Urbanization

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# Urbanization/CASE

Urbanization refers to the reallocation from a rustic to an urban social order due to shifts in global variants. It is a product of economic, political and social advancement that has paved the way for the emergence of large metropolis, cause a spike in the population density of the region. A survey predicted that half of the earth’s inhabitants would reside in urban centers towards the end of 2008 (United Nations).

Intimately connected to the processes of modernization, industrialization and rationalization, the phenomenon has it genesis in the Renaissance period. Continuous attacks by the Turks caused the Christians to migrate from the east to the west of Europe. Consequently, the volume of trade rose and European cities besides the coastline progresses impressively. An additional push was given to urbanization upon the advent of the Industrial Revolution; the population density of European and American cities continued to intensify. For instance, the city of Chicago saw it population rise from fifteen individuals to over twenty million in a timeframe of seventy eight year. Yet, the phenomenon took hold of the Asian and African region only after sovereignty from colonial subjugation; in the first and second half of the 20th century, respectively (Howard Gillette Jr.).

As mentioned before, the process of urbanization takes place when individuals abandon their rural lifestyle and migrate to developed cities in anticipation of a superior standard of living. This is typically the case with developing nations; residents of rural localities fall prey to volatile weather conditions and have to put up with natural disasters such as floods and droughts which have the potential to wreck havoc in their lives. As a result, the vast majority of farmers have started to move to developed metropolis. The best example of this is evident in Karnataka, India; farmers from the drought struck regions of Gulbarga and Raichur regions have migrated to Bangalore to flee paucity. Comparatively, urban centers present prospects of a better life and are generally recognized as places where wealth is centralized. A huge number of educational institutions, work opportunities and healthcare are available only within cities, further adding to the huge list of woes of the rural residents. The phenomenon also takes place as a direct result of individual and corporate attempts to decrease the cost and time involved in commuting while simultaneously cultivating more lucrative employment opportunities, better education, safer housing and cheaper transportation. Residing in urban areas allows the individuals and their families to benefit from the opportunities presented by diversity, proximity and free market competition (Jeremy Nowak).

Another core reason that propels people towards developed cities is the dearth of economic potential within the confines of the rural areas. In addition, “rural flight” is a frequently observed occurrence; on minute family operated farms, it is usually impossible to advance one's standard of living further than necessary nourishment. The produce from the cultivation of crops is further reliant on irregular ecological conditions; in times of trouble - flood, pestilence or drought, the very survival of the farmer and his family becomes doubtful. To top it all off, the introduction of corporate farming and the [mechanization](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Factory_farming) of agriculture has devastated prospects of livelihood for small, middle and family owned farms; vehemently trimming the demand for rural labor (Edward Glaeser).

In sharp contrast, urban cities are glorified as havens where wealth, good and services of one’s choosing are readily available; they are places where destinies can be made and social mobility turned into a reality. There are superior employment opportunities, basic necessities and services along with other professional services that simply do not exist in rural areas. Another key factor as mentioned before is health care. Individuals, in particular the aged are over and over again obligated to shift to cities which possess the doctors with the necessary medical expertise and health care facilities that can accommodate their specific health issues. Other, less important yet attractive features consist of a wider spectrum of amusement and entertainment - restaurants, movie theaters, theme parks and a enhanced quality of schooling, specifically universities. Furthermore, as a consequence of their humongous populace, urban areas also contain a larger assortment of ethnic groups and social communities that may be belief based or otherwise. This permits people to meet and socialize with others similar to them; an opportunity rarely presenting itself in a rural setting.

The rate of expansion and stages of urbanization vary significantly depending on every region (refer to Appendix 1). Amongst the third world nations, Latin American spearheads the ratio of urban residents to overall population. Nevertheless, many East and South Asian countries are expected to have the fastest urban growth rates in the coming decades. It is predicted that nearly all of prospective world population intensification will be in developed urban centers. This amplification and the rearrangement of the planet’s population on such a magnitude in merely two centuries have put strains on the Earth’s natural resources and ecological systems. It is also detrimental to the general population in a myriad of different ways (Stewart Brand).

This hasty urbanization of the global populace is best depicted in a report in 2005 titled, “Revision of the UN World Urbanization Prospects”; the planet’s overall share of urban residents increased spectacularly by 16% (512 million) from the year 1900 to 1950. Then, it rose to an all time high of 49% (3.2 billion) in the year 2005. The research predicts the statistics to spike to approximately 60% (4.9 billion) in the coming decades (United Nations).

A study titled, “State of the World Population” was published in 2007; it claimed that the greater part of the global population will be residing in urban city centers or towns - another first in recorded human history. In popular culture, this has been called the coming of the “Urban Millennium” or the “tipping point”. Predictions for the future estimated a 93% urban expansion rate within developing states out of with over 80% would take place in Africa and Asia alone (UNFPA).

Regardless of the fact that urbanization is the fundamental motivator of modernization, social development and economic progression, there is a mounting apprehension regarding the implications of growing urban centers on the population’s livelihoods, health and the ecosystem. The repercussions of such speedy urbanization results include staggering trends for food security, employment rates, water supply, sanitation and shelter (UNCED, 1992). The main issue that crops up is about the sustainability of the existing trend in urban growth, keeping in mind the associated urban challenges such as slum creation, unemployment, borderline poverty and ecological degradation. All these issues are overlapping and inter-related.

As urban centers build up, the economic consequences can consist of a striking increase in costs, thereby pricing the resident working segment of the population out of the marketplace; this consists of such functionaries as workers of the local municipalities. “Urban development in our period (1789 to 1848) was a gigantic process of class segregation, which pushed the new laboring poor into great morasses of misery outside the centers of government and business and the newly specialized residential areas of the bourgeoisie. The almost universal European division into a 'good' west end and a 'poor' east end of large cities developed in this period.” (Eric Hobsbawm).

There is a huge probability that the majority of ecological issues of the oncoming century will stem from the prolongation and refining of already present troubles that are not on the receiving end of political attention they deserve. The issues are not essentially observed in all countries or then, absolutely nothing is done even when such a state of affairs has been identified. The most alarming problems include climate change, shortage of fresh drinking water for everyday consumption, deforestation, water pollution and out of control population growth. Although very complicated and their specific exchanges tough to describe, it is of the essence that experts scrutinize these problems through the lens of the triad of the social-economic-cultural system. Even the interconnections between environmental problems are now better known, we still lack exact information on how the issues are linked, on what degree they interact and what are the most effective measures. One problem is to amalgamate the water and land utilization-planning to offer food and water security.

On the environmental front, the “urban heat island”; fashioned when urban and industrial regions are developed at a fast pace and high temperatures are plentiful, has turned into a mounting worry that has been on the rise for some time now. In rural districts, a hefty portion of the inward bound solar energy is utilized in evaporating water from the soil and flora. In urban centers, where vegetation and uncovered soil scarcely exists, the greater part of the solar power is immersed into the urban infrastructures and asphalt. Therefore, throughout the period of tepid daylight, limited evaporative cooling in the cities permits the temperatures outside to cross the maximum recorded in rural areas. Supplementary heat is emitted from the automobile vehicles and manufacturing factories that are in abundance. Domestic and industrial cooling and heating units also add degrees to the scale (Park). This becomes the reason to why the urban setting is 1 to 6 °C warmer than neighboring landscapes (United States Environmental Protection Agency). Other affects include a decline in the moisture content of the soil and escalation of carbon dioxide emissions (Georgia Institute of Technology).

In the book “Whole Earth Discipline”, the author debates that the effects of urbanization are on the largely positive for the ecological system. To start off, the birth rate of new urban residents drops straight away to replacement rate, and this keeps on decreasing. This can aid in preventing overpopulation in the near future. Secondly, it halts unhelpful and destructive subsistence farming techniques, like slash and burn agriculture. Lastly, it limits the land use by humans, leaving more for nature (Stewart Brand).

Solid and liquid waste is another major issue in large metropolitan cities. The air pollution the is a consequence of the over-dependence on motorized transport and from burning of coal to supply energy to various machines. Water pollution results from poor sewage facilities and the dumping of industrial waste which includes heavy metals into waterways; enormous quantities of such solid waste are by-produced in the factories and can wreck havoc with the underwater ecosystem as well as humans. Traffic congestion and noise pollution are major environmental impacts of large cities. Because of factors such as paving over previously vegetated land, an ever increasing number of residences and high-rise apartments and industries, temperature increases drastically. Air contamination – the industries and automobiles are signs of urbanization. Due to injurious emissions of gases and smolder from factories and vehicles, air pollution occurs. Contemporary research shows high quantities of floating particulate matter in air, mainly in cities, which contributes to allergies and respiratory problems thus becoming an enormous health risk. Water issues - when urbanization takes place, the hydro cycle changes as cities have more precipitation than adjoining areas. Due to discarding of sewage from factories in the water bodies, water contamination take place which can lead to outbreaks of epidemics. Destruction of natural habitats – in order to create an urbanized area, a large forested area needs to be destroyed. More often than not these areas would have been home to many birds and animals.

Now we will discuss the phenomenon of urbanization in the context of the African region through the environmental perspective. Natural populace increase (elevated births than death) and relocation are important factors in the expansion of cities in the developing countries. The ordinary increase is fuelled by enhanced medical care, better hygiene and superior food supplies, which decrease death rates and cause populations to breed. In a lot of developing countries, it is rustic poverty that drives natives from the rural areas into the city in search of service, food, refuge and schooling. In Africa, most inhabitants move into the urban areas because they are ‘pushed’ out by aspects such as scarcity, ecological dilapidation, spiritual conflict, political harassment, food uncertainty and lack of essential road and rail network and services in the rural areas or because they are ‘pulled’ into the city areas by the compensation and opportunities of the metropolis including edification, electricity, water etc. Even though in many African countries the municipal areas present a small number of jobs for the youth, they are often attracted there by the facilities of metropolitan life (Tarver, 1996).

In Africa, the remarkable effects of speedy urbanization are incredibly obvious in the conurbation and peri-urban areas. As the metropolis gets bigger, the key region of direct impact is the peri-urban region, and those residing in the peri-urban boundary face numerous fresh challenges and opportunities in gathering their requirements and obliging the by-products of the municipal populations. Even though, cities serve as ‘engines’ of development in the majority emergent countries by providing openings for jobs, learning, information and technology transfer and ready markets for agricultural and industrial goods and services, high urban populations consign massive pressure on natural resources and inflicts ‘ecological footprints’ on the peri-urban areas (Rees, 1992; Rees and Wackernagel, 1994). For instance, urbanization leads to the external development of cities and results in changes in terrain exploitation whereby city residents procure major agricultural land for housing or profitable purposes. The alteration of farm lands and watersheds for housing purposes have harmful costs on food security, water availability as well as the healthiness of the people, equally in the cities and in the peri-urban areas.

Cities effect on welfare in numerous ways. In the areas of the atmosphere and wellbeing, problems of discharge lessening, supply of uncontaminated drinking water, sewage and rubbish removal, food safety and poverty diminution are the most significant. Susceptibility of the municipal inhabitants to natural disasters and diseases, in particular HIV/AIDS and atmospheric contamination has also been recognized. Even though, information regarding pollution levels are incomplete, the air and water quality in many cities threatens the wellbeing of millions of urban residents (UNEP, 1994). Although, a noteworthy positive effect of urbanization is promotion of urban agriculture and the cultivation of staple crops, vegetables, poultry and dairying, which are demanded by urban consumers, cultivation of vegetables through sewage irrigation and the use of chemical pesticides affect the health of consumers who are not notified of the circumstances of cultivation of these products.

A large proportion of the urban population is also affected by poor sanitation that threatens their health. River pollution is particularly found to be worse where rivers pass through cities and the most widespread is contamination from human excreta, sewage and oxygen loss (UNEP 986). It is estimated that about 400 million people or about one-third of the population in the developing countries do not have safe drinking water (World Bank, 1990). In many cities such as Kumasi (Ghana) and Lagos (Nigeria), there is limited access to clean drinking water. The quality of several watercourses is poor, with pollutant levels higher than the WHO’s standards. Pesticide contamination from urban agriculture, residues from sawmills and manufacturing industries, wastewater from urban drains and municipal dumping of waste especially human excreta pollute drinking water sources that affect the health of the urban and peri-urban populations. In the long-term, treatment of sewage would be required for safer vegetable production and to reduce water pollution.

Urban populations are also vulnerable to diseases such as malaria or those associated with air pollution. Other malfunctions that are associated with industrial and traffic injuries and psychological disorders, especially in low-income urban and peri-urban area are also disturbing. The unhealthy environment and overcrowded housing in the slums expose the urban poor to high rates of infectious diseases such as pneumonia, tuberculosis and diarrhoea. Although it is clear that cities in the developing countries act as nodes through which development occur, it is important to note that rapid urbanization poses particular risks that affect sustainable livelihoods of millions of people. The wide range of effects includes degradation of the environment (soil erosion, deforestation), destruction of watersheds and wetlands, traffic congestion, contamination/pollution of water, and environmental risks associated with low-income housing areas.

Around the world, especially in Africa and Asia, cities are growing quickly. For the majority of urban dwellers, especially the poor, finding potable water supply, affordable shelter, accessible and secure urban land for agriculture to ensure food security, securing gainful employment and improvement in health facilities would continue to remain a priority. Since restrictive urban growth policies, especially population distribution designed to reduce the rate of rural-urban migration appear to have had limited success in many developing countries, policies must be directed at transforming the rural economy in order to slow the rate of urban sprawl. Comprehensive land use preparation and review of planning standards and managerial dealings would, go a long way to, diminish many of the problems that face city populations in the developing areas, particularly Africa.

Urbanization is set to stay for an extended time. It may slow but surely does not show any signs of stopping. In 1985, 45% of the global populace stayed in cities. Scientists approximate that 60% of the world population will be city-dwellers by 2025. The foremost objective of town planning is to make all facilities and comforts obtainable to the community without imposing many harmful effects on the social order and surroundings, appropriately referred to as “Sustainable growth”. The fundamental rule is to plan cities in advance, rather than let them develop impulsively and chaotically. During urban planning it should be ensured that sufficient infrastructure is accessible to support the inhabitants. Residences should be expediently situated near the civic bodies. This could progress effective provision of the necessary services.

Opportunities can be shaped within countryside areas to lessen stress on cities. This also results in a higher standard of living for the inhabitants of the country as a whole. Some of the villages in South Kanara district of Karnataka set a good case in point for this. They have well-organized transport and communication system and electricity. Co-operatives have been set up to give monetary support to peasants. The bucolic populace has been optimistic about engaging in cottage industries and money-making activities such as manufacturing pickles, handicrafts, sweets and savories. With help from cooperative agencies, advertising of these goods also happens to trouble-free. This is an efficient technique of curbing urbanization, by creating opportunities for public in villages. This reduces the velocity of migration. Currently, planning cities for sustainable development, mainly in the third-world societies, is the most important challenge for humanity. Restricting the populace boom is another key issue of the third millennium. All these vital factors would come to a decision what the future would seem like for the human race and our world.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

