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URBANIZATION: STATUS AND PROBLEM

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Worldwide, urban population is now growing rapidly. There are already more people living in urban then in rural areas and by the middle of the 21st century two-thirds of the world population may reside in urban areas - about 6.4 billion people.

The urban population of the world has changed dramatically over the past few decades: In 1950, far more than two-thirds of all urban residents lived in Europe (30%), Latin America (29%) and Northern America (11%). Some 26% of all urban residents lived in Asia. However, only 3% of the urban population of the world was residing in Africa.

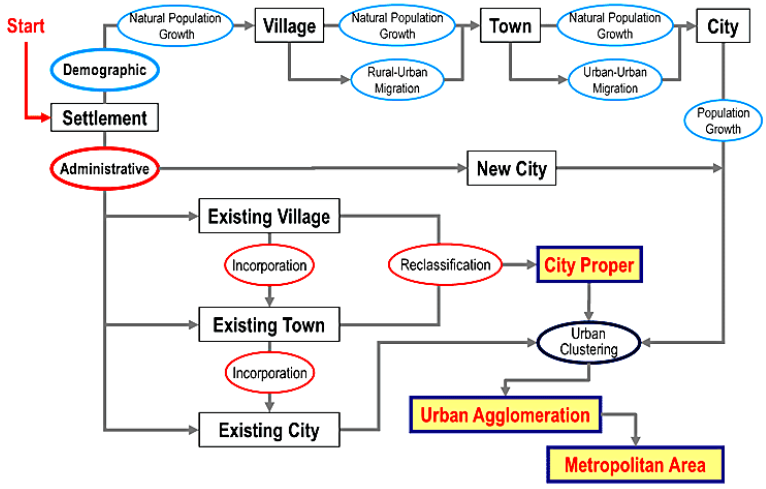
Today, the geographical distribution of urban population around the world is entirely different: 53% of all urban residents are Asian, and already 12% are African. Latin America's and Europe's share of the urban world population has significantly declined to 14% and 13%, respectively; Northern America is now only home to 7% of the urban world population.

- Africa's population is still predominantly rural. However the urban population is rising rapidly. Within one generation (35 years) Africa's urban population may be almost 1.4 billion people - as compared to a rural population of "only" 1 billion.
- In Asia we can still find large rural populations. Currently, there are some 2.3 billion people residing in the rural areas of Asia.
- However, the rural population has been declining since 2000 and it will further decline over the next decades. By 2050, Asia will have only 1.85 billion rural residents. Asia's urban population, on the other hand, has been rising rapidly and will reach some 3.3 billion by 2050.
- Europe's rural population has been declining since the early 1950s, while the urban population has been growing. Today, Europe (including the Russian Federation) has some 202 million rural and about 538 urban residents. By 2050, Europe rural population will decline to 188 million; the urban population will slightly increase to 555 million.
- Latin America and the Caribbean have been highly urbanized since the 1950s. Today, the region has about 547 million urban residents, but only 129 million people living in rural areas. Over the next 35 years the rural population in Latin America and the Caribbean will decline to 108 million, while the urban population will increase to 581 million.
- Northern America: Here the rural population has been almost constant over the last 65 years. In 1950, 62 million resided in rural areas; today there are 66 million rural residents.

However, the number of rural residents will decline in the future. In 2050 Northern America is projected to have a rural population of only 56 million.

By 2050 that is in just one generation three-quarters of the urban world population will reside in Africa and Asia. This is a complete reversal of the situation just 100 years ago. Some 22% of the urban world population will reside in Africa, 54% in Asia. Europe, Latin America and the Caribbean, and Northern America will account for just 9%, 9% and 6% of the urban population of the world.

Estimating the population of urban agglomerations over historical time periods is a major challenge due to the complexity of the urban growth process. Villages can become towns, towns can grow into cities, and cities can be transformed into urban agglomerations in a number of ways:



- They may increase due to natural population growth - as a result of a larger number of births than deaths; they may grow due to rural-urban or urban-urban migration; or they may emerge as a result of administrative changes.
- These administrative changes can also involve several different processes: They may include the incorporation of sub-urban areas or neighboring towns into a larger city or the foundation of a completely new city - as was the case with several newly established national capitals. Administrative changes also include the re-naming of urban agglomerations - particularly those that had foreign names been assigned during the colonial period.

Factors of urbanization **Five major factors** stand out as determinants of city growth and urbanization. While each of these has had its effects upon urban expansion in various periods of history, the period beginning roughly with the middle of eighteenth century saw them intensified. In a sense, it is rapid changes in these factors which have created what is loosely called modern society, typified by industrialization and urbanization.

"Urbanization" refers to:

- process of people moving to cities or other densely settled areas
- changes in the proportion of the population of a nation living in urban places
- changes in social organization that occur as a consequence of population concentration
- Urbanization is thus a process—the process by which rural areas become transformed into urban areas.

Agricultural revolution stands as the leading factor that paved the way for the process of urbanization. For the emergence and growth of cities, the development of agricultural surplus was a prerequisite. The generation of surplus released a significant proportion of manpower from the land and opened the avenues to follow different pursuits. The release of population from the necessity of producing food led to the concentration of people in cities and permitted this section of population to engage in non-agricultural endeavors characteristic of city life. The application of technology to agriculture led to increase in agricultural production. The proportion of agricultural workers supporting those engaged in non-agricultural activities decreased and the productivity per worker increased due to the application of science of chemistry and genetics in the agriculture.

The second major factor behind urbanization is the **technological revolution.** The invention of steam engine, development of mass production techniques, factory system made possible the agglomeration of people in a densely settled pattern. The application of steam as the source of power for industry and transport was a development which revolutionized the nineteenth century. Steam not only made possible a vast increase in man's potential means of subsistence and consequently in his numbers but indirectly by releasing a rapidly increasing proportion of population from the actual tilling of the soil, it became an overwhelming force in city-ward migration and played a major role in determining the internal structure of the city and of economic organization of which it became the nucleus. Prior to this development, provisioning and supplying of raw materials to the city were difficult. The centripetal force of steam, thus played a significant role in the creation of large, dense and rapidly grown urban centres. The city requires a means of livelihood for its populace, who in turn can exist apart from the land only so far as a livelihood and an agricultural surplus permit them. Because of the fact that special conditions exist in particular localities, mass production may be specialized. The power of the factory to support large number of people depends upon the availability not only of food but also access to the products of a highly varied industrial system. A city which produces large amounts of one product could not support its workers unless the products of other cities could be brought in by the exchange of commodities. A critical factor recognized in the increased productivity was thus the utilization of non-human energy in production-the emergence of the machine, initially powered by natural forces of water and wind, then by steam and subsequently by mineral fuels or electricity derived there from, with atomic energy in prospect. Thus it was the centripetal force of steam which eventually led to the concentration of manufacturing, managerial and wholesale distributing activities and population into large urban areas.

The commercial revolution is the next factor in the growth of urbanization. The development of world markets, exchange systems and radically improved means of transport and communication allowed cities to develop under conditions which otherwise would have prevented their appearance. Cities located in areas which dictate a high degree of

specialization are possible as consequence of trade and transport, and indeed it is no longer necessary nor uncommon for a city to depend heavily upon its own immediate hinterland for the needed agricultural surplus. In fact it is much more the case that cities are supported by agricultural products from far flung, interrelated trade system which embraces most of the earth. Historically, the impetus to the city growth given by the expansion of trade actually preceded the principle effects of industrialization. The commercial revolution in juxtaposition with revolution in communication technology, narrowed down the physical distance and led to the shrinkage of space which ultimately made the world interdependent. As a result, the developments in one part of the world necessarily had influence and impact on the other parts of the world, diffusing all over the globe. This resulted in the less reliance of cities on local circumstances and more upon the global conditions.

Increased efficiency of transportation is the next important factor in the ushering of urbanization. Cities being the centre of trade, the transportation system forms the lifeline of the thriving city life. The advances made in the long distance transportation like steam rail road and consequently motor car had a great impact on the urban growth. The increased efficiency of transport facilitated the movement of goods and people quickly and at lower costs from place to place, within the city as well as between the city and its hinterland. The development of transportation facility thus paved way for the growth of metropolitan centers of today. The flexibility, speed and individualization of transport effected by internal combustion engine as embodied in the automobile and the air plane and new technological devices likely altered the structure of urban community and national life profoundly.

The introduction of electricity as a new force in the automobile industry had significant implications for the process of urbanization. The use of electricity exercised a centrifugal influence upon the growth of the cities, thus paving the way for the emergence of metropolis and megalopolis. The fifth factor, the demographic revolution, is a consequence of the developments that took place in the field of agriculture, commerce, industry and transportation. The appearance of urban, industrial society was marked by the developments in the field of medical sciences. The discoveries in the medical field certainly led to improvement in the health conditions of the people by providing cures to a multitude of ailments and diseases. This led to sharp decreases in mortality. Birth rates, however, did not fell so rapidly and one result was a phenomenal growth of the population in western society during the nineteenth and early twentieth century's. These population increments in large measure found their way either to colonial agricultural lands or to the cities. The demographic evolution in this way contributed heavily to the needs of the cities for an increasing labour force and consumer markets.

Urbanized societies, in which a majority of the people live crowded together in towns and cities, represent a new and fundamental step in man’s social evolution. The way cities have influenced and shaped social life throughout the history has led the scholars of urban studies to delve into the origin and development of the urban form. Cities are products of the process

of urbanization. Urbanization is a very complex phenomenon, with myraid dimensions. However, size of the place has been the most widely used criteria in the definition of urban population. Urban areas have a higher concentration of population in a limited area and thus a higher density and social heterogeneity.

Major Global Urbanization Problems

Urbanization is the movement of people from the countryside or rural areas to go to more developed urban areas like towns and cities. This leads to rapid growth in these areas. The movements are usually motivated by the belief that urban areas have more to offer in terms of growth, job opportunities, and development than the rural areas.

Advantages	Disadvantages
Labor opportunities: office jobs, high-tech jobs, jobs in service industries (banks, retail, etc.), government & research jobs	**Transportation:** Congestion, crowding, waste of time, pollution, dirt, noise, unpleasant environment
Higher Education: Secondary schools, colleges, universities, research centers	**Housing:** Small, extremely expensive apartments that consume large part of income, sprawling of slums and suburbs
Culture & entertainment: Museums, theatres, concert halls, sports facilities	**Pollution:** smog, dust, trash, permanent noise, graffiti, neglected public spaces
Health: Hospitals, medical specialists, diagnostic labs	**Environment:** Ugly, artificial environment, lack of green space, bad architecture
Retirement: retirement homes, hospices, social services	**Crime:** high violent crime, drugs, prostitution, street gangs, vandalism, urban riots
Energy: Stable electricity, gas for heating, cooling, cooking	**Family life:** Isolation, little space for children, lack of playgrounds, badly designed playgrounds, drugs in schools, children grow-up in artificial environment
Communication infrastructure: Cable TV, high-speed Internet	**Social relations:** Anonymity, lack of social contact and control, loneliness, anomie
Other infrastructure: sanitation, freshwater, emergency services, international airport	**Health:** Rapid spread of infectious diseases, epidemics, asthma, lack of exercise
Commerce: shopping, eating-out, supermarkets	**Food:** Expensive, processed food, fast food

Urbanization primarily stems from the industrial revolution as it played a big part in bringing people from rural areas to the developing industrial urban areas, which had factory jobs that rendered agricultural jobs less popular. In modern times, urbanization is taking place on a large global scale as most of the development projects tend to focus more on towns and cities.

This is also evident in both developing and developed countries as governments and municipalities allocate urban areas more resources than rural areas, which encourages urbanization.

Currently, half of the total population of the world lives in urban cities, a trend that is definitely going to continue for years to come. Despite urbanization creating opportunities for people who take the leap to look for greener pastures in urban areas, it is often faced with a lot of challenges which this article looks at in-depth

Overcrowding or Overpopulation

is a situation where a lot of people accumulate in a rather limited space that is unable to accommodate them without succumbing to the pressures around it properly. As a result of urbanization, overcrowding is a persistent problem as a large number of people are consistently moving to urban areas on a daily basis.

This leads to cities growing in population and getting crammed when it gets beyond its capacity. When a city is at maximum or excess capacity, the people tend to compete over the limited and

scarce resources such as electricity, water, transport, and the main reason they make a move, employment.

Unemployment

Is another urbanization problem. What is surprising is that a big percentage of youth who are unemployed belong to well raised and educated families. The job opportunities might be more in urban areas and also pay more, but as the number of people continues to grow, the jobs become even harder to find and retain.

Companies find themselves retrenching employees as well as putting even more people out of a job. All these factors put together to make the unemployment rate at an alarming high in urban areas.

In recent times, with the Covid-19 outbreak, the unemployment rates have also increased manifolds. With people being laid off at an alarming rate, more and more people are becoming unemployed every day. Companies are retaining just the bare minimum number of employees

It is alarming because, with the pandemic at our doors, we are facing the evils of urbanization even more. The jobs that had to be created once for fending the needs of the ever-growing urban population are being forced to shut down in the face of a huge economic crisis.

Housing problems

Tend to develop when people move to cities and overcrowd in them. If the cities were not well prepared for the numbers, the houses become more scarce. It is even harder to settle people who come to cities and don't end up getting employed or those who settle in as immigrants. Some of these people are unable to afford to build their own homes or even paying rent. The problem grows in intensity as the materials required to build new houses become more and more insufficient. Limited space also makes it difficult to facilitate construction, and financial resources may even be scarce as they become primarily channeled into other development and social safety net programs other than housing. This only adds to the problem.

Development of slums

Urbanization and industrialization make a lot of people move to the urban areas, but they do not prepare them for the conditions they are likely to face when they arrive there. Urban areas tend to have a high cost of living. The housing problems fuel this even more as all the people who move to urban areas cannot be adequately accommodated.This leads to the advent and growth of slums as safe havens for those who cannot afford the high costs of rent or lack substantial money to purchase apartments or build homes in urban areas. The slums arise from the construction of houses on under-developed or undervalued land due to how scarce and expensive apartments or land is in urban areas.

The houses in slums are often poorly constructed and most of the time lack basic amenities like clean water and proper sanitation. They are built to cater to low-income urban earners. Some of these settlements are even illegal and may be set up next to dumpsites, heavily polluted areas, or natural disaster risk areas such as swampy and mudflow areas.

Sanitation problems

Are rampant in urban areas due to the overpopulation that is seen in many of the areas people settle. The local governments find it hard to properly set up and manage a proper sewerage system due to the rampant bulge of the human population. The fast increase in people's population sometimes overwhelms the local government's resource capacity to construct the required sanitation and sewage systems.

Sometimes, the existing sewerage systems may not have adequate human as well as the infrastructural capacity to treat and manage the waste. So instead, it is drained into the water sources – polluting them and endangering the health of urban dwellers who may not only contract harmful water-borne diseases but also consume water contaminated with industrial waste and heavy metals.

Water shortage problems

Water is very important for sustaining life. The rampant growth of the population in urban areas makes the water very scarce as the normal supply becomes strained and inadequate to properly meet the demands of the large population.The water problems may worsen with the increase in water pollution due to poor sewerage systems and a lack of preventive measures for managing local water pollution.

Health hazards

People living in congested urban areas expose them to a lot of risks. The poor sanitation, water problems, and living in high-risk areas like next to dumpsites leads to disease of all kinds. To make matters worse, people in these areas often do not have proper access to health care services, which makes the disease much harder to cure, and at times, they even lead to death. In the slums, people are often diagnosed with diseases like infertility, food poisoning, allergies, asthma, cardiovascular complication, respiratory failure, cancer, and death. This can all be accredited to the overall pollution that is experienced in these urban areas.

With the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the problem that global urbanization poses can be felt even more. Now that social distancing has become absolutely essential, urbanization has become the greatest health hazard of all times. In developing countries, especially, the problem is even more. The slum areas are the worst affected. It is in these areas that the pandemic is spreading at a much higher rate. In most cases, the cases reported here are severe, and the fatality rate is very high. Here it is worth mentioning that, when the pandemic started spreading in India, people were

really concerned about it spreading in Dharavi, India's largest slum situated in Mumbai. When it spread there, it was by sheer luck that it could be controlled at the earliest.

Degraded environmental quality

This is one of the most common effects of urbanization. The congestion of people in limited spaces and areas reduces the quality of air, contaminates water, and pollutes the noise and land. This leads to very poor environmental conditions for people to live and is often detrimental to the health of these people. There is also the need to improve the infrastructure so as to accommodate the rise in population by erecting new buildings and amenities.

This leads to the destruction of forest and natural habitats in order to acquire the materials required. Industrial waste poured to the river and lakes contaminates the water, and the noise brought about by the numerous human activities carried out sums up the many effects urbanizations bring in slum areas. The more the urban population, the more pollution is caused by automobiles. Although carpooling is a relatively better practice, not everyone has come to terms with it. Most of the people prefer using their personal vehicles. Even if people opt for carpooling or public transport, it does not really help much. Every day, millions of people avail of the commutes, which means, tens and thousands of vehicles run on the streets every single day. Most of these vehicles run on fossil fuels and, as a result, cause an immense amount of air pollution and degrades the quality of the air considerably.

Disposal of trash

Urbanization has led to many factors that have made the trash disposal very difficult. The urban cities produce a lot of waste on a daily basis that they cannot properly dispose of, this subjects the people living in these areas to multiple health risks. The areas that were initially set aside to accommodate trash disposal needs become full, and some of them are inhabited by slum people who move close to such areas. Diseases are easily spread, with some often spread by the insects and animals that frequent the dumping site areas and then get into contact with water that people consume. The trash fills are also located in areas where people live, which subject them to many of these health hazards.

Transportation problems

A lot of people are often moving around in between their workplaces and their homes; this more often leads to traffic jams and congestions. The number of people who own cars is growing every year, especially in urban areas and the public transport system is very unreliable.The number of cars increases, and as a result of this, the traffic problems continue to worsen. This does not only lead to blockages in traffics but increases the chances of people getting involved in traffic accidents and urban air pollution.

Urban crime

The more people are congested in urban areas, the higher the rate of unemployment as the available jobs are not enough to accommodate all. Resources have also become scarce, and not everyone has access to essential social services, which lead the disadvantaged to get into substance abuse, violence, burglary, and organized crime.

Lack of employment also increases poverty, which, as a result, makes it even harder for people to get the essential things they need to survive. People then turn to poverty-related crimes such as theft, conning, and organized crime as a way of earning a living. Such criminal activities, mainly those rampant in urban areas due to poverty and lack of job opportunities, include kidnapping, robbery, carjacking, rape, and even murder. These acts make cities very hard for people to live in as they are not guaranteed their safety, especially for victims who cannot defend themselves in such situations.

Increased rates of poverty

Global urbanization ultimately leads to poverty. As the rates of unemployment increases, more and more people continue to sink beneath the poverty line. Also, as the population increases and the urban areas become more and more congested, the state government starts losing track of the population.

As it does so, in some cases, it also fails to provide for all the people adequately. It ultimately leads to extreme forms of poverty where people have to live on the streets with only a little or nothing to eat or to drink.

As a result of poverty, the standard of living of people also decreases to a point where it can also sometimes be rendered as inhuman. In a world where the rich are constantly becoming richer, and the poor are constantly becoming poorer, poverty is by far one of the largest threats to human existence.

SDG-Goal 11 Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable:

There is a strong link between the quality of life in cities and how cities draw on and manage the natural resources available to them. To date, the trend towards urbanization has been

accompanied by increased pressure on the environment and accelerated demand for basic services, infrastructure, jobs, land, and affordable housing, particularly for the nearly 1 billion urban poor who live in informal settlements.

Due to their high concentration of people, infrastructures, housing and economic activities, cities are particularly vulnerable to climate change and natural disasters impacts. Building urban resilience is crucial to avoid human, social and economic losses while improving the sustainability of urbanization processes is needed to protect the environment and mitigate disaster risk and climate change.

Resource efficient cities combine greater productivity and innovation with lower costs and reduced environmental impacts, while providing increased opportunities for consumer choices and sustainable lifestyles.

The world's cities occupy just 3 per cent of the Earth's land, but account for 60-80 per cent of energy consumption and 75 per cent of carbon emissions.

Targets linked to the environment:

- Target 11.2: By 2030 provide access to safe, affordable, accessible and sustainable transport systems for all, improving road safety, notably by expanding public transport, with special attention to the needs of those in vulnerable situations, women, children, persons with disabilities and older persons
- Target 11.3: By 2030, enhance inclusive and sustainable urbanization and capacity for participatory, integrated and sustainable human settlement planning and management in all countries
- Target 11.4: Strengthen efforts to protect and safeguard the world's cultural and natural heritage
- Target 11.5: By 2030, significantly reduce the number of deaths and the number of people affected and substantially decrease the direct economic losses relative to global gross domestic product caused by disasters, including water-related disasters, with a focus on protecting the poor and people in vulnerable situations

- Target 11.6: By 2030, reduce the adverse per capita environmental impact of cities, including by paying special attention to air quality and municipal and other waste management
- Target 11.7: By 2030, provide universal access to safe, inclusive and accessible, green and public spaces, in particular for women and children, older persons and persons with disabilities
- Target 11.a: Support positive economic, social and environmental links between urban, per-urban and rural areas by strengthening national and regional development planning
- Target 11.b: By 2020, substantially increase the number of cities and human settlements adopting and implementing integrated policies and plans towards inclusion, resource efficiency, mitigation and adaptation to climate change, resilience to disasters, and develop and implement, in line with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030, holistic disaster risk management at all levels