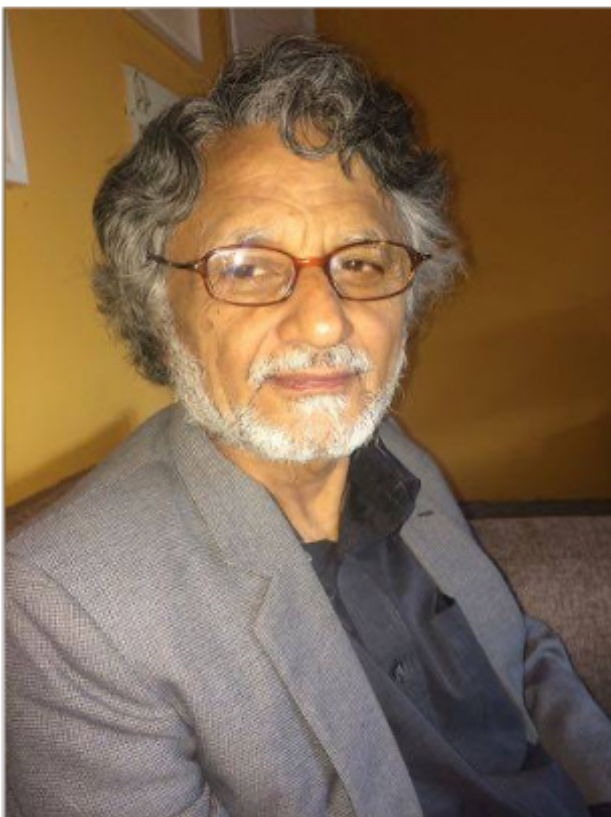


Reza Ali



Reza Ali is honorary director of the Urbanization Research Programme focusing on understanding of the urbanization process, its dynamics and impact. In 2013, the Programme produced its monumental work, *Pakistan: An Emerging Spatial Geography*.

Q. Almost two decades since you estimated the actual percentage of urbanization in Pakistan – why do you think the myth of ‘rural Pakistan’ still persists in certain policy circles?

A. We have a new series covering the 1981, 1998 and 2017 preliminary results for Pakistan provinces and sub-provincial regions. So if someone is interested, this is all available.

But Pakistan is a rural country and the future of our eco-survival will be decided in the rural space. So for me rural Pakistan is not a myth but a social, economic and cultural reality and the ultimate refuge in the battle for our survival as a species.

Q. Do you think the urban population in censuses are under-reported in Pakistan?

A. No, I don't think so.

Q. Do you think master planning of cities can assist in creating cities that are public-friendly with robust public service delivery mechanisms?

A. This is a question of class and power. We cannot have pro-poor cities given our power structure. Our planners cannot produce people-friendly plans as they do not work for the people but for those who have political and economic power, and even if they themselves come from more humble backgrounds their aspirations do not allow for this. Then, at least in Pakistan, our planning and architecture training schools do not expose them to the issues of our people (there are a few notable exceptions in Karachi). However, this does not mean there is nothing that can be done. We can have investment projects and grand designs for reforms. And we can build flyovers and rapid transit systems. But people may really not figure in all this.