and Fes—all were designed in a manner reflecting their Berber origins.

The cities of Iran and India reflect another value:

military showmanship. The Persian and Mughal cities of Esfahan and Delhi incorporated large squares where troops on horseback, or elephants, could dazzle the population.

### *Relationship between Ruler and Governed*

In Madina, Muhammad’s house also served as the mosque. Worshippers and the entire community were used to having access to him day and night. In many early cities, this notion of access to the leader was emphasized in the city planning. Baghdad, the first planned imperial capital, was built as a round city. Gates at all compass points led to the Caliph’s palace in the middle, emphasizing that all citizens were equal before him. Cairo, on the other hand, was built as a strictly royal city, with high imposing walls and large gates, all designed to impart a sense of mystery and wonder about those who lived behind its walls.

### *Comprehension Questions*

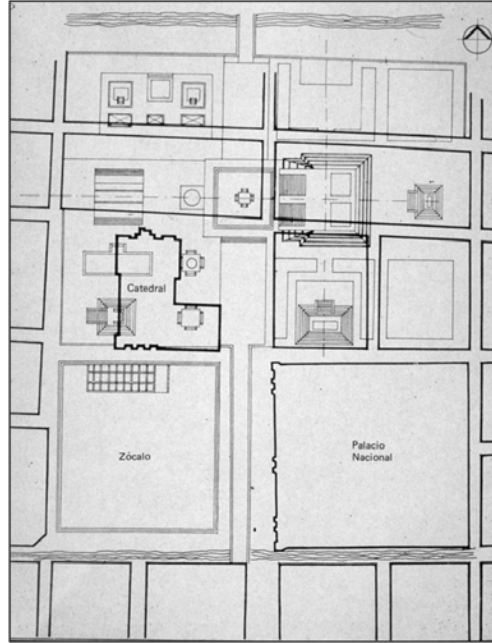
1. Why might someone consider the transition from a grid-like city to one with narrow winding alleys an example of “urban decay”? Why might one argue that this is not the case?
2. Although this article focuses on cities in the Islamic world, the four characteristics it discusses can easily be seen elsewhere. How does your town reflect them?

# Spanish Urban Planning

IN 1492, THE CATHOLIC MONARCHS, Isabella and Ferdinand, completed the Reconquest of Spain, expelling the last of the Muslim rulers from the southern city of Granada. They set to rebuild their country, rejecting the styles that were popular with the Muslim “invaders” who had ruled the region for nearly 800 years. Old cities like Toledo, Seville, and Córdoba were split into two primary areas—the mosque and the bazaar—in which residents carried out their public lives, with maze-like streets in surrounding residential neighborhoods showing little planning or regulation. The first sign of a reconquered city became the cathedral, rising triumphantly on the razed mosque. Municipal government buildings were built close to the cathedral, to symbolize the close connection between church and state. Cities with meandering streets, where no one but locals could find their way around, became much more orderly to accommodate large religious processions and public festivals.

After the unification of Spain, Isabella and Ferdinand turned to formal urban planning in reaction against the informality and lack of order of Islamic cities. They built new cities on a grid system, with a large plaza for the church and municipal government. Their urban planning ideas were based on ancient Roman building regulations that had been brought to Spain in the third century BCE. Remnants of Roman rule could still be seen in Spain: excellent networks of roads, orderly town layout, and formal building practices. The Romans used city planning as a way to impose Roman culture and institutions on local residents. Isabella and Ferdinand sought to do the same: through urban planning, they would impose a new order—one that overturned the eight centuries of Muslim rule—on their subjects.

As they rebuilt Spain, they also invested in an endeavor that would change history: they funded Christopher Columbus’s expedition to search for a western route to the Indies. When the



Plan showing the grid of downtown Mexico City superimposed on Tenochtitlán

Spaniards arrived in Mesoamerica, they found advanced civilizations with sophisticated cities of their own. Tenochtitlán, capital of the Aztec empire, was a well-planned symmetrical city with wide, open streets. It likely had more than 200,000 residents, making it larger than most cities in Europe—and any city in Spain—at the time. As they had done in Spain, the Spanish built their own city on the ruins of the conquered Tenochtitlán. They built churches on the old temple sites and constructed government buildings nearby. The Spanish also destroyed and rebuilt on the ruins of Cusco, Peru, capital of the Inca empire. After centuries of war in Spain, the Spanish understood the effectiveness of this symbolic act. Their rebuilt cities sent the message that power had changed hands.

Throughout most of the region, however, the Spanish built new cities so that they could set up administrative and government functions to control and exploit the territory. Throughout the Americas, they implemented strict urban planning codes. As early as 1513, King Ferdinand gave specific directions to Pedro Arias de Ávila, the Spanish colonial administrator who

founded Panama City, to divide new towns carefully according to a definite plan, because “if not started with form, they will never attain it.” In 1573, the Spanish laws for city planning were codified in the “Royal Ordinances Concerning the Laying Out of Towns,” signed by King Phillip II. The laws regularized the establishment of towns and missions, specifying the size of the town plaza (proportional to the population) and the location of church and government buildings (which should be built so as to give the church greater importance). Spanish cities like Saint Augustine, Florida, founded in 1565, adhered to codes established by Phillip. Finally, in 1680, Charles II issued the “Compilation of the Laws of the Kingdoms of the Indies” (also known as the “Laws of the Indies”), the definitive laws that governed the development of cities in Spanish America.

Colonists who wanted to create new settlements had to comply with 148 regulations, including the construction of all buildings in one style so that the town would be attractive. San Antonio, Texas, was built according to this set of laws. The incredibly detailed laws distanced Spain and its territories from the historical Islamic influence and linked it directly back to its Roman roots. Spain—by literally building on past structures and metaphorically building on its Roman heritage—influenced centuries of urban planning that are still evident throughout the Americas.

## Comprehension Questions

1. What are the key differences between Islamic and Spanish cities? Cite examples from the article.
2. How did Spain’s history affect the development of cities in Spanish America?
3. St. Augustine and San Antonio were established under Spanish guidelines. Conduct some research to find examples of other U.S. cities built by the Spanish. Where are these cities located? What do you know about the history of the regions in which the cities are located?



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**CITY PLANNERS OFTEN** have to contend with issues such as zoning, traffic, and growth management. In Yakutsk, a city just 280 miles below the Arctic Circle, they face additional problems: with an average winter temperature of  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$  and summer highs reaching  $80^{\circ}\text{F}$ , the planners in the coldest city in the world have to deal with challenges that literally can mean life or death for their citizens.

The Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) is a region in the Far East of Russia. A huge territory of taiga and tundra, 40 percent of Yakutia is above the Arctic Circle. Yakutia has a “continental” climate with an extreme range of temperatures between summer and winter. Some of the coldest temperatures in the northern hemisphere have been recorded in Yakutia (down to  $-94^{\circ}\text{F}$ ), and temperatures remain below freezing for seven months of the year. Despite these harsh conditions, life continues normally throughout the winter, and school is canceled only if the temperature dips below  $-70^{\circ}\text{F}$ . The brief summers are hot, averaging in the 70s but with occasional record highs in the 90s.

Citizens of Yakutsk, the capital city, adjust to this cycle of freeze and thaw each year, but for buildings it is more

problematic. The problem is permafrost, which is soil or rock that remains frozen under the surface of the earth. While the deeper layers remain frozen year-round, the upper layer thaws and freezes seasonally. During the short summer, the top layer of soil melts down to a depth of about 10 feet. Because the lower layers are still frozen, the ground cannot absorb the water; the top layer becomes boggy, causing the ground to shift and settle, cracking foundations and destroying buildings.

Native Yakut populations historically were nomads, following the herds and living in seasonal camps that enabled them to adapt to the changing ground conditions. Yakutsk is located on the banks of the Lena, a mighty river that flows from the middle of Siberia north to the Arctic Sea. A fort was originally founded in 1632 by Russian cossack explorers as a base for further eastward expansion. In the late 1800s, gold and other valuable minerals were discovered in the region, and the population of Yakutsk boomed. Wooden buildings were constructed, but they tended to shift during annual thaws. Additionally, the heat of the buildings during the bitter winters caused the top layer of permafrost to melt, increasing the rapidity of ground settling.

Immigration to Yakutia peaked in the 1950s when diamonds were discovered. The Soviet government lured ambitious citizens to the region with promises of salaries two to three times the national average and vacations three times longer than usual. The increased population led to the construction of large concrete high-rise buildings, which were even more difficult to keep stable on permafrost foundations. One architectural solution was to use wooden supports driven deep into the ground through the permafrost. The wood freezes as hard as concrete and the stilts ensure that the warmth of the building is not conducted to the ground and the soil stays frozen. The air space below the building acts as insulation, maintaining the cold in the winter and shading the soil in the summer, thus minimizing the shifting of the ground and its disastrous consequences.

In addition, buildings have to be constructed so as to protect people from freezing. Triple-glazed windows are used to trap layers of air as insulation, and a system of entryways with a series of three staggered doorways keeps buildings from losing too much heat. At  $-40^{\circ}\text{F}$ , a thick fog created by exhalations and car exhaust hovers over the city. Cars must crawl through the fog over the slippery roads. Long-distance transportation is particularly affected by the weather. There are no railroads that reach Yakutsk, and the roads out of the city, which cannot be asphalted due to the shifting ground, are impassably muddy in the summer. Another mode of distance transportation is on the Lena river—by boat during the summer and on sturdy ice roads in the winter—although during spring and fall when the river is not yet completely frozen, ice floes make navigating the river dangerous. In general, the best route in and out of Yakutsk is by plane. In the winter, however, flights are canceled when the thermometer dips below  $-68^{\circ}\text{F}$ , as at that temperature rubber becomes brittle and plane tires can shatter upon landing.

Overall, humans have shown that they can adapt and live in the most inhospitable areas, something that is being proven every day in Yakutsk.

### Comprehension Questions

1. How do climate and conditions affect the way cities grow and develop?
2. How do you think the height of a building is affected by permafrost?
3. What impact might a  $5^{\circ}$  global temperature increase have on Yakutsk?

# Pune 2006-07

*Pune is the eighth largest city in India, and the second largest in the state of Maharashtra, after Mumbai. With a predominantly Marathi-speaking population, Pune is closely associated with Marathi art, literature, drama, and religious beliefs. The city also is known for its educational facilities, including nine universities. In the last decade, Pune has emerged as a prominent location for information technology and manufacturing companies. Cinemas, discos, and clubs also have opened as college students and young professionals make their presence felt. Below is an excerpt from anthropologist Mathangi Krishnamurthy, who writes of her experience conducting fieldwork in the city.*

**OVER 2006 AND 2007**, I spent fifteen months in the Western Indian city of Pune, exploring the ways call centers have influenced life in the city. Pune is not new to me; I spent my undergraduate years as well as part of my working life in this city. My memories are of narrow roads, bicycles and scooters, teeming students, and a fondness for siestas. Pune's character was historical and its charm lay in its slowness. It was known for its rich cultural past, its old-world lifestyle, and an air of high culture. But over the course of my fieldwork, I had occasion to revise this nostalgic portrait. The city that used to be known as the Oxford of the East has become host to numerous information technology outfits as a result of rampant investment and enthusiastic government support. It has reinvented itself from a retirement haven and an educational center into a bustling, crowded metropolis of traffic jams, malls, and multiplexes.

Call centers are located on the outskirts of Pune in newly developed business centers on the edges of older cosmopolitan areas. A large portion of work in the industry is performed during the night to service the workday of the American or British consumer or business. Workers live across various residential areas, and call centers are required to provide cab services so that they can travel safely to their workspaces



Photo by Senthil Kumaran

at night. These cabs roam the city landscape seeking to make sense of the organized and not-so-organized pattern of paved streets, dirt roads, and flyovers.

I spent most of my day meeting call center workers for interviews at various coffee shops throughout the city. The traffic had gotten worse than I remembered, the motorists more dangerous, and the roads more cramped. The cars were swankier, the languages more numerous, and the retail spaces tighter and brighter. Yet, many signs of the old Pune persevered. For example, right off Dhole Patil and Boat Club Roads, opposite Sohrab Hall with its retail stores and fashion houses, stands Vohuman "Irani" Café. The menu at Vohuman has not changed in many years. The cheese omelettes and toast are still worth the wait. The cafe even boasts a fan club on Facebook with more than 1,900 members. Such cafes best represent the lore regarding the unfriendliness of an inward-looking old Pune. As Nissim Ezekiel describes Irani cafes: No talking to cashier/ No smoking/ No fighting/ No credit/ No outside food/ No sitting long/ No talking loud/ No spitting/ No bargaining/ No water to outsiders/ No change/ No telephone/ No match sticks/ No discussing gambling/ No newspaper/ No combing/ No beef/ No leg on chair/ No hard liquor allowed/ No address enquiry/ — By order

Old Pune also persists in the *peths*, administrative regions named after days of the week when the local market would set anchor in that area. While significantly different from each other, the *peths* symbolize the parts of Pune that have modernized with caution. Billboards for netcafes jostle with homeopathic clinics and hole in the wall

stores. Call center cabs are at their ignorant worst when attempting to fetch workers from dimly lit streets and unnamed apartment buildings.

My often unexpected and most informative respondents were wayfarers and old city-dwellers as much as call center workers. Rickshaw drivers told me how the outsiders, meaning the new blue- and white-collar workers from northern India, had changed the city and made it more dangerous; a Baskin Robbins franchisee shared stories of quitting a call center because it hurt his pride to be corrected every time he spoke English; and a hip retail store owner expressed hope that rising salaries would allow consumers to refine their clothing tastes (and buy from her store). My homeopath also shared with me his experiences of call center maladies and young patients with high stress levels and bad backs.

So I found myself rediscovering Pune as I examined the call center industry. In tentatively ending this long short tale, I have no single story to offer.

### Comprehension Questions

1. The author refers to a "nostalgic portrait" of the city and an "old Pune." What does she mean? What characterizes the "old Pune"? Cite examples from the text.
2. According to the author, call centers have played a key role in shaping a "new Pune." How have they changed life in the city? Cite examples from the text.
3. Do you think the author believes that a "new Pune" has erased the "old Pune"? Why or why not? Support your answer with evidence from the article.

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## SPRING BREAK IN EGYPT

MARCH 11–21, 2010

The Center for Middle Eastern Studies will conduct a ten-day tour of Egypt over spring break designed especially for K–12 educators. The tour will include visits to Cairo (Egypt's capital and the largest city in the Arab world), sites of contemporary and historic importance, and a three-night Nile cruise in upper Egypt. We will also spend time with community organizations in areas off the beaten path. Space is limited, and preference will be given to those who teach world cultures, history, and geography.

For more information, please contact Christopher Rose at <csrose@austin.utexas.edu> or 512-471-3582.

## ARTS & EMPOWERMENT IN BRAZIL

*Seminar and Curriculum Development Project for Educators*

JULY 2010

The Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies and Texas Performing Arts will present a unique opportunity to fourteen secondary educators to learn how performing artists in Salvador, Belo Horizonte, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo provide opportunities that transform the personal, social, and economic potential of youth from Brazil's poorest communities. The four-week seminar will include lectures, discussions with artists and students, and observation of classes, rehearsals, and performances.

For more information, please contact Natalie Arsenault at <n.arsenault@mail.utexas.edu> or 512-232-2404.

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